

RELIGIOUS MISCELLANY.

THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER.*

"Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of."

The natural enthusiast, as he gazes upon 'the planets, suns, and adamant spheres, that wheel unshaken through the void immense,' and thus dilates his conceptions of the power and wisdom of the Creator, crushes the wild flower that woe the dew-drop beneath his feet; and yet it is as vividly impressed with the awful blazonry of Omnipotence as the mightiest planet that rolls through the infinity of space. So in the desolation which follows the persecution of any particular class; whilst the prominent objects command the sympathies and interest the feelings of Christian love, the weak and powerless are forgotten, because removed from public view; and yet it is in the voiceless solitude of uncomplaining woe that the secret and silent waste of life is most keenly felt.—But few of their English brethren were aware of the real sufferings of the Irish clergy: they were too noble to make a parade of them. The minister was seen, wherever duty called, discharging his labour of love with apparent cheerfulness; but were the veil lifted which screened his domestic circle, the lineaments of famine deeply traced in cheeks too young to be furrowed, would have wrung tears of remorse from their bitterest enemies.

The incidents of this simple story are strictly true, and came under the personal observation of the writer. They are now given to the world, partly with a view of shewing that the present hostility to the temporalities of the Church conceals a real enmity to her worship, and secondly, that the consequences of it, if triumphant, will, in this country, reach to the most endearing ties of nature, as it has already done in the sister kingdom, and the gentlest and the best beloved in the parson's home be its first victims.

Soon after Lord Stanley's injudicious official declaration that tithes 'should be extinguished in Ireland,' the parish of L—, in the county of Carlow, became remarkable for its strenuous opposition to their collection. The system of 'passive resistance' had been so elaborately matured and successfully developed, that the daring violators of the law boasted of their impunity, and the timid were encouraged to be refractory. When inflammatory harangues were required to rouse the bad passions of the populace, no venal demagogue could surpass the Rev. Mr. M—, the parish priest, in either the violence of his invective, or the inveteracy of his malignity. It was a favourite saying of his, that the Clergy must be starved into a surrender, and that the apostate who contributed one iota of tithes to the Protestant minister, was acting in defiance of the dictates of the Popish religion, and perpetuating a system which had been based in unhalloved assumption, and continued by cowardly compliance.

The honest Romanist who, under cover of the night, paid the Rector his tithes, for he dared not have made the attempt by day, was, at confession, rebuked for his disobedience to mother Church, and condemned to expiate his mortal guilt by penance. The consequence of his hostility was severely felt by the rector, the Rev. Dr. —, who being deprived of his accustomed revenue, arising from tithes, was obliged to support his family upon such resources as his private means afforded, or the piety of his congregation supplied. But it was generally believed that the supply was not adequate to the demand; and different articles of household property, which were known to belong to the Rector, being found exposed for sale in the town, induced people to suspect that the reality was even worse than the appearances. It so happened in the course of events, that Mr. M—, the parish priest, was under the necessity of calling on the Rector to procure his signature to some document. Most gladly would he have avoided the interview; but the pressing urgency of the occasion rendered it inevitable, and he was too well schooled in the ways of the world to allow a matter

of momentary annoyance to interfere with any circumstance of importance to himself. He therefore made preparation for his visit; and, after an hour's ride, found himself upon the avenue leading to the glebe. A few moments more and he was seated in the reception room. This chamber which, upon a former occasion, he had recollected as having been arranged with peculiar taste and simple elegance, was now completely dismantled. All the family pictures had been removed from the walls, except that of the Clergyman himself, and even it was deprived of its gilt frame. In one corner an old guitar, with the strings broken, rested against the wainscot, and the wild wailing of a half-strung Æolian harp in the window, seemed to tell that the spirit of harmony was fled, and that the chords of joy and happiness, which once bound the members of the family together, had been snapt asunder, and the reign of misery and destitution commenced.

The priest was perfectly at a loss to conjecture the cause of all this desolation. Could it be that the minister, to mark his sense of his unprovoked enmity to his just rights, had directed him to be shown into the worst furnished room in the house, and thus made him the object of studied contempt? No; his acknowledged character for politeness and Christian feeling, under every circumstance, was altogether antagonist to such an injurious suspicion. Were they proposing to leave the country, dreading a midnight attack, and had they sent before them the best of their furniture? Surely he must have heard of such intention.

Whilst his mind was occupied with these reflections, the door slowly opened, and the aged Pastor presented himself, and apologising for having detained him, added, 'I regret that the poverty of my means prevents me from receiving you with that degree of distinction which one gentleman owes to another, but these bare walls are all that the malice of our enemies have left us, and such as they are you are welcome to them; you will, however, do us the favour of participating in our homely fare at dinner.' Willingly would the Priest have declined the invitation, but as he was afraid to give pain by a refusal, he attended the minister as he moved on to an inner room, where his family were assembled, waiting his arrival. At the dinner table were already seated a young boy and an interesting little girl. By the window which opened upon the lawn, sat a delicate female, apparently about eighteen years of age—beautiful as the first rays of morning; but the ever-varying expression of her countenance, told that she was the victim of that dreaded scourge of the British isles—consumption. I know not why there is always more of tender interest and compassion displayed towards the unhappy sufferers from this malady than any other, but the loveliness of the victim—the gentleness of the resignation—the abiding nature of the affections, true to its object, though a fatal termination be inevitable—all impart a degree of interest alike melancholy and peculiar. Then there is the delirious idealism of the unrepining sufferer, unconscious of the sad havoc which is going on within, gilding the expected summer of its days, while the chill of death is freezing up the very flood-gates of the heart. Such were the feelings of Emily B—, as she sat in the recess of the window, and watched the decline of day, gazing in a transport of holy enthusiasm upon the glorious orb of life, as it stole from the blood-red heavens amidst the rapture of the skies. Her countenance, meanwhile, was variable as the play of modesty upon the virgin cheek. Like the changeable rose hibiscus, in the morning pale, when the sun mounts the heavens crimson red, then turning to a sickly pallor as it withers. The moon next took up the tale, and her silvery light streaming through the lattice, gave a something of supernatural appearance to the living portrait which she painted.

There is a Sabbath sweetness in autumn's twilight pervading the hush of nature; and such was the feeling of intense solemnity which pervaded the breast of every one present, that every sound was hushed, even respiration itself seemed subdued. The father, as in thought he went back to scenes of by gone days, which too faithful memory presented, and then

BIOGRAPHY.

MEMOIR OF THE VENERABLE SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, D. D. ARCHDEACON OF SURREY, RECTOR OF BRISTOLSTONE, ISLE OF WIGHT, ETC. ETC.*

The biography of Archdeacon Wilberforce may, great measure, be gathered from a work which contains little direct mention of him—the Life of his celebrated father. We there learn that he was born in 1805 [vol. iii. p. 191]; though we are not told the period of the year, yet a letter of his father's Hannah More shews that it was in the autumn [Correspondence of Wilberforce, vol. ii. p. 43]. It shews that his infancy was feeble, and well might Wilberforce (than whom no man had ever a more affectionate nature) exclaim that, "these infantacles soon begin to twine their little cords round our hearts."

We see no mention of his being at a public school, probably his father regarded them with that jealousy which would be as well grounded as it is natural, were it not that private schools are equally dangerous but not equally beneficial. However, Mr. Wilberforce made up for the want of a public school, sending his son to Oxford: "If you have sons who are likely to distinguish themselves," he writes, "I wish them to go into the Church, I would advise you to send them to Oxford" [Life, v. 91]. By the examination list for 1826, we see that Archdeacon Wilberforce distinguished himself greatly, being in the first class for mathematical and the second for classical honours [by the way, from the turn of his mind, he should have expected that his highest honours would have been classical]. From his father's remarks it is probable that he was brought up for Holy Orders, and indeed we know none of that good man's letters which please us more than those which are addressed to him, or to his brothers, while at College. Taking his degree in 1825, the Archdeacon does not seem to have remained long at Oxford, since, in 1829, we find him at a curacy somewhere in its neighbourhood, and by this time we believe he was married to a daughter of the Rev. John Sargent, well known as the author of the very popular Life of Mary Queen of Scots. Hence, Mr. Wilberforce moved to the rectory of Brightstone, in the Isle of Wight, where he still resides. Here we have a further glimpse of him from the life of his revered father, who describes him living in the "conscientious discharge of the duties of the most important of all professions" [Life, v. 331]. It is peculiarly pleasing to see what a high estimate this experienced statesman had formed of the duties of the Christian ministry; and also to see that the manner in which the son discharged his ministerial functions was exactly that which recommended him to the approbation of the father.

While in this retirement, Archdeacon Wilberforce seems to have been as diligent with his pen, as in ministerial functions. From time to time he published occasional sermons, of which the titles have escaped us; and two years ago he appeared as one of the authors of the Life of Wilberforce, a work well known to need remark. About the same time he published, 1st, a valuable Selection from Mr. May's papers, with a preface containing a very interesting notice of his late father-in-law, the lamented Mr. Sargent. 2nd, Eucharistics, or Selections from the Old Divines by way of Preparation to the Holy Communion, with a Preface. 3rd, A volume of sermons preached (as Select Preacher) before the University of Oxford. 4th, Agathos, or Sunday School for children. Slight as this work may appear, we confess that it gives us a high idea of the author's genius, which has enabled him "communica dicere," in a manner which has been done by no one else in late years. We trust that the Archdeacon will not think it beneath him to give us something more of this strain. He has certainly, however, "meditanda," besides a history of the American Church, which is advertised, he is announced as Barton Lecturer next year at Oxford.

Amidst these employments, he was last autumn appointed Archdeacon of Surrey by the Bishop of Winchester;—a selection which gave unmixed satisfaction to the clergy, by whom he was, highly

* From the Church Magazine.

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