

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, JANUARY 26, 1839.

[NUMBER XXXII.]

Original Poetry.

For the Church.
OUR ALTARS.

The Altars of the Forest land!
Oh bless'd and beautiful they rise—
Bright homes upon a foreign strand,
To greet the wandering Briton's eyes.
A thousand dreams of pleasant thought
Float o'er the heart in startling truth,
As Fancy paints each well known spot
Like these, the worshipp'd shrine of youth;
Where early Faith's first voice was heard,
Where childhood's holiest word!

The Altars of the Forest land!
Amid the dark woods' sylvan shade,
Like happy spots of peace they stand,
For rest for weary pilgrims made.
No splendour clothes each humble dome,
No fretted roof or sculptur'd shrine—
But Faith and hope find there a home,
And Christians feel the place divine.
Bright gifts have lain as offerings there,
The treasure'd thoughts of heavenward pray'r!

The Altars of the Forest land!
Fair scions of the parent tree,
Beneath whose far-spread shade we stand,
Amid the blessings of the free.
Here may the wandering Briton come,
Here may he breathe his lowly vow;
He clasps the Altar of his home,
His father's God is near him now!
In the dark waste a fountain springs—
The wearied Dove may fold its wings.

The Altars of the Forest land!
Long be the dear-priz'd birthright ours—
Beneath their fostering shade to stand,
And call them Freedom's guardian powers!
And 'mid the holiest things of earth,
First of the gifts we deem divine,
Be ours—the freeman's sacred hearth,
Be ours—the Christian's stainless shrine!
No brighter boon for man may be
Than these—the treasures of the Free!

Toronto, January, 1839.

ZADIG.

WINTER.*

The general aspect of winter is forbidding. It is the night of the year; the period when, under a mitigated light, nature reposes, after the active exertions of spring and summer have been crowned with the rich stores of autumn. We now no longer survey with admiration and awe those wonders of creative power which arrested our attention in that youthful season, when herbs, plants, and trees awoke from their long sleep, and started into new life, under the kindly influences of warmer suns and gentler breezes; and when the feathered tribes made the fresh-clothed woods and lawns, and the blue sky itself, vocal with the music of love and joy. Nor do we now expatiate in the maturer beauties of summer, when light and heat flushed the glowing heavens and smiling earth, and when the clouds distilled their grateful showers, or tempered the intense radiance by their flitting shade. And mellow autumn too has passed away, along with the merry song of the reapers, and the hum of busy men, gathering their stores from the teeming fields.

Instead of these genial influences of a propitious heaven, our lengthening nights, and our days becoming perpetually darker and shorter, shed their gloom over the face of nature; the earth grows niggardly of her supplies of nourishment and shelter, and no longer spreads beneath the tenants of the field the soft green carpet on which they were accustomed to repose; man seeks his artificial comforts and his hoarded food; the wind whistles ominously through the naked trees; the dark clouds lower, the chilling rain descends in torrents; and, as the season advances, the earth becomes rigid, as if struck by the wand of an enchanter; the waters, spell-bound, lie motionless in crystal chains; the north pours forth its blast, and nature is entombed in a vast cemetery, whiter and colder than Parian marble.

Yet, even in this apparently frightful and inhospitable season, there are means of pleasure and improvement, which render it scarcely inferior to any other period of the revolving year; while proofs of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the great Creator are not less abundantly displayed to the mind of the pious inquirer. With reference to the angry passions of the human race, it is said that God "causes the wrath of man to praise him, and restrains the remainder of wrath;" and a similar remark applies with a truth equally striking to the troubled elements. The Almighty sets bounds to the raging ocean, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." He regulates by his wisdom the intensity of the tempest, "staying his rough wind in the day of the east wind." All the active powers of nature are his messengers: "fire and hail, snow and vapour," as well as "stormy winds, fulfil his word."

The winter landscape has been accused of monotony; and certainly all nature has at this season a less animated and varied aspect than at any other. Unless when sprinkled over with hoar-frost, or covered with a cold mantle of snow, the surface of the earth is of a bleak and faded hue. The woods have long lost the variegated foliage that had previously ceased to be their ornament; and the branches of the trees, with their "naked shoots, barren as lances," present one uniform appearance of death and decay. The howling of the long-continued storm, and the few faint bird-notes heard at intervals in the thickets or hedges, are monotonously mournful. The devastation of the earth, and the sounds that seem to bewail it, are general and unvaried. A few hardy plants and flowers, indeed, begin to swell their buds and expand their petals; but the thick cerements which en-

velopes the one class, and the pale and sombre hue of the other, equally proclaim to the querulous mind the ungenial climate.

Such, at a cursory glance, appear to be the aspect and tone of our winter scenery. But the keenly observant eye discovers even at this desolate season, and in the midst of seeming monotony, that endless variety which characterises every province of creation. On close inspection, indeed, all we behold is varied. Whatever be the season, and wherever lie the scene of our observation, though many things are apparently similar, yet none are exactly or really so. At certain times and places, the mutual resemblances between all the common objects of sense, all that solicits the eye or the ear in the landscape, may be so numerous and striking, that a feeling of monotony ensues; groups of mournful sights and sounds may, in the dead of the year, successively impress us with a sense of melancholy, and incline us to set a limit to the usual prodigality of nature; but yet true wisdom, aided by quick and active observation, easily draws the dull veil of uniformity aside, and reveals to the admiring eye boundless diversity even in the ravaged and gloomy scenery of winter.

Are the woods so uniformly dead, as, on a first survey, they appear? The oak, the ash, the beech, and most of our forest-trees, have lost their varied foliage; but, with the exception of the larch, the numerous varieties of the fir and the pine retain their leaves, and variegate the disrobed grove with their un fading verdure. In the woodland copse, or lonely dell, the beautiful holly still gladdens the eye with its shining and dark-green leaves. Nor are our shrubberies without their living green. The laurel and the bay defy the blasts of winter, and continue to shelter and beautify our dwellings. The flowers have not all vanished. One of the fairest, and seemingly one of the most delicate of them all, the Christmas rose, spots the garden or shrubbery with its bloom, unhurt by the chilling influences of the season. Before the severity of winter is over, the snow-drop emerges from the reviving turf, the lovely and venturesome herald of a coming host. Thus, in the period of frost and snow, and vegetable death, the beauty of flowers is not unknown; but rather what survives or braves the desolating storm is doubly enhanced to our eyes by the surrounding dreariness and decay.

And are the atmospheric phenomena of this season monotonous or uninteresting? Independently of the striking contrast they present to those of summer and autumn, they are of themselves grandly diversified. The dark and rainy storm careers over the face of the earth, till the flooded rivers overflow their banks, and the forest roars like a tempestuous sea. The hoar-frost spangles the ground with a white and brilliant incrustation, or the snow, falling softly, covers the wide expanse of mountain, and wood, and plain, with a mantle of dazzling purity. Then the dark branches of the trees, bending under a load of white and feathery flakes, have a picturesque aspect, and seem to rejoice in the substitute for their lost foliage. And how fantastically beautiful are the effects of frost! Water is transmuted into solid forms of a thousand different shapes. The lake, and even the river itself, becomes a crystal floor; and the drops of the house-eaves collect into rows of icicles of varying dimensions, differently reflecting and refracting the rays of the mid-day sun. The earth is bound in magical fetters, and rings beneath the tread. The air is pure and keen, yet not insufferably cold. Calm and clear frosty days, succeeded by nights that unveil the full glory of the starry firmament, are intermingled with magnificent tempests, that sweep over the land and sea, and make the grandest music to the ear that is attuned to the harmonies of nature.

Variety seems to be a universal attribute of creation. It is stamped upon the heavens, the earth, and the sea. The stars are all glorious; but "one star differeth from another star in glory." The sun eclipses them all; and the moon reigns among them like their queen. The earth is covered with numberless mountains and hills, thick as waves on the ocean, and more wonderfully diversified. From the tiny hillock to the cloud-piercing peak, no two eminences are wholly alike in shape or size, or in any single quality. What valley or plain, what tree, or flower, or leaf, or blade of grass, is in all points similar to another? Search the whole world, and you will find no pair of any of these created things exact counterparts to each other in regard to weight, colour, structure, figure, or any other essential or accidental property. The animal world is as endlessly diversified. Not only is the distinction between the various genera and species wide and impassable, but between the individuals of each species no perfect similarity exists. Twins are commonly most like each other; but yet we are at no loss to distinguish between them. Even when we take two parts, however apparently alike, of two individuals of the same species, we find the same diversity. The variety observable in the human countenance has long been a matter of remark and admiration. The general features are the same in all; but their colour, their relative size, and numerous other particularities, are curiously different. Hence we can at once recognise an individual among a thousand, even when they are of the same stature and complexion with himself.

The diversity of colour is truly astonishing, and is the source of much beauty and enjoyment. Though the primary colours are only seven, yet these are so mixed and blended over all nature as to delight the eye with thousands of different hues of all degrees of depth and brilliancy. Let us look at a bed of blowing summer flowers, and behold the ravishing wonders of colour. The unstained silvery whiteness of the lily, the deep crimson of the rose, the dark and velvety blue of the violet, the bright yellow of the wallflower and the marigold, are but specimens of the rich and gorgeous hues that delight us with a sense of beauty and variety. The fields and lawns, with their bright green, spotted with white clover and crimson-tipped daisies; the meadows, with their buttercups, and all their peculiar flowers; the woods, with their fresh spring verdure, and their flaming autumnal

robes; and the mountains, at one time bathed in a deep azure, at another shining with golden sunlight, all exhibit the marvellously varied touches of that pencil which none but an Omnipotent can wield.

This universal variety is not merely a display of infinite skill, but is equally beautiful, pleasing, and useful. It adds immensely to our enjoyment of nature, and greatly enhances our idea of God's creative attributes. It furnishes us with the means of discrimination, without which the earth would be to us a scene of confusion. Were there only one colour, and were every mountain, for example, of the same shape, or every shrub and tree of the same size, how dull and monotonous would be every landscape! And if every human face were exactly alike, how should we be able to distinguish a friend from an enemy, a neighbour from a stranger, a countryman from a foreigner? Or, to take an example still more impressive, were the powers and passions of every individual mind in every respect similar, that diversity of character and pursuit which constitutes the main-spring of society and civilization, would not be found. In all this there is adaptation and wise design.

Thus, amidst apparent uniformity, the necessary variety every where obtains. Nor does this variety ever run to excess. Utter dissimilarity is as rare as complete resemblance. All things are beautifully and usefully varied; but they also all wear the distinguishing mark of the same great Artist, and can all be arranged into classes, the individuals of which bear to one another the most curious and intimate resemblances. There is in nature a uniformity that is as beneficial as variety itself. The leaves, flowers, and fruits of a tree or shrub, though infinitely varied in their figure and appearance, are yet all so much alike, that they can easily be referred to their parent species. All the animals of a kind have each their peculiarities; but every individual can at once be recognised by the naturalist's practised eye. Thus has the Author of all things so blended variety and uniformity together, as to delight, yet not bewilder us, with exhaustless novelty; to enable us to class his works into great groups of genera and species, and thereby to exercise our powers of reason and observation in tracing the delicate resemblances and disagreements that meet us in all our inquiries. In the classification of these resemblances and disagreements philosophy is mainly employed; and but for them the active and inquiring mind of man would find no motive for the exertion of its loftier powers. We live and move in a world of inanimate substances, infinitely diversified in form, colour, and chemical properties, and intermingled with organic structures that ascend from the extreme of simplicity to all that is wonderful and complex in contrivance, and that possess almost every conceivable diversity in their essential qualities as well as their modes of existence; and to bring order out of this seeming confusion,—to observe, to generalise, and to classify,—to note the limitless variety of created things, and yet to discover the divine harmony that pervades them all, is the noble province of the philosopher, and even of the humblest lover of nature, who would enjoy aright the objects of his love, and adore with due intelligence the great Author and End of all.

O Lord! every quality of thy works is the result of infinite wisdom. The grand diversities of the seasons, with all their distinguishing characteristics, the beautiful harmony and unlimited variety of nature, alike evince thy goodness, and demand the cheerful gratitude of man.

THE CHURCH CATECHISM FOUNDED ON THE BIBLE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "TALES OF THE MARTYRS."

The Church Catechism—how I love that name! sounding like an old familiar friend, carrying us back immediately to the days and thoughts of childhood—those days when our yet lisping tongues were taught to repeat it as their first exercise. What a train of recollections it brings! The well-remembered room—the unforgotten fire-place—the very footstool by which, after rehearsing with serious face those mysterious and awful words, we climbed up for the rewarding kiss. And above all, inseparably connected with every idea of the Catechism, arises the form of our own dear mother—looking as she then looked to our infant eyes, the very personification of all that was beautiful, and kind, and good. We recollect how, as we grew older, its meaning gradually unfolded, till we felt the seed that had so long lain apparently dead in our memory spring forth a living plant.

It was while engaged with my class in our village Sunday-school that I was first led to an examination of the Catechism, as founded upon the Bible, and to a mode of instruction in it, which I would strongly recommend to every teacher of youth, and every parent of a family who may not have adopted a similar method. I had, after the repetition of our duty towards our neighbour, desired the children to look out Luke, x. 29-37, and read the parable with which our blessed Saviour answereth the question, "And who is my neighbour?" My little pupils shewed so much eager attention, that I was induced to turn in like manner to the institution of baptism and the Lord's supper; and afterwards to mark at home a few texts in readiness to pursue the plan. I did not complete my very interesting task till for every sentence in the Catechism I had noted down three or four of the most striking verses which prove the doctrine. It answers exceedingly well: when we begin to catechise, each is ready with Bible in hand to look out the text referred to. The one who first finds, reads it. Some of my best scholars have learnt so many of these verses by heart, that they can, upon being asked to show whence any particular portion is taken, repeat the corresponding text. I am frequently gratified by having them come prepared with verses they have found for themselves in the course of the week; and I indulge in the hope that this searching (perhaps with the assistance of their parents) for the foundation of our venerable Catechism, may be the means of inducing them to bring other doctrines of the Church to the

same infallible test; feeling as we do, that the better our Sion is known, the more deeply she will be loved, the more closely she will be adhered to.

The Catechism is associated in our minds with all the endearing recollections of childhood; but we should be doing it great injustice did we consider it only as a task to be learnt then, and in mature years cast aside. Is there one who has never since his school-day repetition of it read over the Church Catechism? let me beg of him to open his prayer-book now, and, in connexion with the Bible, study that, his first instructor in religion. He will find that the lesson of the boy contains all that is necessary for the salvation of the man.

After repeating our Christian name, we are immediately led to consider the inestimable privileges conferred upon us with that name: when baptised into the community of the Church, we were made "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." What a world of brightness and glory do these few words open upon the soul! Let the subject but for one moment be seriously considered, and the whole faculties are absorbed in its contemplation.

In the next answer we are taught, by the promises made for us, how we must so walk as not to forfeit the prize of our high vocation; and we are then reminded to thank our heavenly Father, "by whom we were called unto the fellowship of his Son" (1 Cor. i. 9); and to pray for that grace without which we cannot hope to continue in a state of salvation.

The creed contains a short summary of the fundamental doctrines of our faith—the creation, redemption, and future judgment; the communion of saints in the universal Church, whether militant on earth or triumphant in heaven; the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting; based upon that first vital article of our religion, a trusting belief in the glorious co-eternal Trinity, three Persons in one effulgent Godhead—the Father who made, the Son who redeemed, and the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth us.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil," are the words of our divine Master; and in contemplating the commandments we are naturally led to consider the comments which he has made upon them. O how are those who, looking only to the letter of the Jewish tables, might be tempted to say, "all these have I kept from my youth up;" how are they constrained, as their spirit becomes developed, to cry out with the humility of conscious guilt, "Lord, who can stand before thee?"

Our duty towards God I think no one can read without being struck with its extreme beauty; the simple, dignified manner with which it asserts the claims of God upon man, of the Creator upon his creature. In the next is summed up, with the assisting light of the New Testament, the remainder of the decalogue, relating to the duty we owe to our neighbour in the different relations of life.

Then follows our Lord's own prayer, with a short explanation of what we desire of God in it.

And, lastly, we find a simple but explicit account of those two sacraments which Christ has ordained in his Church. The connexion between the outward visible sign and the inward spiritual grace is distinctly marked; and as we have before seen the station to which we were raised by baptism, we are now reminded of that to which we were born by nature. Who can listen to the provision made for infant baptism, without having immediately before their eyes the picture of our divine Saviour, as adopted in the service and presented to us in Mark, x. 13-16? He was much displeased with his disciples for rebuking the fond believing parents who brought their little children for his benediction; and as if to shew beyond all dispute, that the very babes are to be admitted to the privileges of his glorious Gospel, he has caused it to be inscribed upon that page which shall live while heaven and earth shall pass away, that "he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

The Catechism concludes with the last crowning rite of our Church; and by distinguishing between the outward part or sign of the Lord's supper, which still remains bread and wine, and the inward spiritual part or thing signified, the body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in it,—she gives a consistent and scriptural explanation of that holy communion.

What is required of them who come to the Lord's supper? that which will be required of every one of us when we come to die. Are you unprepared to receive the communion? then are you unprepared to die. Are you afraid to partake of the communion? then be still more afraid to die. And, remember—remember, that while the communion waits for you, death will approach uncalled, perhaps in an hour when you least expect him. O then delay not to participate in the one, that you may be ready to meet the other; and God of his infinite mercy grant that each of us, when the awful summons shall arrive which is to conduct us into eternity, may, in the words of that Catechism, which, impressed as it has been upon our hearts from very childhood, will, if its promises have been slighted, its commands neglected, and its sacraments despised, most assuredly rise up in judgment to condemn us,—that we may then "repent us truly of our sins past, have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and be in charity with all men."

OUR NATIONAL CHURCH.

"TO THE POOR THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED."

We value our national church, because within her strong and guarded precincts we find opportunities secure and frequent, to preach the Gospel. We love the walls by which we are surrounded, not to look at—not as a trophy of superiority—O no,—but because within these walls there is a constant opportunity of presenting HIM before the people

* From "Sacred Philosophy of the Seasons," by the Rev. H. Duncan, D.D.