

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, I, 12.

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[NO. XV.]

To the Editor of the Church.

SIR.—The following is part of the speech delivered by GODFREY OF BOULLON, from among his assembled chiefs, to Alethes, one of the Ambassadors sent by the king of Egypt, to forbid the passage of the Christian host into Judæa,—translated from the second Canto of Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered; and though it can boast but little of the merit of the original, yet it may not perhaps be unacceptable, as shewing in some slight degree the fervent spirit that breathes through many parts of that great author's most celebrated works.

Ambassador, your accents sweetly bring
Mild words of peace, or proud defiance move;
Now, if esteemed and honoured by your king,
Our hearts are grateful, and receive his love,—
But as your speech before our view has brought
A Pagan war commenc'd with allied zeal;—
To this I answer, as in terms I ought,
And simplest words my purpose shall reveal.
Know then that we have suffered all our woes,
By sea and land, by dark or cloudless skies,
That we may see the way at last unclose,
That leads where Zion's sacred walls arise;
That God on us may all his favor send,
Where every chain in bondage we shall break,
Nor shall we fear, for such a glorious end,
Our fame, our kingdoms, and our lives to stake.
Think not, ambition each great act controls
In this our work, nor is our leading guide:—
The God of Heaven purge from all our souls,
So foul a sin, if such should there abide,
Nor suffer the sweet poison to impart
Its honeyed taste, which soothing but destroys;
But may his hand which moves the sternest heart,
Chasten our wandering thoughts to holy joys!—
For this arous'd us, this has been our guide
Through every danger which our path has crossed.
It made the mountains sink, the floods subside;
Allayed the summer's heat, the winter's frost,—
Calmed the unbridled fury of the main,—
Bowed down or loosed the tempest in its might;—
Hence proudest towers were levelled with the plain,
Hence fiercest foes destroyed or put to flight,—
Hence springs our ardor, hence our hopes arise,
Not from frail mortals armed with sword and lance,
Not from our navies, not from our allies
From Grecian shores, not from the arms of France!—
For while that hand shall still support our cause,
Let every nation our alliance break,
He who from God his whole assistance draws,
All other source of succour may forsake;—
But if his hand no more our camp shall keep,
For errors done, or secret faults surveyed,
Stands there one here, who would not gladly sleep,
Where once his Lord in hallowed Earth was laid?
So shall we die, nor envy who remain,
So shall we die, nor unaveng'd decay,
Nor Asia by our fall a triumph gain,
Nor sorrow for our fate our spirits weigh.

J. C.

REASONS FOR EPISCOPACY.

(Continued from our last.)

Among the disastrous triumphs of the rabid infatuation described by Mr. Colton, he seems inclined to reckon the prevalence of religious insanity. He does not, indeed, venture to say this in the language of confident accusation; but he has seen and heard enough to warrant the suspicion. One lunatic hospital he visited himself; and there he was mournfully struck with the predominance of religious mania. The observations of an intelligent friend have helped to strengthen him in his belief of the fact. The conclusion of the following paragraph exhibits a melancholy instance of the process by which a youthful mind may be thus irretrievably overthrown:—

"Religion is a dread and awful theme in itself. That is, as all must concede, there are revealed truths belonging to this category. To invest these truths with terrors that do not belong to them, by bringing them out in distorted shapes and unnatural forms; to surprise a tender and unfortified mind by one of awful import, without exhibiting the corresponding relief which Christianity has provided; to frighten, shock, and paralyze the mind with alternations and scenes of horror, carefully concealing the ground of encouragement and hope, till reason is shaken and hurled from its throne, for the sake of gaining a convert, and in making a convert, to make a maniac—as doubtless sometimes occurs under this mode of preaching, for we have the proof of it—involves a fearful responsibility. I have just heard of an interesting girl thus driven to distraction, in the city of New York, at the tender age of fourteen, by being approached by the preacher after a sermon of this kind, with a secretary by his side, with a book and pen in his hand, to take down the names and answers of those who, by invitation, remained to be conversed with. Having taken her name, the preacher asked, 'Are you for God, or the devil?' Being overcome, her head depressed, and in tears, she made no reply. 'Put her down, then, in the devil's book!' said the preacher to his secretary. From that time the poor girl became insane; and in her simplicity and innocence has been accustomed to tell the story of her misfortune!"—p. 44.

To crown all these mischiefs, there is imminent danger lest religion, pure and undefiled, should be fatally dishonoured by the distortions and deformities inflicted on her, by this foul, strange, and most unnatural violence. "The superstitions and enormities of the Roman Catholic Church," says Mr. Colton, "gave birth to what is commonly called the French infidelity. The fanaticism of our own country, if it should extend itself widely, and prevail long, would not, probably, create an infidelity so fierce, because it is not imposed by authority; but it would bring religion into general contempt."—p. 45.

In the last place, Mr. Colton enters a distinct and well-reasoned protest against the process by which members of the sec-

tarian churches are admitted into full communion. The public profession, by the candidate, of a hope that he has been born again,—the examination into his orthodoxy before a board of laymen,—his admission to the state of probationer before the whole congregation of the people,—his subsequent entrance upon a solemn covenant, first with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and secondly with the Church which he is about to join; all these strange devices and intentions are more or less familiar to every one, who is conversant with the practice of Dissenting communities in England. But all these things appear, from Mr. Colton's statements, to flourish, in still more rampant predominance, throughout the United States; and, without exception, they are all deprecated and stigmatized by him as utterly vicious in principle, and unspeakably mischievous in operation. He condemns the whole of them, as forming a system which makes the most preposterous demands upon the nerves, the self-possession, and the intellectual resources of the candidates, and which offers insufferable violence to that sensitive and retiring delicacy which often distinguishes those very spirits that are most deeply touched by the power of religion. But, above all, he complains of the scheme as a fatal departure from the whole spirit of the Primitive and Apostolic church. "I am forced to believe," he says, "that Christ, and the members of His body, the Church Universal, are connected with Him, and constituted in Him, only through his appointed ministry; whereas this mode is a constitution, or organization, superadded by man."*** Every Christian, who has been baptized, and publicly recognized as such, by an authorized ministry, is a member in full; and his membership is constituted, solely and alone, through the ministry, and not by association with other members." And he concludes, upon the whole matter, that, "in all points of view, the theory of this (the Sectarian) system is the most unfortunate in its application. The ministry is robbed of its primitive powers. Virtually, there is no ministry; their feet and hands are bound in chains; they are entirely subject to the popular will."—p. 54.

It may not be uninteresting or unprofitable, to an English Churchman, to contemplate the views entertained by an American proselyte to Episcopacy, relative to the process by which this unhappy "defeat" has been wrought upon the life of the original and apostolic system:—

"The history of this incredible change—incredible but for the fact, that stares the world in the face—is perfectly manifest.—First, the reformation from Popery, in some of the forms in which it branched, went further, as all such violent changes are apt to do, than simply to reject what was bad—which was the ground of controversy—and demolished much that was good. Because the Pope, and the factitious hierarchy, of which he was the head, had assumed too much of power, the reformation did not indeed dissolve the Christian ministry, but only rescued by scarcely saving it; and lodged it in some fragments of the Reformed church. With some, who are nice and conscientious, not only as to the most probable primitive organization of the Christian ministry, but also as to its historical and uninterrupted descent, Presbyterian ordination is doubtful, at best; and as to myself, on a re-examination, it has proved unsatisfactory. I am inclined to the belief, that nothing but the strong bias of education, and working at defects of argument in the pride and strength of a long-cherished opinion, can make it satisfactory."—p. 54, et seq.

Among the favourite expedients, for keeping the religious circulation of Christian communities in a brisk and healthy condition, may be reckoned the practice of "mutual watch and care,"—the institution of a sort of spiritual frank-pledge,—which is deemed a most important element in the Presbyterian and Congregational constitution. By this notable contrivance, every individual of society is, in effect, converted into a spy, and an inquisitor, on the conduct of his neighbour. It is scarcely possible to imagine a device better fitted than this to freeze the current of all social intercourse, or to poison the very sources of all domestic enjoyment. It endows the very walls we inhabit with eyes and ears, and puts us in fear of "airy tongues, which syllable men's names," in accents denoting a fearful omnipresence of the spirit of all uncharitableness. One would almost as willingly live under the old regime of Venice, as in a community where it would be impossible to get beyond the hearing, and the sight, of the sleepless demon of censure and accusation. It may be true, that Christian men are bound, by the laws of Christian brotherhood, to sharpen the countenance of each other; so that at all times, and in all directions, a keen edge may be presented against the assaults of iniquity and ungodliness. But it is not true that Christian souls are to grind each other, till they are worn down into powerless attenuation,—a result which must, in time, inevitably follow, in a state of society which constitutes every man an inspector of his fellow, and keeps up a perpetual collision of exhortation and reproof. Sparks of fire, indeed, may be incessantly forced out by this sort of violent and unnatural encounter, but the process, if long continued, must end in the destruction of nearly all that is truly valuable and useful in the conflicting materials. This, we apprehend, is the dictate of common sense, and of a competent knowledge of human nature. But, what then? The Sectarians declare that they have the authority of Scripture on their side. On the ground of Scripture, accordingly, Mr. Colton is prepared to meet them. He takes their texts, and fairly shakes them all to pieces. He shows that, even in the Apostolic times, when the Christian community was a small, suspected, and persecuted flock—when every individual had a direct and vital interest in the virtue and faithfulness of his neighbour—that, even then, the apostles felt themselves under the frequent necessity of rebuking and repressing the busy,

meddling, inquisitive, censorious spirit, which was constantly at work against the peace and quiet of the brotherhood. What, then, can be said of this sort of agency, at the present day?

"Professing Christians," says Mr. Colton, "will not consent to such interference; and there is no good reason why they should. It is the most unprofitable and obnoxious business, which any persons can set themselves about." In the existing state of things, the frontier line between the church, and what is called the world, is not, and cannot possibly be, so broadly and visibly marked, as it was previously to the demolition of idolatry and paganism. And this may be a cogent and powerful motive for vigilance, to every individual Christian; whose main business it is, or ought to be, to guard against the danger of backsliding from the church into the world. But still, this is a state of things which invests the office of mutual watch and guardianship with a difficulty and a delicacy which ought to deter all persons, possessed by the genuine spirit of love and soberness, from plunging headlong into its responsibilities.***

From the foregoing outline of Mr. Colton's exposition, it would appear as if some friendly guide had stepped in to dissipate the mists and vapours which had, for a long time, been overclouding his mortal sight; and had disclosed to him, in formidable vision, the powers which have been, and are, at work, for the subversion of the ancient apostolic structure of the church:—

Apparent diræ facies, inimica que Trojæ
Numina!

And the spectacle, thus awfully unfolded, seems to have wrought an entire revolution in his mind, and to have rallied all his energies, and all his affections, round the Episcopal fabric of his native land. * * * *

The history and the condition of other denominations and societies, one and all, furnish a perpetual commentary on the maxim, that "God sends us bishops, whether we will have them or not." However captivating it may be, in speculation, purity is a thing which, in practice, never can exist; or which, at least, never can endure for a twelvemonth together, so long as intellect and strength of character, are so unequally distributed among the children of men. Favourable circumstances or superior talents, or a happy combination of both, will tend, inevitably, to the elevation of this individual, or of that, into a position of commanding sway. And, if the society in which this eminence is attained by him be a religious society, from that moment the man is, to all intents and purposes, a bishop. He is, frequently, a Pontifex Maximus in his own community. He has a "voice potential," which is next to irresistible. A self-willed, unconstitutional, irresponsible, ever-varying Episcopacy, will always be found to rise up, sooner or later, out of the dead level of ministerial equality. And we all know that authority, when it is acquired and maintained merely by personal influence, will often

"Play such fantastic tricks, before high heaven,
As make the angels weep."

And thus, accordingly, we find it is, with the Presbyterian and Congregational connexions. "God sends them bishops;" bishops, whose power they may deny, but can never effectually withstand; and whose authority is the more dangerous and formidable, as it is exercised without reference to any thing but that which governs the movements of most other successful adventurers in the strife for mastery—their own imperious caprices. The result, Mr. Colton assures us, is confusion, and disaster, and the perpetual and imminent danger of false doctrine, heresy and schism. In support of this representation, he refers to the present notorious condition of these two great denominations. Indeed, the multitude of independent and self-constituted bishops, combined with the general spirit of rigorous intolerance, has made the land literally to swarm with religious sects. "No part of Christendom," he says, "has been so prolific in this product as our Country. It might be almost said to form our religious staple. * * * And just at this moment another grand explosion seems ready to burst upon us; and the Presbyterian Church of the United States is, in all probability, to be rent in twain."—p. 204.

Mr. Colton next proceeds to the consideration of certain religious societies, which are mainly indebted, for their efficacy, to their essentially Episcopal organization. He contends that the Episcopal principle is, in fact, the vital principle, of all the voluntary religious and benevolent associations in America, national and subordinate, and he further maintains that, in the most powerful and important of these associations, the same principle is brought out into far more intense and constant action, than it is in the Episcopal Church itself. And, first, he passes in review before us the American Home Missionary Society, which he terms an Episcopal institution, upon a stupendous scale and of vast energy—wanting, of Episcopacy, nothing but the name. Its diocese is the United States of America; and, at this moment, it avowedly contemplates no less than the extension of its operations, until its influence shall be felt, not only over the whole American continent, but throughout the civilized world. Of this great association, the Secretary is, in fact, the arch-prelate. It may be doubted whether the General of the order of Jesus is more absolute than this august and well-nigh omnipotent functionary. He has, under his supervision and control, upwards of 700 clergy, and 1050 congregations; while all the 17 bishops of the Episcopal church together, for the same ground, have only 772 clergy, and between 800 and 900 congregations—averaging about 47 clergy for each bishop. "All this," says Mr. Colton, "leaves the aspirations of true American Episcopacy out of sight! They are not to be named in such company." And all this, too, illustrates, in a most as-