

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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[NO. XIX.]

Poetry.

THE ASPEN LEAF.

I would not be
A leaf on yonder aspen tree;
In every fickle breeze to play,
Wildly, weakly, idly gay;
So feebly framed, so lightly hung,
By the wing of an insect stirred and swung;
Thrilling ev'n to a Redbreast's note,
Drooping if only a light mist float;
Brightened and dimmed, like a varying glass,
As shadow and sunbeam chance to pass:—
I would not be
A leaf on yonder aspen tree.—
It is not because the autumn sere
Would change my merry guise and cheer,—
That soon, full soon, nor leaf nor stem
Sunlight would gladden, or dew-drop gem,—
That I, with my fellows, must fall to the earth,
Forgotten our beauty and breezy mirth,
Or else on the bough where all had grown,
Must linger on, and linger alone;—
Might life be an endless summer's day,
And I be for ever green and gay,
I would not be, I would not be
A leaf on yonder aspen tree!

Proudly spoken, heart of mine,—
Yet weakness and change perchance are thine,
More, and darker and sadder to see,
Than befall the leaves of yonder tree!
What if they flutter—their life is a dance;
Or toy with the sunbeam—they live in his glance;
To bird, breeze and insect, rustle and thrill,
Never the same, never mute, never still,—
Emblems of all that is fickle and gay,
But leaves in their birth, but leaves in decay—
Chide them not—heed them not—spirit away!
In to thyself,—to thine own hidden shrine;—
What there dost thou worship? What deems't thou divine?
Thy hopes—are they steadfast, and holy, and high?
Are they built on a rock? Are they raised to the sky?
Thy deep secret yearnings,—oh! whither point they?
To the triumphs of earth? To the toys of a day?
Thy friendships and feelings,—doth impulse prevail
To make them and mar them, as wind swells the sail?
Thy life's ruling passion—thy being's first aim—
What are they? And yield thy contentment, or shame?
Spirit, proud spirit, ponder thy state;—
If thine the leaf's lightness, not thine the leaf's fate;
It may flutter, and glisten, and wither, and die,
And heed not our pity, and ask not our sigh;
But for thee,—the immortal,—no winter may throw
Eternal repose on thy joy, or thy woe;
Thou must live, and live ever—in glory or gloom,—
Beyond the world's precincts, beyond the dark tomb.
Look to thyslf then, ere past is Hope's reign,
And looking and longing alike are in vain,
Lest thou deem it a bliss to have been, or to be,
But a fluttering leaf on yon aspen tree!

MISS JEWsbURY.

[Communicated.]

For the Church.

RECOLLECTIONS OF BISHOP WHITE.

Rev. Sir,—The following is the substance of an extract from a letter which I some time ago wrote to a dear friend in a far distant land, and I am induced to send it to you for publication, in the hope that, as the venerable subject of it was extensively known on this continent, and where known revered, it may prove not unacceptable to your readers. It may perhaps be proper to state that, as I took no notes of the following circumstances at the time, and being moreover a stranger in that section of the United States, and consequently but imperfectly acquainted with the names of places and persons, I may possibly be incorrect in some minor points of detail, such as, for instance, the name of the church in which the consecration took place, &c.—but for the general correctness of the whole, I pledge myself.

VERUS.

"My chief object in going to Philadelphia was to have the honor (for such I deemed it) of an interview with that venerable and Apostolic man—now in heaven—BISHOP WHITE. He was for a great many years the only living link in the chain which united the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States to the Church of England, being the last surviving one of the four clergymen who went to England after the Revolution to be consecrated Bishops; it becoming then necessary that the Episcopal church in the States should have the power of ordaining to the ministry within itself, without further reference to the mother country. At the time of his death—which occurred in July 1836, on a Sunday, and about the hour when prayers on his behalf were ascending to the throne of grace from hundreds of churches and from tens of thousands of hearts—he was the oldest Protestant prelate in Christendom, having been almost half a century in the Episcopate, and nearly seventy years in the Ministry. In person he was very tall and slender, and of the most venerable aspect; in mental endowments highly gifted, being a man of great learning, wisdom, and theological acquirements; and moreover singularly blest with health, having been enabled to preach and perform other ecclesiastical duties until within a few days before his decease. Of the seven-and-twenty Bishops that have ruled with such fidelity over the Anglo-American church, since she assumed an independent character, every one of them, but one, was consecrated by this venerable Prelate; and during the long period of his Episcopate, he never once, I believe, was absent from the General Convention of the Church, (which meets triennially,) at whose deliberations he invariably presided. He was called in consequence, by way of distinction,

the presiding Bishop. In his parlour, (the room in which I was sitting with him,) the first meeting,—he told me,—was held, at the close of the Revolution, to draw up a Constitution for the Church, adapted to her new and untried situation; and so few of her ministers were there at that time to represent her, that she appeared indeed but "as a grain of mustard seed." But the seed, though small and unpromising, was sown in faith, and watered with many prayers; and now—behold what the Lord hath wrought! the "grain" has become a GREAT TREE, "stretching out her branches unto the sea, and her boughs unto the river," and thus exhibiting to the world an irrefragable proof that the intrinsic excellence of the Church can uphold her—yea, and cause her to flourish—independently of any connexion with the State.*

Profound was the veneration in which this great man was held, not only by the members of his own church, but by all of every class and denomination. He was the personal friend of the immortal Washington, who highly esteemed him; and indeed when we consider his learning and wisdom, his deep but unostentatious piety, his patriarchal age, and the dignity of his high and holy office, we cannot be surprised at the universal homage which was rendered to this truly Apostolic man.

Not very long after this never-to-be-forgotten interview with Bishop WHITE, I was privileged to see him once more under circumstances of a still more interesting nature. Happening to be on a short visit to a friend in a neighboring Diocese, I was invited by its respected and indefatigable Prelate (Dr. Doane) to proceed to Philadelphia to witness the consecration of the Rev. Dr. Kemper to the office of Missionary Bishop, a novel but highly important step agreed upon by the church at the previous meeting of the General Convention, and which, consequently, gave to the approaching ceremony a rather unusual degree of interest. I accordingly went: and never shall I forget the delightful emotions which the whole scene excited. The consecration took place in the large and beautiful church of St. Peter, which was filled to overflowing with a most attentive audience. And here I cannot help digressing a little to mention two things that impressed me very forcibly on this occasion;—first, the decided superiority of this public mode of consecrating her Bishops adopted by the American church, contrasted with the private manner in which the same solemn ceremony is too often—I had almost said, invariably—performed in England; and secondly, the intense interest which appeared to be felt by every individual present in the solemnities of the day. Each countenance seemed to speak—"my heart is engaged in every thing that concerns the Church." But how should it be otherwise? The one follows of necessity from the other. When pains are taken to present the Church to the people in the full beauty of her unrivalled services—when they are given to feel their interest in them all—when none of those intended for public use are performed "in a corner," to suit the whims and caprices of the lukewarm and supine—but when all of them, from the dedication of the babe to Christ in Baptism to the imposition of hands in consecrating to the highest office in his church, are brought out in beauteous order before the whole body of the church, which thus appears "fair as the moon, clear as the sun,"

"In his whole round of rays complete,"

and to all her enemies "terrible as an army with banners,"—it cannot fail to produce in all her members, through the power of divine grace, the liveliest interest—the most devoted attachment

"Alas! it is not so with us," thought I to myself, as I gazed with delight on the scene before me—"consecration after consecration, and visitation after visitation, may take place, and few, very few, seem to know any thing of the matter, and fewer still appear to care." With what inexpressible pain, when attending divine service lately on one of those occasions (public I was about to add—would that it had been!) just alluded to, did I look round a large church in one of the principal towns of Upper Canada, and number some half dozen persons, who, scattered up and down, were all of the laity that composed the congregation! Alas! that it should be so! But to return to my subject. The consecration, as I before remarked, took place in St. Peter's, and I was fortunate, through the kindness of one of the leading members of that church, to occupy a pew adjoining the altar, from which I had a good view of all the proceedings. The pews immediately in front of the altar were occupied by about thirty clergymen in their robes, if I mistake not. At the opposite end of the church were the vestry-room, the Reading-desk and Pulpit, and immediately in front of the latter ran the great centre aisle direct to the altar. Presently the Rev. Drs. Abercrombie and Milnor, (the latter, I have understood, in early life a Quaker,) two venerable looking men, entered the Desk. The organ pealed in solemn tones, and every eye was turned towards the vestry. Now issued forth the Bishops, seven in number, in full Episcopal habit, headed by the Apostolic WHITE, with "hoary head," to him indeed "a crown of glory." He advanced with rather tottering step, leaning on the venerable Bishop Moore, whose silvery locks flowed in graceful profusion down his shoulders. O what calmness—what solemnity—what meekness and heavenly-mindedness beamed from their countenances! and as my eye was riveted on that man of God, who half a century before was himself consecrated to the Apostolic office by the Metropolitan of Canterbury, and for nearly seventy

* The writer by no means wishes to imply that the connexion existing between the Church and the State in the mother country should be dissolved—far from it. He conscientiously believes that such a union has a divine sanction, and that it is decidedly better for their mutual interests it should be inviolably maintained.

years had been, both in soundness of doctrine and in purity of life, proclaiming "the truth as it is in Jesus," who had himself laid holy hands upon the hoary head of that brother-apostle upon whom he leaned—and as I beheld him slowly moving up the aisle, hundreds—nay thousands—of eyes fastened on him, and as many loving hearts, at that moment, doubtless, blessing their venerable Father,—I was forcibly reminded of St. John, "the beloved disciple," who about the same age, being unable to speak much in public, used to deliver his oft-repeated charge to the church, "Children, love one another!" The prelates took their seats at the altar, Bishop White occupying the large and beautiful chair at the right of the communion-table, with three of the Bishops on his right, and the other three on his left. The Bishop elect sat on a chair placed for him in the great aisle, dressed in his rochet, the remainder of the Episcopal habit being placed on another chair before the altar. Morning prayer was read by the Rev. Dr. Abercrombie, and the lessons by Dr. Milnor, and never did I hear this beautiful service better performed: but that which added chiefly to the effect was the very audible and solemn manner in which the responses were uttered by the Bishops, Clergy, and people together. It is certainly in this way that the great beauty of our church service is best seen and felt, and the end of "common prayer" most effectually answered. There is no disinterested worshipper in this case; each feels that he has a solemn but pleasing duty to perform in the house of God, and he goes there to present for himself the grateful offering of prayer and praise. And the delightful emotion is not confined to the individual worshipper, but is diffused through the whole congregation, for true it is that "as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." I felt it to be so in my own case on that interesting day, for as I looked round on the great congregation and heard their voices united in adoration, thanksgiving, and praise to the Triune God, my heart glowed with increased devotional feeling, and I thought within myself—"It is good for me to be here!" But alas! when I consider how this truly spiritual service is performed in most churches, scarcely a voice to be heard responsive except that of the clerk, who is often a bad reader, as if the congregation conceived they had sufficiently discharged their duty by transferring its performance to him, I cannot be surprised at the taunt of dissenters,—that our Liturgy is cold and lifeless.

All the Prelates took a part in the services of the day. The Ante communion service was read by Bishop White; the Epistle by Bishop H. U. Onderdonk, (the coadjutor of Bishop White, and brother of the amiable Diocesan of New York;) and the Gospel by Bishop Chase. The Gospel in the form of consecration is beautiful, and contains that touching address of our Lord to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Bishop Chase (who wore a black cap, something after the manner of the old Reformers, and whose venerable appearance added much to the effect,) read it with great pathos. He evidently seemed to feel as if our Lord were addressing himself; and when he came to Peter's last reply, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!" the good old man was so overcome by his feelings, (which at that moment, I doubt not, emanated from a heart burning with love to his Saviour,) that he burst into tears. The congregation appeared to catch the glow, and certainly to me it was one of the most delightfully solemn moments I ever enjoyed. O I thought of the happiness of Heaven

"Where each the bliss of all shall share
With infinite delight!"

An admirable sermon was preached by Bishop Doane, after which Dr. Kemper was presented by the latter Prelate and the Right Rev. Dr. Smith of Kentucky. When the venerable Patriarch laid his holy hands (with those of the other Bishops) on the Bishop elect's head, the tears streamed from the dear old man's eyes. Perhaps he thought—as it alas! proved to be—it might be the last time! And oh! could his brethren then present—could the sheep and the lambs of his flock over whom he had so long and so tenderly watched with untiring love—O could they have indeed known that this was to be the last consecration by his hands they should ever witness—what would have been their feelings at that moment! How would the eye of affection have lingered on that aged and beloved form, endeared to them by the most hallowed associations, and bending under the weight of almost ninety years—that form so familiar to their sires and their grand-sires, and now about to descend to the grave full of honours and full of days!

RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM.

It is a trite observation, that human nature is prone to run into extremes. This is remarkably the case as it respects religion. An important lesson may be learned by contrasting the religious bigotry of a former age with the religious liberalism of the present. Toleration, two or three centuries ago, was very little understood. No man was content with holding his own sentiments, without at the same time endeavouring to make every one else hold them too. And every history of our country will inform us, that the Roman Catholics, so long as they were the ruling party, enforced unanimity of opinion by arguments gathered from the prison and the stake. Even in later times it must be confessed that a tincture of the same severity remained. And though few, indeed, for the last two centuries and a half, have perished in England by the hand of the executioner, on account of religion, yet it was by slow degrees that a perfect freedom of judgment was generally established. Now, however, the aspect of things is altered. For though, to be sure, bigotry is not extinct, and there may be those among us, who, if they had