

juxta position of material molecules of whatever nature, from whatever source derived, in whatever form and order arranged, could generate thought and reflection and reasoning powers?—No—He whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting, is the first grand cause as well as the upholder of all things: at once the centre and the circumference of creation: and to him should be ascribed the glory and the power and the kingdom in secula seculorum—Amen.\*

\* See Kirby's Bridgewater treatise.

### HOMÆ BIBLICÆ.

No. VII.

THE ELOQUENCE OF OUR LORD'S DISCOURSES.

Greece and Rome have not been less disposed to boast of the eloquence of their orators, than of the inspiration of their poets, and of their great superiority to the rest of the world in the various arts and sciences which adorn civilized society. And, indeed, what can be compared with the thunders of Demosthenes, and the persuasive energy of Cicero? The classical reader, who is more conversant with their orations than with the pages of his Bible, will perhaps smile when I answer, that the inspired volume affords many examples of sublime oratory which cast the most powerful addresses of these great masters of the passions entirely in the shade.

True eloquence is best known by its effects. Many an inflated address, which has cost the composer of it much thought and labour, is found destitute of every spark of moving oratory. It is maintained as one great proof of the amazing powers of Demosthenes, that after having harangued his countrymen on the propriety of entering into hostile measures against the King of Macedon; they were all so excited by his irresistible appeal, that with one voice they exclaimed, "come let us fight against Philip." And when Cataline, though conspiring against the existence of the Roman State, impudently dared to present himself in the senate, unawed by the majesty of the guardians of the commonwealth, Cicero, by the sole influence of his impassioned eloquence drove him from the capitol into voluntary exile. Were such effects ever produced by any specimens which we have on record of scriptural eloquence?

I will first produce the closing paragraph in that remarkable address of our Lord, called "The sermon on the Mount."—After inculcating the most important duties—after exhibiting them in a new form, and enforcing them by new motives,—he solemnly closes the whole by a direct and forcible application to each of his hearers; "therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." How beautiful and appropriate is this illustration! how much is said in a few words! What can be added to it that will not enfeeble it? and what can be taken from it that will not leave it defective? How sublime a view does it give us of the excellence of Christ's doctrines, and of the character of him who hears and obeys them! The truth of Christ is a rock eternal and immovable; the man who heartily believes this truth, builds for eternity upon this rock, and the edifice shall stand secure while ten thousand dangers threaten to raze it to the ground. These dangers are introduced in a striking climax. First, the rain descends,—this is the lowest degree of evil which assails it, but the roof resists the penetrating shower; then the floods come,—the land torrents which give no notice of their approach, and are as violent as they are sudden, but cannot sweep away the firmly founded fabric: and last of all, the winds of Heaven are let loose upon it—they blow and beat upon, or (as the word implies) strike violently upon the house, and yet it falls not, it is founded on a rock.

Nor is the reverse of this picture drawn with less accuracy, or less spirit. "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

In this passage we have a striking example of the figure called *euphemism*. In the former member of it Christ says of the doors of his word, "I will liken him to a wise man"—but he does not say of the opposite character, "I will liken him to a foolish man," but he shall be likened &c. Thus are we indirectly taught that Jesus delighteth in mercy, and that judgment is his strange work.

The trial to which this house is subject, is the same as that of the former. But how different its fate! It fell. Here are no previous symptoms of decay mentioned: all is done in an instant. One moment the house stands as lovely to the sight as that which had been more wisely built,—the next, you pass by, and, behold, it is gone! I am mistaken if the simple expression "it fell," does not convey to the mind a more correct idea of sudden destruction, than any laboured description of the event could have conveyed. And what more is added? *Great was the fall of it.* Here the rout and ruin of the scene is quite complete. It brings the mind to the contemplation not only of a sudden overthrow, but of a dissolution which is quite irreparable—the man's house becomes his grave: and the place which he had erected for his security and repose, overwhelms him in its everlasting ruin.

Who can fail to perceive that this passage is conceived in the highest style of eloquence? The words are exactly suited to the subject—the rapid enumeration of particulars following closely one after another, connected with the particle *and* the *rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house*—shew at once the vehemence of the speaker's feelings and the imminence of the danger he is describing; the unusual shortness of the sentences serves the same purpose; and the whole seems admirably calculated to produce the most solemn impression on the hearers.

This impression the evangelist informs us was produced. And it came to pass, when he had ended all these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The scribes were the acknowledged instructors of the people,

and doubtless studied all those arts by which they might engage the attention and obtain the good opinion of the multitude.—Christ was himself without personal influence, and was not likely to have been more admired than they, had not his teaching been more energetic. The subject also of his address was not in its own nature acceptable to the persons whom he addressed. Hence he had to combat with their prejudices, in order to obtain their suffrage in his favour. Yet, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, disadvantages greater than Demosthenes or Cicero ever met with, he carried away the admiration of the whole audience—they were astonished at his doctrine.

It seems too that his manner was scarcely less effective than his words; for he spake with a dignified authority, which formed a perfect contrast to the servile flattery of the scribes: and thus commanded an attention which they implored in vain.

This effect of the Saviour's addresses is not solitary. We learn that when the scribes and pharisees sought to kill him, they durst not, because they feared the people: for the common people heard him gladly, and were very attentive to hear him. On another occasion, when the officers of the high priest were sent to take him, their arms were unnerved by the might of his eloquence, and they returned to their employers, saying, "Never an, spake like this man."

J. K.

To the Editor of the Church.

Sir,—There are others besides the Congregationalists of the U. S. (of which body the two authors named below are bright ornaments) who may take a hint from the following extracts:—

"Some, in fine, think that religious experience is the sole test of admission into the Church, provided a man can satisfy them of his conversion (and they are not always hard to be satisfied); if he can relate a plausible story of his feelings, can talk of his distress, and of his comfort, and has learnt to deal in joys and ecstasies, it is enough. How he came by his experience, he probably cannot tell, and his spiritual guides often omit to ask. And yet this is often the point, upon which turns the discrimination between true and false religion; between rational experience and fanaticism; between the good influence of the Spirit of God, and their counterfeit. It is lamentable that so large a proportion of conversions which are the fruit of tumultuous meetings, and the theme of newspaper praise, prove to be of this class. Dark views, gross ignorance, and even flat contradictions in the simplest truths of christianity, are no obstacle. Thousands go from sin to God: from nature to grace: from condemnation to pardon: from despondency to rapture; and when interrogated about the process by which this marvellous transition was accomplished, have little or nothing to say but that they have felt so. And what is still more astonishing, they have been translated from darkness to light without being illuminated! For the uttering of incoherent exclamations and the chattering over a set of phrases, though accompanied with vehement passions, with shrieks, and fallings, and faintings, and fits, and trances must not pass for divine illumination, nor divine influence of any sort. When we consider the mechanism of the human affections, and how rapidly emotion is propagated by sympathy through promiscuous crowds, we can explain all the phenomena, which in this matter have lately attracted the public wonder, without recourse to supernatural agency; and must be convinced that nothing can be more precarious, than the tenure by which these sudden converts hold their possession."—Dr. Mason.

"There is no need of praying as if God and man were deaf; or of wallowing on the floor, and frothing at the mouth, as if filled with hydrophobia, instead of the Spirit of God; nor any harm in kindness and gentleness; nor any benefit in harsh and severe expressions. The state of man may be explained to him so that he shall believe and feel better than by calling him a devil, a viper, or a serpent. There may be as great directness as is needed, or as is possible without indecorum, and the Gospel may be preached faithfully and attended with the power of God, without groaning in prayer, and crying Amen, and without female prayers and exhortations, and without that spiritual pride which never fails to attend pressing the mass of the community out of their places, and shaking together in one cauldron of effervescence all the passions of all the classes in human society."—Dr. Beecher.

UNUS.

For the Church.

### SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

(From Bishop Jeremy Taylor.)

He that watches for the effects and blessings of the Sacrament, must look for them in no other manner than what is agreeable to the usual dispensation. We must not look for them by measures of nature, and usual expectation: not that as soon as we have received the symbols, we shall have our doubts answered; or be comforted in our spirit, as soon as we have given thanks for the holy blood, or be satisfied in the inquiries of faith, as soon as the prayers of consecration and the whole ministry is ended; or prevail in our most passionate desires, as soon as we rise from our knees; for we enter into the blessings of the Sacrament by prayer, and the exercise of proper graces; both which, being spiritual instruments of virtues, work after the manner of spiritual things; that is, not by any measure we have, but as God pleases; only that in the last event of things, and when they are necessary, we shall find them there: God's time is best, but we must not judge his manner from our measures, nor measure eternity by time, nor the issues of the Spirit, by a measuring line. The effects of the Sacrament are to be expected as the effects of prayers: not one prayer, or one solemn meeting, but persevering and passionate, fervent and lasting prayers; and continual desire, and a daily address, is the way of prevailing. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they shall be both alike."

What follows, from the same excellent author and on the same subject, has been often quoted, but it is in itself so peculiarly impressive that it will bear repetition: it will doubtless, also, be new to many of your readers:

"All Christian people must come to the Lord's Supper. They indeed, who are in a state of sin must not so come, but yet they must come. First, they must quit their state of death, and then partake of the bread of life. They that are at enmity with their neighbours must come; that is no excuse for their not coming, only they must not bring their enmity with them, but leave it, and then come. They that have variety of secular employment must come; only they must leave their secular thoughts and affections behind them, and then come and converse with God.—If any man be well grown in grace, he must needs come, because he is excellently disposed to so holy a feast; but he that is but in the infancy of piety had need to come that so he may grow in grace. The strong must come, lest they become weak; and the weak that they may become strong. The sick man must come to be cured, the healthful to be preserved. They that have leisure must come, because they have no excuse. They that have no leisure must come hither, that by so excellent religion they may sanctify their business. The penitent sinners must come, that they may be justified; and they that are justified, that they may be justified still. They that have fears, and great reverence to these mysteries, and think no preparation to be sufficient, must receive, that they may learn to receive the more worthily; and they that have a less degree of reverence must come often, to have it heightened: that as those creatures that live amongst the snows of the mountains turn white with their food, and conversation with such perpetual whitenesses, so our souls may be transformed into the similitude and union with Christ, by our perpetual feeding on him, and conversation, not only in his courts, but in his very heart, and most secret affections and incomparable purities." E. R.

### THE CHURCH.

COBourg, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1837.

The plan suggested by our correspondent in his communication given below is one which has been, in many instances, already successfully acted upon. It is, doubtless, very generally known that the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in addition to Missionaries, the principal agents for the accomplishment of their benevolent work, have always employed a considerable number of Catechists and Schoolmasters; who are expected, in the absence of the more regular ministrations of religion, to read the service of the Church and a Sermon from some approved divine to such congregations as can be gathered on the sabbath-days. Of late years the Society have given more of their attention and bestowed a greater portion of their means for the furtherance of this plan; and while the liberal stipends allowed in many cases to that description of lay-readers ought to ensure the services of competent individuals, the admirable regulations laid down by the Society for their guidance, combined especially with the watchful superintendence of some experienced and judicious clergyman, to whose advice and direction they are generally referred, cannot fail, with the divine blessing, to prove the means of much benefit to the Church. They serve, at least, to prepare the way for the resident minister; pioneers, as it were, whose previous and active labours must help to remove many of the obstacles and inconveniences with which the formation of a new parish is so generally accompanied.

But the supply even of this class of labourers is limited; and we can assure our correspondent that were even the means of their support much more extensively furnished than they are, the difficulty of procuring persons in all respects qualified for a duty so important and responsible is almost as great as that of obtaining clergymen themselves. Under these circumstances, we have a suggestion to offer, or rather to repeat one which has already been made by our correspondent the "English Layman" in his third communication;—and that is, that such families as belong to the Church of England should, as far as practicable, assemble for divine worship every Sabbath-day, and some one of their number—or the duty might be undertaken in rotation—read to the congregation thus assembled the impressive service of the Church and a printed sermon. The good effects of such a plan—and experience has, within our own knowledge, already tested them—cannot but be immediately discerned. It would serve to throw around the sabbath something of the sanctity of which, in the absence of religious services, there is so much risk of its being divested: the young would, by this means, be trained to that observance of this sacred day and to that veneration for the offices of religion to which they might otherwise become strangers: the aged would themselves derive spiritual strength and refreshment, and perhaps warning and counsel, from these exercises of prayer and declarations of the written word;—and who can doubt that the hearty and earnest performance of such duties, imperfectly conducted as they might be, would receive the accompanying blessing of Him who promises to be "in the midst of those who are gathered together in his Name?"—

To the Editor of the Church.

Rev. Sir:—I am glad to observe, since the establishment of your paper, a growing interest in Church matters; which was to have been expected from the dissemination of the principles of true religion, for there are many who read your paper that are prevented from attending regularly at a place of worship. Every well wisher of the Church of England must be delighted at the increasing demand for ministers;—a demand which it is to be hoped will shortly be answered by the establishment of a Theological School, the materials for which are superabundant in this Province. Yet as some time must necessarily elapse before the realization of this supply, might not the present want be obviated by allowing young men of good character and attainment to act as Catechists or Lay Readers in the various places where no regular clergyman is established;—holding out the hope that, if properly conducted for a certain period, they would be ultimately ordained:—not allowing them to read their own composition of sermons, but to deliver one on each Sunday from some sound and approved divine? I know of several places where such an arrangement would be hailed with delight by many who now are compelled to attend dissenting places of worship; and I have no doubt but that from amongst such people a sufficient