

MONTHLY RECORD

OF THE

Church of Scotland

IN NOVA SCOTIA AND THE ADJOINING PROVINCES.

MAY, 1859.

I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET HER CUNNING."—*Psalm 137, v. 5.*

Sermon,

by the Rev. John M. Brooke, D. D., of Saint Paul's Church, Fredericton, N. B. Preached on the Sabbath after the Communion.

I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I will not go back."—Judges 11 : 35, (last clause.)

When Jephthah was chosen by his countrymen to lead them against the Ammonites, who had threatened them with invasion, he vowed a sacrifice unto the Lord, and said, "If thou shalt, without fail, deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be that whatsoever shall come forth of the doors of my house, when I shall return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it for a burnt offering." The armies of Israel triumphed in the day of battle. The children of Ammon were subdued before them. And when Jephthah returned in triumph to his home, his daughter, his only child, in honor of his success, "came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances." The victorious general, then, calling his vow to his remembrance, was filled with the deepest sorrow. "When he saw her he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I will not go back."

It is not my intention to enter more particularly into the nature of the transaction that has given occasion to the declaration in our text; but I propose, by the help of God, in discoursing upon the words I have now read, to set before you the example of Jephthah, as an incentive to you to pay the vows that you have made. It has been customary for the people of God, in every age, to enter into cer-

tain solemn compacts, by which they engaged themselves to the performance of some act of service to Jehovah. The practice, if not actually enjoined, is at least sanctioned in the Old Testament; and various laws are laid down for its regulation.

It is a practice, then, that comes to us recommended by the example of the pious in every age, and by the exigencies of our very nature, to enter into certain engagements by which we bind ourselves to a more careful observation of God's law. For it is a very possible thing that a law which was violated, when regarded merely in the light of an injunction that was binding upon us, may be obeyed when we have voluntarily bound ourselves to obey it. Now all of us are bound to the service of God, not only by the commands which He has promulgated for our obedience, but also by the vows that we have come under. I presume there are few, if any, now present who have not been devoted to God in baptism. And what were the engagements which our parents entered into, on our behalf, in that solemn rite? Were they not that we should renounce "the unfruitful works of darkness," and "walk as children of the light and of the day,"—that we should rise superior to the pomps and vanities of time, and aspire to a portion that is eternal,—that we should be on the Lord's side, and prefer the glory of His name to our own interests, and the success of His cause to our own private advantage? And how, let me ask, have you performed these vows? The conscience of each of you, if suffered to answer, must tell that he has come far short indeed.

But some of you may think to elude the