

Reviews.

THE CANADA DIRECTORY. By Robert W. S. MacKay. Montreal: John Lovell, 1851.

Lucidly arranged, and beautiful in its typography, this volume does infinite credit to its publisher and compiler. To the man of business the work must be an indispensable *vade mecum*, not merely as a directory, but as containing a vast amount of general information relative to the mercantile and agricultural resources of the Province. In various instances we have tested the accuracy of the volume, and have been struck with the absence of error which it displays. The undertaking in every point of view was an arduous one, and we cannot doubt that extensive patronage will reward the enterprising publisher.

FOUR SERMONS ON THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. Preached in St. Peter's Church, Cobourg, during the Season of Advent, 1850; by A. N. Bethune, D.D., Archdeacon of York, and Rector of Cobourg. Toronto: A. F. Plees.

The large supply of this kind of theological literature, which, during the last few years, has been so rapidly accumulating, is a sign, we trust, of an increasing relish for such productions, and augurs well, as we would fain believe, for the spread of personal religion. Still we cannot but assure ourselves that, in many instances, the supply exceeds the demand, and that the success of publication is frequently very uncertain. In regard, however, to the Sermons before us, we feel convinced that they will secure a wide and speedy circulation. The established reputation of their author will, deservedly, attract attention; and their contents are such that those who have given them a reading will be likely to recommend them to others. A subject of the highest importance, alike to the constitution of the Church and the spiritual welfare of each of her members, has been treated with discretion and force,—in a manner calculated (which should be the aim of every sermon) to convince the judgment and to move the heart. May the Redeemer's own Spirit,—without which the best thoughts and the weightiest words are vain—accompany, with persuasive power, these excellent Discourses; and use them as an instrument to commend to many a soul-sick sinner that "medicine of immortality" which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper has been appointed to furnish.

The 1st Sermon is on the text 1 Cor. xi. 26; and is chiefly occupied with shewing how the obligation of communicating at the Lord's Table is involved in the fundamental principles of the Gospel covenant and the life. It is a strange thing, and surely it is an inconsistency which we ought to deeply lament, that, whilst professing Christians at large express a hope of shewing, in some way or other, in the benefits of Christ's death, so few take part in the sacramental commemoration of his death. Is not the contradiction obvious? Must there not be something defective in the interest which we testify in that mystery of love which we decline to commemorate, in the appointed way? When a nation removes from their pedestals the statues of its mighty dead, it is because the heart of that nation is changed toward them. The deeds of the departed hero or statesman are no longer valued, and his memorial, accordingly, excites dissatisfaction and is moved from its place. In what light are we to regard the slighted memorial of the Lord's Supper? The retreating sinner, who will not await the repast and the blessing, does not, it is true, obliterate the ordinance, so far as others are concerned; but he does abolish it virtually as regards himself: does he not, then, cast, at least, a certain measure of contempt on the agonies the Divine Victim recorded, remembered, exhibited in that memorial? The institution is neglected; the commandment infringed; the dying wish and bequest thrown aside, as it were, and set at nought: where, then, we may well ask, are the reverence and the love due to Him who established the institution, issued the unqualified command, bequeathed, almost in expiring accents, the precious legacy of his Sacramental Feast?

"Is it not neglecting Christ?"—this is the way in which Dr. Bethune states the painful inconsistency. "Is it not neglecting Christ, and looking off from Christ, if we regard not, and share not in, the commemoration of his passion, appointed so solemnly by himself? Faith, we are taught, is the main spring of Christian conduct; this it is which impels us to the Saviour; and without it, we could not be considered to have either 'part or lot' in him. But what must be the character of that faith, which moves us not to an enjoyed and positive religious duty,—to that which constitutes the representation of the Saviour's sufferings, and is revealed as a channel of his sanctifying and regenerating grace to our hearts? It would seem, indeed, as if Christian faith was parted with, when the Lord's Supper is neglected; as if there was an abandonment of great principle which causes us to recognize and rest upon the Saviour; a surrender of the tie which links the sinner to the Redeemer, and makes him capable of the deliverance wrought out upon the cross. Many may deny that it is so; and say that, notwithstanding the neglect complained of, their dependence is still upon Christ Jesus for salvation. They may be sincere in that presumption, but there are no grounds for it. The essence, the meaning, the proof of faith is

in obedience; but where this is not rendered, we are bound to dispute and doubt the genuineness of the faith which is professed. It is a name and sound, but not a principle: it is a theory only, to all practical purposes valueless; there is nothing operative or quickening about it, and therefore it must be reckoned at and go for nothing.

"Are we not right, indeed, in believing that this very ordinance of his holy Supper was instituted for the perpetual manifestation, as well as steady revival, of the faith which the Lord insists upon? And, in this view of the case, we must feel persuaded that every time that ordinance is neglected,—every time it is passed by or overlooked,—every time, from whatsoever cause, it is slighted,—there is a giving up, nay, a casting away of Christian faith. Nor does it here mitigate the evil of the offence, that people at such times may plead impediments from things without, or things within, to the fulfilment of this duty. Such impediments are working just the influence, under any circumstances, that it should be the great business of life to counteract; they are destroying in the soul the principle of obedience, sapping the root of faith in Christ, and estranging us from God. So that, in reality, they only aggravate the evil of our case, by keeping us away from duty and holding us at a distance from God; and whilst we are, through our own indolence or perverseness, kept in that condition, we can have no reasonable hope of salvation should we be surprised by death."

The 2nd Sermon is on 1 Cor. x. 16, and embodies a history of the Lord's Supper and of its Types, commencing with the emblematic "Tree of Life" in the Garden of Eden, and closing with a brief but interesting sketch of the holy zeal evinced by the early Church in regard to the then highly-prized privilege of participating in the now much-neglected Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The 3rd Sermon is on St. John vi. 53, and, as its main feature, presents us with an able refutation of the tenet of Transubstantiation. Towards the close of this Sermon, the subject of preparation or qualification is introduced, upon which some very impressive remarks are made. The best preparation, and in fact the only true and effectual preparation for the Lord's Supper is habitual godliness,—a life which, in the main, is a godly life, which is varnished, as it must be, by infirmities, but, at the same, tolerates no indulged sin. No man who habitually indulges any known sin can be a worthy communicant. Still the devoutest Christian, especially if, in temporal matters, his life be one of toil and care, needs his peculiar seasons for retirement for meditation, for bringing himself, so far as may be, to a perfectly recollected state of mind. How often are even serious persons drawn out of this recollected state of mind, and how necessary to make special efforts, with God's help, to regain it, before we approach the solemn precincts of the Lord's Table,—the peculiar residence (if we may speak thus) of the Christian Chechinah. Even the poor Heathen could feel in this way toward the sacrifices of his idol-gods; and what shame (not to say what judgment) will it bring upon the Christian if he fall short of the Heathen precept, put into a form more befitting his own spiritual faith,—"*Puro cum corda venite!*" Yet, whatsoever be the special preparation, there must still be the indispensable foundation of a godly life. The Archdeacon's observations on this head seem to us forcible and judicious.

"Will any, then, say that these are qualifications for a particular ordinance, or a special religious duty; and not rather say, that they are the every-day qualifications of the Christian,—not to be put on or off, as solemn occasions come about and depart; but to be habitually worn,—a never-ceasing appendage of our religious being,—a mark and token, never to be laid aside but always exhibited, of the truth and reality of our life in Christ? Could less, we may ask, be expected of believers on Christ under any circumstances? would less be consistent with the common and ordinary profession of our faith in Him as a Redeemer and Mediator?"

"Such qualifications may, indeed, be called the 'marriage garment,' which must be found upon all who are admitted to the feast of redemption; upon all who are summoned from the 'highways and hedges' or sin,—from the broad road of destruction, the dark land of the shadow of death,—to enter into the covenant of salvation with the Saviour of the world.—Without Christ, where and what are we? Unreconciled to God through Christ, what must be our doom? But redeemed, though that precious sin-offering, from the wages of iniquity, dare we forget that we must be a 'peculiar people, zealous of good works?' And can we think that a 'peculiar people,' such as Christians are required to be, may exhibit less of holiness and watchfulness than the qualifications for this holy Sacrament imply, and yet be consistent or safe? The Gospel itself, in all its joys and privileges as well as admonitions, is a perpetual feast where the Lord's presence always is; and in the Lord's presence any where, we must not be found unclothed with his robe of righteousness. We cannot enter the courts of the Lord's house; we cannot pray to Him in the midst of the congregation, or in the privacy of our own abodes; we cannot, at least, do so acceptably, religiously, or consistently, unless our aim and effort is to be holy as he is holy in all manner of conversation."

"The qualifications, then, for the Supper of the Lord, are nothing new, peculiar, or distinctive; they are what we should possess continually, if we hope to be saved. With less than these, we cannot look with confidence to Christ's atonement; with less than these we cannot hope to die in peace, or look forward to the judgment-seat and the last account with any thing else than the dread of condemnation. But as we hope to be saved, let us even now put that armour on, and thus be ready, daily and hourly, for our perpetual warfare with our spiritual foes; be ready, above all, for the dread conflict with the last enemy; and through him that loved us and gave himself for us, be assured of victory."

The last of the series is founded on 1 Cor. xi. 27, and addresses itself to the anxious and responsible office of meeting objections. With a quotation from this Discourse we must close our review,

acknowledging a feeling, which we cannot express, that we have not only proved unequal to the momentousness of the theme (who is not?) but have failed to do full justice to the Sermons which the Archdeacon of York has written upon it.

"But we must now regard another plea often advanced by persons who ought to manifest an example of diligence in this duty,—the plea that they are too much absorbed in the cares and business of the world to justify their entrance upon a service so solemn, and yet so dutiful.—There might, my brethren, be some reason in this excuse, if this world were all we had to live for,—if its possessions and its comforts were of so much consequence as to engage all our care and effort; if there was to be no limit to the time in which these things could be enjoyed,—no eternity to provide for,—no soul with an everlasting destiny at stake,—no judgment-day, upon the issues of which are to depend its misery or its bliss for ever. If these solemn and weighty things could all be discarded; if they could be made to pass from the mind as visionary dreams or the fancies of zealots, then might people be justified in abandoning their religious duties and neglecting their God.—But if, indeed, it be otherwise, and they are persuaded of the terrible realities of death, and a judgment to come; if they feel assured that that last scrutiny, and that last sentence is just as certain as that, 'it is appointed unto men once to die;' O then they cannot, they dare not, suffer the engagements of earth to interfere with the business of heaven; they dare not estrange themselves from religious duties and religious privileges, because there is work in this world to be done; but rather they will feel, that however pressing and trying all this may be, the first great duty is to be, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

SCENES IN OUR PARISH.

NO. XI.

A DAY OF GLOOM.

Continued from our last.

It is well indeed for miserable man, that in his hour of deep distress, he has one to whom to apply, more pitying than his fellow-sinner. "My heart was almost broken, when I heard of it," said poor Esther, "but the Lord does all things well." It was within an evening or two after her admission into the hospital, and whilst she lay thinking, I suppose, of her forlorn and hopeless condition, in the loss of all earthly comfort, and having then but vain and unfounded hopes for heaven, that the chaplain having read prayers in the next ward, stopped at the strangers' bed. He was one well used to instruct the ignorant, and to comfort those who mourn; yet from Esther's account, I fancy he must have found more than usual difficulty in his first introduction to her. "I thought it very strange and very unkind of him," she said, "so to insist upon it, that I was a sinner; I did not then know with what a holy God I had to do; and I recollect I hoped he would never come again. But he was very patient with me; he came day after day,—blessed be God for it; and I learnt little by little how I was born in sin, and had sinned in thought, word, and deed; and I saw that there could be only one Saviour, but, thank God, I saw that he was mighty to save! And then, O how I need to long for the gentleman's coming; and if he could have talked to me all day, I am sure I could have listened: I shall never see him again on earth but, O dear me! if ever I get to heaven—" And she would stop abruptly and weep, as if the greatness of the hope had overcome her.

She had been in the Infirmary many weeks, when some one who visited her there, told her that her step-mother was about to place the child in the work-house as she could not be troubled with him any longer. "And he is the only one I have left, my child!" she said "and I shall never, never see him again;" and she burst into a passionate fit of weeping, which those about her strove in vain to quell. The physicians were kindly anxious to have her under their care yet a little longer; but she would not be detained. They told her she needed constant attention, and her only chance of recovery was her patiently remaining under their care. But the mother felt that she had rather die with her child, than live away from him; so she was carried home to the miserable hovel which I have pointed out to you; she left the conveniences and comforts of the well-aired and neatly arranged ward for the most wretched of beds, and the scantiest and coarsest of food; but happily for Esther, she had found, and she carried with her to her sordid home, "the pearl of great price;" and to the uneasy bed on which she was laid, when she arrived there, and from which she never rose again for the three remaining years of her life, her Lord's comfort while she lay sick on her bed, "Thou, Lord, didst make all her bed in her sickness." Her change of character was remarked, though the reason of that change was not duly appreciated, by the ignorant and careless people amongst whom she resided. She was a new creature, possessed of new motives and new actions; new sorrows and new comforts; a new support through the accumulated woes of life; and an entirely new hope in the prospect of death.—Without any outward means of grace, the work of the Spirit of God silently, but rapidly advanced.

"It was wonderful," said one, "to see how she bore her illness; how very patient she was, it was unaccountable to see." Perhaps, few Christians ever were called to a longer exercise of that one grace of patience. For Esther's troubles multiplied, whilst all her earthly comforts seemed reduced to one single blessing; all that life had of

joy to her, centered in her little child. He was a child worth his mother's affection, and he loved his poor sick mother dearly; he was gentle and affectionate, in no common degree; and his beauty resembled what his mother's had been, and she had once been very fair. It needed years of suffering, to mar the form which God had made so perfect; but disease effects fearful ravages in the brightest face: and poverty and want trace the brow even of youth with untimely furrows. The winter came on with great severity; and though fuel is so cheap here, Esther had often to bear cold in addition to her other miseries; often for days together no one came in to kindle her scanty fire. If there was bread in the room, the child would reach it for her and divide it with her; and when there was none,—"I thought my Lord would never suffer me to starve, and I believe he never will." No, I think it is well to take God's promises literally when we may; and the rich in this world's goods cannot, perhaps, fully enter into the preciousness of that promise when literally taken, "Bread shall be given thee." Nothing is more easy," says the venerable Bishop Hall, "than to trust God, when our barns and coffers are full; and to say, 'Give us our daily bread,' when we have it in the cupboard; but when we have nothing, when we know not how or whence to get any thing, then to depend upon an invisible bounty, this is a true and noble act of faith." Our poor Esther lived in the daily practice of such faith.

It was on one of the coldest days of that fearfully cold weather, when the ground was frozen like iron, and one could not breathe the freezing air for a minute, without remembering the text, "Who shall abide his cold?" when the icicles hung glittering from the low roof of her miserable dwelling, making a strange contrast to all that was dark and gloomy around them; that a neighbour charitably came into light her fire; and putting the small apartment in better order than usual, left it. It was set in order for a funeral. The child had not stood by the fire a minute, before his thin night dress was in flames: "O Richard, Richard! my son, my son!" shrieked the unhappy mother. She made a convulsive effort to rise, but instantly fell backward; and feeling her utter inability to assist him in his agony, buried her face in the bed-clothes, and lay senseless. The poor infant's cries presently alarmed the neighbours; they put out the fire, but it is needless to record the state to which those few moments had reduced him: he was immediately carried to the nearest hospital.—"That night," said Esther,—the ignorant, you know, are always superstitious,—"that night, just as the clock struck three, I was lying here all in the dark, crying about my poor child: I felt something pass, and step softly on the bed just as he used to do; and I looked up and saw him, and I looked up and saw him, and he looked so beautiful and I was just going to say, 'Is it you, my son?' and he was gone!" "Ah!" said I, "when we dream of friends that are dead, they often do appear to us very beautiful." But Esther evidently did not think it a dream. "I did not know then," she said, "that he was dead; but when my step-mother went in to see him the next day, the doctor told her that he had died just at three o'clock,—just when I saw him;" and she raised her dark melancholy eyes to mine, with an expression which seemed intended to ask, "You do not think that it was only a dream?" But I was sure that a controversy on that incomprehensible subject, the possibility and the probability of apparitions, would be worse than useless; so I generally ended that part of the conversation, by reminding her, that He who had said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," would certainly not leave her comfortless, though he had taken her last earthly comfort away from her; and that I doubted not her little Richard would look very beautiful when she saw him in heaven: "And I think I shall see him," she would answer calmly, "and my Lord has not left me comfortless."

It was a few months after this heavy affliction, I well remember the day, when we were fully repaid the labor of a tiresome walk, by discovering in poor Esther—accidentally as it seemed to us—one of those so exactly pointed out by our Master:—"Sick, and ye visited me,"—"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." I well recollect how shocked we were, not so much at her extreme poverty, as at her solitary and deserted condition. Her husband, as if he had one, and only one human feeling left, had come to look at the child as he lay in his coffin, but utterly neglected the dying mother. Her only support, the pittance which the parish compelled him to allow her, was grudgingly and irregularly paid; yet I never heard her mention him, but with pity, and in a spirit of kindness. The sister who slept with her, left her early in the morning, and returned very late at night; so that, except when a neighbour came in at uncertain intervals, Esther might hunger and none give her bread,—be thirsty and none give her drink. I have several times found her faint, for want of a morsel of food; generally there was none in the room, but sometimes she has said, "There is bread there, but I cannot reach it." It is sad that such things should be in a Christian country, but I have not exaggerated.

(To be concluded in our next.)