

THE MONTHLY RECORD

OF THE

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

IN NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK, AND ADJOINING PROVINCES.

VOL. XIII.

MAY, 1867.

No. 5.

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem! let my right hand forget its cunning."—Ps. 137, v. 5.

S E R M O N

BY REV. DR. CUMMING, OF LONDON,

Preached in Dornoch Cathedral, Sutherland-shire, in presence of the Prince of Wales, on Sabbath, 30th September, 1866, and reported for the "Dundee Advertiser."

The Rev. Doctor preached from 1 Corinthians vii. 29, 30, 31 :—'But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as if they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.' He said—

Dear Brethren,—It seems a truism when we hear or read the words 'The time is short!' But it is a strange fact that the most impressive and important truths—which are generally accepted as such—are regarded too frequently as truisms, and therefore lose their weight, their impression, and their significance. Time, nevertheless, whether we feel it or not—whether we acquiesce in these words or not—speeds on its rapid course. Each revolving year tells us that 'The time is short'—the heather already parting with its bloom—the golden sheaves in the field, amid which Nature seems to sit like a mother among her children thanking and praising God!—all

tell us that 'Time is short!' The fainting limb; the feebler heart; the white hairs upon the old man's head—as if the nearer the light of Eternity comes the whiter and the more resplendent the lustre it reflects upon humanity—all confirm the statement of the inspired Apostle, that 'Time is short!' Scripture indeed exhausts the most impressive figures to convey this impression. 'What is life?'—A tale that is told! saith the Psalmist—that leaves a murmuring echo in the memory; is ended; and forgotten. It is 'like the grass that groweth up; or, if you occupy the loftier levels of the earth, like 'the flower of the grass,' first bitten by the frost, first mowed down by the scythe of the mower. The living walk upon the footprints of the dead. Death is even mentioned in the marriage service, as if there were needed the sound of the funeral bell to mingle with the bridal chimes, and teach us that life's sun soon sets; that the day is far spent; and that the night is at hand when no man can work. You know that at twenty years of age people think time will never end, the years are so long; but at sixty or seventy we marvel how Christmas comes round so rapidly. This feeling has been well expressed by one of our own Scotch poets—the most classical that we have—when he tells us that the older we grow the shorter the years seem :—

•The more we live, more brief appear
Our life's succeeding stages;
A day to childhood seems a year,
A year like flitting ages.

•When joys have lost their bloom and breath,
And life itself is rapid.
While as we near the falls of death,
We feel the tide more rapid.