

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—Acts xvii. 11.

MORNING PRISON OF A CHILD OF SORROW.

Again the orient light is shining !
Again on thee, my God, reclining,
Would I pursue my way ;
Would follow where thy voice shall call me,
Would cling to thee, what'er befall me :—
And oh ! let thy mild look recall me,
When I would go astray.

Nor pain nor langour ean deprive me
Of comfort if thy grace revive me ;
And though my cross I take,
Those who will follow thee must bear it ;
And thou wilt condescend to wear it :—
Oh, let me, Lord ! with thine compare it,
Borne meekly for my sake.

It may be through thy gracious presence,
Thy smile, which is of joy the essence,—
Bliss may on me be shed ;
My favor'd soul in thee delighting,
Thy loveliness her love exciting,
Thy spirit all her powers uniting
In peace her path may tread :

But if dejected, faint and weary,
It should to-day seem rough and dreary ;
Oh ! let thy pitying love,
That source of sweetest comfort cheer me !
And tell me, thou art ever near me,
To strengthen, guide, defend and bear me,
My all in all to prove !

PHILO-BEREA.

THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

Anniversary Sermon for the Church Pastoral Aid Society, May 6, 1844, by the Ven. W. A. SHIRLEY, M. A. Archdeacon of Derby.

LUKE V. 7.

"They beckoned unto their partners which were in the other ship, that they should come and help."

CONCLUDED.

Then there followed, what I would next notice.

IV. THE OVERWHELMING BLESSING WHICH WAS VOUCHSAFED—"When they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes ; and their net brake."

It was in the very nature of their work to grow upon their hands. The supply created the demand. The preaching of the gospel only made men more desirous to hear it, and caused more hearts to hunger and thirst for the bread of life and the water of salvation. The education afforded to some made others more sensible of their ignorance, and more desirous of its removal. The partial circulation of the Scriptures discovered the awful destitution which had so long existed unobserved, and made men earnestly desirous to obtain for themselves and their children that record of their heavenly Father's covenant love. At first it was difficult to find places in which missions might be formed ; then it was difficult to find men to send forth ; but when once the work had fairly commenced, the difficulty was, how to provide for its continual enlargement. The news from almost all quarters was, that the Lord was daily adding "unto the church such as should be saved ; that multitudes both of men and women had become obedient unto the faith ;" that in consequence, more schools, more churches, and, above all, more men, were urgently demanded. So also in England, the ministers and servants of the Lord, who had been like those who stood idly in the market-place because no man had hired them, now found that their work increased upon them beyond the limit of their time or strength, and the whole ecclesiastical apparatus was manifestly insufficient. Neither they nor their people were satisfied with the degree or the character of the services which had hitherto been rendered ; an appetite had been created which it was necessary to satisfy ; and the population had increased also, while they who were required to provide for these increased demands, and the places of worship and schools which were needed, remained much as they had been in quieter, but less hopeful periods. "They inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake." The Church of the nation was found to be inadequate to the nation's wants. What was to be done ? Was the blessing to be cast away, because there were not hands to gather it in ? Were others to be left to do what it was the duty and privilege of the Church to attempt at least, and in God's strength to accomplish ? Was the revival of religious feeling in the country to become through our neglect a means of planting and propagating divisions among us, if not even heresies ? Was the glorious opportunity to be missed of extending the limits of the Redeemer's kingdom, and yet of binding it together at the same time in the spirit of unity ? It was a remarkable crisis, and blessed be God, he taught his servants what they ought to do—he taught them a lesson of V. SYMPATHY AND CO-OPERATION—"They beckoned their partners which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them."

Both clergy and laity conferred together to devise means for meeting the case. The rich were stirred up to help the poor, the more thinly peopled parts of the country to aid the more populous ; and wherever the Lord had his servants, they were taught that none of them ought to live unto themselves, but that the common work required combined exertions, and those very strenuous ones, that the neglect of past years might be supplied. Then arose our societies for building churches, parsonage houses, and schools, and increased vigour was thrown into the whole machinery of our Church.

The great want, however, after all, was of men to work that machinery. We had sent missionaries abroad, but who was to supply missionaries at home ? The very nature of an Established Church opposed some obstacles to its ready extension, for it was considered as an institution self-supporting, and already sufficiently furnished. Its connexion also with

the State, and its independence of voluntary support, to which it owed so much of its strength, its repose, and its doctrinal integrity, were unfavourable to its elasticity—the strength of the oak could not well be had together with the pliability of the willow—and for a time there were obstacles of all sorts, civil and ecclesiastical, to an extension, at once adequate and unobjectionable, of the Church's operations. It is not right to say that, even yet, all these objections have been met, or all the difficulties overcome, but the work has been commenced as we could, and is advancing with a manifest blessing.

We may, I think, regard the Society whose cause I am called to plead as the first, and most efficient agent for meeting the want of men to which I am now alluding.

The population of our country had increased and was increasing at the enormous ratio of 1000 souls every day of every year ; and this increase, embarrassing as it would have been if it had been equally diffused through our parishes, having taken place chiefly in particular districts, became absolutely overwhelming. Another circumstance which aggravated the evil was that, owing to causes to which I need not now do more than allude, the most populous mining or manufacturing districts, and the largest towns, were precisely the places where the churches were scattered the most thinly, and where there was the least provision remaining (for in most instances it had once been given) for the support of the ministers of religion. Hence, clergymen found themselves with 10, 20, 30, or even 40,000 souls under their nominal superintendence. They toiled to the utmost of their strength in many instances, yea, and beyond their strength ; "but what were they among so many ?" Had they not a right then to beckon "to their partners which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them ?" Was it their concern alone that so many thousands were growing up in ignorance, infidelity, and vice, and disaffected to the institutions of their country, of which they were at once the opprobrium and the curse ? All thoughtful men felt that the very existence of their country, in all that made it the object of their grateful and devoted love, was at stake in this great question. All good men were assured that their Lord and Saviour, who had given himself for them, demanded at their hands that they should do what in them lay to rescue those who were perishing for lack of knowledge, and to aid their brethren who were toiling in the midst of many discouragements, oppressed by the magnitude of their work, and yet sustained by seeing that work blessed by their Lord, not only beyond their expectations, but beyond their power to keep pace with its progress ; so that the precious grain lay scattered on the ground because there was not strength to gather it in.

Such was the nature of the case for which this Society proposed to find a remedy ; but another most important point was, to take care that the only proper remedy was indeed provided. The Lord teaches us to expect that as there had been false prophets in the old dispensation, so should there be false teachers in the Christian Church—"wolves in sheep's clothing"—Judas in the college of the apostles. It was therefore needful that the Society should use all lawful and suitable means to secure the selection of faithful men to be sent to aid in a work so great and so momentous ; and that the funds contributed by Christian love, the result often of much self-denial, and accompanied by many prayers, should not be misapplied by sending forth men whose doctrinal views were not those of the Bible, as interpreted by our reformed branch of Christ's holy catholic church ; protesting as she does against Romish and Romanizing errors. This is a point of some delicacy, but still it is one of vital moment, especially at a time in which by the subtle use of language, (always an inadequate vehicle of thought,) the most fatal errors have been decked out in the garb of truth, so that they have been brought in unawares, and have deceived many who appeared to have attained no small degree of spiritual discernment.

Therefore it becomes the Society, and I may add its friends also, to be ever jealous and scrutinizing, that those whom they support are men alive to the dangers which the Church is threatened, and fully resolved to "declare the whole counsel of God," with all simplicity and godly sincerity, not handling the word of God deceitfully, and knowing nothing among their people "but Christ Jesus, and him crucified." Men thus minded will carry with them the sympathy of all the truly spiritual members of Christ's body, and will not fail to be accompanied by the presence and blessing of Him whom they preach as "the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation." With our appointments guarded by the selection of the incumbent, the sanction of the Society, and the ordination or license of the bishop, we may trust that due regard has been had to the integrity of these appointments on the one hand, and to the order and discipline of the Church on the other, in respect to which, we are very much in the position of ordinary patrons. "I will not, however, dwell longer on this point ; neither will I do more than allude to another

* I am glad to have the support (among others) of the Bishop of Llandaff on this point, who, in a letter addressed to the Committee on the morning of the annual meeting, regretting that his state of health prevented his attending, added, "I cannot but express my persuasion that, the complaints sometimes heard of undue interference with the authority of the Church, in the Committee deciding what applications they will comply with, and what they refuse as unsatisfactory, are altogether unfounded. I heartily wish that every patron would exercise the same discretion in the ecclesiastical appointments he makes."

controverted matter ; that, namely of the employment of lay-agency. It is, I think, sufficiently clear, that in the early church the apostles themselves were "helped much in the Lord" by laymen ; all our missionary societies employ unordained catechists to aid the ministerial work ; and in this great city the necessity of the case has forced upon the Church the employment of lay-agents to go into the abodes of poverty, disease, and vice, and compel them to come within the pale of the Church.* That it is necessary, therefore, to employ such persons in many districts, no one can well doubt who is practically acquainted with the spiritual wants of our overgrown parishes, and with the character of their population.

Such, then, Christian brethren, is our case ; and, such as it is, I leave it confidently in the hands of those whom the Lord has embraced within the arms of his love, beseeching them "by the mercies of God" to their own souls, to come effectually to the help of their partners in the good work of the Lord, and to become fellow-workers with those whose blessed occupation it is to catch men. Remember that the result of the miracle we have been considering was, "They forsook all, and followed him ;" and does not our blessed Lord tell each one of us that "if we forsake not all that we have"—if we do not place it in all simplicity at his disposal—we "cannot be his disciples." Try yourselves by this standard ; and may the Lord give you grace to take up your cross daily and follow your crucified Redeemer, who was slain for you. Think of his dying love, and of the value of the souls for which he was content to pay so great a price. If his love has touched and hallowed your heart, remember that you were "not redeemed by silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition" from the first Adam, your father according to the flesh, but that you were rescued from going down into the pit, translated out of the kingdom of darkness, and received into the kingdom of God's dear Son, in consequence of the "one sacrifice once offered" of Jesus the second Adam, that quickening Spirit, through whom "you have passed from death unto life." My Christian brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling unto life eternal, "freely ye have received, freely give." Complain not that a selfish world leaves you to serve alone, but count it rather your blessed privilege to supply their lack of service, and to devote yourselves, body and soul, spirit and estate, to Him who loved not his life even unto death—yea, the death of the cross, that he might open the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and set before you that open door which no man can shut.

HOPE FOR LORD BYRON.

From Appendix to "Dick on the Future State," promised in the last number.

The lady of Mr. John Sheppard, of Frome, having died some time ago, leaving amongst her papers, a prayer which her husband believed to have been composed on behalf of the noble Poet, Mr. Sheppard addressed it to his Lordship, which called forth the reply which is here subjoined.

Frome, Somerset, Nov. 21st, 1821.

To the Right Hon. Lord Byron, Pisa.

MY LORD,—More than two years since, a lovely and beloved wife was taken from me, by lingering disease, after a very short union. She possessed unvarying gentleness and fortitude, and a piety so retiring, as rarely to disclose itself in words, but so influential, as to produce uniform benevolence of conduct. In the last hour of life, after a farewell look on a lately born and only infant, for whom she had evinced inexpressible affection, her last whispers were, "God's happiness ! God's happiness !" Since the second anniversary of her decease, I have read some papers which no one had seen during her life, and which contained her most secret thoughts. I am induced to communicate to your Lordship a passage from these papers, which, there is no doubt, refers to yourself ; as I have more than once heard the writer mention your agility on the rocks at Hastings :

"O my God, I take encouragement from the assurance of thy word, to pray to Thee in behalf of one for whom I have lately been much interested. May the person to whom I allude, (and who is now, we fear, as much distinguished for his neglect of Thee, as for the transcendent talents Thou hast bestowed on him) be awakened to a sense of his own danger, and led to seek that peace of mind in a proper sense of religion, which he has found this world's enjoyments unable to procure. Do thou grant that his future example may be productive of far more extensive benefit, than his past conduct and writings have been of evil ; and may the Sun of Righteousness, which, we trust, will, at some future period, arise upon him, be bright in proportion to the darkness of those clouds which guilt has raised, and soothing in proportion to the keenness of that agony which the punishment of his vices has inflicted on him ! May the hope, that the sincerity of my own efforts for the attainment of holiness, and the approval of my own love to the great Author of religion, will render this prayer, and every other for the welfare of mankind, more efficacious—cheer me in the path of duty ; but let me not forget, that, while we are permitted to animate ourselves to exertion, by every innocent motive, these are but the lesser streams which may serve to increase the current, but which, deprived of the grand fountain of good, (a deep conviction of inborn sin, and firm belief in the efficacy of Christ's death, for the salvation of those who trust in him, and really

* I allude here to the "Association for providing Scripture-Readers in connexion with the Church of England," formed under the auspices of the Bishops of London and Winchester.

seek to serve him) would soon dry up, and leave us as barren of every virtue as before.—Hastings July 31st, 1814."

There is nothing, my Lord, in this extract, which, in a literary sense, can at all interest you ; but it may, perhaps, appear to you worthy of reflection, how deep and expansive a concern for the happiness of others, a Christian faith can awaken in the midst of youth and prosperity.—Here is nothing poetical and splendid, as in the expostulatory homages of M. Delamartine ; but here is the sublime, my Lord ; for this intercession was offered on your account, to the supreme Source of happiness. It sprang from a faith more confirmed than that of the French poet, and from a charity, which, in combination with faith, showed its power unimpaired amidst the languors and pains of approaching dissolution. I will hope, that a prayer, which, I am sure, was deeply sincere, may not be always unavailing.

It would add nothing, my Lord, to the fame with which your genius has surrounded you, for an unknown and obscure individual to express his admiration of it. I had rather be numbered with those who wish and pray, that "wisdom from above," and "peace," and "joy," may enter such a mind.

THE ANSWER.

Pisa, Dec. 8th, 1821.

SIR,—I have received your letter. I need not say that the extract which it contains has affected me, because it would imply a want of all feeling to have read it with indifference. Though I am not quite sure that it was intended by the writer for me, yet the date, the place where it was written, with some other circumstances, which you mention, render the allusion probable. But, for whomsoever it was meant, I have read it with all the pleasure which can arise from so melancholy a topic. I say pleasure, because your brief and simple picture of the life and demeanour of the excellent person whom I trust that you will again meet, cannot be contemplated without the admiration due to her virtues, and her pure and unpretending piety. Her last moments were particularly striking ; and I do not know, that in the course of reading the story of mankind, and still less in my observations upon the existing portion, I ever met with any thing so unostentatiously beautiful. Indisputably, the firm believers in the Gospel have a great advantage over all others—for this simple reason, that if true, they will have their reward hereafter ; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life, without subsequent disappointment, since (at the worst for them) "out of nothing, nothing can arise," not even sorrow. But a man's creed does not depend upon himself ; who can say, I will believe this, that, or the other ? and least of all that which he least can comprehend ? I have, however, observed, that those who have begun with extreme faith, have in the end greatly narrowed it, as Chillingworth, Clark, (who ended as an Arian) and some others ; while on the other hand, nothing is more common, than for the early sceptic to end in a firm belief, like Maupertuis, and Henry Kirke White. But my business is to acknowledge your letter, and not to make a dissertation. I am obliged to you for your good wishes, and more obliged by the extract from the papers of the beloved object whose qualities you have so well described in a few words. I can assure you, that all the fame which ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance, would never weigh on my mind against the pure and pious interest which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my welfare. In this point of view, I would not exchange the prayer of the deceased in my behalf, for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon, could such be accumulated upon a living head. Do me the justice to suppose, that "video meliora proboque," however the "deteriora sequor" may have been applied to my conduct. I have the honour to be your obliged and obedient servant, BYRON.

P. S.—I do not know that I am addressing a clergyman ; but I presume that you will not be affronted by the mistake (if it is one) on the address of this letter. One who has so well explained, and deeply felt, the doctrines of religion, will excuse the error which led me to believe him its minister.

This letter, every one will admit, exhibits Lord Byron in a much more amiable point of view than the traits of his character sketched by Mr. Dallas, prior to the year 1818. The following account of his death-bed sentiments is extracted from "Last Days of Lord Byron."

A very few days before his Lordship's death, Mr. Parry relates—"It was seven o'clock in the evening when I saw him, and then I took a chair at his request, and sat down by his bedside, and remained till ten o'clock. He sat up in his bed, and was then calm and collected. He talked with me on a variety of subjects, connected with himself and his family. He spoke of death also with great composure, and though he did not believe his end was so very near, there was something about him so serious and so firm, so resigned and composed, so different from any thing I had ever before seen in him, that my mind misgave, and at times foreboded his speedy dissolution. 'Parry,' he said when I first went to him, 'I have much wished to see you to-day. I have had strange feelings, but my head is now better. I have no gloomy thoughts, and no idea but I shall recover. I am perfectly collected—I am sure. I am in my senses—but a melancholy will creep over me at times.' The mention of the subject brought the melancholy topics back, and a few exclamations showed what occupied Lord Byron's mind when he was left in silence and solitude. 'My wife ! my Ada ! my country ! the situation of this place—my removal impossible, and perhaps death—all combine to make me sad. I am convinced of the happiness of domestic life.

No man on earth respects a virtuous woman more than I do ; and the prospect of retirement in England, with my wife and Ada, gives me an idea of happiness I have never experienced before. Retirement will be every thing to me, for heretofore to me life has been like the ocean in a storm. You have no conception of the unaccountable thoughts which come into my mind when the fever attacks me.—Eternity and space are before me, but on this subject ; thank God, I am happy and at ease. The thought of living eternally, of again reviving, is a great pleasure. Christianity is the purest and most liberal religion in the world ; but the numerous teachers who are continually worrying mankind with their denunciations and their doctrines, are the greatest enemies of religion. I have read with more attention than half of them the Book of Christianity, and I admire the liberal and truly charitable principles which Christ has laid down. There are questions connected with this subject which none but Almighty God can solve. Time and space who can conceive ? None but God—on him I rely."

From Mr. John Sheppard's reflections upon Lord Byron's letter.

"Nothing in it will be more obvious or more important, in the view of a thinking reader than the full concession of this powerful mind as to the high value of Christian faith ; the "exalted hope, through life," which it is exclusively adapted to confer on its genuine possessors. It is assumed by the noble writer, as an agreed fact, that modern infidels have no better prospects to offer us than that of "eternal sleep." And it is too apparent from intimations in his own, and broader statements in other works, that the reigning unbelief of our day is of this lowest and most hopeless kind. Imagination and physical science seem to have contended which shall lend itself most effectively to the wretched and ignoble task of persuading men that they are altogether mortal. Poetry and physiology have been employed to present visions of materialism and annihilation, which cannot but involve a creed nearly equivalent to atheism.

The schemes of the older deists, and of the modern theophilanthropists, which, while excluding revelation, professedly upheld the doctrine of a future state, are to be placed but one very short step in the scale of moral opinions below that German neology or anti-supernaturalism, which assumes the name of Christian ; and those schemes were exalted when compared with the degrading and demoralizing theory which modern infidels propose.

But whatever superiority these better tenets possessed, it may be doubted whether they have often been firmly held even by the speculators who taught them. Dr. Young, who was a contemporary with some of the chief deistical writers of the last century, has said in one of his well-known prefaces, "from my being accidentally privy to the sentiments of some particular persons, I have been long persuaded that most, if not all, our infidels (whatever name they take, and whatever scheme, for argument's sake, and to keep themselves in countenance, they patronise) are supported in their deplorable error, by some doubt of their immortality at the bottom."

From the mode of conducting this evil cause both in France and England, since his time, we have ground to conclude that this most ruinous kind of unbelief has infected a greater proportion than heretofore of those who reject or do not embrace Christianity. There are still, I trust, not a few, who adhere, in their wishes as well as their professions, to a more elevated and pure philosophy ; but it seems probable that even these secretly fluctuate from the better to the worse, as lower inclinations preponderate. On the other hand, while it is impossible not to fear, from the whole cast of his writings and conduct, that the mind of Lord Byron often yielded itself to the most debasing views of the human nature and destiny, I cannot but believe that it had occasional and strong fluctuations towards that immortal prospect, which the noblest souls of pagan antiquity could not renounce ;—were there no other reason to suppose this, I could yet not allow myself to interpret the language of this letter applied to the departed,—"whom I trust that you will meet again,"—as a merely complimentary or soothing accommodation of phrase to the feelings and hopes of his correspondent.

This would not accord with the bold frankness of the writer's temper and style, and would be a purely gratuitous departure from it, because so easily avoided. It is rather to be judged that his fancy wavered between Plato and Epicurus, though his irregular passions, and licentious habits, with the daring independence and misanthropic spirit which they fomented, biased him towards the latter. Such a vacillation is the best state of mind, concerning all beyond this short precarious life, which can be hoped for by those among us who reject the divine mission of Jesus !

And here another reflection, eminently favourable to Christianity, arises from the very fact, that for want of its influence, an intellect so noble, and feelings so exquisite as Lord Byron's, could be so frequently warped (by his own implied admission) into a state of overt hostility to human virtue and well-being ; that the writer of this letter, with a soul capable of appreciating and loving (I trust, for the time, sincerely) the beauty and happiness of Christian devotion and benevolence, could yet persist in wanton contributions to the overthrow of such principles, and the blighting of such enjoyments. How solemn a lesson against permitting the mind to rush and wander in its own reckless, meteor-like course, and to be but a brilliant torch of devastation, while it might have shone as a light to the world. In connexion with this thought it may be