

The Church.

THEREFORE I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT TO PUT YOU ALWAYS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YE KNOW THEM AND BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH.—2 PETER, I, 12.

VOL. I.]

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[NO. XXXVI.]

Poetry.

DAVID'S LAMENTATION OVER SAUL AND JONATHAN.

2 SAMUEL, I.

Thy beauty, Israel, is fled,
Sunk to the dead.
How are the valiant fall'n! the slain
Thy mountains stain.
O! let it not in Gath be known;
Nor in the streets of Ascalon!

Lest that sad story should excite
Their dire delight:
Lest in the torrent of our woe
Their pleasure flow:
Lest their triumphant daughters ring
Their cymbals, and curs'd Pæans sing.

You hills of Gilboa, never may
You offerings pay;
No morning dew, nor fruitful showers
Clothe you with flowers:
Saul and his arms, there made a spoil;
As if untouch'd with sacred oil.

The bow of noble Jonathan
Great battles won:
His arrows on the mighty fed,
With slaughter red.
Saul never raised his arm in vain;
His sword still glutted with the slain.

How lovely! O how pleasant! when
They liv'd with men!
Than eagles swifter; stronger far
Than lions are:
Whom love in life so strongly tied,
The stroke of death could not divide.

Sad Israel's daughters, weep for Saul;
Lament his fall:
Who fed you with the earth's increase,
And crown'd with peace:
With robes of Tyrian purple deck'd,
And gems which sparkling light reflect.

How are thy worthies by the sword
Of war devour'd!
O Jonathan, the better part
Of my torn heart!
The savage rocks have drunk thy blood:
My brother! O how kind! how good!

Thy love was great: O never more
To man man bore!
No woman, when most passionate,
Loved at that rate!
How are the mighty fall'n in fight!
They and their glory set in night!

George Sandys; born 1577, died 1643.

PUBLIC THANKSGIVING.*

PSALM CVII. 2.—Let them give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed, and delivered from the hand of the enemy.

Prone as we are, my Brethren, to rest our confidence, in the day of trouble, upon our own "arm of flesh," and to cling to earthly dependencies in the periods of our tribulation, there is enough in this changeable and uncertain world—more than enough in the weakness and waywardness and capriciousness of man—to make us see the folly of trusting to the best promises of stability and succour which the things of time can offer. And often, distresses so deep will arrive, and calamities so sore come upon us, that we are ready to throw away the shield of earthly protection in which we had trusted, and go, in our feebleness and nakedness, to the mighty God whose strength alone is sufficient to support and preserve us.

"In my distress I cried unto the Lord," says the Psalmist; and what feeling can be more natural to the Christian, in his manifold and peculiar trials, than to go to the same everlasting refuge? And suppose, when earthly succour fails, and human strength proves but a "broken reed," and worldly dependencies have been shattered beneath us,—suppose that, when helpless and forlorn and in despair, some unforeseen event, through the Providence of God, has arisen to brighten our prospects, re-awaken our hopes, and bring security and peace;—what, under such circumstances, would be the natural feeling of the Christian, thus relieved and restored? What to his soul would be more congenial than a fervent response to the grateful spirit and thankful language of the Psalmist, when he congratulated himself upon a similar deliverance from overwhelming woes; "I will sing unto the Lord, as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God, while I have my being."

And if this be the constraining sentiment of individuals, when they discern, in some unforeseen and unhop'd-for mercy, the providential kindness of their God; can it be otherwise than the strong and overpowering feeling of communities also, when they, in seasons of distress and danger, have experienced the same merciful protection? Christians, upon these subjects, cannot surely feel less strongly or act less thankfully now, than the pious have done in every age of the world!

When Noah, after the waters of the flood had abated, emerged from the ark with the remnants of a world destroyed;—when, after being tossed to and fro for many months upon the universal waters, he was permitted once more to set his foot upon the recovered land; what was his first feeling, and his first act?—There were, it is true, not many to unite with him in his offering

* A Sermon preached in St. Peter's Church, Cobourg, on the morning of Tuesday, 6th Feb. 1838.

of praise, but they comprised every human being then in the world. All, therefore, joined in declaring their thankfulness to the God who had preserved them, by "building an altar unto the Lord, and offering burnt offerings on the altar."

On several occasions, we find Abraham testifying his sense of the loving-kindness of that God who called him out from his native country to be a wanderer in foreign lands, by building altars to his honour, and offering sacrifices thereupon. In the plain of Moreh, in the mountain at Bethel, at Mamre, at Beersheba, the pious patriarch paid this public testimony to the praise of Him who had been his guide and protector through all the manifold trials of his pilgrimage. Nor are we to suppose that these were private or secret offerings, in which all those around him did not participate;—on the contrary, it is easy to believe that he who gained the divine approbation for "commanding his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment," would cause the whole of that household to join with him in these thankful acknowledgments to the Father of mercies.

In the history of Jacob, we discover similar evidences of the same grateful and pious spirit. He, too, often erected these memorials in testimony of the divine protection which had been vouchsafed to him;—at that memorable era in his life, especially, when Esau laid aside his anger and received him with a brother's ardent welcome, Jacob forgot not the God through whom this almost unhop'd-for change had been wrought, but in the land of Shechem, whither he was then journeying, he "erected an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel."

In the latter days of Jacob, he and his progeny removed to the land of Egypt, and in that country they suffered many years of bondage and oppression. At length, after signs and wonders, "with a high hand and an outstretched arm," they were led forth from Egypt; and being pursued to the borders of the Red Sea, the waters miraculously opened a passage for them, and they safely reached the further shore. Pharaoh and his host, attempting to follow them by the same way, thus miraculously formed, perished in the sea. Then it was that Moses, and all the preserved of Israel, sang that memorable song of thanksgiving which is given in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus:—they had been signally delivered from their enemies, and with united voices, in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," they spent their day of public thanksgiving.

If we pass on to the time of David, we shall find that "the man after God's own heart" was not forgetful of the same solemn duty. Many were the vicissitudes, many the sorrows of David's life; but when he had safely passed through that trial—the sternest to a parent's heart—when the unnatural rebellion of his son Absalom was quelled; when he was safe again upon his throne, and peace was promised to his declining days, it is recorded that "David spake unto the Lord, a song" of thanksgiving, because that "the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies."—In the course of this beautiful hymn, he says, "I have pursued mine enemies and destroyed them..... Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of my people..... It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me, that bringeth me forth from mine enemies; thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me; thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord,..... and I will sing praises unto thy Name."

I have repeated these words, my Brethren, from a conviction that they will find a response in your hearts to-day,—called upon, as we are, to offer unto God thankful praises in a spirit and in words to which those of Israel's grateful king would be strictly appropriate. Enough, I trust, has been said to shew that it is no novel duty which, on this occasion, we are called upon to pay; but that it has its examples in the word of God, sufficient to encourage us to its faithful performance,—yes, sufficient to shame and humble us, if we should neglect to offer the same thankful praises, when evidences of God's providential mercies must be so fresh in every memory, and ought to be so fresh in every heart. Here, indeed, the Psalmist's words, just repeated, come home to us with peculiar force, as expressing precisely the terms of gratitude which ought to actuate ourselves.

In a period of profound peace, with nothing more at least to interrupt its stillness than those occasional mutterings of discontent which, in this wicked world, are ever to be heard, even amidst the fullest enjoyment of heaven's blessings;—yes, within a few weeks after a grateful and religious people ought to have been loud in their thankful acknowledgments to God for the unmerited blessings of a bountiful harvest;—at such a time, did a few of those depraved individuals whom Almighty God, for our just chastisement, permits to be the bane of every country, plot the ruin of our happy institutions, and seek to place us under a polity and a domination to which both we and our fathers were strangers. In that privateness and secrecy which the wicked love, were those machinations contrived; and dark and dreadful, as you well know, were the plans of rapine and murder which, in those unholy consultations, were resolved upon. Suddenly, an armed company, headed by an atrocious leader, and ready, as it would appear, for every deed of cruelty, advance to perpetrate their unhallowed schemes. Under cover of midnight darkness, they advance within a few miles of the capital city, resolved upon the expulsion or destruction of its inhabitants, upon rifting and burning their abodes, and plundering all of public or of private wealth that it contained. There—these deeds of wanton cruelty perpetrated—they designed to unfurl a lawless and polluted standard round which the disaffected, the plunderers, and the unprincipled from every quarter might

rally; expecting thus to ensure success—only a present success—to their unhallowed devices. On the other hand, not a note of preparation is heard: no suspicion is felt that there existed within the bounds of a country which ought to be happy and peaceful, the materials for so cruel and audacious a conspiracy: all, to the very moment of the intended execution of these murderous plans, is security and quiet! But "God careth for us:"—He baffled the machinations of the wicked, and brought their devices to nought. When just about to execute their fell design, a leader, hardy and desperate, meets, by an uncommon event, his death: an accident, such as rarely occurs in the whole course of God's mysterious dealings, deprives them of their boldest guide in this career of infamy and cruelty. On a sudden, then, all are panic struck: as upon the hosts of the Syrians encamped before Samaria, "the fear of the Lord fell upon them:" trembling was in their steps, dejection in their countenances, alarm in their hearts,—and they withdrew. They withdrew, no more to renew an attempt thus wonderfully frustrated by the merciful interposition of a gracious God. And then it was that, startled and awakened to a full sense of the danger, the loyal and the brave flew to arms: and, as if to prove that, in minutest instances, God was our helper, the wintry sun shone mildly, the wild winds were hushed, and the angry waters calm; and at a period when snows and ice usually impede the navigation, the waters of our wide lake were traversed in safety,—succours, in more than abundance, conveyed,—every enemy dispersed—rebellion crushed in its bud—and the internal quiet of our land restored!

On subsequent events I do not desire to dwell; because, many thanks to our God, we have reason to hope that the confusion of the times is over, and that no alarm for the future need reasonably be entertained. We seem to be "delivered from the hand of every enemy;" and surely they "whom the Lord hath redeemed" will not be forgetful of him. Especially, when in all these events,—from the commencement to what we may happily regard as the close,—we cannot fail to discern a succession of providences. We are told in sacred history, that "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera:"—we can take up the spirit of that beautiful declaration, and most truly say that the season itself, the very elements,—in so propitiously aiding and seconding, as it were, the cause of order and the laws during the recent commotion,—"fought against" those who sought to disturb and overturn them. And who is he, my Brethren, that "gathereth the winds in his fists," and "hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?" Who is it that hath "gendered the ice and the hoary frost of heaven?"—Surely, if that Omnipotent God who controls both "cold and heat, and summer and winter;" who, in the emphatic terms of Scripture, is the "father of the rain and the dew;"—if He, during the late troubles, so directed the course of the natural world as most essentially to promote the success of our cause, can we deny, or be cold and careless in offering, the tribute of grateful praise which we owe Him?

But we have, in other important particulars, witnessed the interposition of his kind Providence, and his shielding arm. Few, very few, during the late contest, have perished: the loss of human life, on the side at least of order and authority, has been wonderfully—we may almost say, miraculously—small. It is true there are some mournful casualties to be deplored,—casualties, distressing in themselves, which have wrung the voice of lamentation from the widow and the orphan, and thrown a cloud of sadness over many a domestic circle. Apart from the individual lessons which, in these melancholy events, arise to those most nearly concerned,—who, we feel assured, in the bereavements they have sustained, discern the corrections of a Father who loves and pities even while he smites them;—we, my Brethren, see enough even in the partial miseries of such events to induce an earnest effort to prevent, and an assiduous prayer to God that he would avert from us, the repetition of such calamities. We require to be assured that it is something more than the personal privation, fatigue and hardship which, in such cases, we are called upon to endure; more than those general effects of disorder, stagnation of business and pecuniary loss;—we must witness also the sternest and severest calamity of all, in the death of those whom the community prizes as well as individuals love, to feel the strongest motive for exerting every energy, and being instant in every prayer, to preserve the peace and quiet of our land.

All troubles and calamities, of whatsoever nature,—I need hardly remind you—are evidences of our heavenly Father's displeasure: they are a proof that He has been offended by our sins, our carelessness, our negligence; and that correction from his hand is necessary to ensure the humbling of our hearts and the improvement of our lives. When, therefore, the day of this chastisement is past; when the storms of heavenly anger hath gone by, and left but faint and distant murmurings of the tempest from which we have escaped;—it is right and dutiful to assemble together, as we have done to-day, and "pay our vows" of gratitude in the courts of his holy house.

But, brethren, we must not mock our heavenly Father with the mere semblance of thankfulness,—with professions only of our grateful praise. It is not enough to call upon him with the voice of thanksgiving, or merely to tell with our lips the honour and might and mercifulness which surround his holy throne. In this Christian offering our hearts must have a share; in this tribute of praise the spirit, the soul must partake. And if to the eloquent utterings of thankfulness the warm feelings of the heart be allied,—let their intensity, their reality be shown in the conversation and in the life. O do not, then, mock the Almighty Disposer of events with professions of thankfulness which are followed by no change in your hearts and no improvement in your