

THE MONTHLY RECORD

OF THE

Church of Scotland

IN NOVA SCOTIA AND THE ADJOINING PROVINCES.

VOL. IX.

MAY, 1863.

No. 5.

"IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET ITS CUNNING."—*Ps* 137, v. 5.

SERMON.

By the Rev. Dr. Stevenson, Convener of the Colonial Committee.

I. JOHN, III. 2.—Beloved, now are ye sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

AMONG the works of God, all of them vast and surpassing, there is, perhaps, when we think of it, none more wonderful, than these ever active and strangely discursive souls within us. Looking only, for the moment, at the rapidity of its movements, is there, on the earth, nay, is there in the visible heavens themselves, with their swiftly circling orbs, anything that equals, or even approaches it in this respect? The transit of light, from one place to another, however remote, is so sudden, as in ordinary circumstances to seem quite instantaneous, and we might suppose that no sooner has the morning sun, at a distance of ninety-five millions of miles from us, risen above the horizon, than his rays are streaming over our fields and lighting up our dwellings. It is not so, however, and means have been found for surveying the path of these rays, and calculating the rate at which they traverse it; the result is that light darts or is projected at a velocity of two hundred thousand miles in a second. This is almost incomprehensible, and yet, great as is the speed of light, it is not comparable to the rapidity of thought. I wish to rise to the planet Saturn, which, when nearest, is more than eight hundred millions of miles away; and instantly I am there. I desire to mount up to the heaven of the fixed stars, so remote as to have set calculation at defiance; and the very

desire carries me instantly thither. I would traverse the twelve great constellations of the Zodiac; the sun takes an entire year to pass through them; and I have accomplished the journey, before I can utter the words to relate it. Nor is the soul fatigued by these prodigious and rapid excursions. On its course, there is nothing to resist or impede it. I find myself at my journey's end, without having had occasion to describe the path; I have only to wish it, and I am, by means of thought, in heaven, without having quitted the earth.

Strangers to our attention, perhaps, such things may be; but they are most familiar to our experience. For those busy, restless thoughts of ours are for ever on the wing. From place to place,—from one subject to another,—from past ages to present or to future, they fly with an unconstrained and an unconscious freedom. Nay, they disregard time and space altogether; these have no more relation to the movements of the soul, than if they did not exist at all; and a lost paradise, a crucified Redeemer, and an eternal rest in heaven are together as present to the thoughts, as if they had not been separated by long eras of guilt, and discipline, and misery. One ordinance proves and illustrates all this. At the table, you had Calvary before you, with its bleeding Lamb; then, as your mind wandered away back, along the fading line of Christian promise, till the line was lost in the obscure intimation of Eden. Now, the text calls you to think of the present, of your relation to God, as His sons; and it bids you also, to enter the everlasting gates, and consider what you shall be there. Strange, that a ceremonial of such rude simplicity should yet