

THE MONTHLY RECORD,

OF THE

Church of Scotland

IN

NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK AND ADJOINING PROVINCES.

VOLUME XXV.

JANUARY, 1879.

NUMBER I.

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."—Psalms 137, 4-5.

SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE QUEEN AT BALMORAL.

(By the Rev. Principal Tulloch.)

THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD.

"Our Father which art in heaven."—**MATT. vi. 9.**

The Lord's Prayer touches all hearts by its simplicity and comprehensiveness. Its old familiar words come home to us with a living meaning in comparison with which all other words of prayer are cold. The more we use them, the more we feel what true, healthy, happy words of prayer they are. They are the catholic words of prayer for Christendom—the few heaven-taught syllables which unite the hearts of the faithful everywhere; and amidst divisions of opinion and diversities of service, in parish church and cathedral choir, draw the hearts of God's children together, and inspire them with a common feeling of brotherhood as they say "Our Father." They are the dear words of prayer in childhood, when the mind as yet only vaguely understands what the heart with its deeper instinct owns; when the human realities of father and mother interpret the solemn language, and make its awe pass into sweetness. And in after years, when we may have learned many forms of prayer, and sought a varied expression for the varied wants of life, the old beautiful words come back to us, as far more full of meaning—more adequate in their very simplicity—than all we have otherwise learned; and we realise the truth so near

to the centre of all religion, that the child's heart is the highest offering we can offer unto God—holy and acceptable in His sight.

The opening words of the prayer—"Our Father which art in heaven"—form the key-note from which all the rest starts and to which they lead up. Let us try in a simple, unsystematic way to find the meaning of the words. This meaning in a certain sense is not far to seek.

The words of the text unfolds three aspects of truth.

I. Fatherhood

II. Common Fatherhood.

III. Perfect Fatherhood.

The idea of Father is the generic idea of the text. We are taught to pray to God as our *Father*. "After this manner ye shall pray," our Lord taught His disciples. He had been speaking of the hypocritical prayers of the Pharisees in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets; and of the "vain repetitions" of the heathen, thinking "they shall be heard for their much speaking." He unfolds a higher conception of prayer as a living communion of spirit with spirit, of children with a Father. There was nothing absolutely new in this conception of Divine Fatherhood. No novelty is claimed for the conception. Even the heathen had spoken of the supreme Deity as "the Father of Gods and Men." And in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, the idea frequently appears. "Doubtless," says Isaiah, "Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge