

It was delivered by the bishop, a venerable old man, in a full court dress, with his long mantel* floating behind him. The services being all in Dutch, I understood not a word of the discourse. But the preacher was certainly in earnest; and if a judgment is to be formed from the attention of the people, it was both interesting, and instructive. The apparent devotion of the audience was peculiarly striking, and contrasted strongly, in some particulars, with the conduct of many of our congregations at home. During prayer every head was bent down—every eye was closed—there was not a movement—the stillness of death pervaded the multitude. All stood, and there was no motion towards resuming a seat till some time after Amen had been pronounced by the clergymen. Does not this rebuke the practice of many of our churches: and would it not be a decided improvement were we, in this, to imitate their example?

Notwithstanding this favourable specimen of the outward devotion of the Dutch, all my inquiries confirm the conclusion, that practical godliness is, generally speaking, in a low state in Rotterdam, and throughout Holland. I sought information on this point from every one who was likely to be able to give it, and the result, together with my own observations, is decidedly unfavourable. The Reformed Church of the Netherlands differs in no very material point from the Presbyterian Church in our own country. Its creed is the same. Its government does not greatly differ. Nearly two-thirds of the population are connected with it. The government provides a minister for every 700 souls belonging to the national communion. Religion is, upon the whole, outwardly respected, and so are its ministers. The majority of the people go at least once to the church on Sabbath; and when the youth come of age, they generally become members of the communion in which they have been brought up. But having said this, it is nearly all. It is well known that the Dutch have departed most lamentably from the belief, and practices of their fathers. Their creed is strictly evangelical; but the clergy of the present day are thoroughly Arminian, and many of them a great deal more. All sign the confession of the church when admitted to the ministry; but they do not hesitate to affirm that this is an idle ceremony, binding them to nothing, imposed by usage, and kept up without any good purpose. Some time ago a small party, who adhere to the testimony of the Synod of Dort, protested against the conduct of the majority; but they were stigmatised as fanatics; and as attempting to bring the people under the influence of a narrow unscriptural creed, fitted only to cramp the mind, destroy its liberty, and render men dull, morose, and melancholy. The book containing these accusations against evangelical truth, is said to express the sentiments of at least two-thirds of the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church; and yet these are the men who are the successors of Witsius, Maestricht, Vitringa, and a host of others, who, in their day, were the glory of the Dutch church, and the light of the world. If such be the clergy, what are the people? The effect of such a ministry may easily be conceived. The faith of the gospel is little cared for. Salvation, through a crucified Saviour, is neglected and despised. Practical godliness is mournfully disregarded. I was informed that family worship is now almost unknown in Holland; and genuine piety is regarded as fanaticism, and superstition. I have said that the people go generally once on Sabbath to the church; but this may be said to be nearly the whole amount of Sabbath observance. All the other portions of it are regarded as a holiday. In Rotterdam, on the Sabbath we spent there, shops were open in every street; many were but half closed. Business was not very openly, but it was, without a question, diligently

* The mantel is simply a piece of silk about six inches broad and three feet long, fastened by a hook to the collar of the coat. It is a badge of office.