

THE PULPIT.

THE OFFERINGS OF THE PRINCES OF ISRAEL.

"And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them; that the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered: and they brought their offering before the Lord, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox: and they brought them before the tabernacle. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service: and four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according to their service, under the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest. But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders."—Numb. vii., 1-9.

It was a sad censure the Apostle was compelled to utter, when he said, "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." But it is delightful to see a public spirit in religion. And we have some noble instances of it recorded, not only in the New Testament, but in the Old. With regard to the incident recorded in the verses before us, we may observe:—First, the *donors*. These were "the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered." This was well. They who are placed above others are peculiarly bound to take the lead in everything moral and religious. They are under an obligation of *gratitude* to Him who has distinguished and indulged them. They are also under an obligation of *justice*, which requires them to meet the design of their elevation, which is, not the indulgence of their vanity, pride, and selfishness, but their glorifying God, and serving their generation according to His will. They should consider their resources and influence as talents, and use them as stewards of the manifold grace of God. Having more means and opportunities of usefulness than others, they will be the more guilty if they neglect or misimprove them.

Secondly, their *offering*. They "brought before the Lord six covered wagons, and twelve oxen: a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox." As twelve oxen were necessary, every prince could give one: but as six wagons only were required, had each wagon been given by an individual, six only could have been gratified; but by uniting in pairs, all the twelve could equally share in the honour and pleasure.

Their use was to aid in the present service of the tabernacle. That service would not be needful when the ark had a fixed abode in Zion: but in its moveable state, assistance was required, in transporting it from place to place. These oxen therefore were to draw the vehicles containing the appendages pertaining to the sanctuary; and hence the waggons were covered, not only to preserve the sacred furniture from vulgar and rude gaze, but to keep them from dust, and rain, and sunshine, and all the injuries of the weather.