

strenuous of constitution—but still the same man, with the same heart beating, the same brain working, the same bodily and mental powers.

I have no intention of pursuing the subject further in this letter. All that I desire to do, as suggested by the discussion which has lately been raised, is to bear my testimony to the importance (in my judgment) of every clergyman recognising his position as a minister of the English Church thus understood. Each bishop, priest, or deacon, no doubt regards himself as in some sense holding a commission from Christ; so does each Dissenting minister; so, I suppose, does each officer of the Salvation Army; no one could venture to preach the Kingdom of Christ if he did not believe that he held Christ's commission to do so; and it is not in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel that we should rudely forbid any man to speak for Christ "because he followeth not with us;" but, at the same time, the claim to a distinct commission handed down through the Apostles, joining us in historical unity with the Catholic Church in all ages, is a privilege not to be slighted, a treasure to be valued as held in trust for our brethren, and a strong ground in the long and apparently unending controversy with the Church of Rome, which must not on any account be surrendered. "Hold fast that which thou hast; let no man take thy crown!"

The Pending Prosecutions.

Having referred to attempts, at present unsuccessful, to amend the laws of the land as they affect the Church, I cannot refrain from writing a few words upon certain legal proceedings which are now pending, and which are directed against the Bishop of London and the Bishop of Lincoln. Because these legal proceedings are pending, therefore it behoves that any words written by me should not only be few, but also cautious. They shall be so. In fact my desire is chiefly to say how serious, in my opinion, is the chapter in the history of the English Church which has been opened by the action taken against the second of the Prelates just named. So far as the suit against the Bishop of London is concerned, the question brought forward seems to be one which might be fairly argued before a court of law; and I do not know that evil need be anticipated from the argument or the decision, whatever it may be. The question in the case of the Bishop of Lincoln is of a much graver kind, and the action stirs up in an aggravated form all the strong feelings which have been raised from time to time in late years by similar proceedings. Hence it can scarcely be denied the action is to be deplored. I presume that its promoters would freely admit this conclusion, and would say that nothing short of the persuasion that the matter at stake was one of extreme importance would have induced them to take the steps which they actually have taken. For myself, I deplore it, because I cannot imagine that the result can be to extinguish controversy, or to restore peace.

Another Offer.

"THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY" and the "CHURCH GUARDIAN" for one year for FOUR DOLLARS,—the subscription price of the former alone.

NOTE THIS.—We will send the CHURCH GUARDIAN free to any Clergyman who sends us Three Dollars with the names of his parishioners as new subscribers.

A lady in Ontario writes:—"THE GUARDIAN a most valuable paper, and one which every Christian ought to take; and you for its arrival very week."

PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE.

(A Sermon Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 30th, being the First Sunday after Christmas, 1888.)

By THE REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D.

"My time is in Thy hand."—Psalm xxxi, 17.

The Prayer Book version of the Psalms does not always keep so close to the letter of the Hebrew as does the authorised version, but it is not often less true to the general drift and spirit of the writers; and being in itself, as a piece of English, much more beautiful than the authorised version, it enables us the better to conceive of the beauty of the original. The truth is, the Prayer Book version was made at a time when the English language had reached the zenith of its perfection. The men of the sixteenth century had a more perfect ear for its harmonies, and for its resonances, than the men of the seventeenth. How far we of the nineteenth have fallen below the standard of the seventeenth in this respect may perhaps be gathered from the recent attempt to produce a revised version. But in the seventeenth century the decline had already begun. Various fancies and conceits—some of foreign origin—had made men less content with that earlier speech, so strong, so simple, so clear, so tender, which was in the mouths of our forefathers under the Tudor kings. Certainly the Prayer Book Psalter is better known to the Church people than the Bible version, and, with very little care to ascertain and to mark the passages in which it fails to do justice to the original, it may still be enjoyed as they can best enjoy it who know that the purest language is the best and fittest robe for the most perfect thought.

These remarks are partly suggested by the text before us. The original is more exactly rendered by the authorised version: "My times are in Thy hand," the meaning being that all the seasons of human life, with their successive phases of weal and woe, are in the keeping, or the hand, of God. But this meaning is included in the less exact, but more English expression: "My time is in Thy hand." Life, as a whole, including all its subdivisions, is in the keeping of God; its joys and its sorrows, its successes and its failures, its beginning and its close—especially the close of life—and not of some one of the sub-divisions of life, is prominent in David's thought; and, therefore, although the Prayer Book version is less true to the letter than is the Bible version, it renders the mind of the Psalmist with at least equal fulness.

THE PSALMIST'S TRIALS.

David's reflection was one of those which men are led to make naturally in times of anxiety, such as the successful rebellion of Absalom had wrought upon David. In days of health and strength, when everything prospers, and there is as yet no cloud on the horizon, it is less easy thus to take the true measure of life. The foreground of the picture is too satisfactory and too engrossing to permit of a more distant and penetrating survey. Consider the picture which a late Psalmist gives of a prosperous class of men in his day: "They are in no peril of death, they are lusty and strong; they come in no misfortune like other folk, neither are they plagued like other men, and this is the cause that they are so holden with pride and overwhelmed with cruelty; their eyes swell with fatness and they do even what they lust." In days of health and strength it is difficult to think of illness as a reality with which one day we shall have to make acquaintance. We are so conscious of exuberant energy, so taken up with making the best of it, so little apprehensive of its one day failing us, as it never has failed before, that we are not dis-

posed to heed any symptoms that tell of decay, of dissolution. And, in like manner, when all goes well with us, when our plans prosper, and the world smiles upon us its congratulations, we cannot bring ourselves to think that a turn in public affairs, or a failure in business, may make for us all the difference between prosperity and adversity. David had had early in life the advantage of a long training in the school of trouble. His position at the court of Saul, and during the years that followed on leaving it, were full of perplexity and danger, and, when his rebel son took up arms against him and endeavoured to drive him from his throne, he was less shocked and surprised than most men would have been: "My time," he said, "is in Thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies." We may conjecture that the Psalm belongs to the early days of the rebellion, when David's cause appeared to be in serious jeopardy, and he had to leave Jerusalem and to fly with a small band of followers across the Jordan. Powerful monarch as he had been, he could not but know that, on a human estimate, the rebellion had many chances in its favour. Absalom was young and handsome, with a good address, with popular manners, and the strength of the insurrection lay in David's own tribe of Judah which probably thought that it had been overlooked since it had been merged in the kingdom of all Israel. It is possible too that David had in later life somewhat neglected the duties of administering justice in person which formed so large a part of the business of an Eastern king, while he cannot but have lost, and must have been conscious of having lost, moral weight with the best people in his realm by his sin with Bethsheba, and by such scandals in his family as was the conduct of Amnon, his eldest and his favourite son. Although, therefore, he had no doubt of the justice of his cause, his conscience told him, that, considering his past conduct, he had no right to be sure that God would uphold him, and he could not but remember the prediction that evil should be raised up against him out of his own house. It might be that for his sins his sinful son was destined to triumph; it might be that he himself was to fall in battle or to linger out his remaining years in captivity and shame. The issue of the contest was yet beyond his own range of anticipation, but he knew that all was foreseen and determined on in a higher region—all, including the question whether his own life would or would not be prolonged; and so his thoughts naturally turned to God: "My time is in Thy hand; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me."

THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE

The truth that God holds in His hand every human life, and has already fixed the date and the manner in which it shall close, belongs to the general truth that His never-failing Providence ordereth all things in heaven and earth. God's Providence is His purpose and care to preserve that order in the natural and moral worlds which He established at the Creation. If we could conceive of Him as taking no care of His creatures, especially of His reasonable creatures, He would be nothing to us; and, except as a matter of intellectual curiosity, we should not care to know whether He did or did not exist. If He took no care of His creatures, the attributes of justice, goodness, wisdom, holiness, which we ascribe to Him, would have no practical meaning for us. There would be no real basis for, no real sanction of, morality, and religion would be an illusion resting upon sentiment. When, in ancient days, Epicurus allowed the existence of some Divinity, but denied His Providence, it was observed that he only appeared to admit God's existence—that in fact he denied it; and thus the first lessons which God taught man, when He placed him in this world, were that He, man's Creator, is also man's Master, his Ruler, his Parent, his Benefactor; that