

SERMON.

"Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hand. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? —JONAH, iii. 7, 8, 9.

It is a maxim recorded by the most elegant and distinguished of the Roman poets, that "*It is lawful to allow oneself to be instructed by an enemy.*" And why, at a particular time, and in peculiar circumstances, may it not, by parity of reasoning, be equally lawful for Christians to gather instruction from the conduct and example of Heathens? It is unquestionably the intention of the divine Being that this should be the case: and it may be, that unless with a view to effect such purpose, the striking characteristics of the history of the text, had not been so fully recorded. From the conviction, then, that it is the duty of the people of God, to gather wisdom from the manifestation of the providences of God, be such providences exhibited where they may,—and from the persuasion that the relation of the text, reasonably accordant with the subject before us, furnishes that instructive lesson as well as, if not better than, any other portion of the Inspired Volume, have therefore selected it as the foundation of those remarks which, in subserviency to the intention of the Government in appointing this day of *fasting and humiliation*, it very properly becomes our duty to make.

So rarely have general fasts, appointed by authority, been observed in this Province, that to many of us, perhaps the *name* is almost as novel as the *occasion*: an evidence, I trust, (and I believe I am not wrong in drawing such conclusion,) of the goodness and mercy of God towards us, as a people; by which, notwithstanding the distractions which have convulsed almost every nation of Europe, we have been hitherto maintained in safety and in peace.

Time has been, however, when *fasting and humiliation*, both of them in themselves valuable aids to the increase of true piety, were at once more general and more frequent. And this justly forms one of many particulars in which there is reason to regret our so great departure from primitive practice. Many observances have been laid aside as antiquated, and inconsistent with the state of modern improvement, which have not been succeeded, however, by any thing better. And