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"IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET ITS CUNNING."—PS. 137: 5

### SERMON,

*Preached at the opening of Synod, in St. Andrew's Church, Halifax, on Tuesday Evening, June 30, 1874.*

BY THE REV. D. M'RAE,

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JEREMIAH xiv: 8. 9:—"O, the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a way faring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not."

RARELY was the cause of religion at a lower ebb than when these pathetic verses were penned. Our modern taste is almost offended at the daring familiarity of the comparisons employed, to illustrate the scantiness of proof that Jehovah was in the land. Yet, blended with accents of reproach bordering on the irreverence begotten of despair, is a spirit of trust, of clinging reliance, which the most sanguine Christian may well desire to emulate. The God who is as a stranger and wayfaring man, is still the hope of Israel, its Saviour in time of trouble. And he who is likened to a man astonished and a mighty man that cannot save, is still claimed to be in the midst of them, and entreated to "leave them not."

I find in these words expression for the feelings to which contemplation of the state of the Christian Church at large, in our day, and especially among ourselves, tends, in my own mind, to give birth:—I venture to think that they indicate views, by cherishing which more firmly we may hope to rise to a more prosperous condition:—And I am sure that we shall, and do, all most heartily unite in the petition with which they conclude.

(1) Looking at the aspect of the Christian Church in our day, as a visible power in the world, with what feeling must we regard it? With not a little, I think, of grave apprehension. To say nothing of direct political influence, of which, save here and there in comparatively unimportant places, and comparatively unimportant matters, she has long had none,—speaking of the Protestant branches,—what power, let us ask, does she exert over social life and aims? What place, after nineteen centuries of preaching, can the Christian faith be said to occupy in the minds,—what influence does it exert over the thoughts—of men during the six secular days of the week? What merchant conducts his business on the principle of self-sacrifice? What school-boy would not be hissed and hooted at as a coward, did he evince the courage requisite