

DR. ADAM CLARKE ON VESTMENTS.

In these days, when there is a great controversy amongst the clergy as to whether they shall be clothed, it is perhaps as well to give the public Dr. Adam Clarke's (Wesleyan minister) opinion on this vexed subject. It is to be found in his well-known learned commentary, *Exodus xxvii.*, v. 2, "And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty." His note is as follows :

Four articles of dress were prescribed for the priests in ordinary, and four more for the high priest. Those for the priests in general were a coat, drawers, a girdle and a bonnet. Besides these, the high priest had a robe, an ephod, a breastplate, and a plate or diadem of gold on his forehead. The garments, says the sacred historian were for honour and for beauty. They were emblematical of the office in which they ministered. 1st. It was honourable. They were ministers of the Most High, and employed by Him in transacting the most important concerns between God and His people—concerns in which all the attributes of the Divine Being were interested, as well as those which referred to the present and eternal happiness of His creatures. 2nd. They were for beauty. They were emblematical of His holiness and purity which ever characterize the Divine nature, and the worship which is worthy of Him, and which are essentially necessary to all those who wish to serve Him in the beauty of holiness here below, and without which none can ever see His face in the realms of glory.—Should not the garments of all those who minister in holy things still be emblematical of the things in which they minister? Should they not be for glory and beauty, expressive of the dignity of the gospel ministry, and that beauty of holiness, without which none can see the Lord? As the high priest's vestments, under the law, were emblematical of what was to come, should not the vestments of the ministers of the gospel bear some resemblance of what is to come? Is then the dismal black now worn by almost all kinds of priests and ministers for glory and beauty? Is it emblematical of anything that is good, glorious and excellent? How unbecoming of the glad tidings announced by Christian ministers, is a color, emblematical of nothing but mourning and woe, sin, desolation and death! How inconsistent the habit and office of these men! Should it be said, "these are only shadows and are useless, because the substance is come." I ask, why then is black almost universally worn? Why is a particular color preferred, if there be no signification in any? Is there not a danger that, in our zeal against shadows, we shall destroy or essentially change the substance itself? Would not the same sort of argumentation exclude water in baptism, and bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? The white surplice in the service of the Church is almost the only thing that remains of these ancient and becoming vestments which God commanded to be made for glory and beauty. Clothing, emblematical of office, is of more consequence than is generally imagined. Were the great officers of the Crown, and the great officers of justice, to clothe themselves like the common people when they appear in their public capacity, both their persons and their decisions would be soon held in little estimation.

That is an admirable expression in the first Collect in the morning prayer, "Thy service is perfect freedom." And a noble freedom it is, to have the soul released from the insupportable slavery of ignorance and vice, and set at liberty to range in the spacious and delicious plains of wisdom and virtue; to have it delivered from the harsh and turbulent tyranny of insulting passions, and establish it under the gentle and delightful government of right reason.