

THE MISSIONARY RECORD

OF THE

Free Church of Nova Scotia.

VOL. I. HALIFAX, N. S., DECEMBER, 1852. No. 24.

THE HOPE OF A RESURRECTION.

1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. :—" But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

The contrast is here drawn between the state of mind of the ignorant and uninstructed heathen and that of the Thessalonian converts, on the subject of death and the resurrection. The former were utterly ignorant of those sources of consolation which the latter possessed; and how expressive is the language in which the apostle speaks of the former: "*those which have no hope.*" Now, what was the hope of the Thessalonians? The apostle expressed it in these words: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." It is obviously the doctrine of the resurrection to which the apostle is here chiefly alluding. For the heathen had some hope in respect to the immortality of the soul. Their convictions were not very fixed, or certain, on the subject; still, they had some belief in immortality; but the resurrection of the body was a thing they were utterly ignorant of, of which they did not form the most distant idea. When they laid their dead in the grave, or consumed the body, and gathered the ashes in the urn, it was with no enlivening idea that they would be re-animated, and live anew in immortal beauty. They could form no conception of this; and they imagined that the dust was indeed returned to the dust, as it was. Theirs

was a joyless burial or inurnment. No light shone upon the tomb. It was unmitigated darkness. The soul might live, but the body had no share in its immortality. The doctrine of the resurrection seemed to the Athenians like the setting forth of strange Gods. How different, the apostle teaches, was the view of the Christian! "I would not have you to be ignorant," says he, "concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others who have no hope." He would have them realise the great doctrine of the resurrection. He would have them think of that blessed truth, and comfort one another with it. It was a new doctrine to them as formerly heathens themselves; but it was one peculiarly fitted to cheer and animate them in the case of death; when they laid their friends in the tomb. These were not dead, but sleeping. It was but a sleep of a few ages: it might be longer, or it might be shorter; but ultimately they should awake from their sleep:—God should awaken them; and they should then be forever with the Lord.—That was a blessed hope, sufficient to make the apostle exclaim, as he does in another place: "O Death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

It occasions the heart a pang when any precious object is dropped whence it can never again be recovered; and what would be the feeling if we believed that the body which we laid in the dust was laid there for ever! Oh! how unmitigated would be the sorrow of death, if the grave closed for ever on all we held dear. So accustomed are we to the doctrine of a resurrection that we cannot even realise what would be our feeling had we no such doctrine to cheer