

The Church.

THEREFORE I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT TO PUT YOU ALWAYS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YE KNOW THEM AND BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH.—2 PETER, 1, 12.

VOL. I.]

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[NO. IV.]

Original Poetry.

FOR THE CHURCH.

THE SABBATH MORNING HYMN.

I.

The Sabbath Morning Hymn, oh! breathes it not
A holy sound, or in high temple heard,
Or lowly cloister in some happy spot,
Or mountain forest, where no breeze has stirr'd
The summer leaf, or calm and mirror'd sea,
Upon whose breast the stately vessel sleeps,
Or peasant's cot, a household harmony,
Or where the tempest in its fury sweeps!

II.

But where so holy as where voices young
Warble the strain, and praise to Him above
Springs forth like silver waters, and the tongue
Of truth and innocence proclaims his love;
And the heart sings, for yet the guileless lip
Knows not to feign the hope decayed within,
Nor the glad thought the honey'd bowl to sip,
Whose sweetness but conceals its depth of sin!

III.

It comes like spirit-music, or the tone
Of the wild lyre-string by soft breezes swept,
Or the low flute note, or the echoed mean
Of the deep conch shell where the waves have wept,
Calming the soul's high thoughts with glorious dreams
Of heaven and heavenly things, and shedding light
Upon the troubled heart, as new day-beams
Pierce through the shadows of departing night.—

IV.

Oh! 'tis a joyful thing to see the throng
Of cherub faces with their happy eyes;
To hear the words of God in breath of song,
By young lips pour'd as incense to the skies;—
To know that there is Truth, to feel that there
From the heart's fulness those sweet accents come,
Like Angel voices on the sunny air,
 wooing the wandering Spirit to its Home.

C.

THE PERSIAN CONVERT.

BY THE REV. DR. ROSS.

MIRZA MOHAMMED ALI BEG is a native of the city of Derbent: the capital of a province of the same name, lying on the western shore of the Caspian sea, which was formerly tributary to Persia, but, having been conquered by Russia, now forms a part of that vast empire. He was born in the year 1802, and by birth was connected with the principal families of the country. Hadji Kazem Beg was his father: a man accounted holy, from his having made several pilgrimages to spots reputed sacred by the followers of Mohammed; and highly respected for the wealth he possessed, the important offices he filled, and the political influence which he and his relatives exercised at the court of the Khan or native prince. When the province was subdued by the arms of Russia, the hadji was appointed to the office of chief kazy, or judge, in the city of Derbent; but had not held it many years before he was accused, along with others, of holding a treasonable correspondence with his former sovereign, who had fled to Persia; and being convicted, was condemned to have all his property confiscated, to be separated from his family, and to be exiled from his native land. In execution of this sentence, he was conveyed in the year 1822, to Astrachan, a large and populous city on the banks of the river Volga, and about sixty miles from its entrance into the Caspian sea. Thither he was brought, poor, but, in his own estimation, not dishonoured: stripped of office, but not of rank; venerated by those of his countrymen who reside there for the purpose of traffic, and securing the sympathy and respectful feelings of strangers by the dignity of his manners, and the hoary locks and flowing beard with which age had invested him. Mohammed Ali was his only son, a young man then in his twenty-first year; handsome in his person, engaging in his manners, superior in those acquirements upon which his countrymen are accustomed to set a high value, "learned in all the wisdom" of the Mussulmans; and at the same time of the most affectionate dispositions, and remarkable for his attachment to his aged parent. By that parent he was equally, if not more intensely, beloved. Their separation was a blow keenly felt by both. After the father had been a few months in Astrachan, he found that he could not live without his son, he therefore invited him to become the companion of his exile and the partner of his poverty. Without any hesitation the young man complied, and in September or October, 1822 arrived in Astrachan. Previously to his arrival, the father had been occasionally visited by some of the missionaries belonging to the Scottish Missionary Society, which had formed an establishment in that city, and in the journal of Messrs. Glen and Macpherson, mention is sometimes made of his name. With the young man also, Messrs. Glen and Dickson had become slightly acquainted a few years before, during a visit they had paid to Derbent, for the purpose of circulating the Scriptures among the Mohammedans of that place, and had presented him with a copy of the New Testament. The consequence was, that on his arrival at Astrachan, he often visited the mission house, and was on friendly terms with all the missionaries. He soon found it necessary, his father and himself having been deprived of all their former means of support, to do something by which to gain a livelihood for both; and although hitherto unaccustomed to be

the servant of any, gladly accepted the offer which was made to him to become the teacher of some of the missionaries, who wished to obtain a more competent knowledge than they possessed of the Arabic and Turkish languages; an office which, from his acquirements and very superior talents, they considered him well qualified to sustain. Although not in the habit of entering into discussion with their Mohammedan teachers, upon those points on which they differed from them, there was something so free and open in Mohammed Ali's manner, so much ingenuousness about him, something so different from the jealous and suspecting character of his countrymen, that they ventured to use greater freedom with him than they otherwise would have done. Frequent discussions took place between him and his pupils. At first he firmly opposed every statement that was made in support of Christianity; sometimes he became exceedingly enraged, and gave vent to his feelings in expressions of awful blasphemy against that holy name by which we are called; but still there seemed to be that in him which encouraged the missionaries to hope; for, within a few days after such ebullitions, he would renew his inquiries, and again endeavour to provoke discussion. Once, while reading a Turkish manuscript with him, I pointed out some of its absurdities, particularly one sentence which asserted that the world, angels, and men were created for the sake of Mohammed, and that but for him they never would have existed. Mohammed Ali strenuously maintained the truth of this assertion. "How," said I, "is it possible to conceive that all these things were created for the sake of one man, and that man a sinner?" "Ha!" replied he with rising emotion, "do you say that Mohammed was a sinner?" "Certainly he was!" Upon receiving this answer, he broke out into a strain of the most bitter and virulent abuse; cursing and reviling, as if in revenge, the name of Jesus, and pouring contempt upon the religion he had taught. His whole frame was agitated, his countenance was lighted up with rage. The imputation thrown upon the prophet's character, a character against which he had never heard a fault whispered, and of which he dared not to think but as one of immaculate purity, startled and shocked him; I considered it proper to be silent, indeed my feelings were too much overpowered by the torrent of blasphemy to which I had listened, to allow me to make any remark; and for several days I did not so much as hint at the subject of religion. I determined in future to leave it with Mohammed Ali to introduce it or not, as he might choose, persuaded by this plan that I should have a better opportunity of stating the truth, than if I myself were to press it upon his attention;—and so it happened. One subject seemed much to interest, and at the same time to afflict him. Of geography Mohammedans know little. Of the comparative number of Christians, Heathen, and Mussulmans, they are quite ignorant. They have the idea that their own sect constitutes a largely preponderating majority of the human race. The missionaries, therefore, endeavoured to dispel this ignorance, and to rectify their mistakes. In connexion with the information they communicated as to the comparative numbers of Christians, Mohammedans, and Idolaters, they spoke of the exertions made by Christians in all parts of the world, to spread their religion, and to save the souls of men,—of the success which had attended their endeavours, both among Mohammedans and heathen.—and of the certainty with which, trusting to the fulfilment of prophecy, they expected the conversion of men of all ranks, climates, and religions, to the belief of one God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. After his conversion, he confessed that the fact of so many Christian missionaries being employed in different parts of the world had made a deep impression on his heart, that he began to surmise that a religion which could lead men to do so much for their fellow creatures, must be from God, and not from themselves: whilst among Mohammedans, none seemed to take any interest in the condition of others, "whether they were in the way to heaven, or not."

But whilst, in the presence of the missionaries, Mohammed Ali thus maintained the character of a strict and devoted Mussulman, and the determined opponent of Christianity, the Spirit of God was in secret striving with his spirit. His faith in the system in which he had been educated, had begun to waver, the foundation on which he had been building was giving way, and his mind was eagerly endeavouring to discover whether those things were so, of which the missionaries spoke. He had received a copy of the Bible in Arabic, with which he was deeply interested, and which he diligently read. By and by, the missionaries perceived that, although he argued and opposed, his arguments were conducted in such a manner as led them to suspect that he now engaged in controversy, not from the conviction that he was right, but from a desire to obtain information. It was not, therefore, altogether unexpected, although greatly to the delight of the missionaries, that on the 16th of April, 1823, he suddenly and at once threw down his weapons, declared himself no longer an enemy, and uttered his renunciation of the religion of the Arabian impostor. The conflict had been carried on in his mind, unperceived, or only guessed at, by others. Truth had been admitted, the Spirit of God had applied it, and he now stood before the missionary its vanquished foe. On that day, while Mr. Macpherson was reading with him a Mohammedan confession of faith, in the Arabic language, some remarks were made upon the absurdity of such a system of divinity, upon which, pointing to the confession, he exclaimed, "I no more believe what is contained in that book." And he did not: he renounced it at once and for ever, and immediately gave himself up to an investigation of the truth as it is in Jesus.

(To be Continued.)

SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

No. 3.

THE KIND OF UPPER CHAMBER FROM WHICH EUTYCHUS FELL.

ACTS xx. 8. 9.—"And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead."

"The house in which I am at present living, gives what seems to me a correct idea of the scene of Eutychus's falling from the upper loft while St. Paul was preaching. According to our idea of houses, the scene is very far from intelligible: and besides this, the circumstance of preaching generally leaves on the minds of cursory readers the notion of a church. To describe this house, which is not many miles distant from the Irvad, and perhaps, from the unchanging character of oriental customs, nearly resembles the houses then built, will fully illustrate the narration. On entering my host's door, we find the first (ground) floor entirely used as a store. It is filled with large barrels of oil, the produce of the rich country for many miles around. This space, so far from being habitable, is sometimes so dirty with the dropping of the oil, that it is difficult to pick out a clean footing from the door to the first step of the stair case. On ascending, we find the first floor, consisting of a humble suite of rooms not very high; these are occupied by the family, for their daily use. It is on the next story that all their expence is lavished. Here my courteous host has appointed my lodging. Beautiful curtains, and mats, and cushions to the divan, display the respect with which they mean to receive their guest. Here, likewise, their splendour, being at the top of the house, is enjoyed by the poor Greeks with more retirement, and less chance of molestation from the intrusion of Turks. Here, when the professors of the College waited upon me to pay their respects, they were received with ceremony, and sat at the window. The room is both higher and also larger than those below: it has two projecting windows; and the whole floor is so much extended in front, beyond the lower part of the building, that the projecting window considerably overhangs the street. In such an upper room, secluded, spacious and commodious, St. Paul was invited to preach his parting discourse. The divan, or raised seat with mats and cushions, encircles the interior of each projecting window; and I have remarked, that when the company is numerous, they sometimes place large cushions behind the company seated on the divan; so that a second tier of company, with their feet on the seat of the divan, are sitting behind, higher than the front row. Eutychus thus sitting, would be on a level with the open window: and being overcome with sleep, he would easily fall out from the third loft of the house into the street, and be almost certain from such a height of losing his life. Thither St. Paul went down, and comforted the alarmed company by bringing up Eutychus alive. It is noted, that "there were many lights in the upper chamber." The very great plenty of oil in the neighbourhood, would enable them to afford many lamps. The heat of these, and so much company, would cause the drowsiness of Eutychus at that late hour, and be the occasion likewise of the windows being open."—*Jovell's Christian Researches.*

VENERATION IN MANY COUNTRIES FOR THE BEARD.

2d SAMUEL, x. 4.—"And Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and sent them away."

It is considered as a mark of the greatest infamy among the Arabs, when any one cuts off his beard; so much so that many would prefer death to this kind of treatment. Indeed M. D'Arville gives a remarkable instance of an Arab, who having received a wound in his jaw, chose to hazard his life rather than suffer the surgeon to remove his beard.

In times comparatively modern, it was regarded as the greatest indignity that could be offered in Persia. Shah Abbas, king of that country, enraged that the Emperor of Hindoostan had inadvertently addressed him by a title a little inferior to that which he expected as the great Shah-in-Shah, or king of kings, ordered the beards of his ambassadors to be shaved off, and sent them home to their master.

When Peter the Great attempted to civilize the Russians, and introduced the manners and fashions of the more refined parts of Europe, nothing met with more opposition than the cutting off their beards; and many who were obliged to comply with his commands, testified such great veneration for their beards, as to order them to be buried with them.

BELZONI, in his "Researches in Egypt" states, that "one of the buffoons of the bashaw took it into his head one day for a frolic to shave his beard, which is no trifle among the Turks: for some of them, I really believe, would sooner have their head cut off than their beard." He then proceeds to mention, that when this man went to his house, they actually thrust him from the door, and that his fellow buffoons would not even eat with him till his beard was grown again.

Those among the "Arabs who are fixed in cities, do not suffer their beards to grow till they are advanced in years; but the other Arabian inhabitants of the deserts never cut theirs at all. They carry their respect for their beard so far, that to touch it when they swear, is as solemn an oath as that of the ancient gods when they swore by the river Styx. They take great care to keep it clean, and it may be easily guessed, that they consider it as a great affront when any one pulls them by this venerable ornament."—*Mariti's Travels.*