

times, giving his comment upon it for an hour every morning.

In the life of that simple hearted and contented, I had almost said *innocent* man, Isaac Walton, there is an interesting account of the domestic devotions of Mr. Nicholas Farrer: and, in the life of his contemporary, George Herbert, a similar testimony is borne to his habits of social worship. His constant public prayers did never make him to neglect his own private devotions, nor those prayers that he thought himself bound to perform with his family which were always a set form, and not long, and he did always conclude them with that collect which the Church had appointed for the day or week. Thus he made every day's sanctity a step towards that kingdom where impurity cannot enter.

To approach nearer our own day, I would glance at the mention made of the habits of the late Mr. Bacon a name familiar to every lover of the fine arts. His biographer Mr. Cecil, states, that he was a bright example to his family and to the world. Religion, with him, was not the Sunday garb of a formalist. Occupied with business, exalted by favor, and tempted with wealth, religion was still his grand concern. Animated by this, his family dwelt in a house of daily prayer and spiritual instruction.

In Dr. Henderson's Account of his travels in Iceland, several sketches, of no mean interest, are drawn of the domestic worship of the islanders. In vol. 2d p. 124. he described the Sysselman, of Skard, collecting his family and leading their hallowed exercises with a life and energy which few, even of the clergy, would surpass. In p. 24, of the same volume, he details another scene at Stadarhaun, in a family of eight individuals, assembled round their coarse wooden table, when several appropriate Psalms were sung in a very lively manner, after which a solemn and impressive prayer was offered up; all the females placing their hands flat on their faces, so as entirely to cover their eyes. 'The joy,' he adds, which beamed from their countenances, at the conclusion of the service, discovered plainly the increase of happiness derived from their renewed approach to the fountain of bliss.

But there are two passages in the first volume so truly interesting, that, as some of your readers may not be in possession of the work, I must quote them.

'The exercise of domestic worship is attended to in almost every family in Iceland, from Michaelmas to Easter. During the summer months, the family are so scattered and the time of their returning from their various employments so different, that it is almost impossible for them to worship God in a collective capacity; yet there are many families whose piety is more lively and zealous, that make conscience of it the whole year round.

'One day I strolled up a rising ground behind the factory, and falling in with a dry and sheltered spot, I lay down on the grass. While my thoughts were engaged with some of the Psalms I heard the notes of harmony behind; the which, on turning about, I found proceeded from a cottage at a little distance to the left. The inhabitants consisting of two families, had collected together for the exercise of social worship, and were sending up the melody of praise to the God of salvation.—This practice is universal in the island on the Sabbath day, when there is no public service, the members of each family (or where there are more families than one they combine) join in singing several hymns, read the Gospel and Epistle for the day, a prayer or two, and one of Vidalin's sermons. Where the Bible exists, it is brought forward, and several chapters of it are read by the young people in the family.'

'This is the first account which this Christian traveller gives of these simple people. The other passage is at the close of his description of their mode of spending their long evenings. P. 368: 'At the conclusion of the evening labours, the family join in singing a psalm or two; after which a chapter from some book of devotion is read, if the family be not in possession of a Bible; but where this sacred book exists, it is preferred to every other. A prayer is also read by the head of the family, and the exercise concludes with a psalm. Their morning devotions are conducted in a similar manner at the lamp. When the Icelander awakes, he does not salute any person, but hastens to the door, and, lifting up his eyes towards heaven, adores him who made the heavens and the earth, the author and preserver of his being, the source of every blessing. He then returns into the house and salutes every one he meets with, 'God grant

you a good day.'—This pious conduct of the Icelander, when viewed in connexion with the awful scenery that surrounds him, is at once characteristic and delightful. It bears so strong a resemblance to the character and habits of the Scotch peasant, as drawn by the lively pencil of the author of the Shepherd's Calendar that I cannot better express my own feelings than in his language. 'I know,' he observes, 'of no scene so impressive as that of a family sequestered in a lone glen during the time of a winter storm. There they are left to the protection of Heaven, and they know and feel it. Throughout all the wild vicissitudes of nature, they have no hope of assistance from man, but are conversant with the Almighty alone. Before retiring to rest, the shepherd uniformly goes out to examine the state of the weather, (an emblem of the faithful spiritual pastor; indeed, of every Christian parent,) in order to make his report to the little dependent group within. Nothing is to be seen but the conflict of the elements, nor heard but the raving of the storm. Then they all kneel around him, while he recommends them to the protection of Heaven; and though their little hymn of praise can scarcely be heard even by themselves, as it mixes with the roar of the tempest, they never fail to rise from their devotions with their spirits cheered and their confidence renewed, and go to sleep with an exultation of mind of which kings and conquerors have no share. Often have I been a sharer in such scenes, and never, even in my youngest years, without having my heart deeply impressed by the circumstances. There is a sublimity in the very idea. There we lived, as it were, inmates of the cloud and the storm, but we stood in a relationship to the Ruler of those, that neither time nor eternity can ever cancel. Woe to him that would weaken the bonds with which true christianity connects us with heaven and each other!' Of such a spectacle as this, is it too much to say,

"Angels might stoop from thrones in heaven to be Co-worshippers in such a family!"

But this is not a solitary instance, nor has the peculiar beauty of this national habit escaped the observation of the muse. The Poet of Scotland himself, felt this to be one of his native country's chief and purest excellences. Is it necessary to mention 'the Cotter's Saturday night?' or have not Burns' lovely stanzas already hurried over the recollection, and brought full in view a family, in which

*"Their cheerfu' supper done wi' serious face,
They round the ingle form a circle wide,
The sire turns o'er wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible—ance his father's pride,
His bonnet reverently is laid aside;
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare,
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care,
And 'Let us worship God!' he says with solemn air."
"Then, kneeling down to Heaven's eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays!"*

But stop. Your readers must be familiar with the remainder of these exquisite lines: and if any of them are still strangers to the pure delights of social prayer, let them condescend to learn them from an Ayrshire cotter.

Or if poetical authority of a still higher stamp be sought for, I would point to what are, perhaps two of the most beautiful and finely-conceived passages of Milton's incomparable Paradise lost. In the former he thus speaks of our first parents while as yet they were unconscious of sin and therefore approached as nearly as possible, in all their social rites, to the Divine will:

*"As soon as sacred light began to dawn
In Eden on the humid flowers, that breath'd
Their morning incense, when all things that breathe
From the earth's great altar sent up silent praise
To the Creator, and his nostril's fill
With grateful smell, forth came the human pair
And join'd their vocal worship to the quire
Of creatures wanting voice!"*

In the second they appear at their vespers.

*"When at their shady lodge arriv'd, both stood,
Both turn'd, and under open sky ador'd
The God that made both sky, air, earth, and heav'n,
And starry pole. Thou also mad'st the night,
Maker omnipotent! And Thou the day
Which we, in our appointed work employ'd,
Have finish'd, happy in our mutual help
And mutual love, the crown of all our bliss
Ordain'd by Thee!"*

Surely I need not say more in favour of a practice which, as we have seen, conduces to the piety and good order of families, to the discharge of relative duty, to the improvement of the young, to the morals of servants, and to the welfare of the community at large—a practice consonant to the will of God, and co-incidental with the dictates of a well-informed judgment—a practice, moreover, adorned by the recorded examples both of primitive and modern Christians in every station of life, from the throne, to the lowly cot of the pious peasant: nor need I add a syllable in proof how much it is to be wished that so pure and interesting a feature in the character of our ancestry should be universally discernible in our own.

SAMECH.

April 26th, 1836.

The following has been sent us by a friend who says he has written it off from memory—"incerto auctore:"—

THE SEVENTH PLAGUE.

Exodus—Chap. ix. verses 22.

'Twas morn, the rising splendour roll'd
On marble tow'rs and roofs of gold:
Hall, court, and gallery below
Were crowded with a living flow;
Egyptian, Nubian, Arab, there,
The bearers of the bow and spear;
The hoary Priest, the Chaldean Sage,
The slave, the gem'd and glittering Page;
Helm, turban, and tiara shone
A dazzling ring, round Pharaoh's throne.

There came a man—the human tide
Shrank backward at his stately stride;
His cheek with time and storm was tan'd
A shepherd's crook was in his hand,
A shudder of instinctive fear
Told the dark King what step was near;
On thro' the Host the stranger came,
It parted round his form like flame,
He stop'd not at the footstool stone,
Unclasp'd not sandal, kiss'd not throne,
Erect he stood amid the ring,
His only words—'Be just, O King!'

The blood in Pharaoh's cheek flush'd high,
A fire burnt in his sullen eye;
Yet on the chief of Israel
No arrow of his thousands fell,
All mute and moveless as the grave,
Stood hush'd the Satrap and the Slave.—
'Thou'rt come' at length the Monarch spoke,
Haughty and high the words out broke,
'Is Israel weary of his lair?
'The forehead peal'd, the shoulder bare!
'Then take this answer to your land,
'Go reap the wind, go plough the sand,
'Go vilest of the living vile
'To build the never-ending pile,
'Till darkest of the nameless dead,
'The vulture on your flesh be fed;
'What better asks the howling slave,
'Than the base life our bounty gave!'

Shouted in pride the turban'd Peers,
Upclash'd to heav'n the golden spears;—
'King Thou and Thine are doom'd—Behold!—
The Prophet spake—the thunders roll'd,
Along the pathway of the Sun
Sail'd vapoury mountains wild and dun:
'King be the word for freedom giv'n,
'What art thou man to war with heav'n.'

There came no word! the thunders broke;
Like a huge city's final smoke,
Thick, lurid, stifling, mixed with flame,
Thro' court and hall the vapours came:
Scatter'd like foam along the wave
Flew the proud pageant, prince and slave,
Or in the chains of terror bound
Lay corpse-like on the smould'ring ground.
'Speak, King! The wrath is but begun—
'Still dumb!—Then, Heaven, thy will be done!'

Echoed from earth a hollow roar,
Like ocean on the midnight shore,
A sheet of lightning o'er them wheel'd,
The solid ground beneath them reel'd,
In dust sank roof and battlement,
Like nets the giant-walls were rent,
Red, broad, before his startled gaze
The monarch saw his Egypt blaze.
Still swell'd the plague! the flame grew pale,
Burst from the clouds their charge of hail;