

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.]

COBOURG, U.C., SATURDAY, AUGUST 12, 1837.

[NO. IX.]

Original Poetry.

For the Church.

REVEREND SIR,—The following pious and simply beautiful lines were written on a blank page of a Religious book, the parting gift of a Christian friend. The person who gave them to me informed me that the donor of the book was the author of them. Perhaps you may not think them unworthy of a *nook* in your Church.

Oh! say not we are parted
Whilst our souls can meet in prayer,
Whilst there is a throne of love
And one hope unites us there.

Say not thy heart is mournful,
Say not thou art alone,
When thou canst lay thy sorrows
Before thy Saviour's throne.

When the faint light of morning
First tints the east with red,
I pray that heaven's best blessing
May be showered on thy head.

And when evening's lengthened shades
Recall the hour of prayer,
There's no mercy that I crave
But thy dear name is there.

THE REV. J. W. FLETCHER.

To the Editor of the Church.

As you have obligingly given insertion to my former paper which contained a few of the more striking testimonies to the exalted character of the eminently pious Fletcher, you will perhaps permit me to bring before your readers a few anecdotes illustrative of his general spirit and conduct.

An incident or two connected with his *childhood* ought not to be overlooked. At a very early period he discovered an unusual quickness of apprehension and vivacity of character, happily blended with a deep sense of the majesty of God, and a constant fear of offending him. One day, when quite a child, having displeased his father, he ran away from him to avoid correction, and endeavoured to conceal himself in the garden. But his conduct soon struck him with remorse. "What!" said he, "do I run away from my father? Perhaps I shall live to have a son who will run away from me!" The impression that was then made upon his mind was not obliterated for many years.

Having quarrelled with one of his brothers when he was about seven years of age, he was reproved by a female servant, while she undressed him, and told of the punishment that awaited wicked children in another world. Her words deeply affected him. "I am," thought he, "a wicked boy, and how do I know but God may call me to account this night." He then rose from his bed, fell upon his knees before God, confessed his faults, and with deep contrition earnestly prayed for his forgiveness. "And I think," said he, when many years after he related the circumstance to a friend, "that God did hear me that night, and that I felt a little of the peace which I have since been better acquainted with.

His *love to children* forms a most pleasing trait in his character. One day, as he was riding in his favourite wood (on a visit to his native country, Switzerland, for his health) he met several children who were gathering strawberries. "I spoke to them," said he, "about our Father, our *common Father*; we felt a touch of brotherly affection. They said they would sing to their Father, as well as the birds; and followed me, attempting to make such melodies as is common in those parts. I out-rode these; but some of them had the patience to follow me home, and expressed their desire to see me; but the people of the house stopped them, saying I would not be troubled with children. They cried, and said, *They were sure I would not say so, for I was their good brother.*" The next day, when I heard it, I enquired after them, and invited them to come to me; which they have done every day since. I make little hymns for them, which we sing together from four to five. Some of them seem to be under sweet drawings of their heavenly Father; and a few of their mothers begin to come and desire me, with tears in their eyes, to stay in this country. Yesterday I wept for joy on hearing one of them speak of conviction of sin, and of joy unspeakable in Christ, as an experienced Christian would have done." The affection of the children for their kind instructor was, indeed, remarkable. Whenever they met him in the walks, their eyes sparkled with joy; and they shewed that no employment was so delightful to them as that of joining with him in singing the hymns he had taught them, or listening to his instructive conversation.

His *Disinterestedness*.—One day his patron with a joyful countenance informed him that the living of Dunham, in Cheshire, then vacant, was at his service. "The Parish," he continued, "is small, the duty light, the income good, (£400 per annum,) and it is situated in a fine, healthy, sporting country." After thanking Mr. Hill most cordially for his kindness, Mr. Fletcher added, "Alas! Sir, Dunham will not suit me; there is too much money, and too little labour." "Few clergymen make such objections," said Mr. Hill; "It is a pity to decline such a living, as I do not know that I can find you another. What shall we do? would you like Madeley?" "That, sir, would be the very place for me." "My object, Mr. Fletcher, is to make you comfortable in your own way. If you prefer Madeley, I shall find no difficulty in persuading Chambers, the present vicar, to exchange it for Dunham, which is worth more than twice as much." In this way he was appointed to the living of Madeley, with which he was so perfectly satisfied that he never afterwards would accept of any other preferment.

The *Christian meekness and forbearance* for which he was so conspicuous is thus strikingly exhibited—All of Mr. Fletcher's opponents were able, and most of them humorous writers. This circumstance frequently obliged him, contrary to the habitual gravity of his character to encounter them with their own weapons; and this perhaps made him pass for a *bitter* writer with those who could not bear to see their own sentiments treated with the same freedom with which they treat those of a contrary description. I will not recriminate on his respectable opponents: but relate an anecdote which will exhibit his patience and gentleness under severe and rude censures. When apparently in dying circumstances at Bristol, a dissenting minister called upon him. Though he had been forbidden to converse, and the gentleman was a stranger, Mr. Fletcher admitted and received him with his usual courtesy. But the visitor, instead of conversing on such subjects as were suitable to Mr. Fletcher's christian character and afflicted circumstances, entered warmly on controversy; and told him, "he had better have been confined to his bed with a dead palsy than have written so many bitter things against the dear children of God." "My brother," said Mr. Fletcher, "I hope I have not been bitter. Certainly I did not mean to be so; but I wanted more love then, and I feel I want more now." This mild answer silenced him; and sent him away, I trust, better acquainted with Mr. Fletcher's spirit and his own. They are not generally of the best spirit themselves, who are first to complain of the faults of their opponents.

The *fearless intrepidity* of Mr. Fletcher's christian character was strikingly exemplified in his conduct towards one of his nephews during his residence in Switzerland. This young man had been in the Sardinian service, where his profligate, ungentlemanly conduct had given such general offence to his brother officers, that they were determined to compel him to leave their corps, or to fight them all in succession. After engaging in two or three duels with various success, he was obliged to quit the service, and returned to his own country. There he soon dissipated his resources in profligacy and extravagance. As a desperate man he had recourse to desperate measures. He waited on his eldest uncle, General de Gons: and, having obtained a private audience, he presented a loaded pistol, and said, "uncle de Gons, if you do not give me a draft on your banker for five hundred crowns, I will shoot you." The General, though a brave man, yet seeing himself in the power of a desperado capable of any mischief, promised to give him the draft if he withdrew the pistol, which, he observed, might go off and kill him before he intended it—"But there is another thing, uncle, you must do: you must promise me on your honour, as a gentleman and a soldier, to use no means to recover the draft, or to bring me to justice." The General pledged his honour, gave him a draft for the money, and at the same time expostulated freely with him on his infamous conduct. The good advice was disregarded, and the young madman rode off triumphant with his ill-gotten acquisition.

In the evening, passing the door of his uncle Mr. Fletcher, the fancy took him, to call and pay him a visit. As soon as he was introduced, he began to tell him with exultation, that he had just called on his uncle de Gons, who had treated him with unexpected kindness, and generously given him five hundred crowns. "I shall have some difficulty," said Mr. Fletcher, "to believe the last part of your intelligence." "If you will not believe me, see the proof under his own hand," holding out the draft. "Let me see," said Mr. Fletcher, taking the draft, and looking at it with astonishment. "It is indeed, my brother's writing; and it surprises me to see it, because he is not in affluent circumstances: and I am the more astonished because I know how much and how justly he disapproves your conduct, and that you are the last of his family to whom he would make such a present." Then folding the draft, and putting it into his pocket, "It strikes me, young man, that you have possessed yourself of this note by some indirect method; and in honesty I cannot return it, but with my brother's knowledge and approbation." The pistol was immediately at his breast: and he was told, as he valued life, immediately to return the draft. "My life," replied Mr. Fletcher, "is secure in the protection of the Almighty power who guards it; nor will He suffer it to be the forfeit of my integrity, and of your rashness." This firmness drew from the other the observation that his uncle de Gons, though an old soldier, was more afraid of death than he was. "Afraid of death," rejoined Mr. Fletcher; "do you think I have been twenty-five years the minister of the Lord of life, to be afraid of death now? No, sir, thanks be to God who giveth me the victory! It is for you to fear death, who have every reason to fear it. You are a gamester and a cheat, yet call yourself a gentleman! you are the seducer of female innocence, and still you say you are a gentleman! you are a duellist, and your hand is red with your brother's blood; and for this you style yourself a man of honour! Look there, sir, look there! see the broad eye of heaven is fixed upon us. Tremble in the presence of your Maker, who can in a moment kill your body, and forever punish your soul in hell." By this time the unhappy man was pale; he trembled alternately with fear and passion: he threatened, he argued, he entreated. Sometimes he withdrew the pistol, and, fixing his back against the door, stood as a sentinel to prevent all egress; and at other times he closed on his uncle, threatening instant death. Under these perilous circumstances, Mr. Fletcher gave no alarm to the family, sought for no weapon, attempted neither escape nor manual opposition. He conversed with him calmly; and at length, perceiving that the young man was affected, addressed him in language truly paternal, until he had fairly disarmed and subdued him. "I cannot," said he, return my brother's draft; yet I feel

for the distress in which you have so thoughtlessly involved yourself, and will endeavour to relieve it. My brother de Gons, at my request, will, I am sure, voluntarily give you a hundred crowns. I will do the same. Perhaps my brother Henry will do as much; and I hope your other family will make out the sum among them." He then prayed with and for him. By Mr. Fletcher's kind mediation, the family made up the sum he had promised; and with much good advice on one side, and many fair promises on the other, they parted.

His *indifference to worldly distinctions* is thus described by Mr. Cox. "It has already been mentioned that Mr. Fletcher's family was both ancient and noble; but he was so silent on every subject which did him honour, that very few of his most intimate friends were acquainted with the circumstance. Even Mrs. Fletcher, for some time after her marriage, supposed that he was sprung from low parentage." And on one occasion she delicately alluded to this subject—"You mistake," he replied, "my family is respectable; I enjoyed every advantage I could wish." "I thought," said she, "you had been the son of a common soldier." "How came you to think so?" "When I first saw you, many years ago, one of the company asked you what your father was; and you answered, My father was a soldier." "I now recollect it," said Mr. Fletcher; and I said true, for my father was a General: not that I meant to conceal it: but I was then young in my English. I hesitated for a term; and, seeing a private pass the window I beckoned to him and said, My father was a soldier; meaning to designate his profession, and not his rank." "But, my dear," observed Mrs. Fletcher, "when you must have perceived our mistake by our astonishment, why did you not set us right? I certainly did perceive your innocent mistake," Mr. Fletcher replied, "but it was not worth while for me or you to correct it."

A short time after this conversation took place, Mrs. Fletcher, while searching his desk for some paper, found a handsome seal. "Is this yours?" she enquired. "It is mine; but I have not used it for many years." "But why do you not use it?" "had you examined it," said Mr. Fletcher, "you would not have asked the question. You see it bears a coronet, nearly such as designates your English dukes. Were I to use that seal, it might lead to frivolous enquiries about my family; and what is worse, subject me to the censure of valuing myself on such distinctions."

The last intimation Mrs. Fletcher had of the respectability of her husband's family, was received from one of his nephews, who visited England after the death of his uncle. "You know, aunt," said he, "that our family is allied to the House of Sardinia"—"No, my dear, I never heard any thing about it."—"That is strange," said the young man; "did my uncle never tell you that we were allied to the house of Sardinia?" "No, my dear," was the reply, "he did not; and he had so many good things to tell me, in which we both took so much interest, that it is not at all strange that he forgot to mention the house of Sardinia."

His happy though somewhat peculiar method of treating his rude and illiterate miners is graphically described in the two following anecdotes.

A poor collier, now living in Madeley, and upwards of eighty years of age, relates, that in the former part of his life he was exceedingly profligate, and that Mr. Fletcher frequently sought opportunities to warn him of his danger. "For," added the poor man, "he used always to run after such wicked fellows as I was, whenever he saw us, that he might talk with us, and warn us." Being, however, aware of his pious vicar's intentions, this collier was accustomed, as soon as he saw him, to run home with all speed, and close the door before Mr. Fletcher could reach it; and thus, for many months together, he escaped his deserved reproofs. The holy man, however, still persevering in his attempts, on one occasion outran the determined sinner, and obtained possession of his house before him. The poor man, awed by the presence of his minister, and softened by the persuasive kindness of his manners, was greatly affected, and received those religious impressions which soon ended in a thorough change of his character.

Another of his parishioners, who is also still living, relates the following characteristic circumstance: when a young man, he was married by Mr. Fletcher, who said to him, as soon as the service was concluded, and he was about to make the accustomed entry, "Well, William, you have had your name entered into our register once before this." "Yes Sir, at my baptism." "And now your name will be entered a second time: you have no doubt thought much about your present step, and made proper preparations for it in a great many different ways." "Yes, sir." "Recollect, however, that a third entry of your name,—the register of your burial,—will sooner or later take place. Think, then, about death: and make preparation for that also, lest it overtake you as a thief in the night." M. T.

THE SATURDAY PREACHER.

No. III.

NAOMI.

Ruth I. 19, 20, 21.—"And they said, is this Naomi? And she said call me not Naomi: call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me."

I propose to discourse on these two words,—*Naomi* and *Mara*.—*Naomi*, signifying pleasant—and *Mara*, bitter:—the former referring to the unregenerate; the second, to the converted state.