

The Evening

TORONTO, CANADA, THURSDAY, MAY 10, 1849.

[WHOLE NUMBER, DCXIII.]

VOLUME XII, No. 41.]

Poetry.

THE RAINBOW.

CAMPBELL.

The evening was glorious, and light through the trees
Played the sunshine and rain-drops, the birds and the breeze;
The landscape outlining in loveliness, lay
On the lap of the year, in the beauty of May.

For the Queen in the Spring, as she passed down the vale,
Let her robe on the trees, and her breath on the gale;
Let the smile of her promise give joy to the hours,
And fluff in her footsteps sprang herbage and flowers.

The skies, like a banner in sunset tumbled,
Over the west through their splendour of azure and gold,
And fluff in her footsteps sprang herbage and flowers,
Fill its margin of black touched the zenith, and east.

We gaze on the scene, while around us they glow,
When a vision of beauty appeared on the cloud—
'Twas not like the Sun as at mid-day we view,
Nor the Moon, that rolls nightly through starlight and blue.

Like a spirit it came, in the van of a storm!
And the eye and the heart hailed its beautiful form.
For it looked not severe, like an Angel of Wrath,
But its garment of brightness flamed its dark path.

In the hues of its grandeur sublimely it stood,
O'er the river, the village, the field, and the wood;
And river, field, village, and woodland grew bright,
As conscious they gave and afforded delight.

'Twas the bow of Omnipotence I bent in His hand,
Whose grasp at Creation the universe spanned;
'Twas the rainbow of promise, as a symbol of truth,
His vow from the Flood, to the end of time!

Not dreadful, as when in the whirlwind He pleads,
When storms are His chariot, and lightnings His steeds,
The black clouds of His banner of vengeance unfurled,
And thunder His voice to a gull-stricken world;

In the breath of His presence, when thousands expire,
And seas boil with fury, and rocks burn with fire,
And the sword, and the plague-spirit, with death strew the plain,
And vapours, and wolves, give the graves of the slain:

Not such was the Rainbow, that beautiful one!
Whose arch was reflection, its key-stone the Sun:
A pavilion it seemed which the Deity grazed,
And Justice and Mercy met there and embraced.

Awful, and it sweetly bent over in bloom,
Like Love or a death-couch, or Hope's o'er the tomb;
Then left the dark scene; where it slowly retired,
As Love had just banished, or Hope had expired.

I gazed not alone on that source of my song:
To all who beheld it, these verses belong;
Its presence to all was the path of the Lord:
Each fall heart expanded, grew warm, and adored!

Like a visit—on the converse of friends—or a day,
That bow from my sight, passed for ever away;
Like that visit, that converse, that day—to my heart,
The bow from remembrance can never depart.

'Tis a picture in memory distinctly defined,
With the strong and unshaking confidence;
A part of my being beyond my control,
Behold on that cloud, and transferred on my soul.

CANADIAN COLLOQUIES.

NO. V.

CONFIRMATION.

TWENTY years ago not more than a dozen families inhabited the district of which the thriving village of Grindville is now the centre. Being an infant settlement, many were the privations endured by the pioneers of that portion of our new Province, and various were the shifts to which they were reduced in order to meet the difficulties which surrounded them.

Among the perplexities which beset them, not the least formidable, was how their religious wants should be provided for. The majority had been brought up with a salutary reverence for the public worship of God, but, unhappily, they were not all of one mind in this vitally important matter. Small as was the young community, it was sadly rent by the rude hand of schism; combined with a few pious but indifferently taught Churchmen, there were to be met with in Grindville and its vicinity, samples of the leading denominations of the day, and the polemical strife, humilitations, and deplorable for the unchristian bitterness which they displayed.

The Churchmen and Presbyterians, who composed the majority of the people, having made several abortive attempts to erect places of worship in connection with their own bodies, it was finally resolved that a *Meeting-House* should be built. This was accordingly done, and before long a commodious stone edifice was completed, in which every person calling himself *Reverend* was permitted to officiate, provided always that he belonged to a *Protestant* fraternity, Romanists alone were excluded from the ultra-liberal chapel of Grindville, which was equally patent to the Churchman and the Plymouth Brother, the Baptist and Jumper.

As a natural consequence of this unsectarian arrangement, the honest settlers were, in the course of the year, treated to almost every variety and whim of doctrine: on one Sunday a clergyman of the Church would insist upon the duty of parents securing for their young ones an admission into the fold of Christ; next week his exhortation would be neutralized by a Baptist teacher, who, with equal confidence, would denounce the administration of the initiatory sacrament to any save adults; and, perchance, an itinerant "Friend" would contradict both his predecessors by declaiming against Baptism and the Eucharist as unnecessary and unscriptural.

In these circumstances it could hardly fail that the minds of the hapless denizens of Grindville, being known about by so many conflicting words of doctrine, should become miserably perplexed and unsettled; for it must be observed that each service was generally attended by all the community,—the Churchmen assisting at that of the sectary, and vice versa.

Being informed of how matters had been conducted, it did not surprise me to find, on my appointment as Missionary to that quarter of the Diocese, that the notions of my flock in the neighbourhood of the Free Meeting-House were crude and lax to a deplorable degree. Many of them, it is true, exhibited traces of attachment to their almost forgotten mother, but comparatively few were able to render a satisfactory reason why they were not Tunkers, Independents, or New Connexion Old Light Anti-Burghers.

His Lordship the Bishop having intimated his intention of holding a Confirmation at Grindville, I set about to prepare my people for the due reception of that most solemn rite. To do this the more effectually, I visited, as far as in me lay, each individual family, conversing familiarly with them on the subject, and striving to convince them of its importance and most reasonable nature.

Among others I visited Cornelius Stinson, who had been one of the earliest settlers in the Township.—He was a serious-minded, well-disposed person, who in Ireland had uniformly been esteemed a steady Churchman, and who had cordially welcomed me to my new field of labour. Cornelius, however, had unfortunately become tainted with the virus of religious liberalism which a *Free* preaching-house was so well calculated to engender; and many were the occasions on which he betrayed an indifference to matters of substantial importance, from which he would have shrunk with dismay in his native County of Fermanagh, had it then been predicted to him. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" would assuredly have been his indignant and incredulous exclamation.

When I urged upon Stinson the necessity which existed for his adult children being confirmed, he manifested such an unconcern, that I felt it my duty to bring the matter fully and seriously before him.

Accordingly, one fine summer evening, when the horses had been released from the plough, I requested him to walk forth with me to his orchard, which overhung the Grindles Creek: there, under the grateful shade of a beautiful wide-spreading oak, the following communicating passed between us:

M.—You know, my friend, that our good Bishop will be here in less than six weeks, and I am exceedingly desirous that all your children who have reached the proper age should embrace the opportunity afforded them of receiving the Apostolic rite of Confirmation.

S.—Well, your Reverence, I am sure I have no particular objection. If they are willing, I shall be glad to see them do so, though, indeed, this is a very busy time of the year for them to attend service on a week-day.

M.—Excuse me, Cornelius; but you speak as if this were a matter of no great moment.

S.—Honestly, your Reverence, I cannot see that it is of much consequence. Many good people don't believe in it; none of the Methodist sects practice it; and Mr. Drumlog, the Catherston preacher, says that Confirmation is a rag and remnant of Popery.

M.—You both pay and astonish me by using such language. There is nothing which the Church teaches more decidedly and clearly than the duty of our receiving the laying on of hands. And you will bear with me when I add, that your careless lukewarmness in the matter gives me but an indifferent opinion of your faith, and of your reverence for the sacred ordinance.

S.—Stop, stop, sir! I cannot allow you to talk in this way, saving your presence. The Stinsons have always had a good name for honesty, and I would rather beg the bit and the sup from door to door than do anything which might bring a stain upon our character.

M.—Let me ask you a question: Have not your children been all baptized in the Church?

S.—To be sure they have, and no small trouble it gave me to procure their being so. If I went more than thirty miles in the fall, through tremendous roads, in order to get Patrick christened.

M.—Your diligence and zeal were much to be commended! By the way, this is a fine farm of yours; if it be a fair question, how much did it cost you?

S.—Why, I paid one hundred pounds currency down, and got six years to settle the balance. The last instalment will fall due in three months, which forces all of us to be doubly diligent at present.

M.—It must be a great difficulty, in these terribly hard times, to make up the money. Could you not manage to get quit of the obligation to do so? You know Attorney Flaw, who stood for our Riding at last election? He is a smart lawyer, and perchance could find a loop-hole in the bond which would free you from the last payment. Would it not be as well to give him a fee and see what could be done?

S.—Your Reverence must be jesting with me entirely! What! cheat Widow Paton out of the sum due to her, and upon which she mainly depends for the support of her fatherless bairns! I cannot be serious in supposing that I am capable of such mean and heartless rascality!

M.—You speak like an honest man; I expected no other answer from you. Would that in Canada such principles were more universal! But to return to Baptism: Did the minister go through the whole service when he received Patrick into the congregation of Christ's Church?

S.—Of course he did; and all my children, as well as Patrick, were baptized according to the exact words of the Prayer Book.

M.—Then of course there were certain conditions exacted in reference to the unconscious little ones?

S.—To be sure there were, as your Reverence cannot but know. The godfathers and godmothers promised certain things.

M.—And are these sponsors living in the neighbourhood?

S.—No. Some are dead, and some are removed far from this; that, however, does not matter, for I consider that I am bound to perform all that they agreed to do. This I have been always taught, and it stands to reason that it should be so.

M.—Your views are most correct. Now, did you ever notice what is said at the end of the service:—"Ye are to take care that this child be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as he can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar (or common) tongue, and be further instructed in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose."

S.—Yes, often and often. I can say it all by heart.

M.—Now, Stinson, my dear friend, if you refuse to comply with this requirement, which you admit is obligatory upon you, are you not as guilty of a breach of good faith as you would be in swindling poor widow Paton out of her money, by availing yourself of some miserable legal quirk?

S.—In truth, your Reverence, I never viewed the matter in that light before.

M.—You see the obligation is plain as noon-day.

S.—But, after all, is the obligation a binding one?

M.—Why, as the old proverb says, "A promise is a promise all the world over."

S.—But neither Deacon Anxious-seat nor Mr. Drumlog think that Confirmation is a necessary thing. They say that it is not mentioned in God's Word, and, consequently, is not binding upon those who live under the free Gospel dispensation.

M.—And pray, Cornelius, what have you to do with the notions or opinions of every free-trading preacher, whose credentials for the ministerial functions are, for the most part, confined to a black coat, a pair of saddle-bags, and a white neck-tie? Now, if I shall suppose, for the sake of argument, that the Holy Scriptures are silent on the subject of Confirmation, I cannot see how your case could be bettered one whit.

S.—How so?

M.—Does not St. Paul tell us that Christians are to submit themselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake?

S.—Aye, every lawful ordinance.

M.—Assuredly. We are not to comply with any requirement which is plainly opposed to the revealed will of Jehovah; but Stinson, are you prepared to say that Confirmation is an unlawful or a sinful act?

S.—Very far from it, your Reverence.

M.—On the contrary, it is a very profitable and most reasonable service. Your children knew nothing of the conditions on which, by proxy, they were admitted into the Church of Christ. Is it not most fitting that when they come to years of discretion they should deliberately take upon themselves these obligations, if they wish to participate in the benefits thereof with connected.

S.—Why, I must own that there is something in this. But can a thing, Sir, be necessary, which the bible does not particularly enjoin?

M.—The Elder, I fear, reads the bible through the spectacles of his sect, a fault common to dissenters of all denominations. Had he turned to the 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and perused what is there written, with the uncontroverted simplicity of a little child, he never would have made such an erroneous statement to you.

S.—What does your Reverence allude to?

M.—I will tell you: Philip, who was a Deacon, having preached the gospel at Samaria, many believed his words and were baptized, both men and women.

The Apostles having heard these glad tidings, "they sent to them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed that they might receive the Holy Ghost, (for as yet he was fallen on none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus); and then laid their hands on them, and received the Holy Ghost."

S.—This, I must confess, is a strong case in point, but I remember that Mr. Drumlog, speaking of the text you have quoted, said that the Apostles prayed for the miraculous and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, of conveying which the laying on their hands was the outward mode. Now, since miracles have ceased, has not confirmation ceased likewise?

M.—We know that the gracious influences of God's blessed Spirit are always to remain in His Church: it is no where said that they were to be limited to the dawn of the Christian dispensation, and therefore the proceeding of the Apostles, in the case above mentioned, must be regarded as a fair pattern for their successors to follow. In St. Paul's day the prayer of faith healed the sick; would you, therefore, argue that prayer is now to be left unpracticed because similar results do not follow from its exercise?

S.—Of course it would be wicked and absurd to say any such thing.

M.—Take another case, also, from the Acts of the Apostles: we read in the 19th chapter, that St. Paul laid his hands on certain disciples immediately after they had been baptized. And here I may notice that the practice of the Anglican Church is in exact conformity to this example. In the *Order of Baptism* for those of riper years, she says, "It is expedient that every one so baptized should be confirmed by the Bishop as soon after as conveniently may be, that he may be admitted to the Holy Communion."

S.—Your Reverence, I am sure, will forgive me for being so particular, but is there any text which speaks of Confirmation as something which was always to be continued in the Church?

M.—Yes, there is a very striking one in the 6th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, which thus runs:—"Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." You perceive here that both baptisms and the laying on of hands (or Confirmation) are here styled *doctrines*: they are regarded as part of the foundation on which the perfection of the Christian life must be built.

S.—How comes it, then, that the Presbyterians, and many other dissenters, reject Confirmation, while they retain Baptism?

M.—That is a question more easily asked than answered. In return I might inquire why Unitarians deny the divinity of our Lord, or why Quakers have discarded both the Sacraments of the New Testament. But perhaps it may surprise you to learn that John Calvin, the great founder of Presbyterianism, as he may be called, spoke in the most decided terms as to the duty of the Church to retain Confirmation.

S.—You surprise me! Mr. Drumlog never told me anything of this.

M.—Such is the case, however, and as I happen to have with me a tract containing the passages, I shall read it to you:—"He (the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews) connects the IMPOSITION OF HANDS with baptism, because, as there were two classes of Catechumens, so was the ceremony also two-fold. For those who were from without (he means strangers and foreigners to the Christian community,) did not come to baptism without first declaring their profession of faith. In them, therefore, catechetical instruction was to precede baptism; but the children of the faithful, since they were adopted from the womb, and belonged, by right of promise, to the body of the Church, were baptized while infants; yet these also, after their infancy was past, and they had been brought up in the faith, offered themselves for catechetical instruction, which in their case was thus subsequent to baptism. Recourse, therefore, was then had to another symbol, namely, the LAYING ON OF HANDS. This single passage abundantly proves that this ceremony, as to its origin, flowed from the Apostle, though afterwards perverted into superstition; just as the world invariably degenerates from the best instructions to corruptions of them; for they, (the Romanists) set up the fiction that it is a sacrament by which the spirit of regeneration is conveyed, a fiction by which they baptize to pieces; for that which properly belonged to Baptism they transferred to the Imposition of Hands. Let us, then, be assured that by its first authors it was instituted to be a solemn rite of prayer, as also St. Augustine declares. By this symbol, indeed, they wished to approve the profession of faith which young persons, having passed childhood, used to make; but nothing was further from their thoughts than to render under the force of baptism; consequently, in the present day, the institution must be retained in its purity, but the superstition must be reformed. And the tendency of this passage is to sanction the baptism of infants, for on what account should the same doctrine be called, in the case of some, "the Doctrine of Baptism," and in others "of the Imposition of Hands," except that the latter, having already received baptism, were instructed in the faith, so that nothing further remained, in their case, than the LAYING ON OF HANDS."

S.—I have got a good lesson not to pay so much attention as I have hitherto done to the statements of dissenters from the Church.

M.—And may I hope that you will use your influence with your family to induce them to direct their serious attention to a rite so reasonable in itself, and so unquestionably Scriptural in its origin?

S.—Most willingly will I second your Reverence's kind exhortations. May the Lord bless them to the spiritual benefit of my dear children, so that they may profitably receive THE LAYING ON OF HANDS.

M.—Amen!

BISHOPRIC OF PRINCE RUPERT'S LAND.

(From the Colonial Church Chronicle.)

The recent announcement that the Queen has been pleased to direct Letters Patent to be issued for the erection of a Bishopric in Prince Rupert's Land, and the immediate consecration of a Bishop for the oversight of the Church there, seems to require of us a brief account of the rise, progress, and present state of the Missions in that vast territory.

The new diocese will probably comprise the whole of the territory which was granted to the Hudson's Bay Company by a charter from Charles II. in the year 1670. This territory extends from the frontier of the United States in north lat. 40 to the limits of exploration northward, and from the western boundary of Canada to the Pacific. Its superficial area is stated in the "Colonial Church Atlas" to be 370,000 square miles, and the total population, (though this must needs be a rough estimate,) 108,000. The country,

for the most part a vast plain, is varied by a succession of lakes and rivers, and is intersected by the great chain of the rocky mountains stretching from northwest to south-east.

The native Indians, who seek a precarious subsistence by hunting and fishing, live in wigwags or tents, and there is nothing that deserves the name even of a village in the whole territory.

In 1811, an agricultural settlement was formed on the banks of the Red River, to the south of Lake Winnipeg, by the Earl of Selkirk.

When Governor Semple was sent out in 1815, he was specially requested to report to the Company whether any trace was to be found of either temple of worship or idol, and whether it would be practicable to gather the children together for education, and for instruction in agriculture or other manual employment.

In his answer he said, that no place of worship of any sort was to be seen, and most feelingly expressed his anxiety for the immediate erection of a church.

In 1820 the Company was enabled to send out the Rev. J. West as Chaplain to the settlers. He was accompanied by a schoolmaster, who was supported by the contributions of the members of the Company and other friends. Two years afterwards, the Church Missionary Society was induced by the representations of Benjamin Harrison, Esq., and Nicholas Garry, Esq., two of the directors of the Hudson's Bay Company, to send a Mission in their settlement. The Rev. D. T. Jones was accordingly sent out in 1823, and found on his arrival that a church had already been built by the exertions of Mr. West. A second church was completed in 1826, and in the same year the Mission was greatly strengthened by the accession of the Rev. W. Cockran. To this devoted Clergyman the Mission is largely indebted for success. He at once set himself to reclaim the Indians from their roving and indolent life. He taught them agriculture by practical lessons in ploughing, sowing and reaping. When their corn had been harvested, he got a mill erected, and taught them how to grind it. He taught them also how to build houses, and how to thatch the roofs with reeds. In short, he was the Oberlin of the settlement; and in proportion as he employed the natives in farm-work, he secured the attendance of their children in school. Under such zealous and judicious management the Mission made rapid progress. The Revs. Messrs. Cowley, Smithurst, and Hunter, were successively added to the Missionary body; and Henry Budd, one of the first native boys who had been entrusted to the care of Mr. West, was appointed schoolmaster. Such is a brief outline of the history of the Mission up to the year 1844, when the Bishop of Montreal, disregarding all considerations of personal convenience, undertook a journey and voyage of 2000 miles to visit it.

The following particulars, furnished by his Lordship will be read with interest. The total population of the settlement is 5,143, of which rather more than half are Roman Catholics, and all the rest members of the Church of England, for no body of dissenters has ever established itself there. The soil, which is alluvial, is remarkably fertile, and a particular farm is mentioned which had borne an abundant crop of wheat for eighteen years in succession, without ever having been manured. The blessing, therefore, of plenty is vouchsafed to the natives and settlers; that is, abundance of produce for the satisfying of their own wants, but without any market or means of export. They have also horses, cattle, and sheep in fair proportion.

The settlement extends for fifty miles along a strip of land on both sides of the Red River. It contains four churches, built at short intervals from each other. The number of the members of the Church of England at the time of the Bishop's visitation was 2,345, and of these no fewer than 346 were confirmed by him during his visit. Frequent services were of course performed during the seventeen days of the Bishop's stay, and he mentions that the largest congregation which met him amounted to about 500, while the smallest did not fall short of 200. These facts will serve to show that Christianity has made no inconsiderable progress in that settlement, and that the field of labour to which a Bishop is about to be consecrated, though remote, and under some aspects, forbidding, is yet full of interest and encouragement to the true soldier of the cross.

Communications.

[We deem it necessary to follow the example of the London Church periodical, and to state that we are not responsible for the opinions of our Correspondents.—ED. CHURCH.]

To the Editor of The Church.

DEAR SIR,—As much speculation is abroad respecting the re-building of St. James's Church in London, and the late and late in our city, permit me, through the medium of your paper, respectfully to make some remarks calculated to draw the attention of those in whose hands is vested the power to decide in that matter.

And first, I must express my satisfaction on hearing that nothing shall be determined on rashly or hastily, because we might have deep cause of regret, should we decide on a measure of such importance to the Church and the city in general as might on after reflection, be found to be wrong.

One plan, I understand, is to lease on the ground for shops and warehouses, whereby a large fund would be realized to build a Cathedral in some other situation.

Now, here a question naturally arises, have the Trustees such power? I think not; the land is originally given for a sacred and specific purpose, viz., a Church; it would be wrong to turn it to a secular purpose, and which was given for a sacred one? It is no answer to say that it is still a sacred purpose by getting so much more money to build a Church elsewhere. Such, sir, is the argument of those who have robbed the Church of the land granted by the late George III. to turn to purposes of general education. The land was dedicated to God, for a place where His holy worship was to be perpetually maintained; let us be very guarded then that we offend not in this matter, and cause him to withdraw his countenance and blessing from us.

Now, let us try to see what we cannot by patient discussion hit on some other plan, whereby the poor will still be blessed by the regular and free administration of the Word and Sacraments, and at some time we may ultimately see rising in stately majesty on God's Holy ground, in the heart of our city, a Cathedral in grandeur and magnitude worthy of our metropolitan city.

I would respectfully suggest that plans from our many talented Architects be obtained of a Cathedral on a large scale, not of a *Baroque* and expensive Gothic, but of the plain and sober grandeur of the early English style,—(as I believe professional men term it)—a style associated with us, with recollections of the brightest and most glorious days of our *Reverend* Church. Of course from the nature of the ground this cannot be placed in the true ecclesiastical position of east and west, but that, I should think, is of minor importance.

The land, however, being free from the encumbrance of the Insurance office, aided by the immediate subscription of all true members of our Church, sufficient will be obtained to raise the walls of stone, using the materials of the old building so far as they will go, to roof it in, to finish the Chancel, and so much of the Choir with any stone we can get, with nearly as good an ultimate all the former congregation; as also stalls for all the dignitaries of the Church; a temporary partition can be raised at the end of the finished part, to be taken down when the whole is finished.

The removal of my bodies interred where the extended building may reach to, to be either decently removed to the Cemetery, or deposited in a vault under the Cathedral, and an inscription on the flat stone on the floor, (as in our English Cathedrals,) will denote the precise spot where the old Parochial Church was once enjoyed with a Cathedral, and I have no doubt, a few years would see it completed. I am aware some will say, where are the extra funds to be obtained? I need scarce remind such persons of the way we now live in—age, I believe, which will stand comparison with any since the Apostolic days, for liberality and zeal in the members of our communion, both here and in England. One Rev. gentleman of ample means, not far from Toronto, has declared he will give £500 towards a respectable Cathedral for our city. Besides, let us take example from the members of the Church of Rome in our city, who, with less numbers and means, have done themselves so much credit in erecting

their Cathedral of St. Michael, and by a well digested system of organization have brought in the aid of the humblest of their Church; and shall we Churchmen be standing aloof, and not contributing to the same end?

Lastly, let us remember that our ever watchful enemies are waiting for the stumbling of our feet. If we turn this sacred ground to a secular purpose, how can we answer them, when we are denouncing the Legislature of those days for giving us of the patrimony of our forefathers, and we are in the same breath giving our assent to robbing God of His!

I may add, I have conversed with many of my neighbours on the subject, Churchmen, Presbyterians, Methodists, and even some of no religious creed whatever; all concur in saying it will be the most shameful thing that the Church has ever done to let that ground be used for any other purpose than for that for which it was originally intended.

I have extended these remarks to a greater length than I originally intended, and am afraid, I have said too much on your valuable columns; but an earnest desire that those in whose hands is the decision on the above matter, will pause before giving their sanction to a measure of desecration, which will be (to say the least of it) very disastrous to a large portion of Churchmen.

I am, Sir, with much respect,

A CHURCHWARDEN.

Scarboro' May, 1849.

THE CONVENTUAL SYSTEM.

To the Editor of The Church.

REVEREND SIR,—You would oblige me by the insertion of some remarks upon a subject to which you devoted a leading article in your journal of the 26th ult.

Of such a family as the Ferrars, no ill can possibly be said; its elders were men who, having passed through the busy and active period of life, gave themselves in their old age, entirely to religious duties, and good works, and to the spiritual instruction of a circle of young relatives whom they had gathered under their roof. It is, however, an isolated instance, and furnishes no sanction for the conventual system generally.

The term *conventual*—as you observe—is of blameless parentage; but the character of a word depends less upon its origin, than upon its use, and in its present use, it is against the object of which it is the conventional expression, that exception may reasonably be taken. It may well be doubted whether even Protestant Nunneries and Protestant Monasteries could long continue without degenerating into what such Institutions became in England formerly, and are now, in many places.

The motives in which the system originated were just as good and of the same character as the reasons which are now pleaded for their revival. Convents were first founded that the inmates might have opportunity to devote themselves to the study of the Scriptures, and to works of beneficence and charity. Unhappily the "unauthorized asceticism, and the weaving fabulous legends" which you speak of, became part of their religion; but if they had never done anything worse than neglect themselves or each other, by way of religious exercise, and composition of the lives of the Saints, even a Henry VIII. would probably have let them alone, and in time they would have grown wiser like the rest of the community.

It is not enough to say that the convents of ancient times did much good,—that the poor were fed with their alms,—that they were the conservatories of ancient literature,—that the monks were the transcribers and preservers of ancient manuscripts, and the instructors of youth; and that within their abodes the milder arts of the liberal education were cultivated, and that the monks were strict and virtuous. It has been the fashion of later years to say all the good that could be said of the conventual system, and to sink all the evil; books have been written and not by avowed Romanists, to chant the virtues and the piety of the monasteries and nunneries of olden times; and the amount of praise and commendation which is lavished upon the system, springs from human frailty and passions which are ever the same; and those evils must accompany the conventual system at all periods.

Would monasteries now subserve the end of providing for the poor? Would the alms which are but an incidental part of the system relieve the nation with the poor rates? Are they now required for the preservation of literature, and for the multiplying of the copies of books in this age of libraries and printing presses? Is society now in that Vandal state in which nunneries were the only refuge of unprotected women, even of high rank, from the designs of avarice and rapine, and the only places of calm and safe retirement to the peaceful sage, and the worn out soldier, the world-sick statesman, or the dethroned and humbled king? I do not think so. They are not now, nor have they ever been, a refuge to any of those classes, which, in former ages, they alone perhaps supplied.

It has been urged in favour of the system, that with it was incorporated a course of constant prayer and praise; and that, in the words of our old, conventional churches, and reminded that in these churches "rose the choral hymn of praise," and it is sought to enlist all the sympathies and associations, which those picturesque remains, still beautiful in their decay, naturally awaken, in favour of the monastic system of which they were a part. But setting romance aside, could we not have the Church without the monastery?

I know you cannot possibly design to be an apologist for the errors and vices of the Romish monastic system; and I can give a qualified assent to the sentiments of the writer who writes, "The monasteries, for the most part, were the only places of calm and safe retirement to the peaceful sage, and the worn out soldier, the world-sick statesman, or the dethroned and humbled king." I do not think so. They are not now, nor have they ever been, a refuge to any of those classes, which, in former ages, they alone perhaps supplied.

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Poetry.

BURIAL ON ST. PETER'S.

MISS JOSEPH C. NEAL.

(Suggested by the wish of a friend.)

Gently the willows o'er us sway, Waved by the breath of Spring...

All mournful thoughts of death, that cling About some hearts through life...

The Church's aisles still echo back The words of those who died...

We sorrow, yet with truth and faith The victory hath been won...

A holy peace descends to rest Alike on earth and sky...

And dwelling on the Master's death That left the world as it is...

Monday in Easter Week.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

(Concluded from our last.)

I will not dwell upon the endeavours of the fond, forgiving wife...

"Well, Edward," said the old man, as he took a seat, "what is that thou hast done now?"

"The prodigal was silent."

"Edward," continued the grey-haired parent, "I have had deaths in my family—many deaths and thou knowest it—"

"O father," cried Eleanor, "do not upbraid my husband."

"The old man wept—he pressed her hand, and with a groan said—"

"No father!" cried the prodigal, "my sins are my own. I am their author, and my soul carries its own punishment."

"O, Edward!" said the old man, "thou art a father, but little dost thou know a father's heart."

"You are affected, sir—I will not harrow up your feelings by further describing the interview between the father and his son."

He proceeded to Alexandria, where he began to practise as a surgeon, and amongst an ignorant people, gained reputation.

Repentance also had penetrated his soul. He had but few other relatives, and to all of them he had anxiously written, imploring them to acquaint him with the residence of the beings whom he had brought to ruin, but whom he still loved.

He had told you that Fenwick had some skill in surgery, he had studied some years for the medical profession, but abandoned it for the turf and its vices.

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"What dost thou want, man?"

"Mr. Fenwick," feebly answered the prodigal, "Why, nobody lives there," said the other, "and auld Fenwick died in Morpeth gaol, mair than three months sin'."

"Died in Morpeth gaol," groaned the miserable being, and fell against the door of the house that had been his father's.

"I tell ye, ye cannot get in there," continued the other.

"Sir," replied Edward, "pity me—and oh, tell me, is not Mrs. Fenwick here, or her daughter-in-law?"

"I know nought about them," said the stranger; "I'm put in charge here by the trustees."

Want and misery kindled all their fires in the breast of the fugitive. He groaned, and partly from exhaustion, partly from agony, sank upon the ground.

"The other lifted him to a shed, where cattle were wont to feed. His lips were parched, his languid eyes rolled vacantly. "Water! give me water!" he muttered in a feeble voice; and a cup of water was brought to him.

He gazed wistfully in the face of the person who stood over him—he would have asked for bread, but in the midst of his sufferings, pride was yet strong in his heart, and he could not. The stranger, however, was not wholly destitute of humanity.

"Poor wretch!" said he, "ye look very fatigued; do ye think ye cud eat a bit of bread, if I were gin' it to thee?"

Tears gathered in the lustreless eyes of the prodigal, but he could not speak. The stranger left, and returning, placed a piece of coarse bread in his hand.

He ate a morsel, but his very soul was sick, and his heart loathed to receive the food for lack of which he was perishing.

Vain, sir, were the inquiries after his wife and children and his mother; all that he could learn was, that they had kept their sorrows and their shame to themselves, and had left Northumberland together, none knew.

He also learned that it was understood amongst his acquaintances that he had put an end to his existence, and that this belief was entertained by his family.

Months of wretchedness followed, and Fenwick in despair, enlisted in a foot regiment, which, within twelve months was ordered to embark for Egypt.

At that period, the British were anxious to hide the remembrance of their unsuccessful attack upon Cadix, and resolved to wrench the ancient kingdom of Pharaohs from the grasp of the proud armies of Napoleon.

The cabinet, therefore, on the surrender of Malta, having seconded the views of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, several transports were fitted out to join Lord Keith.

In one of these transports the penitent prodigal embarked. You are too young to remember it, sir; but at that period a love of country was more widely than ever becoming the ruling passion of every man in Britain; and with all his sins, his follies and his miseries, such a feeling glowed in the breast of Edward Fenwick.

He was weary of existence, and he longed to listen to the neighing of the war horse, and the shout of its rider, and as they might rush into the invulnerable phalanx, and its breast work bayonets, to mingle in the ranks of heroes; and rather than pine in inglorious grief, to sell his life for the welfare of his country; or like the gallant Graham, amidst the din of war, and the confusion of glory, forget his sorrows.

The regiment to which he belonged joined the main army of the bay of Marmorice, and was the first that, with the gallant Moor at its head, on the memorable seventh of March, raised the shout of victory on the shores of Aboukir.

In the moment of victory, Fenwick fell wounded on the field, and his comrades, in their triumph, passed over him. He had some skill in surgery, and he was enabled to bind up his wound.

He was fainting upon the burning sand, and was creeping amongst the bodies of the slain, for a drop of moisture to cool his parched tongue, when he perceived a small bottle in the hands of a dead officer. It was half filled with wine, he eagerly raised it to his lips—"Englishman!" cried a feeble voice, "for the love of heaven! give me one drop—only one!—or I die!"

He looked around, a French officer, apparently in the agonies of death, was vainly endeavouring to raise himself on one side, and stretching his hand towards him. "Why should I live!" cried the wretched prodigal; "take it, take it, and live, if you desire life!"

He raised the wounded Frenchman's head from the sand, he placed the bottle to his lips, he united his sash, and bound up his wounds. The other pressed his hand in gratitude. They were conveyed from the field together. Fenwick was unable to follow the army, and he was disabled from continuing in the service.

The French officer recovered, and he was grateful for the poor service that had been rendered to him; and previous to his being sent off with other prisoners, he gave a present of a thousand francs to the joyless being whom he called his deliverer.

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Situation Wanted. A YOUNG LADY is desirous of obtaining a situation as Governess in a family where instruction is required in Music and the ordinary branches of an English Education.

FARM FOR SALE. LOT 3, 8th Con. Township of HOWARD, WESTERN DISTRICT, 140 Acres, a very valuable Lot of Land