

The Private Manners of the Early Christians.

In the first ages of the Christian Church, when the followers of the crucified Redeemer were few in number, and exposed to frequent and severe persecutions, the circumstances in which they felt themselves placed, were such as to lead to a marked separation, both in habits and principles, from the ungodly world around them. They were, in the most emphatic sense of the expression "a peculiar people," and that peculiarity was evinced, not merely on great or important occasions, but in the minute details of every-day life. Such an obvious distinction from the idolaters among whom they lived, was not more in accordance with the high and holy doctrines in which they professed to believe, than it was useful in preserving them from an unwarranted conformity to the maxims and modes of life prevalent among the heathen. Not that they were called upon to stand so completely aloof from worldly men, as to refrain from the ordinary charities of social life. No. If there is one principle which the Gospel inculcates more earnestly than another, it is that of universal benevolence and kindness, commanding Christians to do good to all as they have opportunity. But among the primitive Christians while this duty was observed with the most exemplary strictness, the dread of being too much conformed to the world, was ever present to their minds. The animating and purifying motives of Christianity operated upon their hearts with an intensity which can scarcely be understood in the present day. The doctrines of their holy religion they adopted as ruling principles, influencing their whole deportment. They were in the great majority of instances, men who had been formerly sunk in the degradation of a barbarous heathenism, and now, that they had emerged, as it were, into the light of day, they gladly cast away from them every remnant of their former habits, and entered with the utmost ardour into all the peculiarities of the new system which they had embraced.

And, besides, the Christians felt, to their own sad experience, that they were viewed with no favourable eye by the votaries of paganism; cold suspicion, rankling jealousy and hatred, burst forth, at length, into the most cruel and long continued persecution. In this state of matters, it would have been wonderful indeed, if a striking distinction in manners had not characterised a people so situated. The profession of Christianity in a country and an age, such as ours, scarcely affords any test whatever, of the sincerity of an individual's principles and views. It is unfashionable, nay, it would be discreditable and might seriously injure any man's secular interests, to avow himself an unbeliever. An outward adherence to the Christian profession is almost universally prevalent in the community. The infidel is compelled, either to be silent or, at all events, to assume an apparent respect for religion. He cannot do otherwise, unless he has made up his mind to become an outcast from society. And the nominal professor, too, feels the same overwhelming pressure from without. He has no true regard at heart for the interests of religion. He would gladly cast away from him the restraints which Christianity imposes. But to part with the profession and name of a believer, he dare not; such a step would ruin his character and reputation in the eyes of his fellows, and though he has "no fear of God," he has some little regard for the esteem of man. He plays his part, therefore, with the utmost dexterity; he becomes a hypocrite, a mere nominal Christian, "in words, professing to know Christ, while in works he denies him."

Such characters as we have now referred to are comparatively unknown in an age of persecution. The chaff is then most effectually separated from the wheat. When the ungodly world begins to frown, when the clouds of adversity and trouble gather, and blacken, and burst over the Church of God, then it is that her winnowing time has come. The love of many, who in the days of prosperity were loudest in their professions of attachment to the cause of Christ, suddenly seems to wax cold. They quit the ranks of his followers; they walk no longer with him. It is most edifying to turn to the early ages of the Christian Church, and see the effects of persecution on the minds of true believers. They remain steadfast, and unmoved. Their courage is unshaken by the most earnest solicitations of friends, or the most bitter reproaches of enemies.

They love Christ and his salvation, and nothing can avail to wrench from them this precious treasure. They feel that they are bound to one another by a firmer tie than before; and now that they are not merely believers of one common faith, but objects also of one common hatred, they stand out in bolder relief than ever from their ruthless persecutors. Is it wonderful, that in these circumstances the Christians of early times should cautiously avoid every, even the slightest, tendency to conform to the customs of the heathen around them, and, perhaps, rush into the opposite extreme: thus exhibiting a marked singularity in their manners, and deportment. In the minute details, however, of their ordinary conduct, there is a beautiful simplicity which we cannot but admire. And we are all the more anxious to call the attention of our readers to the habits of the primitive Christians, that there are few who have carefully studied the subject. With the exception, indeed, of Mr. Jamieson's recent work, entitled "The Manners and Trials of the Primitive Christians," we are not aware of any modern volume, to which we can refer our readers; and as the book to which we have now alluded abounds in interesting and authentic information on the topics of which we are treating in this article, we shall avail ourselves of it for the purpose of illustration.

A Correspondent of *Zion's Advocate* reports the following as part of the exercises at a social ministerial conference, convoked during the Chartist excitement, a few weeks since in London.—Ed.

The Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, while he agreed with his friend Mr. Bevan, that we had been preserved from bloodshed in answer to prayer, yet thought as God worked by means, we should not overlook the fact that in this country there was so large a number of working men, well fed and well clothed, through the indirect influence of religion. Referring them to the present outcry in France for Liberty, equality, and fraternity, he expressed a fear lest they might soon have only 'liberty to perish, equality in starvation, and the fraternity of wolves.' And referring to the Apostle's words, 'All ye are brethren,' proved forcibly that there was—not a false and fictitious—but a real fraternity among those who were renewed by grace—they were admitted to the position, and invested with the feelings of members of the same family. It must also be remembered that there were natural inequalities in man which no force could destroy: it was impossible to make men equal in talents, equal in virtue, equal in industry, equal in success, or equal in office.—such an attempt would have the effect of forbidding all excellence—it would be impossible to raise the worst, and it would therefore be necessary to degrade the best: it would be like bringing down the mountains of Switzerland to the flat level of a morass—the morass would not be raised, but would be a morass still, while all the splendid inequalities of that sublime scenery would be utterly lost. But there was one kind of equality in true religion—all Christians were equally dear to their common Father; all equally redeemed by the blood of Christ; all had equal happiness secured to them in heaven.—There was also a tendency to equality in knowledge, for each was anxious to impart that which he possessed, and to acquire an additional stock for himself; so, too, there was a tendency to equality in success; a community in which religious principle exerted an influence would have less idle, less vicious, less improvident, less intemperate members, and therefore less paupers. If the Gospel were fully received, it would give all that the wildest Republican could desire. If the Chartist were all Christians, who would oppose their having every privilege they could wish? Would they not then be fit for liberty? He concluded by saying that with respect to the Alliance we had no cause to triumph, yet, but much reason to pray—that believers in this country were not living as near to God as they might, that we ought to cast ourselves on the mercy of God, to enable us to get on in religion as fast and as far as we could; Christians never had such facilities as at present for promoting the great object of life, and thus proving themselves not only the best Christians, but the best patriots also. The expression once used by the great captain of this country, 'England expects every man to do his duty,' was applied to us individually by our great Leader. He expects us to do our duty. The Rev. Dr. Ethridge then offered prayer. The Rev. P. Latrobe, head of the Moravians in London, shortly addressed the meetings, and after some brief remarks by the Rev. Owen Clarke, a Baptist, on the necessity of earnest prayer in the present time of convulsion and danger, a Doxology was sung, and the Rev. Mr. Langdale, an Episcopalian, dismissed the meeting with a short prayer.

The Thugs of India.

There is a race of hereditary robbers and murderers in India known by the name of Thugs.—These monsters in human shape, have been reformed and civilized under the influence of the Gospel and the labours of christian men, and may yet be the light of the eastern world. So omnipotent is divine grace. Their horrible profession and depravity, are strikingly illustrated by the following anecdote related by Col. Sleepman, a British officer in India.

"A stout Mogul officer, of noble bearing and singularly handsome countenance, on his way from the Pannjaub to Oude, crossed the Ganges at Gurmuktesur Ghat, near Meeruth, to pass through Moradabad and Bareilly. He was mounted on a fine turkey horse, and attended by his khidmutgar (butler) and groom. Soon after crossing the river, he fell in with a small party of well dressed and modest looking men, going the same road. They accosted him in a respectful manner and attempted to enter into conversation with him. He had heard of Thugs and told them to be off. They smiled at his idle suspicions, and tried to remove them; but all in vain; the Mogul was determined; they saw his nostrils swelling with indignation, took their leave, and followed slowly. The next morning he met the same number of men, but of a different appearance, all Mussulmans. They accosted him in the same manner—talked of the danger of the road—the necessity of their keeping together, and taking the advantage of the protection of any mounted gentleman that happened to be going the same way. The Mogul officer said not a word in reply, resolved to have no companions on the road. They persisted; his nostrils began again to swell, and putting his hand to his sword, he bade them all be off, or he would have their heads from their shoulders. He had a bow and quiver full of arrows over his shoulders, a brace of loaded pistols in his waist-belt, and a sword by his side, and was altogether a very formidable looking cavalier. In the evening, another party that lodged in the same surae, became very intimate with the butler and groom. They were going the same road; and as the Mogul overtook them in the morning, they made their bows respectfully, and began to enter into conversation with their two friends the groom and the butler, who were coming up behind. The Mogul's nostrils began again to swell, and bade the strangers be off. The groom and butler interceded; for their master was a grave sedate man, and they wanted companions. All would not do, and the strangers fell in the rear. The next day when they had got to the middle of an extensive and uninhabited plain, the Mogul in advance, and his two servants a few hundred yards behind, he came up to a party of six poor Mussulmans sitting weeping by the side of a dead companion. They were soldiers from Lahore, on their way to Lucknow, worn down by fatigue, in their anxiety to see their wives and children once more, after a long and painful service. Their companion, the hope and prop of his family, had sunk under the fatigue, and they had made a grave for him; but they were poor unlettered men, and unable to repeat the funeral service from the holy Koran; would his highness but perform this last office for them, he would, no doubt, find his reward in this world and the next. The Mogul dismounted; the body had been placed in its proper position, with its head towards Mecca. A carpet was spread; the Mogul took off his bow and quiver, then his pistols and sword, and placed them on the ground near the body; called for water, and washed his feet, hands and face, that he might not pronounce the holy words in an unclean state. He then knelt down and began to repeat the funeral service in a clear loud voice. Two of the poor soldiers knelt by him, one on each side, in silence. The other four went off a few paces, to beg that the butler and groom would not come so near as to interrupt the good Samaritan at his devotions. All being ready one of the four, in a low under-tone gave the *dhikr* (signal); the handkerchiefs were thrown over their necks, and in a few minutes all three—the Mogul and his servants—were dead, and lying in the grave in the usual manner—the head of one at the foot of the one below him. All the parties they had met on the road belonged to a gang of Jumaldee Thugs, of the kingdom of Oude. In despair of winning the Mogul's confidence in the usual way, and determined to have the money and jewels they knew he carried with him, they had adopted this plan

of disarming him; dug the grave by the side of the road, in the open plain, and made a handsome young Mussulman of the party the dead soldier. The Mogul being a very stout man, died almost without a struggle, as is usually the case with such, and his two servants made no resistance. —*Cong Journal*.

Law and Lawyers in Norway.

The administration of civil law in Norway is most admirably contrived. In every school district, the freeholders elect a Justice of the Court of Reconciliation. Every lawsuit must first be brought before this Justice, and by the parties in person; and state their mutual complaints and grievances at length, and the Justice carefully notes down all the facts and statements of the plaintiff and defendant, and after due consideration, endeavours to arrange the matter, and proposes for this purpose, what he considers to be perfectly just and fair in the premises. If his judgment is accepted, it is immediately entered in the court above, which is a court of Record; and if it is appealed from, the case goes up to the District Court, upon the evidence already taken in writing, by the Justice of the Court of Reconciliation. No other evidence is admitted. If the terms proposed by the Justice are pronounced to be just and reasonable, the party appealing has to pay the costs and charges of the appeal. This system of minor courts prevents a deal of unnecessary, expensive, and vexatious litigation. The case goes up from court to court upon the same evidence, and the legal argument rests upon the same facts, without trick or circumlocution of any kind from either party.—There is no chance for pettifoggers,—the banditti of the bar. Poor, or rich, or stupid clients cannot be deluded, nor Judge or Jury mystified by the skill of sharp practitioners in the courts of law in Norway. More than two-thirds of the suits commenced are settled in the Court of Reconciliation, and of the remaining third not so settled, not more than one-tenth are ever carried up.

The Judges of the Norwegian courts are responsible for errors of judgment, delay, ignorance, carelessness, particularity or prejudice. They may be summoned, accused, and tried in the superior Court, and, if convicted, are liable in damages to the party injured. They are, therefore, very few unworthy lawyers in the Norwegian courts. The bench and the bar are distinguished for integrity and learning. They have great influence in the community, and the country appreciate the many benefits which have resulted from their virtue and their wisdom.—*J. S. Maxwell*.

DR. CHALMERS PREPARATION.—Dr. Chalmers never trusted to his extemporaneous powers.—His sermons were the fruit of laborious preparation; for though the soul was rich, it would not yield its fruit without assiduous cultivation. At the commencement of the sermon he spoke very deliberately, and without animation; but kindling as he proceeded, to the tameness of his exordium, in which there was not often anything particularly striking, succeeded those bursts of nervous and argumentative eloquence for which he was pre-eminently distinguished, and of which the effect was heightened by the rapidity and animation with which they were delivered. His sermons rarely occupied more than three-quarters of an hour; nor did he exhaust the patience of his hearers with such long prayers as we are now accustomed to hear in almost every place of worship. Virtue itself has its boundaries, which, if not observed, ceases to be virtue; and long prayers are so often the effusions of vanity as of religion.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES IN THE ARMY.—The sum of £16,300 has been charged in the army estimates for the year 1848-9 for Divine service in the army. Of this sum, £8767 is apportioned to Great Britain for the Episcopalian Church, £2992 to the Presbyterian, and £709 to the Roman Catholic. To Ireland £3397 is apportioned,—viz., to the Episcopalian Church, £2847; to the Roman Catholic, £2679; and to the Presbyterian, £2392. A sum of £2000 is apportioned to the colonies, viz., £7380 to the Episcopalian, £1898 to the Roman Catholic, and £294 to the Presbyterian. To this sum then it is to be added £243 for cost of religious books and contingencies. The gross estimate for religious services is in addition to the sum of £28326 £21, borne on the estimate for staff officers at home, and abroad, and which includes the pay and allowances of the commissioned staff chaplains at London, Osnaburg, Malta, Barbadoes, and the Mauritius.