

A SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, HALIFAX, N. S.

ON FRIDAY, MAY 1st, 1840.

BEFORE THE

Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society,

ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR

CELEBRATING THE NUPTIALS

OF

Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria,

WITH

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE ALBERT
OF SAXE COBURG AND GOTHA,

BY WILLIAM COGSWELL, M. A.

CURATE OF ST. PAUL'S,
AND A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY.

"It is a good land, which the Lord our God doth give us."
Deut. 1 : 25.

HALIFAX:

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE COMMITTEE,
APPOINTED BY THE NOVA SCOTIA PHILANTHROPIC
SOCIETY, TO MANAGE THE CELEBRATION OF
HER MAJESTY'S MARRIAGE.

1840.

At a meeting of the Committee of Management, appointed to regulate the celebration of Her Majesty's nuptials, by the NOVA SCOTIA PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY, it was

Unanimously Resolved, That this thanks of the Committee, in behalf of the Society, be presented to the Rev. William Cogswell, M. A., for his able and impressive discourse, delivered before the Society, on the first of May,—and also

Resolved unanimously, That the Honorable J. Leander Starr, Messrs. Robert Richardson, and W. A. McAgy, do wait upon the Rev. Gentleman, with the above resolution, and respectfully request him to furnish a copy of his Sermon for publication, under the superintendence of this Committee.

The Rev. Gentleman kindly complied with the request of the Committee, who have now the pleasure of presenting his eloquent Sermon to the public.

TO THE
NOVA SCOTIA PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY,
THIS SERMON,
PREACHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR DESIRE,
IS,
WITH FEELINGS OF SINCERE REGARD,
AND EARNEST PRAYERS,
THAT A SPIRIT OF CORDIAL HARMONY
AND CHRISTIAN LOVE
MAY EVER BE THE CHARACTERISTIC OF
THEIR ASSOCIATION,
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY
THEIR FRIEND AND SERVANT FOR CHRIST'S SAKE
THE AUTHOR.

SERMON, &c.

PSALM XVI. 6.

“THE LINES ARE FALLEN UNTO ME IN PLEASANT PLACES ; YEA, I HAVE A GOODLY HERITAGE.”

Of all the merely natural feelings, that have been implanted by the gracious Author of our being in the human breast, there are few that are of a purer and more abiding nature, than the love of country and the love of home. This is a feeling which imparts many of the sweetest charms with which it is invested to the life we live upon the earth, and entwines the strongest tendrils which enclasp it around the heart of man. It is a feeling which the Lord hath sanctified by many sweet allusions in His blessed word, and by which He would illustrate to us, in a way to which no soul can be insensible, the nature of that tenure by which man holds possession of mere present things, and sets forth the intensity of that delight with which the soul, whose citizenship is in heaven, looks forward to the full enjoyment of that home, in which his treasure is deposited, on which his affections dwell.

Of the depth and power, with which this feeling takes possession of the breast, who can be better judges, than ye, my dear friends and fellow countrymen, whom it is my high privilege this day to address.—As one of yourselves, who have not been without opportunities, in the good providence of God, of contrasting with our own the charms which other lands present, and have returned each time from the contemplation of their

beauties with only deeper fondness to the land of my birth, the home of my affections, and the scene of all my earthly prospects, I may undertake in some measure, dear friends, to answer in your behalf ; and to assert, that, while not insensible to the glories of more antient lands, nor blind to the loveliness of more fertile climes, there is no one whose heart turns with a more abiding and more gladdening devotion to his own loved country, than he who has drawn his first breath and imbibed the first feelings of his nature in our lowly but beloved land.

'Twould be difficult, in many cases, to trace the intensity of this affection to any worthiness in the objects on which it is placed. We can but refer it, for the most part, to the benevolence of the Great Author of our being, who hath, for the wisest purposes, and in truest kindness to our race, made it an instinct of our nature. Perhaps, indeed, it may be generally found to exist with liveliest energy in the hearts of those whose lot is cast in lands that present the least attraction to a stranger's eye. The fire of true devotion to his country and his home burns frequently with an intenser flame in the bosom of the Laplander, that spends the greater portion of his life beneath the darkness of a sunless sky, than in the breast of the luxurious Italian, who would seem to have every charm, which the fertility of nature, or the refinement of art could spread around his path, to bind him to his native clime. Is it not of the Lord's mercy that thus it is ? Hath He not thus arranged the disbursement of His benefits with more equal hand than a superficial glance at the relative blessings of His creatures could lead us to suppose ? Hath He not thus dispensed the materials of human happiness, or at least the grounds of human contentment, with a compensating tenderness, which cuts off from every one but the determined murmurer every position from which an assault could be directed at His wisdom or His love ?

If it were on no other ground than this, my friends, that ye could plead excuse for the fervor of that love which warms the heart of every Nova Scotian to his birth place and his home, surely we could not be so insensible of the goodness and mercy of the Lord, as not to praise Him for having engrafted in our nature so important a material of our happiness. There have been those, who, gazing with a stranger's eye upon the beauties of our land, or passing with a stranger's step across its bounds, have ranked the devotion of her children to their birth place among the strange enthusiasms, which they pity as they would the childish fancies of the contented idiot. Even to their sarcasms may our reply be one of gratitude to God, that if no better ground for it exists, He has blessed us with an instinctive feeling of so deep intensity.

But is this all with you ? Thankful as ye well might be, to the Giver of all good things for this blessing, have ye not other and yet larger grounds of thankfulness to Him, in the mercies which attach you to the land of your affections ? Have ye not yet more abundant cause,—proudly, shall I say ? nay, rather thankfully, to appeal to the many advantages which surround you here, and to challenge for yourselves an interest in such words, as those in which the Psalmist expressed the fulness of his grateful heart in similar recollections. "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage." O ! my beloved, I am but expressing the genuine sentiments of my own heart, when uttering a prayer for you, that, through the Lord's grace, ye may but be able to give as good a reason for the hope that is in you of a share in the glories of that better land into which no sin, no sorrow, and no death can come, as ye can for gratitude to God, that the tabernacle of your earthly rest has been set up under His good providence in a land like this.

I know not how I can more appropriately endeavor to

improve the occasion on which ye are now assembled, my beloved brethren, within these sacred walls, than by briefly recapitulating to you the grounds of thankful acknowledgment to the Giver of every good which the home of our hearts presents. Suffer me, then, to engage your attention, beloved fellow-countrymen, to the natural, the political, and the religious advantages of our native Province ; and then, with all brotherly affection and Christian love, address to you such reflections as these considerations may call forth.

I. Of the natural advantages of our country, the blessings of climate and soil, while I would not speak with the mere blind affection of one who can see no faults in the object of his attachment, have I not cause to speak with gratitude and with joy ? What is it that makes any clime beneath the sun desirable as a place of rest ? What more than that it should conduce to the healthfulness of its inhabitants, and suffice for the culture and the ripening of the products of the soil ? Changeable, we confess, is the character of our atmosphere, and marked with extraordinary vicissitudes of heat and cold ; yet may we not appeal to the many hoary heads that command the reverence of our people, and point to the many that are gathered only as the full shock of corn in his season into their last resting place, as proofs that health and long life, far from being strangers to our soil, are the characteristics of its people. Frequently are the very lips, which murmur at the strange rapidity which marks the variations of our seasons, contradicted in their charges of its unhealthfulness by the glow which mantles on the cheek, or the vigor that sustains the frame of those that murmur at it. That there are cases of sickness, of disease, of death within our borders, might as well be made a charge against the truth of man's immortality, or a ground of question concerning the

power of Him who holds our lives in being, as against the healthfulness of the clime in which He has placed our lot. That man is mortal, who can question ; that disease, and all the sickly heraldry of ills, are the usual forerunners of that change which is appointed unto every being of our race, who can doubt?--but who can fail also to acknowledge that the dread messenger of the tomb comes with as little of natural terror in his look, to those from whom his spiritual sting has been withdrawn, in this, as in any portion of that universe which sin hath reduced beneath his sway.

Of the fertility and abundance which mark the products of our soil, what cause have we to yield the palm to any clime beneath the sun ! That a Northern region abounds not with the fruits which flourish beneath Southern skies, is no reproach ; but who can pass through our land, as the glad voice of Spring hath called the sweet warblers to our groves, unlocked the purling rivulets, and decked our-fields and woods with the verdure of their early dress, or as the breath of Autumn sweeps over the waving corn-fields, and decks the forests with their thousand tints : and if he has a heart alive to nature's charms, or awake to the calls of gratitude, which the bounties of a Father's gracious hand present, can fail of acknowledging, that, both as regards the features of our country's loveliness, and the more solid charms of its fertility, "the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places ; yea, we have a goodly heritage." True, the sun that beams upon us decks not our forests with the orange bloom, nor inhales the sweet savor of the fragrant pine : but neither doth his heat quicken the deadly viper into life, nor people the shades of our groves with the venomous reptile or the poisonous herb. True, the sweet notes of the nightingale echo not through our glades, nor doth the gaudy plumage of the bird of paradise reflect in its golden hues the brightness of the ray that sports amid its beauties : but neither doth the lion's fearful roar

awake horror in the unwary traveller's breast, nor the beauteous tints of the leopard's coat burst, undesired, upon the view. True, the breezes that awake the billow's smile around our coasts bear not a spicy freight upon their wings to refresh the weary seaman, as he draws near our land : but neither doth the tremendous hurricane lash the waves into fury, nor the dread Simoom spread desolation and dismay across our land. True, the stern grasp of winter's icy hand enchains, for some long and dreary months, the energies of the field and flood : but with an air of defiance the same hand hurls back the advances of the pestilential fever, and crushes, ere they burst into luxuriance, the noxious buds of epidemic disease.

II. Of the political advantages which attach to this our earthly home, I need but allude to those which form our interest in the event that wakes the rejoicings of this day : I mean the connexion we rejoice in with the country which stands on the highest pinnacle of earthly greatness, and our share in the privileges of that constitution, which has long been the admiration of other lands and the glory of our own. Of all that is truly valuable in the name of liberty, surely we may rejoice in the full possession. Partakers in the fostering care of that parental government, beneath whose shadow we repose in quiet and peace, and whose protection we enjoy without a demand upon our property or our persons towards the maintenance of its security, there is no privilege that the most favored of its subjects share which is not bestowed on us, no grade of exaltation, amid the honors which surround its throne, which is not freely open to the honorable ambition and pursuit of the lowliest of our inhabitants.

The very vicinity of our land to that vast territory, whose tenants claim to themselves a superiority over other lands in the principles of public liberty, instead of

infecting us with any mania for participation in their vaunted freedom, surely tends only to keep alive in us a truer appreciation of our own. We must be blind indeed to the character which has, by late events, been more prominently enstamped upon the vaunted institutions of the neighbouring republic, not to perceive the ground we have for joy, that while our boast of freedom is not liable to the sarcasm with which a citizen of that country was lately met, when hailing his parentage from the freest land on earth, "Sir, I can only call that a free country in which there are no slaves;" on the other hand, our dependance upon the protection of the government, whose subjects we rejoice to be, is not liable to be weakened by perceiving that it has not power to control its subjects, or enforce its laws.

So truly are the principles of genuine freedom inculcated and enforced by the glorious constitution, whose benefits, through the goodness of the Lord, we now enjoy, that the prerogative of the Sovereign can no more be extended to oppression, than the liberty of the subject can be permitted to wander into licentiousness, or branch out into acts of injury or violence. The laws under which we live are not armed with greater power to guard the throne of royalty, than they are to protect the cottage of the poor. That "the Queen can do no wrong," is a doctrine which does not more involve the majesty of her crown, than it does the safety of her people. For while there is no limit to the extent in which the sovereign power may be displayed in acts of mercy and of grace, the bounds, by which the laws restrain from injury and wrong, do not more clearly restrict one subject from the injury of his fellow, than they restrain the hand which sways the sceptre of these vast dominions from wronging the most distant, the most lowly of those that bow beneath its rule.

These, then, beloved fellow countrymen, are the political advantages which endear to us the land in which they are so freely, so continually enjoyed. The beauteous combination of perfect liberty with complete protection can be witnessed in no other land in greater perfection than it is in this. This sheds a charm even over the dependance which we acknowledge ; and gives us an interest in all that concerns the personal happiness, as well as the public greatness, of our Sovereign, which none can know and feel but those who have participated in the sunshine of parental favor, which smiles from the throne upon its most distant subjects, and have known by their own experience the glow of child-like reverence and gratitude, which warms the hearts of those who feel how tenderly their every privilege is cared for, how anxiously their every right enforced.

III. Of the religious advantages which are connected with this our home, I come now, thirdly, to speak. And if, on the score of the natural blessings of climate and soil, we gladly yield the palm to the beloved land from which our own descent is for the most part traced : if, on the ground of political advantages, we may rejoice in the participation of a full equality with those who are gladdened by a nearer prospect of the Sovereign's smile, but by no deeper interest in the Sovereign's care than we : on the ground of religious freedom, we feel that we are even more greatly favored than the tenants of the parent soil. Who in this favored land can ever fancy a restraint upon his conscience, or an assault upon his purse, in behalf of any form of doctrine, or of discipline, of which in his heart he disapproves ? Who can ever conjure up in his imagination the shadow of a restriction upon the freedom of his choice, as regards the vine or the fig-tree, of whose fruits he shall participate, or in whose shade he shall repose ?

Yet, on the other hand, my own heart would reproach me, did I not remind you that there is no blessing connected with the Establishment of a National religion, of which, though freed from any pressure of its burden, we do not enjoy the benefit. Will not your hearts go with me, dearly beloved, in ascribing praise to the Lord, that, while ye are left in the exercise of an unbiassed liberty in the choice of your religious opinions, ye have not been left to wander in the darkness of untutored ignorance, or the licentiousness of godless infidelity. Grievously as every Christian heart must lament the lack of spiritual instruction, in which so many portions of our land have long been lying, yet we can scarcely fear, that, in our most neglected harbor, or our deepest wood, there lives a family, in which the name of God has not been known at least, however little it may be honored, in which the salvation which is by Jesus Christ has not at least been heard of, however little it may have been apprehended or enjoyed. Yea, we doubt whether among our uncivilized brethren, the elder natives of our common land,—with whose enjoyments ye desire this day to associate the names and nuptials of our gracious Sovereign and her Royal Spouse,—there be one so ignorant as not at least to recognize the truth of the immortality of his soul, and of his responsibility for good or evil to the Great Spirit that hath given him his life ?

Contrast, for a moment, even with their state, the darkness of the minds of those misguided youths, who, by a sad necessity which their own transgressions had induced, were compelled to pay the forfeit with their blood of their murderous aggressions upon the soil and the inhabitants of our sister Colonies. Urged, with that tenderness which mingles even with the severity of British justice, to take heed to their souls' welfare, before Eternity awoke them to their loss, and to accept the instructions of a spiritual guide before they were summoned into the world:

of spirits to answer for their deeds, they almost without exception replied, "No ! we have never been taught to believe that we had a soul, that there is an Eternity, that there is a God ; and we care not to know it now, when the conviction of its truth, if it be true, would only unnerve us by the horror it would wake within our hearts." Citizens they were of a country, which boasts the freedom of its institutions, and the intelligence of its people, but discards, as contrary to freedom, the idea of a national provision for religious instruction, and, in seeming ignorance of man's lost estate, leaves its untutored subjects to find their own way to God and to heaven.

May we not rejoice, then, beloved fellow-countrymen, that, while the true spirit of civil and religious liberty is ensured to us, our souls have not been left uncared for, nor the means of attaining the liberty of the children of God kept back with a false tenderness from our reach. My brethren, I appeal to your hearts,—to the heart of that one of you, if there be such a one here, that may have been disposed to question the tendency of these few last remarks,—and ask, have we not reason to rejoice, that, through the blessing of our God, and through the care of that great country in whose privileges and whose blessings we so richly share, our land has not more cause for gratulation in its natural advantages, nor a more exalted standing in political freedom, than it has ground for joy in the title, based upon the purity of Scripture principles and the extent of Scripture knowledge that pervade it, of a **CHRISTIAN LAND**. To your own hearts I leave the prosecution of the enquiry to what this state of things is to be traced : but from your own hearts I demand a grateful acknowledgment of the loving-kindness of the Lord, in that, throughout the length and breadth of our land, Christ is at least occasionally preached, and the souls of young and old invited to come, and buy, without money

and without price, of the wine and milk that may satisfy their spirits and refresh their souls.

Each of the three topics on which I have endeavored now to recal to your minds, beloved, the reasons for your rejoicing acknowledgment, that "the lines are fallen to you in pleasant places, that ye have a goodly heritage," will suggest a brief reflection or two of a practical nature.

The natural advantages of our favored land direct our minds more immediately to the gracious Author of our abounding blessings, and suggest a call upon you, my brethren, to see that ye continually render to the Lord the praise and glory due unto His Name. Surely His goodness and His mercy have followed you all the days of your life: He hath anointed your heads with oil, and caused your cup to run over. Thankful am I that He hath put it into your hearts to praise Him for it this day in His Holy temple: O! may your lives be correspondent to this act, and shew throughout their remaining tenor the disposition to glorify His Name. Yet, richly as He has spread around the path of your earthly pilgrimage the richest bounties of His hand, He hath enstamped upon the sweetest of them all the marks of change and of decay, to lead you even amidst their enjoyment to the thoughts of that country of far richer joys, that home of spiritual and eternal delights, which He has prepared for His people above. Of the blessings of our earthly home all are partakers. The Sun ariseth upon the evil and the good; the earth unfolds her beauties and unlocks her treasures to the unjust as well as to the just. Not so, the home of the redeemed above. Its mansions await the follower of Christ alone: its doors admit alone the converted and the holy. Dear friends, we are fellow-citizens of this our earthly heritage: let me entreat you earnestly to enquire, are we also "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God,"

fellow-travellers to "the city which hath foundations," fellow-heirs of that "kingdom which cannot be moved." 'Tis not for man, who seeth not the heart, to decide this question for you: but may the God of all grace and mercy grant, that the root of true piety be found within you: and that, however checked by the frosts of the world's atmosphere, or hidden from the careless gaze by the leaves that protect its tenderness, its blossom may in the spring-time of the Eternal year, like our own sweet flower, break forth in fragrance and in bloom, and be found meet to be transplanted to the garden of our Heavenly King.

The natural advantages of our country would be the same, under whatever form of government or of religion its inhabitants might dwell: but the blessings of political freedom to which I endeavoured, secondly, to direct your eyes, belong to us as subjects of the British Sceptre, and suggest to me the call upon you, dearly beloved, never to be ashamed to confess the many ties of grateful obligation, which bind you to the expression of a devoted loyalty to the Monarch of these realms. May not our assembling in this house to day be permitted to give rise to some pleasing loyal associations? This sacred edifice, within which we are assembled, was the gift of a Royal Ancestor of our gracious Queen. Anxious, that, wherever his sway was recognized, his people should be taught their duty to their Heavenly King, he planted these sacred walls amid the forest stumps, as a fold in which the few sheep in this then wilderness might, Sabbath after Sabbath, be enclosed. Within this enclosure, in after years, was numbered among the worshippers of God the honored and lamented Parent of our Sovereign. And here have ye this day been joining in the prayer, that He, by whom Kings reign and Princes decree justice, may guide our Sovereign Lady in the paths of godliness and peace; and here hath many an aspiration, doubtless, risen to the Giver of all

spiritual grace for blessings upon that nuptial union, which we this day would celebrate. Long, O! long may VICTORIA, in the fear of God, and in the love of her people, sway the sceptre of these realms. Rich, O! rich be the outpouring of the blessings of the God of Abraham upon the auspicious union of her hand and heart with the object of her affections, and of her unbiassed choice. Cultivate, dear brethren, remember how many are your obligations to cultivate, a spirit of heartfelt loyalty like this. Long may it flourish in your breasts. Long, yea long, may it lead you to pour forth your heart-felt supplications to the God of mercies on our Sovereign's behalf. Long may it preserve you in firm attachment to her throne and government, and in cheerful obedience to the laws she ministers. Loyalty has ever been your leading character: O! cherish it in full luxuriance,—a loyalty, which, though, like our own sweet flower, it may be humble in pretensions, and unknown to fame, yet, blooming amid the snows, will scarce yield, in the sweetness of its fragrance, or the delicacy of its tints, even to dear England's Rose.

Once more, beloved fellow-countrymen, suffer the word of admonition in the remembrance of the blessings of religious freedom, which in these our pleasant places ye enjoy. Your assembling here this day, composed as your Association is of members of every religious denomination, gives earnest of a spirit of harmony and Christian love in the maintenance of the differences, which, in minor and non-essential points, prevail among you. O! take heed to yourselves, and seek the blessing of the Lord, that this spirit of Christian fellowship and charity may ever exist among you. It can be no more expected, that, on every point of Christian faith, there should be a perfect similarity among the inhabitants of earth, than that there

should be an exact resemblance in the complexions of their countenances, or the features of their form. I doubt not myself, that the unity for which the Saviour so earnestly prayed is attained, when his followers, **HOLDING ON TO HIM AS THEIR HEAD**, agree to hold those shades of minor difference in forbearance and in love. But, my friends, guard, I entreat you, guard against the approaches of that spirit which would array you in hostility against each other on the ground of these diversities: and count him an enemy to your own and your country's peace, who would sow the seeds of religious disunion among you, and urge any of you to deem yourselves aggrieved because of any fancied favor which the professors of any other form of Christianity may seem to enjoy. Mark well at least the religious character and conduct of any one, who would, as has so unhappily been done in other lands, make use of religious distinctions as weapons of political warfare; and deem those ever unsafe guides for your religious opinions, who are not certain of their own. O! be it your care, beloved, that brotherly love may continue; and if, in the constitution of our fallen nature, there must be rivalry where there is difference, let yours be the rivalry of Christian love, and the endeavor to surpass your competitors in the race of expansive benevolence, and the care of never, dying souls. Then may we hope that our enjoyments of religious blessings, in this our earthly home, may be perpetuated in that better country, to which the Christian tends; and that the rivalry in Christian usefulness on earth will be exchanged for the blessed desire of singing the loudest song in heaven, to the praise of **HIM THAT SITTETH THERE ON THE THRONE, AND OF THE LAMB FOR EVERMORE. Amen.**

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