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THE PSALMS IN HISTORY AND
BIOGRAPHY.

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MCPHERRON AND GIBB, PRINCETON,
PRINTED IN CHINA, MADE IN U.S.A. CONLEY OFFICE.

THE PSALMS
IN
HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY.

BY THE
REV. JOHN KER, D.D.



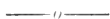
'Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage.'

Eighth Thousand

EDINBURGH:
ANDREW ELLIOT, 17 PRINCES STREET
1887.

‘What a record that would be, if one could write it down, — a” the spiritual experiences, the disclosures of the heart, the comforts and the conflicts which men in the course of ages have connected with the words of the Psalms! What a history, if we could discover the place the Book has occupied in the inner life of the heroes of the Kingdom of God!’ THORUCK.

PREFATORY NOTE.



THE interest of this little work is increased by the fact that it was the last effort of my brother's mind. He had given the finishing touches to it with his own hand when he was suddenly called home. Like most men of strong faith, and deep insight into the human heart, he was especially fond of the Psalms, and nothing delighted him more when he was with a few chosen friends than to repeat one of his favourites, and to expatiate on its beauties.

Another thing may give interest to the work—my brother had begun to draw out a course of lectures on the Psalms for his class, to be given during the winter. These were to be treated more from an exegetical and doctrinal standpoint, and to show what a rich mine of wealth there is in them, ‘for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in

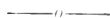
righteousness.' But the voice of the teacher and friend will be heard no more, though many will long remember its winning tones, and Faith and Love can join him in that new song he is singing before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

And may we not hope that this, his latest work, 'sown in weakness, will be raised in power' to the glory of God, in drawing hearts more to this precious part of His word for comforting, quickening, and edifying, so that, though being dead, he yet may speak.

E. K. N.

EDINBURGH, *October 1886*

P R E F A C E.



It would not be easy to number up the commentaries on the book of Psalms. Calmet, in the early part of last century, reckoned them at about a thousand, and from his time to Mr. Spurgeon's *Treasury of the House of David*, they have largely increased. The present little book has a simpler object in view. Its editor (he cannot call himself author) was struck many years ago with the manner in which the Psalms have pervaded human life, and made themselves felt in the most critical moments of action and suffering; and he began to note down instances, from time to time, as they occurred in the course of his reading. The passage from Tholuck, given on page iv., fell in his way, and confirmed a growing idea that a selection of them might be read with interest, and perhaps profit. The

wise man has said or words truly spoken, that they are like 'apples of gold in pictures (baskets) of silver.' The incidents may be the silver baskets, the Psalms are certainly the golden apples, and the only work has been the gathering and scoring them. In regard to this the words of good Bishop Horne in his Commentary on the Psalms may be adopted: 'If any one derive half the pleasure from reading that has been received in the collecting, the work is more than paid.'

Had all the incidents in ordinary biography been made available, there would have been no end of material; but an attempt has been made to limit the instances to persons or events of a more public character, or to such as throw some light on the psalm, or the portion of it quoted. On the other hand, the incidents, if merely named, would have been bare and colourless, and it has been felt necessary, in a number of cases, to describe briefly the circumstances in which the words were used. These incidents are not confined to what is commonly known as the Christian circle--first, because it might be presumptuous to draw any such marked line, and next, because one object was to show the broad humanity of the book of Psalms. Its plenteous rain

has watered not only what may be said the garden of God, but has scattered drop far and wide 'to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth.' When we find its words quoted in strange places, and by unlikely lips, we may learn their wonderful power to make room for themselves, where they may 'grow and stand;' and we may look hopefully to him who does not break the bruised reed, and who can make the seed which springs up in thorny places overcome surrounding obstacles, and change the very soil.

An attempt was made to classify the incidents under separate heads, but this was soon found to be perplexing, and indeed impossible; and the *Parables* have therefore been taken in order, which may suffice for common reference. As, however, a number of the *Parables* are referred to in different places, a general index, including them all, has been given; and also an index to the leading persons and events used in illustration. By this means, it is hoped, something may be done, or at least suggested, in the way of aid to reading in the family, and instruction in Sabbath classes, so as to bring this part of the Bible into connection with Christian biography and history.

Psalms and events could be arranged together in a number of consecutive courses, and thereby fresh interest might be given to both. The early Christian Church, the Reformation in the different countries of Europe, the Covenanting period in Scotland, have, all of them, had their own sacred songs, enshrined in deeds of heroic struggle, illuminated by the fires of martyrdom, endeared and hallowed by the most touching memories. The study of the event in history, and the fixing of the song in the memory, and, by God's grace, in the heart, would be one of the best ways of turning the hearts of the children to their fathers, and of giving to the young their inheritance in the son of Jesse. The same may be said of Christian biography. Silvio Pellico, in the history of his imprisonment, has a striking chapter on the written records left upon the walls by those who preceded him in the cells through which he passed. In the book of Psalms we have a series of chambers where hearts and lives have left the records of their experience. They are very varied, but in all of them, prison or palace, there is a window towards the sun-rising. The hope that the intelligence of parents and teachers may be stimulated to some such plans for deepening the interest of the

young in the book of Psalms has been one reason for sending out these notes.

We may add that we are anxious to contribute, in however small a degree, to the maintenance of the Psalms in the public worship of our churches. By this we do not mean that they should have an exclusive place. It is difficult to see why we should not use the New Testament in our praise as well as in our prayers and our preaching; or wherefore we should not have scriptural songs in which the name of Jesus is confessed by our tongue, and his saving deeds proclaimed as they have been most fully revealed. There may be room for both Testaments — for the Song of Moses, and the Lamb — in the worship of earth as well as of heaven. But, in the reaction towards hymns, let us not forget the songs of the ancient Church of God. Their language and modes of thought help us to the spiritual appreciation of the Old Testament, which is still for us the larger portion of God's word, even though it is not the clearest. This subdued light has its value. There are moods of musing, dubious wanderings under star-gleams, and longing for light in the night seasons, which suit the heart at times when it cannot open to the brightness

of mid-day. And even when the dawn appears, as it often does in these Psalms, and the morning is spread upon the mountains, there is a freshness and gladness about it when it comes with the dew of youth. The Christian Church, at any one time, has probably members who belong to all the past periods of her existence; the night, the dawn, and the full daylight—may, each member may have by turns all these seasons in himself. There should be songs to suit them all, and can we have them better than by taking those which have risen to God in the course of her lengthened history? Among these the book of Psalms must always hold a foremost place. And there is this marked feature in them, that while they are full of the praise of God's mercy, and laden with comfort, there are no sacred songs which exalt so highly the divine righteousness and purity, and impress so strongly the duties of uprightness and truth. We need songs to attemper our souls to these high attributes if we are to understand the gospel, and fulfil its precepts. Hence the Psalms formed the men who faced danger, and did not quail before the multitude of spearmen, who did not weary under suffering, and were faithful unto death. Our worship may

put on fairer forms, and there is no reason why it should not do so, with due regard to spirit and truth; but we shall grow up a feebler race than our fathers when we cease to sing their Psalms, and when we forget the order of worship the Psalmist has given, 'Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.'

To the historical illustrations of particular psalms we have appended some testimonies to the value of the book of Psalms as a whole; and in the close there will be found an account of the metrical versions of the Psalms that have been in chief use among the Reformed Churches. As there is reference to them in the illustrations, this account may have some interest.

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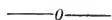
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THE PSALMS IN HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY.



INTRODUCTION.

THERE are three ways in which the Psalms may be regarded historically. The first is their connection with the life of those who, under the inspiring breath of God's Spirit, were their authors. Dr. Maclaren of Manchester, in his interesting volume, *David in the Psalms*, has dealt with this in the case of the chief of these. He has brought the utterances of the sacred poet into contact with his history, and has shown how they illustrate each other. We understand both of them better when this is done, and we reach a higher estimate of David's character. It is not easy to perceive how he was the man 'according to God's heart' when we read only the narrative in the books of Samuel and Kings. We have there 'the

battle of the warrior with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood,' the heavy incidents of fight and flight, of breathless struggle and victory ; but we see little of the movements of his soul. It is in the book of Psalms that we put our finger on the beating of his heart-pulse. Wordsworth, in one of the finest of his sonnets, that on Kilehurn Castle, compares the view of the past to a waterfall, which is frozen and rigid when seen from a distance, but when we come near it, every drop is full of fervid life and motion. David's Psalms give us this close access to his time ; they are instinct with the stress and strain of his inmost life. He is in conflict with enemies and worldly allurements, beset with temptations of ambition and pleasure, with a keenly sensitive and passionate nature, but he turns with deep conviction to faith in God as his only safety, and seeks fellowship with him as his supreme happiness. We find him at the court of Saul praying that he may be kept unspotted from the world,—in the midst of his wild followers in the cave of Adullam, sending the breathings of his soul Godward,—in banishment among strangers turning to God's house as the home of his heart,—on the throne of Israel clothing himself in sackcloth for his terrible fall ; and as we see God taking him from the sheep-folds of Bethlehem to feed

Israel his inheritance, and listen to the experience of the singer in every time of life, and at every turn of condition, we not only have a deeper view of David's character, but we comprehend why the sacred poet of the Bible, who was to waken in men of all ranks so many chords of feeling, should have a history with such a wonderful range. It is the same, in degree, with the other psalms not belonging to David. The great majority have sprung from history, personal or national—from Moses in the wilderness of Sinai to the captivity by the rivers of Babylon, and to the return from it. Even the didactic psalms, which seem to be an exception, are not so in reality. They are the products of a history of the inner life,—openings to the light of day from the strong hidden currents which have been flowing underneath. Take the 19th or the 119th, or any of them, and remark how the personality of the speaker enters, leaps up as it were, into his song: 'Who can understand his error? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.' 'Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.' They are so intensely subjective that we feel sometimes as if we could write a spiritual biography from them. These men did not sit down and say, 'I shall make a poem on such an event, or I shall analyse

human nature and depict this emotion in song.' The rod of God smote the rock, and the waters gushed out ; they could not but sing what they felt. For the centre of the Bible is a life, and this great life which pervades it, in various forms from first to last, gives plan and consistency to the Scriptures. So each part is drawn into sympathy and conformity with the centre,—many circles of lives with their different orbits, some of them nearer, some farther away, but all under divine guidance, revolving round him of whom it is said, ' In him is life, and the life is the light of men.' The Psalms give us the fullest expression of this in the Old Testament, and, wherever we can trace the circumstances out of which they sprang, or enter into full contact with a human soul speaking in them, we shall find that, with God's help, they come most powerfully from the heart to the heart.

The second history connected with the Psalms is that of Christ. He himself has said, ' It is written in the Psalms concerning me ;' and his apostles have applied to him many of their utterances, and reasoned from them as containing views of his person and work. His deepest agony on the cross was expressed in their words ; his soul was breathed through them into his Father's hand ; his victory over death,

and his exaltation to the throne of the universe, were seen far off in their visions of a glorious future. These are not surely meant to be exceptional or rare references to what was the great hope of the ancient Church, but finger-points to the lines by which we are to read the book, guides for discovering in it the burden of its prophecy,—‘the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.’ We speak of certain psalms as Messianic, the 8th, the 16th, the 22nd, the 110th, and others, and we do it justly, for in these the person of Christ emerges more distinctly, and there are events which belong to him and no other. The inspired writer rises above himself, and passes over into the great absorbing subject of his contemplation. But there is also a sense, and a very true one, in which every psalm is Messianic: it would never have found a place in the word of God, or expressed the feeling it does, but for a Christ who was to come. If there be a plan which will come out at last in the movements of the world’s history, advancing to a far-off end, we may well believe that in this inner history, which God has prepared for the world’s guidance and impulse, there will be a method; and no other is so natural as that the thought and feelings, and hopes and aims of those who are divinely trained under it should be advancing to him

in whom they all find their completion. And this, whether they be great or small, near or distant, open or hidden, as the sun draws upwards the sea in its great bays and little creeks, brightens the clouds and colours the leaves, holds in their circuits the mightiest planets and the latest asteroids which the astronomer has felt travelling across the sky before he has discovered their orbit. Christ is this in the Bible; and in the book of Psalms we can trace it most distinctly. The vision of the perfectly righteous man, who delights to do God's will and prospers in all he undertakes, is never entirely fulfilled till it reaches him who did no sin; the cries for pardon, the desires for fellowship with God, find their completion only in the cross and the spirit of Christ; the prayers for the relief of the oppressed, for the lifting up of the fallen, for the entrance of a divine kingdom of righteousness and peace, go forward to him who has all power given him in heaven and earth for carrying out his just and merciful designs. It is true that the dove of prophecy, as it circled over the waters, was not always in view of the ark; but, in its farthest wanderings, it was under its attraction, and was swayed by, and fluttering to, that final resting-place. In this sense, then, not only the psalms of direct prediction, but those of confession, of supplication, of aspiration of the failing sight, and

fainting heart looking for God's salvation, are truly Messianic. They are shadows cast from the tree with the healing leaves, never so clearly defined as when they lie deepest on the soul,—channels grooved for the river of life from which the course of its streams could be foreseen never so distinct as when the ploughshare of trial is sharpest and heaviest. And, indeed, if we would understand the secret of this history, we must remember that it was Christ's own spirit which infused the desires that led to himself. As the world makes known God, because God is the maker of the world, the Psalms make known Christ because he inspired them. It was a long Emmaus journey, and he was walking beside the travellers all the time, making their hearts burn within them, and drawing them forth to reveal their need before he came to reveal himself as the satisfaction of it. The Psalms contain his history, because he is not only their subject, but their divine author, the root as well as the offspring of David.

There is still a third history connected with the Psalms—that to which we have already made reference in the preface, and which we wish to make the subject of illustration hereafter. They have written a new record for themselves in the experience of many Christian men and women, and in some of the most

remarkable movements of the Church and of the world. The Lord Jesus Christ who breathed them into human hearts at first, gathered them afterwards into his own, and then, having filled them with richer meanings, commissioned them on wider and grander errands. He left his cross, ascended his throne, and sent them forth like his angels, as ministering spirits to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. What a wonderful story they could tell if we could gather it all from lonely chambers, from suffering sick-beds, from the brink of the valley of the shadow of death, from scaffolds and fiery piles witnessing in sunlight, from moors and mountains beneath the stars, and in high places of the field turning to flight the armies of the aliens! We may hope that the collection of some of them in historical association will furnish more than pictures to the fancy. Fresh light may be cast on the words from the way in which they are used. There is an exposition by example as well as by the mere understanding, and if we see how the sword of the Spirit has been wielded in some emergency, it may reveal the point and edge of the weapon, and help our hand to the hilt. Even where it does not cast light on the meaning, it will give a psalm fresh power over us to know that it has taken part in shaping some great crisis, or that it has carried a

message in time of trial to some suffering heart. There is a want of memory for the choicest parts of the word of God which many people plead guilty to, without regret or shame. Yet the apostle puts great emphasis on the value of a right memory: 'By which also,' he says, 'ye are saved if ye keep it in memory.' The Psalmist, too, is never weary of insisting on the duty of remembering God's works and words, and he shows us a way by which we may attain to it: 'I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.' If we can connect God's word with our living experiences, we shall not easily let it slip; the heart will make an indelible mark with that text on the memory. And, next to our own experience, we shall remember it through the help it has given to others. The book of Psalms, beyond every book of man, and most parts of the book of God, can be brought into this connection with life. We can take passage after passage and write out for it some grief it has comforted, some doubt it has solved, some deliverance it has wrought or celebrated. This, we can say, was cast into a well of Marah and sweetened it; this brought water out of the rock and made the desert fresh for many a mile; this went down with Joshua into the battle, and held up the hands of Moses on the mount; this descended with the ark of the covenant

into the swellings of Jordan to dry up the flood. If we can read the book, or a part of it, in the light of such experiences, we may be helped to make it more our own, to take it home to our heart and to keep it for a possession. There are promises in the Bible which seem beyond our reach ; we have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. But some one, like ourselves, has been there before us, and has left a cup to be let down with his name and story engraven on the rim : ‘ For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.’

It is but another side of this truth to say that the Psalms, when associated with such experiences, help us to realize the oneness of the life of God in all his family. They form the closest bond between the Old Testament and the New, the bond of spirit and life. When we sing them we join with a multitude which no man can number, a long line of pilgrims in the most distant ages, who drew from them strength for their journey and solace for their hardships. There are no sacred words on Christian lips which have such an antiquity, no river of melody which has made glad so many generations in the city of God. The men who lived long after the deliverance from Egypt, claimed fellowship with those who came forth with Moses, and felt as if they were present when they

joined in the praise: 'They went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.' The Psalms furnish us with such an age-long communion of interest. They are like the memorial stones of Gilgal, witnesses to a glorious past, and even more, for they gather new testimonies as the fathers leave them to their children, 'that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord that it is mighty; that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.' If the Psalms form this fellowship in the world of time, they do it not less throughout the world of space, and among living Christians. They are the most Catholic element in all the varieties of worship found in every country and clime, among them that name the name of Christ. It has often been remarked that those who differ in definitions of doctrine, agree when they approach the throne of grace in prayer, or the person of Christ in reverence and love. In the Psalms of the Old Testament and the Gospels of the New—the songs of the son of Jesse and the person of the Son of David—there is room for the meeting of many who may be divided elsewhere. Before the art of printing made the whole Bible open to the Church, these were the parts transcribed without end by the copyist's pen. It arose from the feeling that here is to be found the heart

and essence of the word of God. The spirit was preserved by them for long centuries from being crushed under the weight of ceremonialism, and blinded by the thick darkness. When we listen, and hear from these ages the chanting of the Psalms, imperfectly understood as they were, it sounds 'like a song as in the night, when a holy solemnity is kept, until the Lord caused his glorious voice to be heard, and showed the lighting down of his arm.' And still, wherever they are sung, we may feel that we can join in that worship, and hope that the unity of the Spirit, in this part, will clear away, in God's time, mists which remain. Thought has its rights, and must use them for the discovery of all Christian truth; but meanwhile it is well that we have this common meeting-place for the heart.

There is one further purpose which we hope may be served by this association of the Psalms with history; it may aid in showing how great the debt is which human life owes to the word of God. Every one who has read the *Eclipse of Faith* by Henry Rogers will remember the chapter called the *Blank Bible*. He dreams that he awakens one morning to find his Bible reduced to pages of white paper; and on inquiry, in all the houses around, the same thing has happened. The Bible as a book has disappeared

from the world, and everything borrowed from it in literature has vanished likewise. Never before was it known to what an extent genius had been indebted to the Book of books, and never was such value set on the memories of the humble Christians who could aid in restoring the lost treasure. The world began to recognise the worth of what it had long despised, now that it had lost it. But what if we could carry out this fancy of Rogers, and suppose the Bible obliterated from the history of the world and the life of man! Imagine all erased that the Bible has done in setting before men the ideal of equity and purity, of generosity and mercy; all the motives which have nerved the patriot's arm to do, and the martyr's soul to suffer! Conceive the destruction, or the non-existence of the strength and peace and joy which the Bible has infused into the hearts of the desolate and bereaved, which it has sent into the homes of rich and poor alike, of many surrounded by grandeur and glitter who are withering amid the sunshine from a worm at the root, and of lonely creatures who are crying out in forsaken misery, 'Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul!' If it were possible to represent this, and to show 'the shadow from the heat, the covert from wind and rain' which would have been lost, we do not believe a *Christian Apology* would ever need to

be written—‘upon all the glory this should be the defence.’ It is not possible. It comes under the eye of him alone, who ‘looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven,’ and who will reveal it when he opens the books—the book of his word, of his providence, and of the souls of men. But we may form some small conception of it when we take one portion of God’s word, such as this book of Psalms, and gather some of the cases in which it has brought help to men in trouble, or strength and guidance to the Church in trying moments of her history. Yet what are the few incidents which fall to the knowledge of any one compared with the experience of the Church of the living God through all time, and in all parts of the world? The few that meet the light of day, what are they to the hearts which are bound up and healed in the secret chambers of his presence? Nevertheless the few stars which cross our narrow window chink may lead our thoughts, as God did Abraham, to the wide heaven with its unnumbered lights, and to all those who from the broad sea and earth, and from every lonely place, are looking upward to his sky. The firmament of his word has also its stars which no man can number, the promises and hopes and consolations by which God has given ‘power to the faint,

and increased strength to them that have no might.' Each one has had its record in some heart and life. What a history it will be when they are all gathered together and made known, and how the old challenge will be renewed in a higher sphere of divine handiwork ! ' Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number : he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth.'

Psalm 1.

RUSKIN says the Psalter contains, in the first half of it, the sum of personal and social wisdom. The 1st, 8th, 12th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 23rd, and 24th Psalms, well learned and believed, are enough for all personal guidance; the 48th, 72nd, and 75th have in them the law and the prophecy of all righteous government; and every real triumph of natural science is anticipated in the 104th.

The earliest version of the first psalm known in Scotland, in the native tongue, is by Alexander Montgomery, who lived in the reign of James VI. He belonged to the Eglinton family, was a captain in the bodyguard of Regent Morton, and is referred to by James Melville in his diary as 'a good, honest man, and the Regent's domestic.' His best known poem, containing passages which show a true sympathy with nature, is the allegory of the 'Cherry and the Slae.' He is the author of many odes, sonnets, and psalms; and we extract this as a specimen, and as showing

that love for the Psalms which became so strong a feature in the character of the Scottish people. We have changed obsolete words and spelling, and brought the rhyme closer to our present pronunciation, but the entire rhythm and general expression have been preserved. A French critic remarks on the old versions of Marot and Beza that they owe their great variety of rhythm to their having been formed in the 16th century, before the more monotonous measures of the 17th and 18th began to prevail. It may be that our present Scottish version (Rous's) has suffered somewhat from this later origin, but it has gained by closer fidelity to the original Scripture.

I.

That man is blest,
And is possessed
Of truest rest,
Who from ungodly counsel turns his feet ;
Who walks not in
The way of sin,
Nor comes within
The place where mockers take their shameful seat ;
But in God's law to go
He doth delight ;
And studies it to know
Both day and night.
That man shall be—like to a tree
Which by the running river spreads its shade ;
Which fruit does bear—in time of year ;
Whose root is firm, whose leaf shall never fade.

II.

His actions all
 Still prosper shall ;
 So doth not fall
 To wicked men ; whom, as the chaff and sand,
 Winds, day by day,
 Shall drive away ;
 Therefore I say
 The wicked in the judgment shall not stand ;
 Neither shall sinners dare,
 Whom God disdains,
 To enter the assembly where
 The just remains.
 For God most pure, keeps record sure ;
 He knows the righteous' heart and converse ay :
 But like the fire—kindles his ire
 'Gainst wicked men, till they consume away.

Psalm 2.

As the first psalm is the outer door of practical insight with a prophetic close, so the second psalm is the inner door of prophetic foresight with a practical close ; and these two interchange and interpret each other through the whole book, in the one case the life bestowing vision, in the other the vision leading to life.

The earliest song of thanksgiving and prayer in the Christian Church is drawn from this psalm. It is the beginning of that long history in which David, Christ, and the experience of the Church, are found so often re-appearing in union. (Acts iv. 24-30.)

‘And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said,—

“ Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth,
And the sea, and all that in them is :
Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said,
Why did the heathen rage,
And the people imagine vain things ?
The kings of the earth stood up,
And the rulers were gathered together
Against the Lord, and against his Christ.
For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus.
Whom thou hast anointed,
Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles,
And the people of Israel, were gathered together,
For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel
Determined before to be done.
And now, Lord, behold their threatenings :
And grant unto thy servants,
That with all boldness they may speak thy word,
By stretching forth thine hand to heal ;
And that signs and wonders may be done
By the name of thy holy child Jesus.” ’

Ver. 10 was the remonstrance addressed to Henry VIII. by John Lambert, who was burned at Smithfield in 1538 :

‘ Now, ye kings, understand, and ye which judge the earth be wise and learned. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice in him with trembling.’

Lambert’s martyrdom was one of the most cruel of that time, and the often-quoted words came from him as he lifted his fingers flaming with fire, ‘ None but Christ, none but Christ ! ’

Psalm 3.

Vers. 3-6. 'But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me ; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. . . .

'I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.'

This was the text from which Bishop Bedell preached to his fellow-prisoners in the time of the Irish rebellion in 1642, when he and the Protestants of the district were shut up in hold, and in danger of death at any moment. He was one of the best bishops who ever lived in Ireland, and, had his example been generally followed, the Reformation would have made much greater progress in the country. He learned the Irish language, had the Bible translated into it, was assiduous in Christian work, and filled with the spirit of meekness and self-sacrifice. The word *bedel* in Hebrew signifies *tin*, and so deep was his desire of an entire renewal that he took for his motto, Isa. i. 25, ✓ 'I will purely purge thy dross, and take away all thy (bedel) tin.' He lived from 1570 to 1642, and, when he died in the midst of these troubles, the Irish had such regard for him that they fired a volley at his interment, and cried, *Requiescat in pace ultimus Anglorum*.

The French Protestants, in the time of their persecution, had psalms adapted to their varied circumstances. The 3rd Psalm was for the stationing of sentinels to

keep watch against sudden attack; when the danger was over, and they could worship in safety, they sang Psalm 122nd.

Psalm 4.

Augustine quotes this psalm as of special value, and worthy to be sung aloud before the whole world for an expression of Christian courage, and a testimony of the peace God can give in outward and inward trouble (*Conf.* ix. 4). 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.'

James Melville quoted it, among others, when he was dying. 'This being done, he comforteth himself with sundrie speeches out of the Psalms, quhilk he rehearsit in Hebrew; as, namely, ane speech out of Psalm 4th, "Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me." Psalm 27th, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, quhat can I fear?" Psalm 23rd, "Albeit I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear none evil, because God is with me." The candell being behind back, he desired that it should be brought before him, that he might see to die. By occasioun thereof, he remembered that Scripture, Psalm 18th, "The Lord will lighten my candell; He will enlighten my darkness."'

Psalm 6.

This psalm might have a history to itself. It has a wail of pain and sorrow, deepening into anguish, running through it; but comfort dawns at the close, like an angel turning the key of the prison. It is the first of the seven penitential psalms, the others being the 32nd, 38th, 51st, 102nd, 130th, 143rd. One of the strangest things, though not the happiest, in its records is, that, along with Psalm 142nd, it was the choice of Catherine de Medici, the Jezebel and Athaliah of the French monarchy. She was irreligious and superstitious, profligate and devoured by ambition; and the fact that she had no children, seemed likely to deprive her of the control which she hoped to gain in the counsels of the kingdom. The psalm was the expression of mere worldly disappointment. She became at last the mother of Francis II. (the first husband of Mary Stuart) and of Charles IX., whose character she corrupted by ministering to his vices, and whom she urged to the massacre of St. Bartholomew. 'Her desire was realized,' says a French historian, 'for the misery of France; and that family, which then took pleasure in the Psalms, put to death thousands of the Reformed for singing them.'

It has a more pleasing association with another princess, allied to the French royal family. Elizabeth Charlotte was niece of Sophia, Electress of Hanover,

and grand-daughter of Elizabeth Stuart, after whom she was named. She had remarkable abilities, and was carefully educated by her aunt Sophia, under the eye of the great Leibnitz. Her father, the Elector Palatine, constrained her to a marriage with the Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV., in the hope that the union might save his principality from the aggression of the French king. But it helped Louis to fresh claims; and, when her beautiful native land, beside the Rhine and Neckar, was wasted by the French armies, its towns laid in ashes, the Castle of Heidelberg, the home of her childhood, undermined and shattered, and the people she loved driven out in winter to die houseless and famishing, she could not sleep for the visions of havoc, and for the thought that she had been cruelly sacrificed to a vain policy. Her letters, lately published, are deeply interesting for the light they throw on the time, and on the Court of France. Her heart went back to her early Protestant faith, and to the old Castle of Osnabruck, where she had spent her happiest days with her aunt. In a letter to her she relates an incident connected with this psalm. She was walking one day in the orangery at Versailles, and was singing it in the translation of Clement Marot, as an expression of her feelings. A noted artist of the time, warmly attached in heart to the Reformed religion, was engaged in painting the roof, and heard her. Scarcely,' she writes, 'had I finished the first verse,

when I saw M. Rousseau hasten down the ladder and fall at my feet. I thought he was mad, and said, "Rousseau, Rousseau, what is the matter?" He replied, "Is it possible, madam, that you still recollect our psalms and sing them? May God bless you, and keep you in this good mind." He had tears in his eyes.' It is interesting to know that Louis XIV., broken-hearted in his old age by defeats and disappointments, recognised her worth, and leaned on her for comfort.

Another woman, of our own time, with trials in a different position, and yet like in kind to those of Elizabeth Charlotte, has put her heart into some of the words. The wife of Thomas Carlyle inserts verses 2-4 in her *Journal*, 1855, when in sore trouble of body and mind, amid weakness and weariness, sleepless nights and wounded feelings. 'Oh, dear! I wish this Grange business were well over. It occupies me (the mere preparation for it) to the exclusion of all quiet thought and placid occupation. To have to care for my dress, this time of day, more than I ever did when young and pretty and happy (God bless me, to think I was once all that!), on penalty of being regarded as a blot on the Grange gold and azure, is really too bad. *Ach Gott!* if we had been left in the sphere of life we belong to, how much better it would have been for us in many ways! Ah, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak as water. To-day I walked with effort one little mile,

and thought it a great feat. Sleep has come to look to me the highest virtue and the greatest happiness; that is, good sleep, untroubled, beautiful, like a child's. Ah me! "Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long?"

This same verse 3 was the common expression of Calvin when he was in trouble, '*Tu Domine usque quo?*' 'Thou, O Lord, how long?' and parts of the psalm, with the last verse of Psalm 70th, were among the dying words of Robert Rollock, the first Principal of the University of Edinburgh, a man remarkable for power of administration and deep piety.

Psalm 9.

Five scholars of Lausanne, devoted to the Reformation, were taken in France, A.D. 1553, and burned in the Place des Terreaux at Lyons. As they were being carried to execution, they sang with a loud voice this psalm, '*De tout mon cœur, t'exalterai, Seigneur.*' 'I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart. . . . When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.' At this time, by a decree of Pope Paul IV., began that reign of terror, under the treacherous and cruel Guises, which lasted nearly till a different terror, its daughter and Nemesis, took its place.

Psalm 11.

When John Welsh and his fellow-captives were summoned from their prison in Blackness, on the Firth of Forth, to appear before the Court at Linlithgow, they sang this psalm as they walked by night under guard to their trial. In the old version, which they used, it stands :—

- ‘ I trust in God, how dare ye then
Say thus my soul untill ;
Flee hence as fast as any fowle,
And hide you in your hill ?
- ‘ Behold, the wicked bend their bowes,
And make their arrows prest (ready)
To shoot in secret, and to hurt
The sound and harmless breast.
- ‘ But he that in his temple is
Most holy and most hie,
And in the heavens hath his seat
Of royal majestie,
- ‘ The poor and simple man’s estate
Considereth in his mind ;
And searcheth out full narrowly
The manners of mankind.’

While they were lying in their dungeon, deep and dark, below the level of the sea, they received a letter from Lady Melville, of Culross, one of the best women of her time, bidding them be thankful that they were

only 'in the darkness of Blackness, and not in the blackness of darkness.'

They were at length banished 'forth the kingdom,' under the arbitrary government of James VI., who was bent upon the establishment of Episcopacy. Calderwood says: 'Upon the 6th of Nov. 1606, about the evening, when they were ready to embark, Mr. John Welsh conceived a fervent prayer, on the shore of Leith, and they took good-night of their friends, wives, and acquaintances, and entered in the boat; and after they had waited a good space upon the skipper, because he was not ready, they returned by two hours in the morning, at which time many were present. After prayer, they entered in the boat, with singing the 23rd Psalm. The people were much moved, and prayed heartily for them.'

§ Psalm 12.

An old writer tells that a ship, with exiles for religion, was driven on the coast of Barbary, in a night of fearful storm, when they had nothing before them but death among the waves, or captivity among the Moors. They sang together the 12th Psalm, and when they reached the 5th verse, the ship went to pieces, most of them perishing in the sea, or rather passing through it to life and liberty.

The 5th verse was the text of the sermon preached by Dr. Fabricius before Gustavus Adolphus, when he

took Augsburg after a severe fight, in which the honour of the day was given by the king to the Scottish Brigade under Colonel Hepburn. A solemn thanksgiving was held in the principal church, and religious liberty was proclaimed in the city of the famous Confession, while the ferocious Tilly, after his defeat, retired breathing out threatenings and slaughter.

Ver. 5. 'For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.'

Psalm 15.

John Wilson (Christopher North), in his *Light and Shadows of Scottish Life*, chooses this psalm to be sung at the 'elder's death-bed,' for 'it was an old custom in Scotland that the ransomed of the Lord returned and came to Zion with songs.' It is a description of a class of men who, for centuries, and in every rank of life, have been an honour and strength to their Church and country.

'Within thy tabernacle, Lord,
 Who shall abide with thee?
 And in thy high and holy hill
 Who shall a dweller be?
 The man that walketh uprightly,
 And worketh righteousness,
 And as he thinketh in his heart,
 So doth he truth express.'

Psalm 16.

This psalm was the last Scripture read by Hugh McKail, the evening before his execution in the Grass-market of Edinburgh. After reading it he said to his father, and those about him: 'If there were anything in this world sadly and unwillingly to be left, it were the reading of the Scriptures. I said "*I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living.*" But 'his needs not make us sad; for, where we go, the Lamb is the book of Scripture, and the light of that city, and, where he is, there is life,—even the river of the water of life, and living springs.'

He was a young man of fervid poetic nature, with much ability and culture, was educated at the University of Edinburgh and in Holland, and was licensed to preach at the time of the treacherous overturn of the constitution of the Church of Scotland by Charles II., Middleton, and Sharp. His last sermon in the High Church of Edinburgh was preached while 400 Presbyterian ministers were being driven from their churches, September 8, 1662. Speaking of the persecutions of the Church, he said: 'She had suffered from an Ahab on the throne, a Haman in the State, and a Judas in the Church;' which last was taken to himself by Sharp, for whose part in his trial, see McCrie's *Notes to the Life of Kitch*. The torture of the boot, and his weak state of health, seemed likely

to end his days before he came to the scaffold, and he wrote these lines:—

‘Vita ergo innumeris curarum erroribus acta
Clausula consimilis perbreve finit iter,
Distrahor ambigui dubio discrimine fati;
Æger enim jaceo; sin revalesco, cado,’—

which may be freely rendered—

‘To right, to left, where’er I turn mine ear,
My parting knell, on either side, I hear;
My deepening sickness leads me to death’s gates,
And for returning health the scaffold waits.’

No painter has chosen this for his subject like the ‘Last Evening of the Girondists;’ and yet it is surely as interesting to see a young man, in the first bloom of youth, inditing an epigram with the scholarship that had descended from George Buchanan, and rising to the joy that comes from a higher source. It is the more necessary to advert to this view of Hugh McKail’s character, because he is the chief figure in a picture of the Covenanters, given by Sir Walter Scott, who, unfortunately, with all his generous sympathy, was unfitted partly by taste, and more by education, for appreciating this side of Scottish history.

As in all deeply tender natures, Hugh McKail had his vein of humour. Being asked, on one occasion, how his tortured leg was, he replied, ‘The fear of my neck maketh me forget my leg;’ and then, reverting to the lamentations of some of the women, he said,

'that though in years he was young, and but in the budding of his ministry, yet he was not to be mourned, for one drop of his blood, through the grace of God, might make more hearts contrite than many years' sermons might have done.' And so, indeed, it came to pass.

Psalm 17.

'But as for me, I thine own face
In righteousness will see ;
And with thy likeness, when I wake,
I satisfied shall be.'

Alexander Hume of Hume closed his life by singing this verse before being executed at Edinburgh in 1682. His death was one of the most cruel judicial murders of the time, and was resolved on to strike terror into men of position and property, who might be inclined to the popular cause. He was known to be attached to the Presbyterian interest, and attended some of the proscribed meetings. His wife, Isabel Hume, appealed on the day of his execution to Lady Perth, and begged her to interpose for her husband's life, and for the sake of her five young children. She was rudely repulsed, his estate was forfeited, and his wife and children exposed to great privation till the Revolution. A fine paper drawn up by him, just before his death, is given by Wodrow, iii. 418.

This Earl of Perth suppressed an influential petition in favour of Hume. When James became king,

Perth declared himself a Roman Catholic, was created a duke, adhered faithfully to his royal master's cause, and retired with him to France, where he ended his days, and had his body deposited in the Scots College, beside James' heart; till another Revolution, wilder than that which banished them, cast forth their relics, 'no marble tells us whither.' Only the Epitaph remains in which James is described as wise and pious like David, William is Absalom, and Carstares and the rest are Achitophels. The son of this Perth, also called Duke, came over with the Chevalier in 1715, and so harried the districts of Strathearn and Strathallan that his name still lives in local rhyme, -

‘O Marshal Duke of Perth!
 You're the plague of all the earth—
 You breed hunger and great death
 Where you go.’

This is far enough away from good Alexander Hume, and his death-song on the scaffold, and we may return to it by saying that his descendants still hold their place in Berwickshire.

Psalm 18.

This psalm is connected, at an early period, with the history of France, in a way which illustrates the spirit of the time. The practice of divination which once employed the writings of Virgil for reading the fates of the future, changed to the Psalter, when David

took his place above the Sibyl. Clovis, the founder of the French monarchy, whose name in the form of Louis has descended to so many kings, was marching southward from Paris, A.D. 507, to meet the formidable Visigoths in battle. Anxious to forecast the result, he sent messengers to consult the shrine of St. Martin of Tours, the oracle of Gaul. They were told to mark the words of the psalm chanted, when they entered the church. These were vers. 39, 40, and encouraged Clovis to the step which proved decisive in French history :

‘ I have wounded them that they were not able to rise ; they are fallen under my feet.

‘ For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle ; thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.’

For a very different purpose, and to point the way to a nobler victory, the words from vers. 17–19 were sung upon the scaffold by four sons of the Huguenots, many centuries afterwards :

‘ He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me : for they were too strong for me.

‘ They prevented me in the day of my calamity : but the Lord was my stay.

‘ He brought me forth also into a large place ; he delivered me because he delighted in me.’

They were sung by the last martyrs of the desert, Francis Rochette, and three brothers of the name of Grenier, who suffered as late as 1762, under the reign of Louis XV. Rochette was executed first, and exhorted

his companions to endure to the end. 'Die a Catholic,' the executioner said. 'Judge,' Rochette answered, 'which is the better religion, the one which persecutes, or the one which suffers.' The youngest of the brothers Grenier, who was only twenty years of age, held his hands before his face during the tragic scene. The other two looked on with unmoved countenance. They embraced one another, and commended their souls to God. The eldest first laid his head on the block. When the turn of the youngest came, the executioner, moved with pity, said, 'You have seen your brothers perish; change your religion that you may be spared.' 'Do your duty,' the young man said, and his head was severed from his body. The words of De Pressensé about this period are worthy of quotation:—

'In the land warmed by the burning sun of the South, planted with the pale and sad-coloured olive, the stones cry out, for they have been watered by precious blood; and they proclaim the unconquerable fidelity of our fathers to their faith. Near to Nimes, in a solitary spot, there is to be seen the cave where the assemblies of the desert were held. The height is pointed out where the sentinel was placed who had to announce to the worshippers the approach of the dragoons of Louis XIV. At Nimes itself, the tomb of Paul Rabaut, the re-organizer of the persecuted and scattered churches of the eighteenth century, was lately discovered. It was transported to the centre of

the Cevennes, near the house of the celebrated Cevenol chief, Roland, who, more than once, with a handful of brave mountaineers, put to flight the army of "*the great monarch*." That house has been rebuilt by subscription, and it remains a monument of one of the most heroic struggles ever maintained for liberty of conscience. Another touching memorial of the time is the tower of Constance at Aigues-Mortes. The town of Aigues-Mortes, built by Saint Louis, on the model of Damietta, after his return from the first Crusade, has not been touched by modern civilisation. It remains what it was in the thirteenth century, behind its bastioned walls, on the brink of a dark stagnant water. All is sad and silent. Here is the famous tower of Constance, which served as a prison for the Protestant ladies who refused conversion to Catholicism. Some remained nearly forty years in this sepulchre, without seeing or hearing from a single friend. Such a captivity is worse than all deaths of torture, worse than to be cast, like Blandina, to perish by the teeth of lions. The names of those holy women may now be read on the walls of their prison, and the old Psalms of the French Reformation are sung from time to time by the children of the Huguenots who visit the spot.'

Psalm 20.

The famous physician, Sir James Y. Simpson, was one of a family which had the privilege of a pious mother,

She was early left a widow, and had many a perplexing thought and sore struggle in providing bread for her household. When she was hard pressed with thinking and toiling, and could not see her way through, she used to sit down and repeat the 20th Psalm. She rose refreshed, and her children learned to call it 'mother's psalm.'

‘Jehovah hear thee in the day
When trouble he doth send ;
And let the name of Jacob's God
Thee from all ill defend.
O let him help send from above,
Out of his sanctuary :
From Zion, his own holy hill,
Let him give strength to thee.’

On March 9, 1839, the sides of a coal pit, called ‘The High Pressure,’ near Musselburgh, Midlothian, fell in, and the shaft was filled up with earth, imprisoning thirteen people. After trying in vain every means of exit by abandoned shafts, they retired to a narrow space which had been hollowed out of the coal seam, 18 ft. by 24 ft., and 3½ ft. in height. Here they sat down, and prepared for death. They held a prayer-meeting, which they began by singing together the first four verses of this psalm. They were all calmed and strengthened, and conversed on the Scriptures, the state of their souls, and their hopes for another world, now and then pathetically referring to their loved ones at home. After long suspense, they were delivered

almost by miracle, and the last verse of their song seemed prophetic :

‘ In thy salvation we will joy ;
In our God’s name we will
Display our banners ; and the Lord
Thy prayers all fulfil.’

Psalm 21.

‘ The king in thy great strength, O Lord,
Shall very joyful be ;
In thy salvation rejoice
How veh’mently shall he !’

A noble coronation psalm when raised to the praise of him who has a right sceptre and an eternal throne. It was sung throughout England by the over-trustful Presbyterians at the restoration of Charles II. They afterwards mildly characterized it as a day when the bitter was mingled with the sweet. The most ignoble part of the history of British Presbyterianism was from 1650 to 1660 ; in Scotland even more than in England. During those years it was struggling to have the liberty of the Church secured on an impossible basis, and shutting its eyes to the profligacy and perfidy of the worst of the Stuarts. Such a psalm applied to such a monarch looks like a hideous parody. It needed twenty-eight years of persecution unto death to wipe out the stains, and to vindicate the claim of the true King whose right it is.

Henry of Navarre, in an hour of remorse, and in a dark and wintry night, fled from Paris, and joined the Protestants assembled at Alençon (see Psalm lxxxviii.). The next morning he went to divine service, and the 21st Psalm, giving the picture of a true king, was sung. He asked if it had been selected on his account, and, finding that it came in regular course, he was much impressed. Unhappily, like his grandson, our Charles II., he did not preserve his good impressions when on the throne.

Psalm 22.

Vers. 4, 5. ‘Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.’ These words were conjoined with one of the most celebrated *antiphones*, or responsive chants of the middle ages: *Medii vitæ in morte sumus*. —‘In the midst of life we are in death.’ It has been transferred to the Anglican litany, and is known throughout Germany in Luther’s version, ‘*Mitten wir in Leben sind, Mit dem Tod umfungen.*’ The original Latin hymn, in which the words of the Psalm find a place, is attributed to Notker, of the great Abbey of St. Gall in Switzerland, who died A.D. 912. The Huns at that time were the terror of Europe, having penetrated to the heart of Germany, and the hymn was used in battle against them. Afterwards it was applied to

such superstitious ends, that special permission was required for its use. 'In the midst of life we are in death,' is said to have been suggested to Notker's mind from the sight of the perilous position of some men who were throwing a bridge over a frightful chasm in the Alps, as Wesley's visit to Land's End suggested his hymn,

'Lo! on a narrow neck of land,
'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand.'

We may claim a distant connection with the hymn of Notker, from the fact that St. Gall was founded A.D. 614 by Celtic missionaries, in the midst of what was then a pathless forest on the shores of Lake Constance, and that they made it a centre for carrying the light of the Gospel north and south among the Gothic race, as their brethren at home did among the heathen Saxons who landed on our eastern coasts. One of the most curious things preserved in the monastery is a vocabulary of the Celtic and Gothic words employed to qualify them for their work.

Psalm 23.

'The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green: he leadeth me
The quiet waters by.'

Every line, every word of it, has been engraven for generations on Scottish hearts, has accompanied them

from childhood to age, from their homes to all the seas and lands where they have wandered, and has been to a multitude no man can number, the rod and staff of which it speaks, to guide and guard them in dark valleys, and, at last, through the darkest. And in many a tongue besides, it has shown its power when the 'Good Shepherd' speaks through it to those who know his voice. Its history sparkles to the daylight in numerous records, and it would be longer if we could follow it into all the secret, but not sunless, resting-places in hidden hearts, which only the day of God will declare. The 6th Psalm may be called a well of Marah into which the tree is at last thrown which sweetens the waters. This, from first to last, is as the waters of Siloa that go softly, having its source in the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

At Psalm 11th is mentioned the case of six ministers who were taken from Blackness prison to be judged at Linlithgow. Row, the historian, tells us 'that they were afterwards brought to Leith, and there, the ship being ready and many attending their embarking, they fell down upon their knees upon the shore, and prayed several times very fervently, moving all the multitude about to tears in abundance, and to lamentation; and, after they had sung the 23rd Psalm joyfully, taking their leave of their brethren and acquaintances, passed to the ship, and re-encountering with a stormy tempest, so that they sailed that night no further but over to

the other side of the water ; but then, upon the morn, getting a fair wind, were safely transported and landed in France.'

Calderwood tells us that it was John Welsh who prayed, and that the parting psalm, the 23rd, was sung at two in the morning, and that many people accompanied them to the boat, much moved, and praying heartily for them. A parting this which reminds us of another long before, on the shore of Miletus. John Welsh, the son-in-law of John Knox, who took a prominent part then and afterwards in the Reformed Church, both in Scotland and France, was the first graduate and licensed preacher sent out by the University of Edinburgh. He never returned to Scotland after this banishment, but he preached to thirty of his old congregation from Ayr, who visited him at Rochelle as a deputation—a wonderful token of attachment, when we think of the distance at that time. It may be interesting to give the old version of the psalm as it was sung on Leith shore :—

1 'The Lord is only my support,
And he that doth me feede ;
How can I then lack anie thing
Whereof I stand in need ?

2 'He doth me fold in coates most safe,
The tender grass fast by ;
And after driv'th me to the streams
Which run most pleasantly.

- 3 'And when I feel myself near lost,
Then doth he me home take ;
Conducting me in his right paths
Even for his own name's sake.
- 4 'And though I were even at death's door,
Yet would I fear none ill ;
For by thy rod, and shepherd's crook,
I am comforted still.
- 5 'Thou hast my table richly deckt
In despite of my foe ;
Thou hast my head with balm refresht,
My cup doth overflow.
- 6 'And, finally, while breath doth last,
Thy grace shall me defend ;
And in the house of God will I
My life for ever spend.'

Marion Harvey, a servant girl in Borrowstounness, twenty years of age, was executed at Edinburgh in 1681 for hearing Donald Cargill, and for helping his escape at South Queensferry. When annoyed on her way to the scaffold, by the curate who wished to thrust his prayers on her and her fellow-sufferer, she said, 'Come, Isabel, let us sing the 23rd Psalm,' which they did ; and having come to the scaffold, and sung the 84th Psalm, she said, 'I am come here to-day for avowing Christ to be Head of his Church, and King in Zion. O seek him, sirs, seek him, and ye shall find him.'

Isabel Alison, who suffered with her, belonged to

Perth, and lived very privately till she was apprehended for having heard Donald Cargill, and for refusing the test. On the scaffold she said, 'Farewell all created comforts; farewell sweet Bible in which I delighted most, and which has been sweet to me since I came to prison; farewell Christian acquaintances; now into thy hands I commit my spirit, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' Whereupon the hangman threw her over.

No execution of those cruel times seems to have excited a deeper interest and sympathy throughout the country. Lord Fountainhall, a well-known judge of the period, twice notices their end, and tries to excuse the sentence. In his *Observes* he says, 'There were hanged at Edinburgh two women of ordinary rank, for their uttering treasonable words and other principles and opinions contrary to all our government. They were of Cameron's faction. At the scaffold, one of them told, so long as she followed and heard the curates, she was a swearer, Sabbath-breaker, and with much aversion read the Scriptures, but found much joy upon her spirit since she followed the conventicle preaching.'

When Edward Irving was on his deathbed, he repeated the 23rd Psalm in Hebrew. His last words were, 'In life and in death I am the Lord's.' He had the conviction for a time that he would certainly remain till the coming of Christ; but he realized at length the approach of death. Christians may be reconciled to this necessity by the knowledge 'that they who are

alive and remain shall not prevent (anticipate) those who are asleep.' There is, in truth, a sense in which dying is the higher part ; it makes us more conformable in our history to Christ himself. That was a noble saying of James Guthrie, when, being told that he was to be hanged while Argyle was to be beheaded, he said, 'I am willing to suffer on a tree like my Lord and Master.'

Ver. 4. 'Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,' were the dying words of the great Scottish philosopher, Sir William Hamilton.

When Dr. Alexander Duff, the Indian missionary was travelling in the Himalayas, he saw a native shepherd followed by his flock. The man frequently stopped and looked back. If he saw a sheep drawing too near the edge of the precipice, he would go back and apply his crook to one of the hind legs, and gently pull it back till the animal joined the rest. Going up to the shepherd, he noticed that he had a long rod, as tall as himself, and twisted round the lower half, a thick bar of iron. The region was infested with wolves and other dangerous animals, which in the night-time prowled about the place where the sheep lay. With his long rod the shepherd could strike the animal such a blow as would make it flee. This brought to the remembrance of the traveller the expression of David the shepherd, 'Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,' and saved it, as he thought, from the charge of tautology, the staff referring to

God's hold of the sheep, the rod to his defence against enemies. When he himself lay dying, and apparently unconscious (Feb. 1878), his daughter repeated to him the 23rd Psalm, and he responded at the end of each verse.

Poor desolate and afflicted Heinrich Heine, who had been a pantheist and a scoffer, alternately or combined, was laid for years on what he called his *mattress sepulchre*, and took to reading the Bible, especially the Psalms. One of the very last of his poems, addressed to his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, bears traces of the shepherd-song of God's flock, and if it wants the sparkle and point of his early genius, it is redeemed by its softened tenderness. It begins thus:—

‘My arm grows weak ; Death comes apace,
 Death pale and grim ; and I no more
 Can guard my lamb as heretofore.
 O God ! into thy hands I render
 My crook ; keep thou my lambkin tender.
 When I in peace have laid me down,
 Keep thou my lamb, and do not let
 A single thorn her bosom fret,
 And guide where pastures green and sweet
 Refresh the wanderer's weary feet.’

Psalm 24.

The psalm of the *Lord the Shepherd* is followed by that of the *Lord the King*, for the door of mercy leads

into the throne-room of power, and places those who enter by it under the shadow of the Almighty.

The father of the celebrated Principal Carstares, the restorer of the Scottish Church at the Revolution, was a man of warm devotional character, and suffered severely in the time of the twenty-eight years' persecution. Woodrow (*Analista*) tells of him: 'He was doing duty at the Sacrament for a brother minister at Calder. Upon the Sabbath he was wonderfully assisted in his first prayer, and had a strange gale through all the sermon, and there was a remarkable emotion among the hearers. He gave out for singing part of the 24th Psalm:'

'He from th' Eternal shall receive
The blessing him upon,
And righteousness, ev'n from the God
Of his salvation.
This is the generation
That after him inquire,
O Jacob, who do seek thy face,
With their whole heart's desire.'

While singing these and the following verses, the narrator says 'he came to the communion tables, and all in the assembly were marvellously affected, glory seeming to fill that house. He served the first table in a kind of rapture, and he called some ministers there to the next, but he was in such a frame that none of them ventured to come and take the work off his hands. He continued at the work with the

greatest enlargement and melting, upon himself and all present, that could be, and served fourteen or sixteen tables. A Christian that had been at the table and obliged to come out of the church, pressing to be in again, stood without the door, and said he was rapt in the thought of the glory that was in that house for near half-an-hour, and got leave scarce to think upon any other thing.'

It seems to have been a movement similar to that which took place at Kirk of Shotts under John Livingstone, and is evidence of the great wave of religious feeling which was then sweeping over Scotland—a preparation for the furnace heated seven times, which the church was about to enter. The spring-tide of it can be best seen in the most remarkable book of the time—*Rutherford's Letters*.

Protestant worship was never authorized in Paris, or its neighbourhood, till the Edict of Nantes, 1598. In that year, Catherine of Navarre assembled a large company in the Palace of the Louvre, which had been the centre of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. The psalm first sung was the 24th, and with deep feeling the escaped remnant sang, 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.' They were not long allowed such a meeting-place, but they found rest, for a time, elsewhere.

Psalm 25.

‘My sins and faults of youth
Do thou, O Lord, forget :
After thy mercy think on me,
And for thy goodness great.’

Touching words in themselves, and surely never more so than when they began the dying-song of Margaret Wilson, while the sea was rising round her at the mouth of the water of Blednoch, by Wigtown. She was twenty years of age, blameless and gentle, but had been in the habit of attending field and house conventicles, and refused to take the test. For these things she was condemned to be drowned along with an elderly woman, named Margaret Lachlan, accused of the same offences. They were tied to stakes within the tide-mark, where the waters of the Solway come up swift and strong into the channel of the Blednoch. The older woman was placed farther from the bank, that the sight of her struggles might terrify the younger, and cause her to give way. But she was faithful to the death.

‘O do thou keep my soul,
Do thou deliver me :
And let me never be a ham’d,
Because I trust in thee.’

Desperate efforts were made to cast discredit on the narrative in Napier’s *Life of Claverhouse*, but the

question has been set at rest by the book of Dr. Stewart of Glasserton, *The Wigtown Martyrs*. The two women are buried in the churchyard a little above the place where they were drowned, and descendants of the family to which Margaret Wilson belonged are to be found near Glenvernoch, on the water of Cree, where she lived.

Psalm 26.

Vers. 8-12. 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men. . . . But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity; redeem me, and be merciful unto me. My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the Lord.'

After the revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685, by Louis XIV., the Protestant ministers were expelled from France, but the people were forbidden to leave, and all the highways and byways were jealously watched to prevent them. Fines, imprisonment, tortures, were then employed to make them renounce their religion, and their children were taken from them to be brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. Despair drove the Protestants to attempt every means of escape. They took refuge among the mountains and woods, hiding by day, and fleeing by night to reach the frontiers. The most industrious

and intelligent of her population left France, and inflicted on her a loss from which she has not yet recovered. The stories of some of these refugees are of the most thrilling kind. When they reached a friendly land, they thanked God with ecstasy for the safety and freedom their own country denied them. Pineton of Chambrun, one of these exiles, tells that when he and his companions came in sight of Geneva, they sang with tears of joy this psalm, from verse 8 to the close, every word of which seems made for such a case.

Psalm 27.

India was still heaving with the ground-swell of the terrible mutiny of 1857, when the wife of Sir John Lawrence was called home to her children in England, and had to leave her husband, who could not quit his post, surrounded by the smouldering embers which might, at any moment, rekindle into flame, and worn to exhaustion with the anxiety and labour which did so much for the preservation of the Indian empire.

She thus writes, ‘When the last morning of separation, Jan. 6, 1858, arrived, we had our usual Bible reading, and I can never think of the 27th Psalm, which was the portion we then read together, without recalling that sad time.’ In perusing the psalm, one can see what springs of comfort must have opened in every verse, from the beginning to the close:—

‘The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? . . . For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. . . I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.’

Psalm 29.

In some of the old versions of the Psalter, in the seventeenth century, there is an arrangement of a number of the psalms according to the months of the year, forming what may be called a Calendar of nature yielding its fruit of praise every month. The 29th is taken for July, the season of thunderstorms, for, in this psalm, seven thunders utter their voices. April has the latter part of the 65th; and the showers and springing verdure of May have the 104th, vers. 13, 14. Psalm 90th, in December, suggests the flight of time, and the 147th, vers. 16, 17, is chosen for the snow and ice of January.

Psalm 30.

Among those who suffered in the Netherlands, during the fierce governorship of the cruel Alva, was one

John Herwin. 'In prison,' says the chronicler of the time, 'he was wont to recreate himself by singing of psalms, and the people used to flock together to the prison door to hear him. At the place of execution, one gave him his hand and comforted him. Then began he to sing the 30th Psalm. A friar interrupted him, but Herwin quickly finished his psalm, many joining with him in singing of it. Then he said to the people, "I am now going to be sacrificed; follow you me when God of his goodness shall call you to it." And so he was first strangled, and then burnt to ashes. Think of the faith which could look through death, and close his song and his life, with the words, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever."'

Verse 5 was among the latest sayings of Dr. John Brown, the commentator, as he repeated it, 'His anger is for a moment: his favour is for a life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'

Psalm 31.

This psalm sparkles all through with lamps, which have lighted the steps of men in dark places. Above all, the 5th verse has given the closing words to many a life. It was one of the seven sayings on the

cross, and the last — ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.’ It was the dying word of Stephen, addressed to Christ himself, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ It was the parting word of Luther, of Knox, of John Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of Julian Palmer, one of the noted martyrs in the reign of the English Mary, of Francis Teissier, the first martyr of the ‘Desert,’ who ascended the scaffold singing it, in 1686, and of countless more. ‘The Lord himself gave the word, and great has been the company of those who published it.’ No watchword of the Captain of salvation has been taken up by so many sons whom he has led to glory through the valley of the shadow of death. Let us try to catch more fully the accents of some of them.

On the 6th of July 1415, the anniversary of his birth, John Huss was burned to death in a field near the ancient city of Constance. He had come there from Bohemia, under a warrant of safety from the hand of the Emperor Sigismund, for the violation of which the pope granted absolution, pressing it on the reluctant monarch. The doctrines for which Huss was condemned were essentially those which Luther proclaimed a century later. A brass tablet let into the floor of the cathedral marks the spot where Huss stood, while seven bishops removed his priestly dress piece by piece, and placed on his head a paper crown painted with demons. They addressed him, ‘We deliver thy soul to Satan.’ ‘But I,’ he said, ‘commend

it into thy hands, Lord Jesus Christ, who hast redeemed me.' When taken to the place of execution he fell on his knees, and repeated in prayer some of the psalms, especially the 51st and 53rd. He was heard to repeat frequently the words, 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth.' When he arose, he said, 'Lord Jesus Christ, stand by me, that, by thy and thy Father's help, I may endure this painful and shameful death which I suffer for thy word.' When the fire was kindled he cried three times, 'Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me.' At the third time his voice was stifled by the smoke, but they saw his lips still moving. His ashes were cast into the Rhine, and for a century it seemed as if fire and water had triumphed over truth.

Luther died in 1546. His last words were, 'O my heavenly Father, the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all consolation, I give thee thanks that thou hast revealed to me thy dear Son Jesus Christ, in whom I believe, whom I have preached and confessed, whom I have loved and honoured. I pray thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, to take my soul into thy keeping.' Then he said thrice, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth;' and, without a struggle, he yielded up his breath.

John Knox died on the 24th Nov. 1572, when dark clouds were gathering round the Reformed

Churches, at home and abroad, after the terrible massacre of St. Bartholomew. On Friday, 21st, he ordered his coffin to be made, and was much engaged all day in meditation and prayer. These words were often in his mouth, 'Come, Lord Jesus. Sweet Jesus, into thy hands I commit my spirit. Be merciful, Lord, to thy Church which thou hast redeemed. Give peace to this afflicted Commonwealth. Raise up faithful pastors who will take the charge of thy Church.' From this time till his death his pious ejaculations were so many, that those who waited on him could remember only a small part; for he was seldom silent, except when they were employed in reading or prayer. On Monday the 24th he said, 'Now, for the last time, I commend my spirit, soul, and body,' touching three of his fingers, 'into thy hand, O Lord.' About eleven o'clock at night he gave a deep sigh, and said, '*Now, it is come.*' Richard Bannatyne, his faithful attendant, immediately drew near, and desired him to think upon those comfortable promises of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which he had so often declared to others; and, perceiving that he was speechless, requested him to give them a sign that he heard them, and that he died in peace. Upon this he lifted up one of his hands, and, sighing twice, expired.

Nearly a century after this, on a dark morning, Dec. 22, 1666, the words were the parting-song of Hugh McKail, at the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, in the version now used in Scotland,—

‘Into thine hands I do commit
My spirit : for thou art he,
O thou, Jehovah, God of truth,
Who hast redeemed me.’

We have already, at Psalm 16th, spoken of his imprisonment. He was among those who came from the west before the fight at Pentland, but wishful to enter Edinburgh on a mission to friends, he was taken at Braid's Craigs, and, after suffering the torture of the boot, was condemned to death. ‘About two of the clock,’ says the narrative, ‘he was carried to the scaffold with five others, who suffered with him, where he appeared to the conviction of all that formerly knew him, with a fairer, better, and more staid countenance than ever they had before observed. Being come to the foot of the ladder, he directed his speech northward to the multitude, saying that “as his years in the world had been few (only twenty-six), so his words at that time should not be many.” Having done speaking to the people, who heard him with great attention, he sang a part of the 31st Psalm, and then prayed with such power and fervency as forced many to weep bitterly. Having ended, he gave his cloak and hat from him ; and when he turned himself and took hold of the ladder to go up, he said, with an audible voice, “I care no more to go up this ladder, and over it, than if I were going home to my father's house.” As he went up, hearing a great noise among the people, he called down to his fellow-

sufferers, "Friends and fellow-sufferers, be not afraid! Every step of this ladder is a degree nearer heaven." His farewell address is known to all acquainted with Scottish history, and is one of the most rapt and seraphic of that fervid time. Death touched his lips with a live coal from the altar before it closed them. The deaths of such men produced so much sympathy that at length drums were beat to drown their voice, and the place of execution was transferred to some distance from the city, between Edinburgh and Leith.

Psalm 32.

'Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' This was the favourite Psalm of Augustine. With reference to it he says, '*Intelligentia prima est ut te nôris peccatorem.*' 'The beginning of understanding is to know thyself a sinner.'

When Luther was asked which were the best Psalms, he replied, '*Psalmi Paulini*,' 'The Pauline Psalmus;' and being asked to name them, he gave the 32nd, 51st, 130th, and 143rd. These all belong, it will be observed, to the penitential psalms. Luther's frame of spirit, and his struggle for justification by faith, disposed him to this preference. But the best psalms are those which help us most in our time of need. The heart feels its way to them in extremity, as David's hand to the hilt of Goliath's

sword. 'There is none like that; give it me'—for God's Word is made like the sword at the gate of Eden, 'it turns every way.'

As if to show that the follies of the most frivolous courts cannot shut out the thought from the occasional view of the real and deeper side of life, this psalm is said to have been a favourite with Diana of Poitiers.

Ver. 2 contains the spiritual ideal which quaint old Izaak Walton set up for the model of his life. In closing his biography of Bishop Sanderson, he says: 'Tis now too late to wish that my life may be like his, for I am in the eighty-fifth year of my age; but I humbly beseech Almighty God that my death may be, and I earnestly beg of every reader to say, Amen. 'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and *in whose spirit there is no guile.*'

This psalm was also a favourite with Alexander Peden. There is a distinct region in the south-west of Scotland, from upper Clydesdale and Nithsdale to the Solway, a land of intricate rolling hills, clear streams, remains of ancient forest, with, on the one hand, green smiling valleys that stretch to the sea, and at their heads, on the mountain summits, breadths of waste moorland and labyrinths of bog and morass, the haunts of the curlew and lapwing that break the deep solitude with their wild melancholy cry. It is peculiarly the land of the Covenant, where it stood at bay, and found sympathy in the glens, and, when pursuit was fierce, refuge among the uplands, where

the memories of marvellous escapes and cruel slaughters remain in the grey moss-covered stones which sprinkle the hills.

Where wives and little children
Were faithful unto death,
And graves of martyred heroes
Lie in the desert heath.'

The name of Alexander Peden still flits, as he did himself, over all that wide district, and is attached to points such as Peden's cave, Peden's pulpit, Peden's bed, while his terse sayings, and intuitions into character and events, have procured for him the title of 'the prophet.' His sermons, filled with forebodings of judgment, and tender invitations to take shelter under the wing of mercy, have the effect of a sky traversed by thunder-clouds with interspersed 'glints' of sunshine—the kind of man to be produced when truth is hunted amid dragonnades and deserts. His life was passed among the moors and mists, surrounded by deaths manifold. Men would call it 'charmed;' he would have accounted for it by 'snow and vapours fulfilling his word.' When hard pressed by the troopers, and brought to a breathless stand, he used to pray that God would 'cast the skirt of his cloak over him,' and more than once the cloud which has its home among these hills removed and came between him and his pursuers. He died at last peacefully in one of his hiding-places; but his persecutors took his body and hung it on a gibbet at

Cumnock. It has made the place a burying-ground—*God's Field*—for all the neighbourhood. One little incident of his life in connection with this psalm helps us to come close to him. ‘On one occasion,’ says the narrative, ‘when the service was ended, he and others that were with him lay down in the sheep-house and got some sleep. He rose early, and went up by the burnside and stayed long. When he came in to them, he did sing the 32nd Psalm from the 7th verse to the end.

“Thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt
From trouble keep me free:
Thou with songs of deliverance
About shalt compass me.

“Ye righteous, in the Lord be glad,
In him do ye rejoice:
All ye that upright are in heart,
For joy lift up your voice.”

When he had ended, he repeated the 7th verse again, and said, “These and what follow are sweet lines which I got at the burnside this morning, and I will get more to-morrow, and so we shall have daily provision.”

Psalm 34.

The 34th Psalm is mentioned by Cyril, A.D. 340, and also by Jerome, as being usually sung by the Church of Jerusalem at the time of Communion. It is

appropriate throughout, some of the parts specially so, and it contains the passage which the Evangelist John (xix. 36) applies to our Lord, 'He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.' Error had begun in different ways to creep into the Christian Church, but the memorials of the bread and wine were parted among all, and the thanksgiving of the communion had not passed into the sacrifice of the mass. The efficacy of atonement is ascribed only to the personal work of Christ himself, and such expressions as these occur: 'It is by Jesus Christ we bring this sacrifice of praise in thy name, and in the name of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. O Lord, we render thanks to thee by thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent in the last times to be our Saviour and Redeemer, the Messenger of thy Counsel. It is by him, the Word who comes forth from thee, that thou hast done all.' It may be seen how well this spirit agrees with the burst of gratitude in the opening of the psalm, 'I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.' Sometimes there was added the fervent aspiration of the 42nd Psalm, 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.' It was the love of youth burning all the brighter that it was borne heavenwards by winds of persecution.

Ver. 10. 'The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:

but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,' were the last words written by Columba after he had spent a long life of incessant Christian labour, part of which was given to the transcription of copies of the Psalms and Gospels. Columba's figure in the history of the British Church is the most clear and noble from the entrance of Christianity to the Reformation, with the exception of Bede and Wickliffe; and he surpassed both of these in the missionary ardour he felt and infused into his followers. His position in Scotland is a singular one. He stands among the stormy Hebrides, like one of their lonely lighthouses, upheld by a mighty arm of rock, to cast a sudden gleam over the waters, and draw it back again into the night. But like theirs, too, the light reappears, hidden, but not quenched; or, still more, it is flashed from point to point as time moves on. Placed as he and his disciples were on the known limits of the western world, their zeal turned eastward, and sought a field among the Celtic and Gothic tribes to the very centre of Europe. The endless knot — the peculiar signet mark of Scottish art — is found carved in stone, graven in gold and silver, inscribed on illuminated parchment, and tells at Würzburg, at St. Gall, at Ratisbon, that the foot of the Columban missionary has pressed the heathen soil with the message of the faith. Columba died on the morning of the Lord's day, June 9, A.D. 597, in his beloved Iona.

‘There sleep the saintly dead,
Whom from their island home
The Baptist’s hermit spirit led
O’er moss and moor to roam.
Where, soft as spring-tide dew,
Their gracious speech was heard,
Wild tribes whom Caesar never knew
Bowed captive to the Word.’

The narrative Adamnan gives of his closing hours, of his farewell words with his sorrow-stricken disciples, of his parting with his faithful old horse, which put its head on its master’s breast as if aware of the event, reveals the deep tenderness and humanity of his nature.

When the biographer has lingered lovingly on the little incidents that preceded the death, he continues: ‘After these words he descended the hill, and, having returned to the monastery, sat in his hut transcribing the Psalter; and coming to that verse of the 34th Psalm, where it is written, “They that seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good,” “Here,” said he, “at the end of the page I must stop, and what follows let Baithen write.” The last verse he had written was very applicable to the saint who was about to depart, and to whom eternal good shall never be wanting; while the one that followeth is equally applicable to the father who succeeded him, the instructor of his spiritual children, “Come, ye children, and hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” And indeed he succeeded, as recommended

by him, both in writing the words, and in teaching his disciples.'

Far away from Columba in time, and yet with the same simple faith, two men sang a part of this psalm at the place of execution in Edinburgh, 1679. They were Andrew Sword and John Clyde, countrymen from Galloway, who were condemned for having been at Bothwell, and in penalty for the death of Archbishop Sharp, though neither of them had ever seen him.

Ver. 19. 'The troubles that afflict the just
In number many be ;
But yet at length out of them all
The Lord doth set him free.'

'God hath not promised,' said one of them, 'to keep us from trouble, but to be with us in it, and what needs more ?' I bless the Lord for keeping of me to this very hour ; for little would I have thought a twelvemonth since that the Lord would have taken a poor ploughman lad, and have honoured me so highly as to have made me first appear for him, and then to keep me straight, and now hath kept me to this very hour to lay down my life for him. At the ladder foot, he said to his brother, 'Weep not for me, brother, but weep for yourself and the poor land ; and make him sure for yourself, and he shall be better to you than ten brethren.'

It was surely fire from God's own heaven which

breathed this soul into the mould of a Scottish ploughman.

Psalm 37.

This Psalm was the basis of the hymn of Paul Gerhardt, *Befehl du deine Wege*, which has taken national rank in Germany, next to Luther's *Ein' feste Burg*. It has become well known in the English language through John Wesley's translation:—

‘Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into his hands,
To his sure truth and tender care,
Who heaven and earth commands.’

The story told of its origin is well known. When Paul Gerhardt was banished from Berlin by the Elector of Brandenburg, because he conscientiously refused some conditions attached to his ministry, he turned in with wife and children to a small wayside hostelry, not knowing where to betake himself. Seeing his wife deeply depressed, he quoted to her Psalm xxxvii. 5: ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass;’ and then went out into the garden. There, sitting under an apple tree, he composed the hymn, and read it to his wife for her comfort. That same evening two messengers arrived from Duke Christian of Merseburg to offer him an honourable place in his dominions. There are circumstances which cast doubt on some of

these details, but this is certain, that the hymn was the expression of Paul Gerhardt's character and life; and that it has spoken to the heart of many in troublous times.

It was the custom in some of the high schools in Germany, when pupils were leaving at the close of their course, to accompany them to the gate of the town singing this hymn.

When the first Lutheran church was opened in Philadelphia, in 1743, it was with Gerhardt's song.

When Queen Louisa of Prussia, in 1806, received the news of the disastrous battle of Jena, she sat down, after her first burst of weeping, and sang this hymn softly at the piano; when she rose, her eye was clear and her spirit calm.

This fifth verse was also the frequent promise with which David Livingstone, the African missionary and traveller, encouraged himself in the midst of his wanderings and perils,—a man sprung from the island of Ulva, near Iona, who caught the mantle of Columba, and with it crossed oceans and planted the seeds of Christianity among races first discovered by himself.

Ver. 25 was the promise which Robert Baillie of Jerviswoode left to his young son George, when his estates were confiscated, and he was condemned to death at Edinburgh, December 24, 1684. He was the great-grandson of John Knox, was called the Scottish Sidney, and was feared and hated by the

government of the time for his religious and political opinions, though no unlawful act could be laid to his charge. Dr. John Owen, writing to a friend in Scotland, says of him: 'You have truly men of great spirit among you; there is, for a gentleman, Mr. Baillie of Jerviswoode, a person of the greatest abilities I ever almost met with.' Bishop Burnet says: 'This worthy and learned gentleman was brought to his death in a way so full of the spirit and practice of the Courts of the Inquisition, that one is tempted to think the methods taken were studied in them.' He had a speech prepared for the scaffold, which was erected at the old Cross of Edinburgh, but on beginning, 'My love for the Protestant religion hath brought me to this'—the drums were beat, and he could say no more. In his dying testimony he says, 'I leave my wife and children upon the compassionate and merciful heart of my God, having many reiterated assurances that God will be my God, and the portion of mine.' He bade his son George, who visited him the evening before his execution, trust in the testimony of the psalmist, 'I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' The son proved worthy of the father, rose to high office in the State after the Revolution, and the descendants of Robert Baillie are found among some of the noblest families in the kingdom.

Psalm 39.

Socrates, called *Scholasticus*, an ecclesiastical historian of the fifth century, tells of a plain man named Pambo who came to a learned man, and asked him to teach him some psalm. He began to read to him the 39th: 'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.' Having heard this first sentence, Pambo took his leave, saying he would make this his first lesson. He did not return, and when his teacher met him after the space of two months, and asked him when he would proceed, he replied that he had not yet mastered his first lesson; and he gave the like answer to one who asked the same question forty-nine years after.

A very good illustration of the saying of James, 'The tongue can no man tame;' but Pambo might have succeeded better had he allowed his teacher to go on to ver. 7: 'And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee;' or had he sought, as the apostle describes it, 'the wisdom from above, which is first pure and then peaceable.'

Ver. 9. The last days of Calvin were passed under severe bodily suffering, which forced from him involuntary moans. Those about him heard repeatedly the words of Hezekiah, 'I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward,' followed by those of

this psalm, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth ; because thou didst it.'

When Dr. Thomson, of St. George's, fell dead at the door of his own house in Edinburgh, the blow was thought to be irreparable by the evangelical party in the Church of Scotland. Dr. Jones of Lady Glenorchy's, his bosom friend, shut himself up in privacy, and did not appear till the following Sabbath, when he preached with powerful effect. The first psalm he gave out for singing sent a thrill through the immense congregation—

‘Dumb was I, opening not my mouth,
Because this work was thine.’

It was the penetration of Dr. Jones which discovered the genius of Dr. Chalmers in obscure Kilmany, from which he came as a new standard-bearer.

Psalm 40.

Ver. 17. *Deus meus, ne tardaveris*, ‘Make no tarrying, O my God,’—words which were repeatedly in the mouth of Robert Rollock, the first Principal of the University of Edinburgh, during his last illness. Under long and painful suffering he had interviews with friends, colleagues, ministers and magistrates of the city, exhorting them to faithfulness in their duty. His biographer says that, as he came near his end, he kept silence during the night till the Sabbath dawn,

when he broke out with the words, ‘Come, Lord, make no delay; come, Lord Jesus, tarry not. I am wearied with my loathing of day and night. Come, Lord Jesus, that I may come to thee.’ It was early spring, 1599, when he died; and at his funeral a tempest of rain and wind was sweeping the streets of Edinburgh; but multitudes of every class followed him to his grave, and made great lamentation over him.

Psalm 41.

‘Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. . . . The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.’ Thomas Fuller tells how Queen Mary of England, abstracted from her evil counsellors, had good features of character. She erected again the hospital of the Savoy which had been founded by her grandfather, Henry VII.; and her maids of honour, out of their own wardrobe, furnished it with beds, blankets, and sheets; and then he adds, ‘Were any of those ladies still alive, I would pray for them in the language of the psalmist: “The Lord make all their bed in their sickness.” And he is a good bed-maker indeed, who can and will make it fit the person, and please the patient. But seeing such are all long since deceased, it will be no superstition to praise God for their piety, and commend their practice to the imitation of posterity.’

Psalm 42.

Ver. 1. 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,' gives the keynote to a psalm which must have been often in the thoughts of the early Christians in the time of persecution. The hart is a common emblem on the walls of the Catacombs where they found refuge, and the whole psalm was often sung at the close of Communion.

Ver. 5. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?' The narrative of the death of the Bohemian martyrs, who suffered at Prague in 1621, says, 'John Schultis was the next, who on the scaffold said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him." "The righteous seem in the eyes of men to die, but indeed they go to their rest." Then kneeling down, he said, "Come, come, Lord Jesus, and do not tarry;" and so he was beheaded.'

There is a wild but beautiful pass called Dalveen, which connects Nithsdale with Clydesdale, and has communication with numerous glens around; among them with the famous defile of the Enterkin. From its sequestered character and ready doors of escape it was a favourite refuge for 'the wanderers.' Here, in the summer of 1685, Daniel M'Michael was surprised by the troopers and told to prepare for death. He calmly said, 'If my life must go for his

cause, I am willing; God will prepare me.' He was shot in the presence of some of his relatives while singing part of this psalm—

Ver. 8. 'His loving-kindness yet the Lord
 Command will in the day;
 His song's with me by night; to God,
 By whom I live, I'll pray.'

His friends carried his body to the romantic church-yard of Durisdeer, 'the door of the oak forest,' where he lies under a rude stone with a quaint epitaph—

'Daniel was cast into the lions' den
 For praying unto God, and not to men;
 Thus lions cruelly devoured me
 For bearing unto truth my testimony;
 I rest in peace till Jesus rend the cloud,
 And judge 'twixt me and those who shed my blood.'

Psalm 43.

The 43rd Psalm was chanted in the church at Milan A.D. 387, when Augustine, after a severe and prolonged spiritual conflict, was baptized by Ambrose, whom he looked upon as his spiritual father. *Conf.* ix. 14.

Ver. 3. 'O send thy light forth and thy truth;
 Let them be guides to me,
 And bring me to thine holy hill,
 Even where thy dwellings be.'

After the ministers and elders of the Free Church

of Scotland, at the Disruption, had reached Tanfield Hall in their first step of emancipation, May 18, 1843, Dr. Chalmers took the chair as Moderator, and rose to give out the opening psalm. Dr. Buchanan, the historian of the *Ten Years' Conflict*, says, 'A heavy thunder-cloud had for some time darkened the heavens, and, as the eye ranged at that particular moment over the dense mass of human beings who covered the immense area of the low-roofed hall, individual forms had almost ceased to be distinguishable through the sombre shade. The psalm which Dr. Chalmers had chosen was the 43rd. He began at that touching and beautiful line—

“O send thy light forth and thy truth,”

and as the words sounded through the hall, the sun, escaping from behind his cloudy covering, and darting his brilliant beams through the windows which pierced the roof, turned on the instant the preceding darkness into day. It was one of those incidents which only superstition could misunderstand, but which, at the same time, is entitled to its own place among the traits of the picturesque which belonged to the scenes we are describing.'

Psalm 44.

A psalm wherein the depressed and almost hopeless state of the Church is contrasted with the great

history of God's doings for it in the past, closing with a piercing cry for a new interposition.

James Melville in his diary, at the year 1572, says: 'Our Primarius (Principal of the University of St. Andrews), Mr. James Wilkie, a guid, peaceable, sweet auld man, caused sing commonly this year the 44th and 79th Psalms, which I learned by heart, for that was the year of the bloody massacres in France and great troubles in this country.' John Knox died that same year, with firm faith in God, but with his spirit clouded by the dark signs of the time in Scotland as well as France; for Regent Murray had fallen by the shot of the assassin in the streets of Linlithgow, and the plots of the Guises against the Reformation were constant and far-reaching.

Ver. 22. The words quoted by the Apostle Paul, Rom. viii., and enshrined in a triumphant hymn of victory, were sung by the noble Bohemians, who were executed in the midst of a terrible persecution of the Protestants by Ferdinand of Austria, in the Grosser Ring at Prague, June 21, 1621. Forty-seven were executed on two separate days, and among them were those men of the nation most distinguished for rank, learning, and piety. As the first passed on to their death, those still in prison sang to them, 'Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.' They spent the night after in psalms, prayer, and mutual exhortation. Early in the morning they washed, put on their best

apparel as if going to a marriage feast, and cut off the collars of their doublets, that, when they came to the scaffold, they might need no making ready. When called forth, one by one, they went to their death with undaunted heart, and took leave of each other with the words: 'Farewell, loving friends; God give you the comforts of His Spirit, patience and courage, that what you have confessed with your mouth you may confirm with your death.' Ferdinand, persuaded by his counsellors, Cardinals Clesel and Caraffa, had sworn to extirpate heresy. The Protestant churches were closed, the leaders and ministers executed or banished, and the Jesuits sent forth to work at the conversion of the people. Pescheck, in his *History of the Bohemian Church*, gives short biographies of the sufferers in 1621, and the touching incidents in their life and death. It was the custom to have a sword, similar to that of the executioner, engraven with the names of the condemned and preserved as a record. One of these, which had been brought to Edinburgh among a collection of ancient armour, was recognised lately by a Bohemian student to whom the graven names were household words, and was sent back with him to his native land, where freedom and gospel truth are slowly rising from the blood-stained soil.

Psalm 45.

A psalm sung by Columba near the fortress of the king of the Northern Picts, by the mouth of the river Ness. Adamnan, his biographer, says, 'But another story concerning the great and wonderful power of his voice should not be omitted. The thing is said to have taken place near the fortress of King Brude. When the saint himself was chanting the evening hymns, with a few of the brethren, some Druids coming near to them did all they could to prevent God's praises being sung in the midst of a pagan nation. On seeing this, the saint began to sing the 44th (our 45th) Psalm, and at the same moment so wonderfully loud, like pealing thunder, that the king and people were struck with amazement and fear.' Adamnan tells that his voice could be heard at five hundred, and sometimes even a thousand paces, and yet that when near, it did not seem exceeding loud. It is to the credit of these old Picts that, though they tried to drown his voice, they do not seem to have gone to extremes of persecution. We read of only one violent death among the early Scottish missionaries, and even this does not seem to have been premeditated.

The 45th Psalm had a special place in the heart of Edward Irving, and Dr. Begg tells of the effect produced on himself by the deep, finely-modulated bass voice and profound feeling with which it was

read to a crowded audience in the West Church of Edinburgh. It is one of those psalms of majesty and tenderness which appeals to the spirit of mingled power and pathos possessed by both Columba and Irving. From King Brude and his fierce Pictish chieftains to the Edinburgh of the nineteenth century is a long journey, but the psalm compasses it in its prophetic sweep.

‘O thou that art the mighty One,
Thy sword gird on thy thigh;
Even with thy glory excellent,
And with thy majesty.

Thy name remembered I will make
Through ages all to be;
The people, therefore, evermore
Shall praises give to thee.’

Psalm 46.

This is the Scripture version, with a better basis of confidence, of what is perhaps the noblest of all classic utterances—

‘Si fractus illabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruine.’

‘Should the strong firmament in ruins break,
Fearless the just man stands amid the wreck.’

On this psalm Luther has founded his notable hymn, *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, ‘A fortress strong is God our Lord.’ It breathes the force of battles, faces

fearlessly the fire and the scaffold, and thrills in every line with unconquerable faith and Christian heroism. It was written in 1529, during the preparations for the Diet of Augsburg, when the Protestant cause seemed wavering in the balance. During the sitting of the Diet, Luther resided at the Castle of Coburg, and he sang it to the lute every day, standing at the window, and looking up to heaven. When Wittenberg was surrendered to Charles V., and Melancthon, Jonas, and Kreutziger, who, after Luther's death, were the leaders of the German Reformation, were sent into banishment, they entered Weimar in great trouble of spirit. As they passed along the street, they heard a girl singing Luther's hymn. 'Sing on, dear daughter mine,' Melancthon said; 'thou knowest not what comfort thou bringest to our heart.' Before the battle of Leipsic, Sept. 17, 1631, Gustavus Adolphus asked his whole army to sing it, and after the victory he thanked God that the word was made good, 'The field he will maintain it.' Before the Edict of Toleration in 1781, by the Emperor Joseph II., the Protestants of Linz were torn from their families and banished to Transylvania. In their bitter grief they sang with tears the words of this hymn—

'Take, if they will, our life,
Goods, honour, children, wife,
Yet is their profit small,
These things may vanish all,
The city of God remaineth.'

Heine, though mistaken as to the place where the hymn was first sung, has well described its spirit and history: 'Luther loved music, and has been called *the swan of Eisleben*. But he is very unlike a swan in some songs in which he animates the courage of his friends, and excites himself to the fiercest ardour. The hymn with which he entered Worms, followed by his companions, was a true war-song. The old cathedral trembled at these unwonted sounds, and the crows were startled out of their dark nests in the turrets of the spire. This hymn, the *Marseillaise* of the Reformation, has preserved to this day its energetic power, and perhaps we may soon have to raise again these old words, flashing and pointed with iron.'

When the Huguenots and the Covenanters of Scotland were in trouble, they used to say, 'Come and let us sing the 46th Psalm'—

'God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid;
Therefore, although the earth remove,
We will not be afraid.'

Ver. 10. 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth,' was the text from which Richard Cameron preached July 17, 1680, in Avondale, near Drumclog, three days before his death. A man whose course was brief and bright like a meteor,

but burning its spirit into the cause, so that his name became a star of guidance till the day dawned. It was his last sermon, and some notes of it have been preserved: 'The work begun shall be carried on in spite of all opposition. If ye be not delivered, and made a free and purified people, ye shall no more be a nation than the Jews at this day. I say not this to cast you down, but to stir you up to take hold of Christ, and to range yourselves under his standard. Our Lord shall not fail to raise it in the world, but O that it might be in Scotland!'

Too many of those who uphold the nationality of the Scottish people forget that these men were as needful to its distinct independence, while they were pursuing their own high aim, as were the men who fought against the Edwards. But for this endurance the special character of the nation, and all that has flowed from it, would have been lost. Wallace, Knox, Cameron are in the line of common descent.

Psalm 49.

Another psalm of Alexander Peden's (See Psalm xxxii.). It was his strong confidence in the final display of God's righteousness, whatever clouds meanwhile may obscure it. He had taken refuge for a time in Ireland, and a narrative speaks of him preaching in a wood and reading this psalm. In giving it out to be sung, he charged his hearers not

to join unless they could do it in a believing spirit 'Few at first took part, but soon many broke out and sang with such force and feeling, that the like was seldom witnessed.' Richard Baxter has the true way of putting the spirit in which psalms of strong personal experience should be sung. Speaking of Psalm lxiii., 'My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land,' he says, 'I can sing it, because though I have not a soul like David, I desire to have it; *I have a heart to the heart.*'

Psalm 50.

There is a mystery about the authorship of that wonderful hymn *Dies Ira*, 'Day of judgment, day of burning,' which adds to its power as it falls from the bosom of distant centuries, like the tones of a cathedral bell, dropping slow and solemn from the tower at midnight. It is now generally ascribed to Thomas of Celano, who lived in the thirteenth century; but little is known of him. The first verse of the hymn, *Teste David cum Sibylla*, represents the heathen prophetess as joining David in looking forward to the consummation of all things in the fire of the final day. It has been matter of discussion what passage in the Psalms is referred to, and opinions are divided between Psalm l. 3 and Psalm cii. 26. The starting note seems struck most distinctly in these sublime words 'Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence' a

fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.'

Ver. 16. 'But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?'—the words on which Origen lighted when, in a time of great mental depression and self-accusation, he was called on by the Church at Jerusalem to preach to them. He overcame it by earnest prayer, and rose higher through the trial.

Psalm 51.

A psalm which fitly follows the 50th; the cry for mercy and purity rising from the view of judgment, and in this, too, harmonizing with the tone of the *Dies Iræ*.

'Quid sum miser tum dicturus,
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Quum vix justus sit securus?'

'Guilt and shame my soul assailing,
Where shall I find friend availing,
When the righteous man is quailing?'

It is one of the Pauline psalms which delighted Luther, and has had a manifold history, open and secret. It was sung by George Wishart and his friends at the Laird of Ormiston's, in East Lothian,

on the night when he was taken prisoner, to be afterwards burned at St. Andrews. 'After supper he held comfortable purpose of the death of God's chosen children, and pleasantly said, "Methinks that I desire earnestly to sleep," and therewith he said, "will we sing a psalm?" and so he appointed the 51st, which was put in Scottish metre (Wedderburn's Version), and began thus:—

"Have mercy on me, God of might,
Of mercy Lord and king;
For thy mercy is set full right
Above all earthly thing;
Therefore I cry both day and night,
And with my heart shall sing;
To thy mercy with thee will I go."

For a long period in the Middle Ages, and after the Reformation, it was the *Miserere*, the last cry for mercy, sung, or heard, by those who were about to step into the presence of the judgment-seat. When it was read to Henry V. of England on his death-bed, the closing words, 'Build thou the walls of Jerusalem,' seemed to fall on the ear of the dying man as a reproach, for he had cherished a vow, and he murmured, 'If I had finished the war in France, and established peace, I would have gone to Palestine to rescue the Holy City from the Saracens.' It was read to Lady Jane Grey and her husband, Guildford Dudley, when they were executed together, Aug. 22, 1553, read to her in Latin, and repeated by her in

English. It was read also at Norfolk's execution a few years later. It was the last prayer of Oecolampadius, who had his sickness aggravated and his death hastened by the untimely end of his friend Zwingli in 1531. He called the ministers of the churches round him, exhorted them to fidelity and purity of doctrine, prayed earnestly in the words of David in the 51st Psalm, and soon after died. It would be too long to tell of all the Protestants in France who made it their death-song, during that long agony in which it is difficult to say whether we wonder most at the cruelty of the persecutors or the constancy of the sufferers. Pierre Milet was one of the earliest burned, in 1550, on the Place Maubert, Paris, with the refinements of cruelty common at the time; and more than 200 years after, March 27, 1752, Francis Benezet met his death, both of them with this psalm on their lips. There is a remarkable similarity in the manner of death of the French and Scottish martyrs, arising from the frequent intercourse between the Churches in the early days of the Reformation, and from their common devotion to the book of Psalms.

One of the most interesting of these to a Scotsman is that of Thomas Forret, who suffered martyrdom on the Castle Hill of Edinburgh, nearly a quarter of a century before the Reformation gained firm footing in the land. He was of a family that had owned the estate of Forret in Fife from the time of William

the Lion, and was Canon of Incheolm in the Firth of Forth. A volume of Augustine led him to the Bible, and there he found salvation through Christ alone. When the people came to have pardon for money, he would say, 'I am bound to speak the truth to you. There is no pardon for our sins that can come to us from Pope or any other, but only by the blood of Christ.' This, and the abundance of his work in preaching, brought him before the Bishop of Dunkeld and the Abbot of St. Colm's, who urged him to keep silence. 'You are a friend to my body,' he replied, 'but not to my soul. Before I deny a word I have spoken, you shall see this body of mine blow away with the wind in ashes.' The account of his death has been preserved by his faithful servant, Andrew Kirkie. When he was brought to the stake on the Castle Hill, he cried first in Latin and then in English, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner;' then, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' and ended with the *Miserere*, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness.'

Ver. 7. Probably the northernmost grave on the surface of the earth is one made for a member of the expedition of Sir George Nares to the Arctic Sea, in the ship *Alert*. It is near Cape Beechy, on the brow of a hill covered with snow, and commanding a view of crowded masses of ice which stretch away into the mysterious Northern Ocean, where, hung like a lamp over the door of the unknown, shines the

polar star. A large stone covers the dead, and, on a copper tablet at the head, the words are engraved, 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'

Ver. 18. The first presbytery of the Irish Presbyterian Church was constituted by immigrants from Scotland, in Carrickfergus, June 10, 1642. There were five ministers and as many elders. The sermon was from Psalm li. 18, 'Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem.' Two hundred years afterwards, in 1842, every minister of the Church preached from this same text. There were then above five hundred.

Psalm 53.

Repeated along with the 51st by John Huss, at the place of execution near Constance. We can see how he chose the one for the expression of his personal experience, the other to mark the character of his time, and his hope of the triumph of truth, ver. 6, 'O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.' Justice is now being done to John Huss in his own country for what he did in the foundation of its language and literature, but the universal Church of Christ is his debtor for the light he kindled at the torch of Wickliffe, and handed on to Luther. The timid Erasmus could admire it

when he said, *Joannes Huss exustus, non convictus*—
‘burned, not confuted.’

Psalm 55.

Darnley’s servants told of the last hours of his life, that Mary’s words at parting made him feel uneasy. She left him at the house of the Kirk o’ Field (near the present University), and went to Holyrood to be present at the marriage of one of her maids of honour. On leaving she said, ‘It is a year to-day since David Rizzio died.’ He could not sleep, and turned to read the lesson of the day, which was the 55th Psalm. Next morning he was found lying dead in the little garden beside the house. The house itself had been blown up with gunpowder. It was Sabbath evening, Feb. 9, 1567, when he lay reading the words, some of which sound like a knell on the past, and a doom on the men of blood around. Well for him if the closing words of the psalm entered his heart.

Ver. 4. ‘My heart is sore pained within me; and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.

Ver. 5. ‘Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.

Ver. 23. ‘But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.’

Psalm 56.

Ver. 8. 'Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?' a verse frequently in the mouth of Archbishop Usher, one of the best and most learned men of his time—born in Dublin 1580, driven to and fro through England and Ireland amid the troubles in Church and State, during one of the most troublous times in our history, and at length finding the rest he often sighed for at Reigate in England, 1655, after he had preached the gospel for fifty-five years.

Psalm 60.

It was in the order of service, March 20, 687, and was sung at the death of Cuthbert. This missionary of the seventh century is first heard of as a shepherd boy on the hills of Gala Water, then known as Wedale. The religious movement among the Celtic races under Columba and his followers laid hold of the Saxons, and Cuthbert became the apostle of the glens of the south of Scotland and the north of England. Lindisfarne, or Holy Isle, which he first chose as his centre, was the Iona of the eastern coast; but the solitude of the storm-beaten Ferne Islands, known in later times through the heroism of Grace Darling, drew him to them, from that love of

seclusion which was in part morbid, but in part a natural desire to escape the turmoil and tempests of the time. Numerous legends have gathered round his life, and the wanderings of his body after his death, till he found a resting-place in Durham Cathedral. In the midst of all the stories, we can see even from the churches that bear his name between the Forth and Tyne, and down into Galloway, that he was an unwearied traveller and preacher. The seed he sowed in troublous times took vital hold and sprang up in after ages. The account of his death has been given by Bede, who received it from Herefrid, an eye-witness. He had retired to one of the Ferne Islands, and was known to be dying. A company of his brethren from Lindisfarne came to visit him, but only one was admitted to his death-bed. Meanwhile the others sang the 60th Psalm. When Herefrid came out and announced his death, one of them mounted the high ground above the cell and held up two lighted torches, a preconcerted signal to their friends in Lindisfarne that Cuthbert had departed. The accents of the psalm and the wail for the dead were carried with the signal across the sea.

It was in Cuthbert's time, 685, that the Pictish monarch, after a great victory over the Saxons, crossed the Forth, took possession of Edinburgh and the Lothians, and prepared the way for an independent nationality and Church, the Church of Knox, Henderson, and the Covenanted struggle. The

60th Psalm had a place in one of the incidents of that history. Robert Douglas gave it out to be sung when he preached the coronation sermon of Charles II. at Seone, January 1, 1651, the Marquis of Argyle putting the crown on the head of the ungrateful monarch who afterwards sent him to the block. The text was 2 Kings xi. 12, 17, most appropriately chosen, the sermon very long and filled with uncourtly truths. The earnestness of the preacher and the duplicity of the chief hearer, if hearer he was, are one of the historical contrasts of the time; but there was a true word of prophetic insight in the close of the discourse, when the text which sealed the Solemn League and Covenant, in the East Church of Edinburgh, was again quoted, Neh. v. 13, ‘Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out and emptied.’ Nearly forty years of broken pledges and of profligacies elapsed till the threatening was made good.

The 60th Psalm is also memorable in the history of the Secession Church of Scotland. When Ebenezer Erskine, in 1740, had to leave his church, he took his place with an immense multitude below the battlements of Stirling Castle, and sang the first five verses of this psalm. Looking down on the field where the heroic Wallace gained a decisive victory for his country, the words have in them the ring of battle:

‘And yet a banner thou hast given
 To them who thee do fear ;
 That it by them, because of truth,
 Displayèd may appear.

That thy belovèd people may
 Delivered be from thrall,
 Save with the power of thy right hand,
 And hear me when I call.’

The psalm of his friend, Wilson of Perth, in similar circumstances, had a quieter tone, though scarcely less appropriate, Ps. lv. 6–8 and 12–14. His text was fittingly chosen, Heb. xiii. 13. Both of these leaders were children of the Covenanters. When the Secession and Relief Churches joined in 1847, in Tanfield Hall, Edinburgh, the 60th Psalm was again sung, and with it Ps. cxlvii. 1–3, division ending in reconstruction :

‘God doth build up Jerusalem,
 And he it is alone
 That the dispersed of Israel
 Doth gather into one.’

Psalm 63.

As early as the third century this was the morning song of the Christian Church.

Vers. 6, 7. In the life of Theodore Beza it is told that, being much troubled with want of sleep, he beguiled the time with holy meditation, and, speaking to

his friends of it, used that speech: 'When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.' And also Ps. xvi. 7, 'My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.'

Psalm 65.

This beautiful psalm, first of grace, then of nature, inverting the order of Ps. xix., seems to have taken early possession of the heart of the Christian Church. There is a prayer which has come down to us from the Church of Alexandria, alluded to by Origen, first half of the third century, in which its language is largely used, and applied to the land of Egypt: 'Send rain out of thy treasures upon these places which stand in need of it. Renew and make glad the face of the earth by its descent that it may bring forth and rejoice in the rain-drops. Raise the waters of the river to their just height; renew and make glad the face of the earth by its ascent; water the furrows and increase their produce. Bless, O Lord, and crown the year with the riches of thy goodness, for the sake of the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger.'

Psalm 67.

This psalm has been called by the ancient expositors 'the Lord's prayer of the Old Testament.' It has,

like that of the New, seven divisions. The first three verses and last three are linked by a longer one in the middle, and the third and fifth are in the same words. It is by special distinction *the missionary psalm*.

In the year 1644, the Corporation of London invited the two Houses of Parliament to a grand banquet, in proof of the union of their cause, and in celebration of their victory. The Westminster Assembly of Divines and the Scottish Commissioners were also invited, and the festival was after the manner of that of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Stephen Marshall, a noted preacher of the day, selected for his text the appropriate words, 1 Chron. xii., last three verses; and the spiritual provision seems to have reached a profusion not thought of in public feasts of our days. Baillie gives a full description of the rejoicings, and tells how the feast ended with the singing of the 67th Psalm, Dr. Burgess reading the line, that all might take part, 'a religious precedent,' says a chronicler of the time, 'worthy to be imitated by all godly Christians in both their public and private meetings.'

Psalm 68.

A psalm of wonderful power and compass, of living fire and dramatic picturesqueness, ranging from the remote past with its triumphs, onward to a final and

irreversible victory in the future; with figures which startle us by their sternness (ver. 23), and others (ver. 30) that teach us the spirit in which we should read the whole. With what a blast of irresistible storm it breaks out, sweeping all enemies before it in hopeless ruin, and then clear like a silver trumpet rising from the din of the battle, comes the call to 'rejoice in God!' 'But let the righteous be glad,' followed by the reason of the summons so strange and touchingly tender like rain from a thunder-cloud:

'Because the Lord a father is
Unto the fatherless;
God is the widow's judge, within
His place of holiness.'

And then the psalm moves on by the memories of Sinai and Horeb, of manna provision, and water from the stricken rock, through march and conflict, and 'garments rolled in blood,' till it ends in the conquest of the world for the King of righteousness and peace. The sword in it is that which God permits, in his righteous government, the sword with which sin executes judgment on itself; the peace is that which Christ promises as his legacy and gift, and which is more fully described in Ps. lxxii.

This 68th Psalm was known among the Huguenots as the 'song of battles,' and was raised by them in many a bloody and desperate conflict. The words in their old version are:

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‘Que Dieu se montre seulement
Et l’on verra soudainement
Abandonner la place,
Le camp des ennemis épars,
Et ses haineux, de toutes parts
Fuir devant sa face.’

An old Camisard, as the hunted Protestants of the Cevennes were called, says, ‘We flew when we heard the sound of the psalms, we flew as if with wings. We felt within us an animating ardour, a transporting desire. The feeling cannot be expressed in words. It is a thing that must have been felt to be known. However weary we might be, we thought no more of our fatigue, and grew light as soon as the psalms reached our ear.’

It was chanted by Savonarola and his brother Dominicans, A.D. 1497, as they marched to the grand Piazza of Florence to meet the trial of fire to which they had been summoned by their enemies. The corruption of the Church of Rome was never deeper in the lives of pontiffs and clergy; and, in the midst of it, rose the wonderful contrast and protest of Fra Angelico who breathed into his paintings the mystic beauty of a seraphic soul, and of Savonarola, whose outraged conscience broke forth in words of flame. Both belonged to the same convent of San Marco, and Rome spared the artist, but burned the Reformer, May 23, 1498. While in prison awaiting his death, he wrote a brief exposition of Ps. li. and Ps.

xxxii., pouring out his soul in a torrent of the most fervid feeling. A few lines help us to see the prisoner in his dungeon, and to hear the sobs with which he pressed David's words close to his heart. 'Be pitiful to me, O Lord; not according to the mercy of man, which is small, but according to thine, which is great, immense, incomprehensible. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, not according to thy small mercy, for thy mercy is small when it relieves and liberates men from bodily miseries; but it is great when thou pardonest sin, and raisest men above the level of the earth. So, Lord, have mercy upon me, according to thy great mercy. According to the multitude of thy mercies, cancel my iniquity, and cleanse my heart from every impurity; let it become white and clean, that thy finger may write on it the law of thy love with which sin can never more dwell. I come to thee, O Lord, not as the Pharisee, but as the publican, for I know my iniquity; I come to thee, bowed down with sin, and I weary myself day and night with the moaning of my heart.

Psalm 71

Was, in his old age, the cherished psalm of the distinguished Covenanter, Robert Blair, which he was accustomed to call 'my psalm.' The Christian Father Origen, made the same claims on those passages of the Bible which came specially home to him—'this is my

Scripture.' Robert Blair was one of the most remarkable men of his time for ability, learning, and piety. His life was a very eventful one. Forced by persecution to take refuge in Ireland, he became there one of the founders of the Irish Presbyterian Church. Still pursued by intolerance, he was half-way across the Atlantic to seek rest in New England, when a storm drove him back to continue his work in his native land. After the Restoration, he was an object of fear and dislike to Archbishop Sharp, who had him sent into virtual banishment in the neighbourhood of Aberdour, where he died, broken by age, infirmity, and anxiety for the public interest, in 1666. Before he died, he repeated the 16th Psalm, the 23rd, and the whole of his own psalm, attracted no doubt specially to vers. 17, 18: 'Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not.' His son had to purchase leave to raise a simple monument to him in the churchyard of Aberdour, with an inscription very brief, it is said, 'because of the iniquity of the time.' It still stands with the epitaph, *Mors Janua Vitæ*, 'death the gate of life,' with a seeming reference to the words in Ps. xvi., 'Thou wilt show me the path of life.' His grandson was Robert Blair, author of *The Grave*; among his descendants, Dr. Hugh Blair, with other noted men of the name.

The 71st Psalm was asked for on his death-bed by Philip de Morny, known as Plessis de Morny, a man of illustrious rank, chivalrous spirit, and sincere piety,

who cast in his lot with the Huguenots, and stood by them in every extremity. Prayer being ended, he desired they would read unto him the 71st Psalm, giving testimony of the infinite pleasure which he took in it, and of his experience of it for his own consolation. He said he was persuaded of an eternal life by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit, more powerful, more clear, and more certain than all the demonstrations of Euclid, repeating two or three times the words of the Psalmist, cxvi. 10, 'I believed, therefore have I spoken.'

Psalm 73.

After the defeat of Montcontour, as they were carrying Coligny off the field, nearly suffocated by the blood of three wounds pouring into his closed visor, an old friend, who was being carried wounded beside him, repeated the first verse of this psalm,—

'Si est ce que Dieu est très doux.'

'Truly God is good to Israel.' The historian adds, 'That great captain confessed afterwards that this short word refreshed him, and put him in the way of good thoughts and firm resolutions for the future.' If the whole psalm is read, it will be seen to be singularly suited to such an emergency; and so well were the psalms then known, that the first verse called up the whole.



Ver. 25. One of the most interesting records of the Covenanting time, is the diary of Mrs. Veitch, wife of one of the outlawed ministers who was imprisoned and exiled, and more than once in view of the scaffold. They survived all, and after the Revolution he became minister, first of Peebles and then of Dumfries, where he died. An extract from her journal may give some idea of the tenderness of heart that lay beneath the stern conscience of those times, and of the springs of simple faith in personal experience which refreshed and strengthened them in their endurance for principle. She tells of the death of her third son, twelve years of age, with whom, and other children, she had taken refuge in Northumberland, while her husband and her older sons were in Holland. She saw the death of her child approaching, but feared that the thought of it was bitter to him. When in this state of anxiety she says, 'One day, calling me to his bedside, he told me that the world had lost its attractions to him, and that he was resigned to die. I asked the reason of this, as his heart seemed to be otherwise set. He said that he had been praying and giving himself to Christ; that Christ had assured him of the delight he took in his soul, and this had comforted him. Afterwards he said, "Is it not a wonder that Jesus Christ should have died for sinners? Oh, this is a good tale, and we should think often on it." He frequently repeated these words, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,"

which refreshed me,' says his mother, 'more than if I had been made heir of a great estate. Calling for his brother, who was at home, and his sisters he blessed them all, and bade them farewell. On becoming unable to speak, he held up his hand while I spoke to him of death and heaven. At last, with his own hand he closed his eyes, and so we parted in hope of a glorious meeting.'

Ver. 26. 'My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever,' was the last verse on which the thoughts of Charles Wesley rested, and with which his sanctified genius rose to higher notes among angels and ransomed spirits. His death was like his life. He called his wife, and bade her write to his dictation. It was the last of seven thousand hymns, some of them the finest in the English language, which had welled from his heart day and night, wherever he moved.

'In age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a sinful worm redeem?
Jesus, my only hope thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;
O, could I catch a smile from thee,
And drop into eternity !'

Psalm 74.

A cry of the Church, on the brink of despair, to God, who seems to stand with face averted and arm inactive ;

and yet it is certain he wrought wonders of deliverance in the past, and that he is still the living God in his works around. The appeals to him are bold beyond measure, yet deep in their humility; agonizing in the feeling of forsaken neglect, yet full of faith; in the spirit of Jacob, 'I will not let thee go,' or of Jeremiah, 'Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us; leave us not.'

'O God, why hast thou cast us off?
Is it for evermore?
Against thy pasture-sheep why doth
Thine anger smoke so sore?
Thy hand, even thy right hand of might,
Why dost thou thus draw back?
O from thy bosom pluck it out,
For our deliverance sake.'

It was the song of a band of Covenanters, Nov. 28, 1666, at Rullion Green, on the skirts of the Pentlands, when brought to bay by the Government troops. Goaded by intolerable oppression, they had come from the West to present an armed remonstrance at Edinburgh. The authorities refused them a hearing, and resolved to strike terror by a powerful force which had been placed outside the city. The Covenanters were retiring to their homes, when they were pursued and intercepted. With 900 men, outworn with fatigue and hunger, they occupied a steep slope which

risers from the romantic stream of the Glencorse. They raised the plaintive cry of the 74th Psalm, and were attacked by 3000 disciplined troops, under the fierce Dalziel. Outnumbered as they were, they made a determined resistance, and the report to the Government says that ‘never were men seen to fight more gallantly, and abide better than they did, the general being forced to use stratagems to break them.’ The fight was prolonged till dusk, when they were dispersed, and many of them captured. The prisoners were treated with great barbarity, being shut up without food or shelter in Greyfriars Churchyard, numbers being executed, or sent to the plantations as slaves. The graves of some of those who fell in the struggle may be seen on the hillside. A simple stone, with lines rude in rhyme but true in feeling, marks the spot :—

‘A cloud of witnesses lie here,
Who for Christ’s interest did appear,
And to restore true liberty,
O’turned then by tyranny ;
These heroes fought with great renown,
By falling got the martyr’s crown.’

The psalm they sang does not finish, but is broken off, and, as it were, taken up into the swelling din of a prolonged battle,—to indicate that in the defeat of a righteous cause we have to look up to God, till he turns the page and lets us read *Victory* on the other side,—immediate for the fallen, ultimate for the truth.

‘Do not forget the voice of those
That are thine enemies ;
Of those the tumult ever grows,
That do against thee rise.’

Psalm 76.

Sung at Drumclog, June 1, 1679. At this time, in Scotland, those who met for worship elsewhere than in the churches sanctioned by Government were given over to martial law, frequently shot in the fields or on the moors, without trial, and their bodies left where they fell. It was this period which, in the words of Renwick, ‘flowered the mosses with martyrs.’ One of their gatherings was held, not long before midsummer, on a Sabbath morning, at Drumclog, where the head-waters of the Avon and Ayr approach each other, and close to the peak of Loudon hill, where grey cairns commemorate battlefields of Wallace and Bruce, who struggled for national freedom, as the Covenanters did for spiritual,—these services for which they ‘jeopardied their lives in the high places of the field,’ winning for us our quiet Sabbaths. Claverhouse had heard of the intended meeting, and came with a strong body of his troopers; but the Covenanters, though poorly armed, were skilfully led, and resolute of heart. After a severe action the dragoons were entirely defeated, Claverhouse escaping with difficulty. The psalm sung by the Covenanters, as they descended

the hill to the encounter, was the noble burst of triumph which celebrated the overthrow of Sennacherib and his host, and the tune was the plaintive but lofty Martyrs:—

‘There arrows of the bow he brake
The shield, the sword, the war,
More glorious than than hills of prey,
More excellent art far.

Those that were stout of heart were spoiled,
They slept their sleep outright;
And none of those their hands did find,
That were the men of might.’

About a century before, in 1588, the same psalm was given out to be sung at the Market Cross of Edinburgh, by Robert Bruce, a descendant of the great King Robert, when the news came of the defeat and dispersion of the Spanish Armada. This Bruce, like his namesake, was a man of heroic nature, and a preacher of such majesty and power, that John Livingstone says when he heard him, he thought ‘there had been no such preacher since the days of the apostles, and never would be again.’ ‘Every one of his prayers seemed like a strong bolt shot up to heaven.’

About ten years later it was sung by Alexander Shiels (author of *The Hind let Loose*), and by other Covenanters, at the Market Cross of Dundee, in celebration of the Revolution. Doubtless, Drumlog was

in their memory, and they were in the line of descent from the old achievements of *Castle Dangerous*. At Douglas, at this time, the Cameronian regiment was formed, which defended Dunkeld so stoutly, in 1689, against the victors of Killiecrankie, and which has distinguished itself since in many a stricken field. William Cleland, its first lieutenant-colonel, a man of literary gifts, had fought at Drumclog, and fell bravely at Dunkeld.

Charles Kingsley had a special love for the psalm. When sailing up the Rhine, and looking on the ruined strongholds of the old freebooters, he writes, 'How strange that my favourite psalm about the hills of the robbers (hills of prey) should have come in course the very day I went up the Rhine!'

Psalm 79.

Fourteen Protestants of Meaux, arrested at a meeting, sang this psalm as they went to death,—

'Les gens entrés sont en ton heritage.'

'O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance.' The priests and monks tried to drown their voices by singing '*O salutaris hostia*;' but the song of the martyrs was silenced only by the flames. While some of these sufferers chose psalms with the cry for pardon for sin, and others the hope and joy of the divine vision, there were those again who, as in

this case, appealed to God for his persecuted truth. Crespin, the early French martyrologist, tells of one of these, Jean Rabac, put to death with indescribable cruelty, at Angers, in 1556, that he continued to sing this psalm till he had scarcely the form of a man, and so gave up his soul to God.

It was not till 1562 that the Huguenots were driven to resistance by these barbarities, and by the massacres committed by the Duke of Guise. No one who is ignorant of this history can estimate rightly the position taken up by John Knox, when all the craft of her uncles sought to employ Mary Stuart as an instrument for crushing the Reformation, first in Scotland and then in England. It was his foresight and firmness which thwarted the deeply laid plans of the Papal party in France and at Rome.

The 79th Psalm was one of those which came closely home to the hearts of our countrymen and countrywomen in the days of the Indian Mutiny. Think of it as read amid the horrors of Cawnpore and Lucknow.

Ver. 2. We are told in Jurieu's Letters that the Protestants of Metz sang this verse when they lifted from a heap of refuse, where it had been cast, the body of one of their brethren, a judge of the city, and carried it away to interment.

Ver. 8. 'O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low.' They were the last words of

John Owen, who died August 24, 1683, when things looked very dark in England and Scotland for the cause of religious truth and freedom. It was the time of which the poet Waller has said,—

‘Bold is the man who dares engage
For piety in such an age.’

Indifference, infidelity, immorality were general in court and country, and the Church of Rome was in great hope of regaining its power. But Owen had a bright hope beyond. When told, in his last illness, that his book, *Meditations on the Glory of the Redeemer*, perhaps the most remarkable, certainly the most elevated, of all his works, had just been put to the press, the dying man lifted up his hands, and said, ‘I am glad to hear it, the long wished-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing, in this world.’

Psalm 81.

Vers. 8-16. ‘Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; there shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.’

The whole passage forms the beginning of the appeal of the Scottish exiles in Newcastle, Aug. 10,

1584. They had been compelled to quit Scotland, owing to the oppressive course which was afterwards pursued in Church and State for a full century, during the reign of the later Stuarts. At the head of the exiled party were Andrew Melville and his nephew James, and here was drawn up the system of government for the Church of Scotland, which fought its way to a definite triumph in the Glasgow Assembly of 1638. Andrew Melville took up the standard from the dying hand of John Knox, and, instead of Frankfort and Geneva, the shelter of the refugees was found in Berwick and Newcastle. The common interest of the Reformation was now drawing England and Scotland more closely together, especially on the side of the Puritans, and preparing the way for the union of the kingdoms.

Psalm 84.

Jocelyn, in his life of Kentigern, tells of an interview between him and Columba, A.D. 584, at a place called Mellindenor, where they and their companies met one another singing psalms. Mellindenor is what is now known as Molendinar, *rius molendinarius*, the little stream by Glasgow Cathedral, used for the primitive mill,—the first glimpse we have of the city with mills innumerable, with a kind of anticipation of its motto of welfare through the preaching of the Word. The psalms said to have been sung were

on the side of Kentigern, Ps. cxxxviii. 5, 'In the ways of the Lord, how great is the glory of the Lord !' and on the side of Columba 'they sang with tuneful voices' Ps. lxxxiv. 7, 'The saints shall go from strength to strength, until unto the God of gods appeareth every one in Sion.' It is matter of regret that the lives of these good men should have been disfigured, through the superstition of a later age, with so many trifling legends ; but the evidence we have of their delight in the Psalms and Gospels is proof of their deep spiritual feeling.

Foxe, in his *Book of Martyrs*, under the year 1554, in the reign of Queen Mary, gives an account of one William Hunter, nineteen years of age, who was pursued to death for the gospel's sake. It is taken from his brother's narration. 'He suffered with great constancy, and recited the 84th Psalm as he was a-dying. Then there was a gentleman who said, "I pray God have mercy upon his soul." The people said, "Amen, Amen." Immediately fire was made. Then William cast his Psalter right into his brother's hand, who said, "William, think on the holy passion of Christ, and be not afraid of death !" And William answered, "I am not afraid." Then, lifting up his hands to heaven, he said, "Lord, Lord, Lord, receive my spirit ;" and, casting down his head again into the smothering smoke, he yielded up his life for the truth, sealing it with his blood to the praise of God.'

When Thomas Halyburton was dying, he caused

them to read the 84th Psalm, and to sing the latter part of it,—

‘Lord God of hosts, my prayer hear ;
O Jacob’s God, give ear.
See God our shield, look on the face
Of thine anointed dear.’

He joined in singing, and, after prayer, he said, ‘I had always a mistuned voice, a bad ear, but, which is worst of all, a mistuned heart. But, shortly, when I join the temple service above, there shall not be, world without end, one string of the affections out of tune.’ And, after that, he caused one of the ministers to read to him what Dr. Owen had said of this temple service above, in his book on the *Person of Christ*. Thomas Halyburton, born 1674, died 1712, with a brief life, has left in Scotland a well-known name. He was a man of remarkable ability, uniting a fervent nature with a decided power of metaphysical thought. His piety had the character of that of Rutherford and McCheyne, clinging to the person of Christ with a deep, intimate affection. His death-bed sayings, many of which were preserved by his friends, are like those of Bunyan’s pilgrims by the river’s brink when they looked across to the King in his beauty. One of them is, ‘O blessed be God that ever I was born! I have a father, a mother, and ten brethren and sisters in heaven, and I shall be the eleventh. O blessed be the day that ever I was born!’ He was Professor

of Divinity at St. Andrews, and lies there by Rutherford's side.

Ver. 11. 'No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' When Thomas Carlyle was leaving, in doubt and despondency, his quiet mountain home at Craigenputtock for the untried tumult of London, he quoted part of this verse for comfort to his brother Alexander and himself, but mingled it with the words of another passage, Rom. viii. 28. It must be confessed that his accuracy in Scripture knowledge is not so remarkable as in some other matters, and he himself would have owned that the exact words of the Psalmist are more suited to his philosophy than those of the apostle. Yet his faith in its core is Christian: 'I turned my thoughts heavenward, for it is in heaven only that I find any basis for our poor pilgrimage on this earth. Surely as the blue dome of heaven encircles us all, so does the providence of the Lord of heaven. "He will withhold no good thing from those that love him!" This, as it was the ancient Psalmist's faith, let it likewise be ours. It is the Alpha and the Omega, I reckon, of all possessions that can belong to man.'

Psalm 85.

Ver. 10. 'Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other,' was the text of Dr. Thomas Goodwin, the great Indepen-

dent divine, at the opening of Parliament, Jan. 27, 1659, when Richard Cromwell was installed as Protector. The sermon is a reasonable plea for liberty of conscience, and an exhortation to unity and peace—seed cast on stormy waters, not to be found till after many days.

Psalm 86.

Observe the place of this psalm, an earnest personal appeal, standing between two others which promise great things to the cause of God. It is one of the plaintive songs, edged with hope,—‘a cloud turning out its silver lining on the night,’—with which the French Huguenots were accustomed to march to death.

Psalm 88.

Bishop Hooper, who was burned at the stake in Gloucester, A.D. 1555, during the reign of Queen Mary, commends this song to his wife, when writing to her from prison. ‘It contains,’ he says, ‘the prayer of a man brought into extreme anguish and misery, and who, being vexed with adversaries and persecutions, saw nothing but death and hell. And although he felt in himself that he had not only man but also God angry towards him, yet he by prayer humbly resorted unto God, as the only port of consolation in his desperate state of trouble. These psalms,’ he continues, ‘be for the purpose of help, when the mind can have

no understanding, nor the heart any joy of God's promises; and therefore were the 6th, 22nd, 30th, 31st, 38th, and 69th Psalms also made, from the which you shall learn both patience and consolation.'

It had a place also in the history of Henry of Navarre. After the massacre of St. Bartholomew, in 1572, the Reformed party were without a head. Henry seemed called by his birth to take the position, but he was a prisoner in the hands of Catherine de Medici, who sought to corrupt his spirit through sensual indulgence, as she had done with her own son. Henry, however, had not lost conscience, and one night Agrippa d'Aubigné, his attendant, heard him sighing and speaking to himself. On listening he heard the words of the 88th Psalm, 'O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry.' D'Aubigné said to him, 'Sire, is it not true that the Spirit of God is still dwelling and working in you? While your friends are fighting against your enemies, you fail them. Your friends fear only God, and you, a woman, before whom you crouch when they stand erect like men.' The prince made his escape from Paris and joined his friends at Alençon. It was the hour of service, and they were singing the 21st Psalm,—the character and blessing of a true king. The king was struck by it, for he had heard it from D'Aubigné during their flight.

The history of Henry IV. is well known, his gallant struggle for the crown of France, his renunciation of Protestantism to secure it, and his proclamation of the Edict of Nantes, which gave, for a time, a measure of religious liberty. But it may be questioned whether his weak apostasy and loose morality did not ultimately bring as much harm to France as the intolerance of Louis XIV. His conduct shook confidence in principle, opened wider the floodgates of corruption in the court and country, and so this act of the first Bourbon prepared the ruin of the family, and sore loss to the nation. His daughter, Maria Henrietta, married to our Charles I., did much to imbue her husband's mind with the love of absolutism; and the sensual indulgence, from which he was free, reappeared in the later Stuarts, and with their devotion to despotism in Church and State prepared their fall. The old Holyrood of Edinburgh witnessed the visit of our Charles I. in 1633 which commenced his quarrel with his Scottish people,—the meteor-like passage of his descendant Charles Edward in 1745,—and the sojourn of Charles X. of France in 1831 when expelled from his throne; and down through the whole history strangely linked together, comes the wail of this psalm, which Henry of Navarre did not lay enough to heart.

Its beauty and pathos struck Wordsworth as given in the words of the Scottish Version. The passage is in the funeral song in the *Solitary*,—

‘A solemn voice,
 Of several voices in one solemn sound,
 Was heard ascending : mournful, deep, and slow,
 The cadence as of psalms—a funeral dirge !
 We listened, looking down upon the hut,
 But seeing no one : meanwhile, from below,
 The strain continued, spiritual as before ;
 And now distinctly could I recognise
 These words :—*Shall in the grave thy love be known,
 In death thy faithfulness ?*’

Psalm 89.

Ver. 6. ‘Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord ? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord ?’ The reply of a French Huguenot to a courtier who was urging Henry IV. to choose the strongest side.

Psalm 90.

A prayer of Moses the man of God. A psalm of deep solemnity and pathos, beginning with a past eternity, and moving on to an eternal future, while it gathers into its bosom men with their sins and brief fading lives, and supplicates for them God’s forgiveness and tender mercy.

Vers. 1–4 is the burial song of the Russian Church. Ver. 12. ‘So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.’ Thomas Fuller tells in his own quaint way, that Bishop Rudd was requested to preach before Queen Elizabeth by the

Archbishop of Canterbury, because he was a special favourite with the Queen, and was, indeed, designed as the Archbishop's successor when he died. The Archbishop said, at the same time, 'The truth is, the Queen now is grown weary of the vanities of wit and eloquence, wherewith her youth was formerly affected; and plain sermons which come home to her heart please her best.' Encouraged by this guidance, honest Bishop Rudd chose for his text Ps. xc. ver. 12, and touched on the infirmities of age, with a personal application to the Queen. But Her Majesty, to whom hearing about death was most ungrateful, was highly displeased, and Bishop Rudd lost both the reversion of the archbishopric and Her Majesty's favour. 'But he justly retained,' says Fuller, 'the repute of a reverend and godly prelate, and carried the same to the grave.'

Dr. Stoughton, describing the funeral of John Hampden, says: His remains were conveyed to the churchyard of Great Hampden, close beside the old family mansion, where the patriot had spent so much of his life in the studies and sports of a country gentleman. Through lanes under the beech-covered chalk hills of the Chilterns, a detachment of his favourite troops, bareheaded, carried him to his last resting-place,—their arms reversed, their drums and ensigns muffled,—mournfully chanting as they slowly marched along the dirge from the Book of Psalmists: 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Thou turnest man to destruction. Thou

carriest them away as with a flood ; they are as a sleep : in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up ; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.' When the funeral was over, the soldiers, retiring from the village church to their quarters, made the green woods and the white hills, that summer day, resound to the beautiful prayer, so appropriate to their circumstances, Ps. xliii. : 'Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation : O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength : why dost thou cast me off ? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy ? O send out thy light and thy truth ; let them lead me.' John Hampden met his death in June 1643, in the beginning of the great civil war. He died in prayer, with the words, 'O Lord God of hosts ! great is thy mercy ; just and holy are thy dealings unto us sinful men. O Lord, save my bleeding country. Have these realms in thy special keeping. Lord Jesus, receive my soul ! O Lord, save my country ; O Lord, be merciful to—' His speech failed, and falling backwards he expired.

Perhaps this psalm was never read amid circumstances that brought it nearer to the history where it was indited, in the desert and under the shadow of Sinai, than in one striking instance. In the year 1865 a dreadful accident occurred in Switzerland, upon the Matterhorn, a mountain which till then had

defied all attempts to ascend it. Its summit was gained, but in coming down, three of the party, Lord F. Douglas, Mr. Hadow, Rev. Charles Hudson, along with Michael Croz, a guide, lost their footing on the ice, and were swept over a tremendous precipice 4000 feet high. The body of Lord F. Douglas was never recovered; the other three were found, lifeless and almost formless, on the glacier at the base. The Rev. J. McCormick, Mr. Hudson's intimate friend, describes the purity and spirituality of his character, and the feeling of reverence and prayerfulness with which he contemplated the works of God in these awful solitudes. 'Whether,' he says, 'the enterprise which ended in his death be looked on as wise or foolish, I am persuaded that his soul was filled with joy and gratitude as he stood where no human being had ever stood before, and gazed from a new point of view on the great Creator's works.' His Prayer-Book was found on his body, and it was suggested that there should be a short funeral service. 'Poor Hudson's Prayer-Book was produced for this purpose. I read out of it Ps. xc., so singularly appropriate to time and place, and repeated some prayers and a portion of the Burial Service. Imagine us standing with our bronze-faced guides, leaning on their axes or alpenstocks, around that singular grave, in the centre of a snow-field, perhaps never before trodden by man, with that awful mountain frowning above us, under a cloudless sky—in the very sight, as it were, of the

Almighty,—and try and catch the sound of the words : “Lord, thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and world were made, thou art God from everlasting, and world without end. Thou turnest man to destruction ; again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men.”’

Psalm 91.

Theodore Beza relates that, in his younger years, he was one day in the church of Charenton, and heard the 91st Psalm expounded. It came home to him with power, and he was enabled to close with the 2nd verse : ‘I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress : my God ; in him will I trust.’ At his death he declared to his Christian friends that, in the after changes of his life, he found the promises one by one fulfilled. In the civil wars, then so fierce in France, he was kept in a composed spirit, and had most convincing deliverances from most imminent hazards. ‘And now,’ he said, ‘I have no more to wait for but the fulfilling of these last words of the psalm, “I will show him my salvation,” which with confidence I look for.’—Beza was born 1519, and died 1605. In early life he was light-minded and devoted to worldly pleasure, but, after the change he records, he became, next to Calvin, the most influential leader in the Reformed Church. His long life was

spent in preaching, writing and administration, with a diligence peculiar to that age. His translation of the New Testament into Latin came into universal use among Protestants; and the French Psalter, which had such an effect on the spirit of the Huguenot, owes more than a half of its version to his poetic genius, the rest being the work of Clement Marot. The church of Charenton, associated with the memory of Beza, and many of the most eminent ministers of the French Reformation, was an immense structure in the suburbs of Paris, near the junction of the Seine and Marne, where liberty for Protestant worship was enjoyed. Few edifices ever gathered round them memories of so many eloquent and devoted preachers and pious worshippers. At last, when the Edict of Nantes was revoked by Louis XIV., it was razed to the ground amid the tears and groans of the despairing Huguenots. A picture of the scene, struck off and circulated in numberless prints, with reference to Ps. lxxiv. ver. 7, served to keep alive their grief and love: 'They have cast fire into thy sanctuary; they have defiled by casting down the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground.' A century afterwards the rebound of the blow shattered the French monarch's throne.

Psalm 92

Is called by Dante (*Purg.* xxviii. 80), *Il Salmo Delectasti*, because, in the Vulgate, the 4th verse

Psalm 94.

Vers. 9, 10. 'He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?' These verses made a strong impression on the mind of Sophia the Electress of Hanover, a woman of decided mental power, and were adopted with approbation by her friend the philosopher Leibnitz in his opposition to Atheism. The principle on which he reasoned was, that as the stream cannot rise above its fountain, intelligence in man implies an intelligent source. Thought must come from thought. Descartes had already given expression to the same idea in his *Meditations*, III., 'Now it is manifest by the light of nature that there must be as much reality in the efficient cause as in the effect; for whence could the effect draw its reality but from the cause? And how could the cause communicate the power to it, if it had it not in itself? And from this it follows, not only that nothing can be produced from nothing, but also that what is more perfect cannot be a result of, and dependent on, what is less perfect.'

Psalm 95.

This psalm, the *Venite exultemus Domino*, 'O come, let us sing unto the Lord,' was the chant of the Templars the Knights of the Red Cross, when during

the Crusades they entered into battle with the Saracens for the conquest of Jerusalem.

In a different spirit, the great missionary, Christian Schwartz, took the 6th verse, and put it over the entrance of his new church in Tranquebar: 'O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.' He called the church Bethlehem, as his predecessor, Ziegenbalg, had built one with the name Jerusalem, which was filled with native converts. More devoted labourers never entered the mission field. The death of Ziegenbalg, the first Protestant missionary to India, was one of rapture, departing at the age of thirty-six. His closing words were: 'Christ says, "Father, I will that where I am, there shall also my servant be."' He then put his hand to his eyes, and exclaimed, 'How is it all so clear? It seems as if the sun were shining in my eyes.' He then asked that the hymn *Jesus meine Zuversicht*, 'Jesus my trust,' should be sung, and died while they sang it.

Psalm 96.

Julian, the nephew of Constantine, succeeded to the Empire A.D. 361, renounced Christianity, which had been established by his uncle, and devoted a brief but energetic reign of two years to the attempted restoration of paganism. He sought to put a new spirit of philosophy into the old forms, and, without return-

ing to sanguinary persecution he used measures of restriction which were more dangerous. The Church historians of that period tell us that the psalm commonly sung by the Christians during the reign of Julian was the 96th. Read in this light, it becomes singularly appropriate.

Psalm 97.

This psalm has also an association with Julian and the Christians of the East. The gospel gained an early hold of the important city of Antioch (Acts xi. 26), and, in the time of Julian, though weakened by impurity, it had great influence among the masses of the people. One of the bishops, named Babylas, had suffered martyrdom a century before, and he had been buried in the grove of Daphne, sacred to Apollo, on the banks of the famed Orontes. Julian wished the place to be restored to the worship of *the god of day*, and ordered the body of Babylas to be removed. The Christians of the city carried it in solemn procession to another resting-place, chanting the 97th Psalm. There is a tone of lofty confidence running through it, and the Church historian refers particularly to the 7th verse, 'Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.'—The spot was visited during the late survey of Palestine, and Captain Conder speaks of it as bright with the red blossoms of the oleanders,

which here rise to the dignity of trees. This plant, he thinks, must have been the true *Daphne*—the *Daphnē* or *dawn*—sacred to Apollo, as there is no flower in the East whose delicate rosy flush could be so well used as the emblem of the opening morning. If so, there are words in the psalm which might have a fitting reference to the occasion, whether the singers of Antioch meant it or not; ver. 11, ‘Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.’

Psalm 100.

The great psalm of praise sung in all lands for many centuries and in countless gatherings. In the Scottish Version, and with the accompaniment of Luther’s melody, it has already girdled the earth. But it could not have spoken to so many, or raised thanksgivings so joyful, unless there had been tender human feeling in its heart. When Melanethon was mourning the death of his son in Dresden, July 12, 1559, not long before his own, he drew comfort from the 3rd verse, ‘It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.’

Psalm 101.

It is related of Ernest the Pious, Duke of Saxe-Gotha, that he sent an unfaithful official a copy of the 101st Psalm, and that it became a proverb in the land

when any magistrate had done wrong, 'He will certainly receive the Prince's psalm to read.' 'Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.' The Ernest who set such value on this psalm was one of the best men of his time, the founder of the Saxe-Gotha family, born 1601, died 1675. He was the bosom friend of Gustavus Adolphus, and after his fall on the field of Lutzen brought up the reserve which turned the tide and secured victory. When peace returned to Germany after the terrible Thirty Years' War, he set himself to repair its ravages, and many of the institutions remain which were founded by him. He was one of the first since the Reformation to interest himself in foreign mission work, and sent embassies to Egypt and Abyssinia for that end. He took for his own guide the 2nd verse of this psalm, 'I will behave myself in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.' Himself the son of a pious mother, he superintended the religious instruction of his own children, in the midst of his public duties, so thoroughly, that they could repeat by heart the greater part of the Bible.

Psalm 102.

One of the seven penitential psalms, giving the picture of a man who has sunk to the deepest abyss of trial, crushed in body, broken in spirit, surrounded by what seems the utter wreck of the cause of God; and then rising to confidence and gladness when he remembers the power and faithfulness of him who is everlasting. In this the psalm is a forecast shadow of the history of Christ Himself, to whom it is applied, (Heb. i. 10), and who, after passing through its depths, rises to his throne, and says to his brethren, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'

The second version of it in the oldest Scottish Psalter, a remarkably fine one, is by John Craig, who was Knox's colleague in St. Giles', and whose own experience may be said to be given in the psalm. When a Dominican monk at Rome, he embraced the principles of the Reformation, was cast into the prison of the Inquisition, and about to be led to the stake. The very night before he was to suffer the Pope died, an insurrection broke out, the prisons were thrown open, and he escaped through a series of remarkable deliverances to take an important part in the work of reform in his native Scotland.

There is no grander missionary hymn than vers. 13-22, a fitting companion to the 60th chapter of Isaiah, taking up, to use the words of Milton, 'the

whole passion of pity on the one side, and joy on the other . . . like that of our Saviour Christ, suffering to the lowest bent of weakness in the flesh, and presently triumphing to the highest pitch of glory in the spirit, which drew up his body also ; till we in both be united to him in the revelation of his kingdom.'

'Thou shalt arise, and mercy yet
Thou to Mount Zion shalt extend :
Her time for favour which was set,
Behold, is now come to an end.
Thy saints take pleasure in her stones,
Her very dust to them is dear.
All heathen lands and kingly thrones
On earth thy glorious name shall fear.'

The psalm is the keynote to Mrs. Browning's *De Profundis*, written in the anguish of bereavement, and drawing hope from the thought of an unchanging God :

'By anguish which made pale the sun,
I hear him charge his saints that none
Among the creatures anywhere
Blaspheme against him with de pair,
However darkly days go on,
And having in thy life depth thrown
Being and suffering (which are one)
As a child drops some pebble small
Down some deep well, and hears it fall,
Smiling . . . So I ' THY DAYS GO ON

Psalm 103.

There is a well-known German version of this psalm, *Nun lob, mein' Seel' den Herrn*. It was made by John Graumann at the request of Albert I., Duke of Prussia, that he might be able to sing in verse words which he highly prized. He had it frequently sung to him on his last sick-bed, joining in it and adding his own thoughts. It was also the death-song of Christian III. of Denmark, A.D. 1559, and he expired when they had reached the verse, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him!'

When Gustavus Adolphus entered Augsburg, the city of the Protestant Confession, after his great victory at Leipsic which struck the decisive blow for religious freedom in Germany, he went straight to the Church of St. Ann, and caused this psalm to be sung in the German version.

Part of the psalm was sung, Feb. 17, 1688, in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh by James Renwick, the last sufferer in the long twenty-eight years of persecution. Young in years, there is a plaintive tone in the words,—

'Such pity as a father hath
Unto his children dear;
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship him in fear.'

And then, as if he felt the breath of the coming

deliverance to himself and his country already blowing on his dying cheek, come the words of joyful trust, —

‘ But unto them that do him fear
God’s mercy never ends ;
And to their children’s children still
His righteousness extends.’

He died, not with resignation, but in transport, like some of the early Christian martyrs. He was much interrupted by the beating of drums, but the people about him caught up and preserved many of his words. He appealed to the Lord if this was not the most joyful day he had ever seen. He blessed the Lord for honouring him with the crown of martyrdom, an honour which the angels could not have, being incapable of laying down their lives for their princely Master. Speaking of the disturbance he suffered, he said, ‘ I shall soon be above these clouds ; then I shall enjoy thee and glorify thee without interruption or intermission for ever.’ When they would let him speak no longer, he ascended the ladder, and said ‘ Lord, I die in the faith that thou wilt not leave Scotland, but that thou wilt make the blood of thy witnesses the seed of thy Church, and return again to be glorious in our land. And now, Lord, I am ready. The bride, the Lamb’s wife, hath made herself ready. Lord, into Thy hand I commit my spirit : thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.’

The 103rd Psalm was read over, once every day,

in the family of John Angell James, of Birmingham. When his wife died he was asked if it should be read. 'Yes,' he said, 'it is as full of comfort as of thanksgiving.'

Psalm 104.

Henry Stephanus, the celebrated classical scholar, has a Commentary on the Psalms,—*Liber Psalmorum Davidis*, Paris 1562,—and in the preface he tells that, when he was in Rome, he met with some who in their one-sided love of classic literature, denied the Psalms all poetic merit, and laughed at the poet Antonius Flaminius because he attempted to reproduce them in Latin verse, which they said was trying 'to put seeds in dry sand.' Stephanus says he convinced them of the opposite by quoting a number of the psalms, and especially the 104th, and he showed them that nothing can be found more poetic and inspiring than these old lyrics, and that, if Flaminius did not succeed, it was not the soil, but the sower, who was to blame.

The 104th Psalm was a favourite with Alexander von Humboldt. After speaking in his *Cosmos* of the exalted views of nature given in the Old Testament, as the living expression of the omnipresence of God in the visible world, he refers specially to this psalm: 'We are astonished to find, in a lyrical form of such limited compass, the whole universe, the heavens and

the earth, sketched with a few bold touches. The toilsome labour of man, from the rising of the sun to his setting, when his daily work is done, is contrasted with the moving life of the elements of nature. This contrast and generalization of the action of the natural world, and this vision of an omnipresent invisible power which can renew the earth or crumble it to dust, are not so much a glowing and gentle, as a solemn and exalted conception of creation !' Humboldt names Ps. lxy. 6-13, lxxiv. 15-17, as having similar features in softer form.

Vers. 19-24 is the Evensong of the Russian Church.

Psalm 107.

Ver. 20. 'He sent his word and healed them,' was the text of the Reformer, George Wishart, in Dundee, A.D. 1544. The town had been visited with the plague in a very deadly form, and there was great consternation among the people. Wishart no sooner heard of it than he hastened to the place. 'They are in trouble,' he said, 'and need comfort ; perchance the hand of God will make them now to magnify and reverence that word which before, for fear of men, they set at light part.' He was received with great joy, and preached standing on the east gate, which still remains, the infected being without and the whole within. Knox says, 'By this sermon he roused up the hearts of all that heard him, so that they regarded not

death.' He visited the sick, relieved the wants of the poor, and exposed himself fearlessly to the risk of infection. Dundee became one of the foremost towns in the cause of the Reformation. Wishart himself, not long after, suffered at the stake in St. Andrews, and was the forerunner of Knox, as, at a longer interval, Huss was of Luther.

Dr. George Smith, in his life of the distinguished Indian missionary Dr. Duff, tells that when he was on his first voyage to India, in 1830, the vessel was wrecked amid breakers off the coast of South Africa. By a wonderful escape, they reached in boats a small island, with nothing left to them but life. A sailor walking along the beach noticed an object cast ashore. Going up to it, he found it was a quarto copy of Bagster's Bible, and a Scottish psalm-book, somewhat shattered, but with Dr. Duff's name on both. Taking them to the hovel where the passengers had sought shelter, he presented them to the owner. They knelt down, while Dr. Duff spread the books on the white bleached sand, and read the 107th Psalm. We can conceive with what deep meaning the words came home, as he read with thanksgiving and prayer the four deliverances recorded there, among them that of the sailors in the storm, and closed with 'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.' He had been taking 800 volumes to found a library, and of all his store the Word of God alone remained.

Psalm 112.

Ver. 4. 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness,' was the text of the Convocation Sermon preached by Dr. Chalmers in St. George's, Edinburgh Nov. 17, 1842. It was on the eve of the Disruption and perplexity as to the future was in every heart. 'Never,' says Dr. Buchanan, 'was the truth, "A word spoken in season, how good is it," more vividly realized when the preacher gave out his text. Every man looked at his neighbour, and exchanged the silent but strong expression of conscious comfort and encouragement which the very utterance of these words at such a moment called forth.'

Psalm 113.

With the opening verses of this psalm began the Evening hymn of the Apostolic Constitutions: 'From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised.'

Psalm 114.

'When Israel went out of Egypt, the psalm of deliverance from bondage, was that with which one of the Huguenot martyrs, Aymon de la Veye, marched to the death by fire, as Beza says, with noble constancy, in 1552; and in 1762, more than two

hundred years afterwards, Francis Rochette, the last martyred minister in France, ascended the scaffold, also singing one of Marot's psalms.

Psalm 115.

Non Nobis Domine was the battle-song of the heroic John Sobieski, king of Poland, Sept. 12, 1683, when he marched down from the heights of Kalenberg, and defeated the immense army of the Turks which was besieging Vienna, and had reduced it to the last extremity. It was a turning-point in history, the final great Eastern invasion which has thundered at that gate of Europe; and ever since, the Turkish power and Mahommedan faith have been on the wane. There was indescribable enthusiasm as the psalm was sung, 'Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.'

Ver. 4. Many ages before, Publia, a noble Roman lady, was cruelly beaten for singing in the time of Julian, 'Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.'

Psalm 116.

This was a burial song of the early Church, looking through death to life, and in this way a companion to Psalm xvi.

Ver. 7 is given as the verse with which Babylas

of Antioch comforted himself in the prospect of his martyrdom under the Emperor Decius. 'From this we learn,' the historian says, 'that our soul comes to rest when it is removed by death from this restless world.'

Vers. 13-19 has been the communion song of many a company of Presbyterian worshippers through centuries :

'Till of salvation take the cup,
On God's name will I call ;
I'll pay my vows now to the Lord,
Before his people all.'

The whole psalm is the foundation of a remarkable hymn of thanksgiving by one Burkard Waldis. He was a monk who became a noted evangelist in Germany. After embracing the doctrines of the Reformation, he was seized by night, carried hundreds of miles from his home, and kept in severe imprisonment till rescued by his brothers, John and Bernhard, at cost of great danger and travail ; and to them he dedicates this song, with others which he made in his captivity, as he says, 'To drive away the sad and weary thoughts and Satanic temptations with which he was assailed.'

Psalm 117.

The psalm sung by Cromwell and his army after the victory of Dunbar, Sept. 3, 1650, and known

afterwards by the Puritans as the Dunbar Psalm. As the Scottish army left their strong position on the heights to offer their raw soldiers to Cromwell's veterans, he pointed to the sun, whose disc was rising over the German Ocean, with the words, 'Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered.'

It was the custom of Philip Henry to sing the 117th Psalm every Sabbath after the first sermon, as the fullest expression of thanksgiving. He used to say that the more singing of psalms there is in our families and congregations on Sabbath, the more like they are to heaven; and that he preferred singing whole psalms to pieces of them.

Psalm 118.

A psalm which might have a history to itself, sounding the depths of trial, rising to the loftiest heights of triumph, and looking far forward to him who measured them both in his rejection and his final victory—beginning and closing with thanksgiving for everlasting mercy

In those days when it was the custom for kings and courtiers to choose for themselves special psalms, this was the selected of Charles V. The biographer of Clement Marot tells that, in 1540, he presented to that emperor, as he was passing through France, a copy of his Psalter as far as it had been carried. The emperor accepted it benignly, gave the poet

Laithers favorite psalm - "The 118th"
the 118th

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200 doubloons, and asked him to complete his translation, praying him especially to send him, as soon as he could, the translation of the 118th, *Confitebor Domino quoniam bonus*, as he loved it much. It took rank along with the 68th Psalm as the battle-song of the Huguenots, and in the fields and woods the 24th verse was the frequent opening of their worship:

‘La voici l’heureuse journée
Que Dieu a faite à plein desir;
Par nous soit joie démenée,
Et prenons en elle plaisir.’

It was sung by them on bended knee at Contras, when some courtiers in gay dress cried, ‘See, the cowards are already begging mercy!’ ‘No,’ said an officer, who knew their way, ‘you may expect a stern fight from the men who sing psalms and pray.’ After the victory the Huguenots sang the 124th Psalm. So dear were the psalms to them, that, when persecution had done its worst, when their churches were demolished and their worship forbidden, they sometimes gathered at night round the ruins, and imagined they heard the sound of psalms in the air—‘A song in the night, as of a holy solemnity.’ Most frequently the words which seemed to reach them were the 27th verse of the 118th Psalm; and a deed of the Parliament of Pau remains, prohibiting the meeting of the Huguenots by night at their ruined church of Orthez to listen for the echo of the

psalms. In similar circumstances, the same feeling sprang up among the hunted Covenanters of Scotland. Where the grand defile of the Enterkin breaks down on the Nith, there is a little side valley with the ruined church of Kirkbride, the burial ground of some who suffered there; and when the wind was playing round it, especially on a summer Sabbath evening, the people fancied they could hear the accents of the psalms from the spot. A poet of the district has given expression to the feeling:

‘Hark, from the far hill tops,
And low from the lanesome glen,
A sweet psalm tune like a late dew draps
Its accents doon the win’;
But naething on earth can disturb that sang,
Not Clavers in a’ his pride,
For it’s raised by the Lord’s ain ransomed thrang,
Forgathered aboon Kirkbride.’

These sounds from the sky were the echoes in the hearts of the people of many psalms that had risen from scattered groups on the moorlands, and from dying men on the scaffold.

Donald Cargill became the leader of the Covenanters after the death of Richard Cameron, and when he suffered in the Grassmarket, he sang part of the 118th Psalm. When going up the ladder, he said, ‘The Lord knows I go on this ladder with less fear and perturbation of mind than I have sometimes entered the pulpit to preach.’ He was interrupted with the

beating of drums, and could finish only three verses, 16-18, which he used often to quote during life :

'The right hand of the mighty Lord
Exalted is on high;
The right hand of the mighty Lord
Doth ever valiantly,
I shall not die, but live, and shall
The works of God discover;
The Lord hath me chastised sore,
But not to death given over.'

With an immovable fidelity to conscience, Donald Cargill had a tender, sensitive nature, and, with his own death full in view, gave himself to comfort his fellow sufferers. In a letter to one of them before execution, he says, 'Farewell, dearest friend, never to see one another any more till at the right hand of Christ. Fear not, and the God of mercies grant a full gale, and a fair entry into his kingdom, which may carry sweetly and swiftly over the bar, that you find not the rub of death.'

Some of these verses from this psalm were sung by the army of William of Orange, when he landed at Torbay in 1688. William asked Cartares to conduct service; and he prayed and gave part of the 118th Psalm to be sung, 'in which the troops all along the beach joined; and this act of devotion produced a sensible effect.' It is not likely that William knew the minute incidents of Donald Cargill's death, but he must have heard of him. Cartares no

doubt was fully acquainted with the circumstances, and may have been led thereby to the choice of the psalm. In any case it is fitted to stir thought, that the words drowned on the lips of the dying Covenanter were not long after taken up triumphantly by the army of deliverance under William. Another striking coincidence referred to by the Prince of Orange as a propitious token was, that exactly a hundred years had passed since the Spanish Armada had been scattered on these same coasts.

The Carstares here spoken of was one of the most remarkable men of his time,—driven to Holland as a refugee, the trusted friend and counsellor of William of Orange, and the chief instrument in bringing about the settlement of the Church of Scotland in 1688,—a learned, good, and most sagacious man, who died in 1715, while he was Moderator of the General Assembly for the fourth time, and who lies buried in the historic churchyard of Greyfriars, beside many of the leaders of that period.

Ver. 15. ‘The voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous,’ used to be quoted by Philip Henry in commendation of family worship, with the remark that ‘it is a way to hold forth godliness, like Rahab’s scarlet thread, to such as pass by our windows.’

The 17th verse, ‘I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord,’ was the last utterance of Philibert Berthelier, a noble Genevese. At the

time Bonivard was committed to the dungeon of Chillon, A.D. 1519, for defending the liberty of his native city, Berthelier was beheaded on the island where the blue waters of the Rhone make their first swift rush for freedom from the lake. A tablet marks the spot. This confidence in a life beyond death was the frequent testimony of these witnesses for truth and righteousness. James Guthrie, one of the earliest martyrs for the Covenant, expressed it in the words of the prophet when, as he ascended the scaffold, he looked up to the sky and said, 'Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die.'

Ver. 22. 'The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner,' is the text from which Ebenezer Erskine, Oct. 10, 1732, preached the sermon, before the Synod of Perth and Stirling, which led to the formation of the Secession Church and began a new movement in the religious history of Scotland.

Psalm 119.

A psalm embracing the length and breadth of human life in its wonderful variety, and revolving round one centre, the word of God,—resembling in this the living Word, who is God's manifold Wisdom, and the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is called by an old commentator, *a holy alphabet for Zion's scholars*, and was evidently constructed to help

the ancient believers to carry out the principle of ver. 11, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' It might supply, of itself, endless incidents, from which only some can be given.

Mr. Spurgeon quotes two from men of different temperament. In the midst of a London season, and in the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, 1819, William Wilberforce writes in his diary, 'Walked from Hyde Park Corner repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort.' And again, John Ruskin in *Pors Clavigera*, 'It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my child's mind most repulsive, the 119th Psalm, has now become, of all, the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God.'

One of our most popular hymns, *We speak of the realms of the blest*, had its origin in this psalm, not from any direct reference to the heavenly world, but from the spirit which it breathes, and the longing it excites for all that is pure and perfect. The hymn was written, after reading Bridges on the 119th Psalm, a few weeks before her death, by Mrs. Elizabeth Mills, who died in 1839 at the age of twenty-four.

There is frequent reference to the psalm in the diary of Henry Martyn: 'Found some devotion in learning a part of the 119th Psalm.' 'In the evening

grew better by reading the 119th Psalm, which generally brings me into a spiritual frame of mind.' 'Again in a fretful frame; it was not till I learned some of Psalm cxix. that I could return to a proper spirit.'

It drew to it the special admiration of Pascal, who, as his sister Madame Perier says, often spoke with such feeling about it, 'that he seemed transported,' '*qu'il paraissait hors de lui même.*' He used to say that, 'with the deep study of life, it contained the sum of all the Christian virtues.' He singled out ver. 59, as giving the turning-point of man's character and destiny: 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.'

Ver. 9. 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' Henry Scougal, author of *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, when a youth, opened his Bible and lighted by peradventure on this passage. It went to his heart, and he gave himself to God, and to the Christian ministry. He became Professor of Theology, King's College, Aberdeen, and dying in 1678 at the early age of twenty-eight, has left a fragrance in his name which associates it with that of Leighton.

Ver. 20. Chalmers says that though 'he could not speak of the raptures of Christian enjoyment he thought he could enter into the feeling of the Psalmist, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times."'

Ver. 25. 'My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word,' was the expression of the Emperor Theodosius, when he was received into the Church again by Ambrose at Milan, after acknowledging his sin in the massacre at Thessalonica.

Ver. 28. 'My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word,' is referred to with strong emphasis by Maine de Biran, who may be looked on as the founder of the spiritual school of philosophy in France,—a school which after many struggles seems to be reviving, and gives hope of a return to Christian truth among the best thinkers. He was at first a firm adherent of the school of Condillac and sensationalism, but through a course of solitary reflection reached a deeper basis, and came to delight in God's word. He says of this verse: 'The word which can give me life will not come from myself, nor my own will, nor from anything I can see or hear around me. In religion there are two things, feeling and faith. Feeling no doubt inclines to faith, and then faith in its turn is the spring of new feelings. But feeling without faith can be only a vague mysticism, without a fixed foundation or a firm conviction. Christian truth acts on me with a varying degree of intensity; but in the midst of its variations I still know that it is truth, and I cannot cease to yield to its authority.'

It is interesting to compare this self-analysis of the philosopher with the experience of one who had

advanced deep into the divine life. Jonathan Edwards, speaking of this verse, says, 'I had vehement longings of soul after God and Christ, and after more holiness; wherewith my heart seemed to be full, ready to break; which often brought to my mind the words of the Psalmist, Ps. cxix. 28.'

Ver. 46. 'I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed,' is the motto prefixed to the Augsburg Confession—the charter of the German Lutheran Church.

Ver. 71. When Francis I. of France was defeated and taken prisoner at the disastrous battle of Pavia, A.D. 1525, where 'all was lost save honour,' he was carried off the field to the Church of the Certosa. The choir at the time was chanting part of this psalm, and, when they came to the 71st verse, the captive monarch preceded them in a loud voice, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes.'

Ver. 84. Like a cry from beneath the altar of testimony comes the voice of two men whose story is given in the *Cloud of Witnesses*, and who at 'twilight of the evening were put to death at the Gallow-lee between Edinburgh and Leith, for their adherence to the Covenant,'—

'How many are thy servant's days?
When wilt thou execute
Just judgment on these wicked men
That do me persecute?'

Ver. 92. 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction,' is written on Martin Luther's Bible by his own hand. The date is 1542, and the Bible is preserved at the Brandenburg Mark Museum, Berlin.

Ver. 97. Henry Martyn says, 'I experienced a solemn gladness in learning this part, "MEM," of the 119th Psalm.'

Ver. 105. 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.' This is the text prefixed to a little book called *The Lantern of Light*, which was the favourite reading of the Lollards before the Reformation. The close of a prayer in the preface shows the principles of these children of the dawn: 'When thou, O Lord, didst die upon the cross, thou didst breathe into Thy word the spirit of life, and didst give it power to quicken us through thine own precious blood, as thou thyself hast said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."' The Lollards of England and Scotland were charged with reading the Bible in their mother tongue,—Wickliffe's translation,—and with esteeming it above any instruction they received from the priests. On this account they were called *Biblemen*. A considerable number of them were taken up for trial in Kyle in Ayrshire, and other western districts, in 1494, nearly seventy years before the time of Knox. That region, so prominent in the time of the Reformation and the Covenant, had the seed in the soil.

Psalm 121.

Dr. Blaikie, in his *Life of Livingstone*, tells that this psalm and the 135th were read by him when he parted with his family and went out first as a missionary to Africa. 'I remember my father and him,' writes his sister, 'talking over the prospects of Christian missions. They said that the time would come when rich and great men would think it an honour to support whole stations of missionaries, instead of spending their money on hounds and horses. On the morning of 17th November 1840, we got up at five o'clock. David read the 121st and the 135th Psalms and prayed. My father and he walked to Glasgow to catch the Liverpool steamer.' The old man walked back with a lonely heart to Blantyre, while his son's face was set in earnest toward the dark continent. The 121st Psalm was also a ground of hope to Livingstone's mother-in-law, Mrs. Moffat, when she wrote to him at Linyanti, on the threshold of his perilous journeys: 'My dear son Livingstone, hitherto I have kept up my spirits, and have been enabled to believe that our Great Master may yet bring you out in safety. But his ways are often inscrutable, and I should have clung to the many precious promises made in his word as to temporal preservation—such as the 91st and 121st Psalms; but I have been taught that every petition, however

fervent, must be with submission to his will. Unceasing prayer is made for you. When I think of you, my heart will go upwards. "Keep him as the apple of thine eye;" "Hold him in the hollow of thine hand," are the ejaculations of my heart.'

Psalm 122.

Wolfgang Schuch, a Protestant pastor in Lorraine, was burned at Nancy because he maintained that salvation is to be found only through the free grace of God, by faith in Jesus Christ his Son. When he heard his sentence he began to sing the 122nd Psalm, the song of ascent to the city of God. When he was led to the place of execution, he sang the 51st Psalm, and continued it till the smoke and flame took from him voice and life.

Psalm 123.

'Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.' With this psalm Philip Henry was accustomed to conclude his Sabbath evening service in his own family at Broadoak. His children then knelt down around him and received his blessing. The account which his son, Matthew Henry, gives of the household is one of the fairest pictures we have from the Puritan time, and might serve for the Chamber Peace in the palace Beautiful described by Bunyan. After meat and thanks, on

every Sabbath, the usual song of the family and guests was the 23rd Psalm.

Psalm 124.

‘Now Israel may say, and that truly,
If that the Lord had not our cause maintained;
If that the Lord had not our right sustained,
When cruel men against us furiously
Rose up in wrath, to make of us their prey.’

This second version of the psalm, with its bold marching melody, is known in Scotland as *Durie's Psalm*. James Melville, in his own quaint way, gives in his diary, date 1582, the origin of the name. John Durie had been banished from his pulpit and from Edinburgh for his boldness of speech in criticizing some of the high-handed acts of James VI.; but the feeling in his favour was so strong that the sentence had to be reversed. The case can be best understood by giving James Melville's own words: ‘Within few days after the petition of the nobility, John Durie gat leave to ga haim to his ain flock of Edinburgh; at whase returning there was a great concours of the haill toun, wha met him at the Nether Bow; and going up the street, with bare heads and loud voices, sang to the praise of God, and testifying of great joy and consolation, the 124th Psalm, “Now Israel may say, and that tiewly,” till heaven and earth resoundit. This noise, when the Duke (of Lennox), being in the toun, heard, and ludging in the

Hiegate looked out and saw, he rave his beard for anger, and hasted him off the toun.' The picture given of John Durie is so lifelike that we cannot help giving it in the original: 'John Durie was of small literature, but had seen and marked the works of God in the first Reformation, and been a doer baith with tounge and hand. He had been a diligent hearer of Mr. Knox, and observer of all his ways. He conceived the ground of matters weil, and could utter them fully and manfully, with a mighty spirit, voice, and action. The special gift I marked in him was holiness, and a daily, careful, continual walking with God in meditation and prayer. He was a verie gude fallow, and took delyt as his special comfort to have his table and house filled with the best men. These he would gladly hear, with them confer and talk, professing he was but a buik-bearer, and would fain learn of them; and getting the ground and light of knowledge in any gude point; then would he rejoice in God, praise and pray thereupon, and urge it with a clear and forcible exhortation in assembly and pulpit. It was the number of these men, spread over Scotland at the time, not of the first rank, but captains of hundreds and fifties, which gave the Reformation such a hold upon the body of the people.

The psalm has a place in Swiss history very like the incident of John Durie.—After Geneva had gained its freedom and become the head of the 'Reformed,' the Dukes of Savoy, who were leaders of

the Romish party, made many attempts to crush the new movement. One of the most noted was in 1602, known as the *Escalade*. The inhabitants, lulled to security by peaceful professions, had neglected all precautions. On a dark night in December, 200 Savoyards, the advanced party of a large force, scaled the walls, and were about to admit their associates. The assailants were so sure of their prey, that they despatched a messenger to their commander, announcing their complete success. A sentinel going his rounds lighted on them and was killed; but the discharge of his matchlock, before he fell, aroused the citizens. They flew to arms, each man with the nearest weapon, and after a desperate conflict the town and walls were cleared of the enemy. An iron pot with which an old woman knocked down a soldier—a counterpart of the stool of Jenny Geddes—was long preserved in the town arsenal;¹ and a monument to the Genevese who fell, with their names inscribed, stands in the cemetery of St. Gervais.

¹ The veritable iron pot was carried off to Paris, during the French occupation of the town by the first Napoleon, and has gone amissing; but its place is supplied by numbers of the iron caps of the Savoyards thrown away in their flight, and by the scaling ladders used in the attack. The *Escalade* is commemorated by a handsome fountain-monument with bas-reliefs, one of which represents Theodore Beza giving out the psalm at the door of the Cathedral. The French version of the psalm is by Beza himself, and is sung to the same tune as that of our old 124th. It may be interesting to know that our Scottish version is from the old Reformation Psalter, and was made by Whittingham, who succeeded Knox as pastor of the English exiles in Geneva, and who was married to Calvin's sister.

When the conflict was over, the venerable Theodore Beza, eighty years old, returned solemn thanks, and gave out the 124th Psalm to be sung. Every year since, on the 12th December, it has been sung in Geneva.

The learned and pious Dr. Tholuck of Halle used to tell an anecdote of his father-in-law. He was a convert from Roman Catholicism; and as it happens sometimes that though the mind may be entirely emancipated, the desire for priestly absolution returns, his son-in-law asked him before he died, if he had any such feeling. The dying man expressed his sole confidence in the great High Priest, and, giving a wave of triumph with his hand, said in the words of Luther's version of the psalm,—

‘Strick ist Entzwei, und wir sind frei.’

‘Broke are their nets, and thus escapèd we.’

The biographer of M'Cheyne, giving an account of his death, tells that ‘next day he continued sunk in body and mind, till about the time his people met for their usual evening prayer-meeting, when he requested to be left alone for half-an-hour. When his servant entered the room again, he exclaimed with a joyful voice, “My soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and I am escaped.” His countenance, as he said this, bespoke inward peace; and ever after he was observed to be happy.’ We cannot help being reminded of Zacharias, when he went into the temple of the Lord, while the whole

multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense, and there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, who said, 'Fear not; for thy prayer is heard.'

Ver. 8. 'Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.' With this verse the French Protestant Church always begins its public worship—words which well become the children of the Huguenots.

Psalm 125.

'They in the Lord that firmly trust
Shall be like Sion hill,
Which at no time can be removed,
But standeth ever still.'

This psalm was frequently sung in the hours of danger during the Scottish Reformation period. The tune which accompanied it was *St. Andrew*. It was in frequent use also with the French Protestants, when hiding from the *dragonnades* of Louis XIV., and fleeing to the frontiers for escape. Every verse and word seemed made for such emergencies.

Psalm 126.

Very nearly nine hundred years after the dirge of St. Cuthbert had been sung on the Northumbrian shores, in the 60th Psalm, James Melville in his diary,

1585, tells how he and other Scottish exiles, returning home with 'the bountiful and gracious hand of their God upon them' along these same coasts, sang on the Sabbath day, at Alnwick, the 126th Psalm and many more. It may be interesting to give a verse of the psalm then in use, as showing the variety of rhythm employed. The version is by William Keith, a native of the North of Scotland, and one of the exiles at Geneva in the time of Knox:—

'Full true it is That they who sow with tears indeed,
A time will come When they shall reap in mirth and joy.
They went and wept, In bearing of their precious seed,
For that their foes Full oftentimes did them annoy;
 But their return With joy they sure shall see;
 Their sheaves home bring And not impeded be.'

Ver. 5. 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,' a favourite verse with Philip Henry, who used to say that 'weeping should not hinder sowing.' His death brought a fulfilment of it. It took place suddenly on the morning of a fast for public danger, when he was to have preached. Some wished to defer the service, but this text was quoted for going forward with it. His son, Matthew Henry, spoke from 2 Kings xiii. 20: 'And Elisha died . . . and the bands of the Moabites invaded the land.'

'Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing,'—the expression of ecstatic joy at the triumph of freedom, and a righteous cause,—gave

language to Fowell Buxton when he heard of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. It was deep religious feeling which nerved the men who stood in the van of that battle.

Psalm 129.

This psalm has a place in a peculiar crisis of the history of the ancient Church of the Waldenses. When Louis XIV., in 1685, revoked the Edict of Nantes, he succeeded by promises and threats in inducing Amadeus, Duke of Savoy, to expel the Vaudois of Italy from their valleys, and to plant Romanists in their stead. Thousands were put in prison for refusing to renounce their faith, while a portion were permitted, at the instance of some of the friendly Cantons, to retire to Switzerland. For two years the exiles sought to form new ties, but the yearning love of the old home was too strong, and, in the autumn of 1689, a band of 800 men resolved to regain their valleys or die. In frail boats, under cover of night, they crossed the Lake of Geneva, with the heroic Henri Arnaud, pastor and colonel, as their leader—the Moses and Joshua of this new and strange exodus. Their course led them over snow-covered mountains, across impetuous rivers, along the face of terrible precipices, where the look-back in daylight made them shudder; and amid an unfriendly population, ready to obstruct their march and reveal it to the hostile troops which hovered round them.

It was not far on the one side from the track pursued by Hannibal, and on the other from that of Napoleon, when they poured their legions on the plains of Piedmont; but how different the movement of Henri Arnaud and his little band in true moral grandeur! Arrived in their native valleys, they were attacked on both sides by the forces of Louis and Amadeus more than forty times their number. The celebrated Balsille, a natural fortress of rocks, enabled them to set every attack at defiance, till through a change of politics, in which the English Revolution had its share, Amadeus came to terms with them, and sought their help as auxiliaries to expel the troops of the French king, who had been the original cause of their banishment. The history is one of the most wonderful since the deliverance from Egypt, and is recorded in a journal, set down day by day, entitled, *Story of the glorious Return of the Vaudois into their Valleys. By Henry Arnaud, Pastor and Colonel of the Vaudois.* The manner of the story is as remarkable as the matter of it, simple, natural, and unaffected; but through its clear transparency can be seen the intense love of country and of God, and the faith in an unseen Presence which was leading them by the hand through darkness, and shielding them in its hollow from the rage of overwhelming enemies. When the exiles had reached the first church in their old home, the Journal says, 'We had the pleasure of finding the church of Prals still standing, and, after removing the marks of

Romish worship, we sang the 74th Psalm: "O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old. . . . Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations, even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary." Then M. Arnaud, that he might be heard by those without as well as within, stood on a bench placed in the opening of the door, and having made them sing the 129th Psalm, he preached from some of the verses of it: "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed against me." 'A thing worthy of remark,' the narrative goes on to say, 'is that God ordered it that the first sermon the Vaudois heard in their valleys was in a church where M. Leidet had ministered; one who had been surprised singing the psalms among the rocks, and for having confessed publicly the truth of the gospel, he lost his life on the scaffold in 1682, in the fort of St. Michel.'

The 74th Psalm, here sung by the Vaudois, had not long before been sung by the Covenanters on the Pentlands; and both, from mountains far apart, had entered into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. 'Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.'

Psalm 130.

Along with the 51st, this was the peculiar delight of Luther; for these two, in the Old Testament, approach nearest to his favourite text, Rom. iii. 24; through which, as he says, he saw the gate of heaven opening wide before him. One of his great psalm-hymns, which penetrated to the heart of the German people, was formed on this 130th: '*Aus tiefer noth schrei ich zu Dir*'—'Lord, from the depths to thee I cry.' If the 46th furnished the *major*, this gave the *minor* key among the sacred songs of Germany. It was written in 1524, and has its history. On the 6th of May of the same year, a poor old weaver sang it through the streets of Magdeburg, and offered it for sale at a price that suited the poorest. He was cast into prison by the burgomaster; but 200 citizens marched to the town hall, and would not leave till he was released. Psalms and music were chosen weapons of the time. The song returned into Luther's own heart. During the Augsburg Diet, when he was at the castle of Coburg, and had to suffer much from inward and outward trials, he fell into a swoon. On awaking from it he said, 'Come, and in defiance of the devil, let us sing the psalm, "Lord, from the depths to thee I cry." Let us sing it in full chorus, and extol and praise God.' In the first days of the Reform, along with the 51st, it was frequently

employed as a funeral song. It was sung at the interment of Frederick the Wise, the staunch friend and protector of Luther, in 1525.—When the body of Luther was on its way from Eisleben, where he died, to Wittenberg, where he lies beside Melancthon and the two great Electors, Frederick and John, it remained a night in Halle, 20th February 1546, in the *Liebfrauen Kirche*, of which his bosom friend, Justus Jonas, was minister. This psalm in Luther's version was given out by Jonas, and sung by the thousands who thronged and wept around the bier.

Dr. John Owen gives an account of the way in which he was led to write his commentary, or rather series of discourses, on this psalm. ‘Mr. Richard Davis,’ he says, ‘who afterwards became pastor of a church in Rowel, Northamptonshire, being under religious impressions, sought a conference with me. I put the question to him, “Young man, pray, in what manner do you think to go to God?” “Through the Mediator, sir,” Mr. Davis answered. “That is easily said,” I replied; “but I assure you, it is another thing to go to God through the Mediator than many who make use of the expression are aware of. I myself preached Christ some years, when I had but very little, if any, experimental acquaintance with access to God through Christ; until the Lord was pleased to visit me with sore affliction, whereby I was brought to the mouth of the grave, and under which my soul was oppressed with horror and darkness; but God

graciously relieved my spirit by a powerful application of Ps. cxxx. 4: 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,' from whence I received special instruction, peace, and comfort in drawing near to God through the Mediator, and preached thereupon immediately after my recovery." This is no doubt the reason why nearly three-fourths of Owen's treatise is occupied with this verse.

It was the 130th Psalm, sung in St. Paul's, May 1738, and heard by John Wesley with deep emotion, that prepared him for the truth of justification by faith, which he embraced shortly afterwards, through reading Luther on the Galatians. His conversations with Peter Bohlen, of the Moravian Brethren, also aided him greatly, and helped to preserve him from the mystic legalism of *Law's Serious Call*, to which he was at one time inclined. But for this decision, the mighty movement which has sprung from Wesley would have failed in the birth.

Ver. 6. Jonathan Edwards, in his *Journal*, says, 'In September 1725, was taken ill at Newhaven, and endeavoured to go home to Windsor; was so ill at the North Village that I could go no farther, where I lay sick for about a quarter of a year. And in this sickness God was pleased to visit me again with the sweet influences of His Spirit. My mind was greatly engaged there on divine pleasant contemplations and longings of soul. I observed that those who watched with me would often be looking out for the morning,

and seemed to wish for it ; which brought to my mind those words of the Psalmist, which my soul with sweetness made its own language, " My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning : I say, more than they that watch for the morning." And when the light of the morning came in at the windows, it refreshed my soul from one morning to another. It seemed to me to be some image of the sweet light of God's glory.'

To how many hearts this psalm has brought comfort and hope God only can tell, but seldom do four such names as Luther, Owen, Wesley, and Edwards surround one portion of the word of God. It reminds us of the ancient fourfold encampment of the tribes of Israel round the tabernacle, or the city that lieth foursquare, with a herald at each central gate.

Psalm 133.

' Behold, how good a thing it is,
And how becoming well,
Together such as brethren are
In unity to dwell !'

In 1638 it was sung at the close of the famous Assembly held in Glasgow, of which Alexander Henderson was moderator. It was the triumph, for the time, of the second Reformation, the Bannockburn of Scottish religious liberty, a bright morning, to be followed by clouds and conflicts, but never forgotten.

With all our divisions we are in advance of that period, and every time the psalm is sung it has a prophetic look, and a prayer for the final happy issue.

The American Greely Expedition went into their winter house in 1881, amid the eternal ice and snow of the Arctic Circle, with a night before them of four months and a half. They arranged their reckoning of time so as to keep their Sabbath, and have a religious service, including the reading of the Psalms. The first Sabbath contained Ps. cxxxiii., and the Commander brought before the men the duty of brotherly feeling, and his hope that every one would endeavour to cherish a friendly spirit, and endeavour to reconcile those who might drift into any unpleasant controversy. The result may be found in the fact to which he bears witness, that though 'for months without drinking water, destitute of warmth, with sleeping bags frozen to the ground, with walls, roof, and floor covered with frost and ice, deprived of sufficient light, heat, or food, they were never without courage, faith, and hope.'

Psalm 136.

The foundation of Milton's 'Let us with a gladsome mind,'—written when he was fifteen,—the only one of his psalms which has been taken into the public worship of the Church, though no one felt more than he did the surpassing depth and height of the Psalmist's inspiration.

‘Their songs,
Thin sown with aught of profit or delight,
Will far be found unworthy to compare
With Sion’s songs to all true tastes excell’g —
Where God is praised aright, and godlike men,
The Holiest of holies, and his saints, —
Such are from God inspired.’

Psalm 137.

‘By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea we wept when we remembered Zion,’ has struck the key to many a song of the love of country. The Abbé Cucci, a great Oriental scholar, and author of a translation of the Old Testament into Italian, one of the few of the Roman Catholic clergy who have taken the side of Italy and freedom against the Papacy, lectured, in 1883, to an immense assembly in Rome, and expressed his special love to the 137th Psalm. He said it was the first and grandest patriotic song which was ever written, linking God and country together. Camoens, the national poet of Portugal, has paraphrased it as ‘the psalm of pious patriotic memory.’

When the gifted but unfortunate Henri Heine yielded to the political oppression and social indignity meted out to his race in Germany, and submitted, without heart-conviction, to Christian baptism, he was moved to the soul by this psalm, while he loathed the dishonesty of his own act. It is touching to know

how beneath his surface cynicism there was a burning love to his kindred, and a yearning heart toward the things that are written in the Book. Writing to a Jewish friend, he says, 'I remember me that the psalm, "We sat by the waters of Babylon," was then your favourite, and that you recited it so beautifully, so nobly, so touchingly, that I would fain weep now, and not alone over the psalm.' And again, writing from Heligoland, 1830, 'As yesterday was Sunday, and a leaden *ennui* lay on the whole island and almost crushed my heart, I took up the Bible in desperation, and in spite, as I confess to you, of my being a secret Hellene, the Book has not only well entertained, but deeply edified me. What a Book! Vast and wide as the world, rooted in the abysses of creation, and towering up beyond the blue secrets of heaven! Sunrise and sunset, promise and fulfilment, birth and death, the whole drama of humanity, all are in this Book. It is the Book of Books—BIBLION. The Jews may easily console themselves for having lost Jerusalem, and the temple, and the ark of the covenant, and the golden vessels, and the precious things of Solomon. Such a loss is insignificant compared with the Bible, the imperishable treasure which they have rescued. If I do not err, it was Mahomet who named the Jews "the people of the Book"—a name which has remained theirs to the present day on the earth, and is deeply characteristic. A book is their fatherland. They live within the boundaries of this Book.

Here do they exercise their inalienable citizen rights, Here they can be neither persecuted nor despised. Absorbed in the study of this Book, they observed little of the changes which went on about them in the world. Nations arose and perished; States flourished and disappeared; revolutions stormed forth out of the ground, but they lay bent over their Book, and observed nothing of the wild tumult of the times which passed over their head.' Poor Heine passed through many phases of thought and feeling, far enough away from the spirit of the Bible; but, years after his letter from Heligoland, he writes to one of his friends from Paris, when his body was at the grave's mouth, but his mind unbroken: 'I attribute my enlightenment entirely and simply to the reading of a book. — Of a book? — Yes, and it is an old homely book, modest as nature — a book which has a look natural as the sun which warms us, as the bread which nourishes us, a book as full of love and blessing as the old mother who reads in it with her dear, trembling lips, and this book is *the Book*, the *Bible*. — With right is it named the Holy Scripture; he who has lost his God can find him again in this book, and he who has never known him is here struck by the breath of the Divine Word.'

In a still higher point of view than the love of the earthly land, the 137th Psalm may be regarded as the spring of the songs of the 'Jerusalem above,' which, in all ages of the Church, have looked

away from the banishment of exile to the final home—

‘For thee, O dear, dear country,
 Mine eyes their vigils keep;
For very love, beholding
 Thy happy name, they weep;
Even now, by faith, I see thee,
 Even now thy walls discern;
To thee my thoughts are kindled,
 And strive, and pant, and yearn.’

Psalm 139.

A psalm of wonderful power, in which the singer takes the sense of God’s omnipresence first into his own heart, and then makes it flash to the utmost bounds of the universe, and into the deepest secrets of being. ‘O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thought afar of.’ But the penetrating eye of divine holiness would be terrible, unless he had assurance of its benignity; and so he takes refuge in the thought of divine mercy, praying for cleansing from impurity, that he may be able to look to God with a clearer vision. Notice the advance in the meaning of the word *search* (vers. 1 and 23): ‘Thou hast searched me and known me.’ ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart.’ Notice also how he prays that he may hate sin, not only when it is around, but when it is within him, anticipating the apostle

(Rom. vii. 24). This gives the key to many of the expressions in the Psalms which have been spoken of as vindictive. These men were in conflict with sin, which surrounded them, wounded them, sought to crush them; but they were taught by the Spirit of God to hate it also in themselves: and the completion of this lesson, as of the love of God, is reserved for the New Testament.

Villemain, a noted French critic, speaks of this psalm in his essays on the genius of Pindar: ‘I was seized with admiration the first time I read Plato’s testimony to the omnipresence and providence of God —“ If you were hidden in the deepest caverns of the earth, if you were to take wings and fly to the height of the skies, if you were to seek the confines of the world, if you were to descend to the depths of Tartarus, or some more dreadful place, the Divine Providence would still be near you.” This is higher than Homer’s description of the movement of his gods in three steps to the ends of the earth; but compare it with the Psalmist’s, “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” If this poetry is man’s, it is from a spirit transfigured by divine grace, as was the face of Moses when he came

down from Sinai, shining with the brightness he had seen.'

Psalm 141

Was the Evening song of the early Christian Church. 'Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.' The calm floating of the fragrant cloud upward, the hands outstretched to God when the day's work is done, are a contrast to the morning prayer, full of purpose and aim, like an archer who fits his arrow to the bow, and then follows it to the mark. Ps. v. 3: 'My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.'

Psalm 143.

Thomas Bilneg, burned in the reign of Henry VIII., had, at first, fear of death, but he rose above it, and his behaviour at the stake made a great impression on the people. 'He made his private prayer with such earnest elevation of his eyes and hands to heaven, and in so good and quiet behaviour, that he seemed not to consider the terror of his death; and ended at last his private prayers with the psalm beginning, "Hear my prayer, O Lord; consider my desire!" And the next verse he repeated, in deep meditation, thrice: "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy

sight shall no man living be justified." And so, finishing that psalm, he ended his prayers.'

Psalm 144.

From this psalm, which was in the order for the day, Bishop Bedell preached, Jan. 30, 1642, in the midst of the Irish Civil War, and died a few days afterwards. (See Ps. iii.) There is a singular appropriateness to the circumstances: 'Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight; my goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust.' . . . 'Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.' Bishop Bedell was one of the most devoted men of his time. The Bible which, with great labour, he got translated into the Irish language, was for a long time the one chiefly in use among the Scottish Highlanders; but it was not till the beginning of this century that it found much entry into Ireland. The last sermon, on this psalm, was preached by him in the house of a converted priest, to which he was allowed to retire from Castle Oughterard, County Cavan, where he had been kept a prisoner. He lies in a corner of Kilmore churchyard, close to a large sycamore tree which he himself had planted.

Psalm 145.

The tradition about the *Te Deum* is that it was first sung by Ambrose and Augustine, through inspiration, when, in 387, they were together at Milan. The truth is that this hymn had its origin in a responsive Christian song which Ambrose introduced into the West from the Eastern Church. It was a morning psalm of praise, and began, 'Every day will I bless thee, and praise thy name for ever and ever.' This 145th Psalm may be looked on as having the germ of the widespread Christian hymn, and as being itself the *Te Deum* of the Old Testament. The Jews were accustomed to say that he who could pray this psalm from the heart three times daily, was preparing himself best for the praise of the world to come.

The second version of it in the Scottish Psalm-book is by John Craig, the colleague of Knox, and shows his poetic taste. The peculiar versions of the 136th and 143rd were either by him or by Pow, minister of St. Cuthbert's. In those days, larger portions were sung than is now common; the 51st on fast days, the 103rd at communions, the harmonic parts being given in the Psalm-book, and carefully rendered. The attention given to sacred song was a feature of the Reformation.

Psalm 146.

‘Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord O my soul. While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.’ This psalm was the delight of David Home of Wedderburn, who used to sing it, accompanying his voice with the harp. He was a member of an old family in Berwickshire, and father of David Home of Godscroft, author of one of the first Scottish family histories, *The House of Douglas*. The troublous character of the time may be judged from the fact that he was the first of his line who, for a long period, had died a natural death, the rest having lost their lives in defence of their country, or of principle. He was remarkable for piety and probity, candour and integrity, and had whole psalms in memory, and short portions of them often in his mouth.

Psalm 147.

Like the 133rd, the psalm of brotherhood. It has been sung twice in seasons of Church union in Scotland, first in 1820, when two branches of the Secession were reunited, and again in 1847, when the United Secession and Relief joined to form the United Presbyterian Church. The second and third verses strikingly connect union with spiritual comfort and healing:

‘ God doth build up Jerusalem ;
And he it is alone
That the dispersed of Israel
Doth gather into one.
Those that are broken in their heart,
And grievèd in their minds,
He healeth, and their painful wounds
He tenderly up-binds.’

Psalm 148.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux thus describes the death of his brother Gerard: ‘ Who could ever have loved me as he did? He was a brother by blood, but far more in the faith. God grant, Gerard, that I may not have lost thee, but that thou hast only gone before me; for, of a surety, thou hast joined those whom, in thy last night below, thou didst invite to praise God, when suddenly, to the surprise of all, thou, with a serene countenance and cheerful voice, didst commence chanting that psalm, “Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels; praise ye him, all his hosts.” At that moment, O my brother, the day dawned on thee, though it was night to us; the night to thee was all brightness. Just as I reached his side, I heard him utter aloud those words of Christ, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!” Then repeating the verse over again, and resting on the word *Father*, *Father!* he turned to me and smiling said, “O how

gracious of God to be the Father of men, and what an honour for men to be his children!"

Psalm 150.

Whatever connection we may be able to find in the place which particular psalms hold to one another, there can be no doubt of an arrangement as to the whole. The book begins with benediction, and ends with praise—first, blessing to man, and then glory to God. The entire book is divided into five portions, each with a similar close, and evidently intended for the public worship of the ancient Church, —the 41st, the 72nd, the 89th, the 135th, and the 150th. The last psalm is the great Hallelujah, the triumphant acclaim to him who hath gotten the victory, after the manifold sorrows and conflicts through which the Church of God and the believing soul have passed. The temple thrills and throbs with the burst of gladness, as all the powers of man, and all creatures in the universe are summoned to aid the song. It seems as if this were the very summit and climax of the praise that can ascend to God, the loftiest wave of the many waters that break at the foot of his throne; and yet it yields to that joy of which the apostle speaks, which is ‘unspeakable and full of glory.’ In one of Raphael’s great pictures, St. Cecilia, and the singers round her, have caught hearing of the accents of the praise of Heaven, and, as some look down and listen in profound

thought, and others look up in rapt wonder and ecstasy, the instruments of earth fall from their hands and lie broken at their feet. When we read this psalm, and pass forward to the new song which fell on the entranced ear of John in Patmos, we feel as if the poet-painter had some vision like this before him : 'And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour, and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'

TESTIMONIES TO THE VALUE OF THE
PSALMS.

Athanasius says: 'It seems to me that the Psalms are for every one who sings them like a mirror of the soul, in which it can recognise its movements and express its feelings. For in this book thou findest the whole life of man pictured, the moods of the heart, the movements of the thought. If thou hast need of repentance, if thou hast met trial and temptation, if thou art exposed to persecution and calumny, in all, and in every case, thou canst find here instruction, and bring thy case before God in the words of the Psalms.'

Ambrose. 'The law of Scripture teaches, history instructs, prophecy prepares, admonition corrects, precepts advise. In the Psalms is the fruit of all, and a healing medicine for the soul. It is the praise of God, the weal of man, the voice of the Church, the best confession of faith. Through the Psalms I learn to avoid sin, and unlearn being a haunter of repentance.'

Augustine. ‘O God, how have I spoken with thee when I read the Psalms of David, those songs so full of faith, those cries that shut out all pride! How have I spoken with thee in them, and been enkindled and inflamed with love, when I could have read them before the whole world, as a witness against the pride of man! And yet they are read in all the world, and “there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”’

Luther. ‘The human heart is like a ship driven on a wide sea by winds of sorrow and joy. And what are the Psalms, but the earnest words of men driven about by these winds? Where are more beautiful words of joy than the psalms of praise and thanksgiving? There thou seest into the heart of all the saints, as into fair and pleasant gardens, as into heaven itself, and walkest among the heart-rejoicing flowers, the happy and gladsome thoughts that rise to God and his goodness. And, again, where findest thou deeper, more touching words of sorrow than in the penitential psalms? There thou seest again into the heart of all the saints, as if into death or hell itself. How dark and gloomy it is there, when God hides his face! And when they speak of fear and hope, it is in such words that no painter could give the colours, and no Cicero the language.’

Melancthon. ‘This book is the most beautiful (*elegantissimus*) in the whole world.’

Calvin. 'If the reading of my Commentary on this book brings as much blessing to the Church of God as I have got in the composition of it, I shall not repent of the work. I may truly call this book an anatomy of all the parts of the soul, for no one can feel a movement of the spirit which is not reflected in this mirror. All the sorrows, troubles, fears, doubts, hopes, pains, perplexities, stormy outbreaks by which the hearts of men are tossed, have been here depicted by the Holy Spirit to the very life.'

Salmasius, one of the most learned men of his time, the great antagonist of Milton, said on his death-bed: 'I have lost a world of time; if I had one year more, I would spend it in reading David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles.'

Milton, when he speaks of his design of writing his great poem, and of the source of inspiration he hoped for in the Bible, says: 'But those frequent songs throughout the law and prophets, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very art of composition, may be easily made appear over all the other kinds of lyric poesy to be incomparable. They are the inspired gift of God to celebrate, in glorious and lofty hymns, the throne and equipage of his almightiness, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his Church, to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs

of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ.'

Hooker. 'The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books, the Psalms do both more briefly contain, and more movingly also express, by reason of that poetical form wherewith they are written. What is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a strong confirmation to the most perfect. Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of providence over this world, and the promised joys of that world which is to come, all good necessary to be either known, or done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief or disease incident unto the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found.'

Sibbs, one of the richest and raciest of the Puritans, in beginning his treatise on the *Soul's Conflict with Itself*, from Ps. xlii. 11, says: 'The Psalms are, as it were, the anatomy of a holy man, which lay the inside of a

truly devout men outward to the view of others. In the Scriptures be compared to a lamp, the Psalm may well be the heart, they are so full of sweet affections and passion. For, in other portions of Scripture, God speaks to us; but in the Psalmody men speak to God and their own hearts.

Bishop Horne, in the preface to his Commentary, says: "This little volume, like the paradise of Eden, affords us in perfection, though in miniature, everything that groweth elsewhere,—“Every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food”—and, above all, what was there lost, but is here restored, the tree of life in the midst of the garden.

And now could the author flatter himself that any one would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the hurry and bustle of life, the din of politics and the noise of folly; vanity and vexation flew away for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose fresh as the morning to his task, the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every psalm improved infinitely upon acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the poet; for then he was grieved that his work was done. In 1780, under the influence of him to whom all these are

known, and events foreknown, they suit mankind in all situations, grateful as the manna which descended from above, and which conformed itself to every palate. The fairest productions of human wit, after a few perusals, like gathered flowers, wither in our hands and lose their fragraney; but these unfading plants of paradise become, as we are accustomed to them, still more and more beautiful; their bloom appears to be daily heightened, fresh odours are emitted, and new sweets extracted from them.'

A good remark is made as to the authorship of particular psalms: 'When we discern in a letter the well-known hand of a friend, we are not solicitous about the pen with which it was written.'

Sir Patrick Hume of Polwarth, father of Lady Grisel Baillie, was compelled in the time of persecution to hide for a lengthened period in the vault of Polwarth Church. 'His great comfort, and constant entertainment, for he had no light to read by, was repeating Buchanan's psalms (in Latin), which he had from beginning to end by heart, and retained to his dying day. Two years before he died, which was in 1724, I was witness to his desiring my mother to take up that book, which amongst others always lay on his table, and bid her try if he had forgot his psalms, by naming any one she would have him repeat, and, by casting her eye over it, she would know if he was right, though she did not understand it; and he

missed not a word in any place she named to him and he said they had been the great comfort of his life 'by night and day, on all occasions.'—*Memoirs of Georg Baillie of Jerviswood and Lady Grisel Baillie.*

Sir William Wallace, the Scottish patriot, when he was being put to death, in a very cruel way, in Smithfield, made the Psalter his mother had given him be held before his face that he might look on it as long as he lived.

'Great numbers of the French Huguenots, after 1685, fled across the frontier, and enriched materially and intellectually every land they settled in' (*Weiss Protestant Refugees*). But thousands had to suffer the fiercest persecution in France. The Châtelet, Bastille, Vincennes, Ham, Isles of St. Margaret near Cannes, and all the prisons of the kingdom, had their prisons choked with those who refused to abjure. These places were so damp that their clothes rotted on them. They were beaten and dragged by the hair for persisting to sing the Psalms. Those who were condemned to the galleys reckoned themelves happy when a more humane commander allowed them to hum them; and editions fitted for the pocket were conveyed to them by their friends. They sang them in the ships which carried them in banishment to the colonies. Women and young girls were mixed with the vilest criminals, and the Psalms were their defence

against oaths and foulness. Meeting among the mountains and forests of the '*Desert*,' the Psalms guided their friends to their assemblies, but sometimes brought on them the sudden fire of the enemy. When at last madness drove them to arms, the Psalms became their battle-songs, and their opponents speak of their singing as wild and fierce like a trumpet. Three hundred Cevenols, shut up in the tower of Bellet, refused to surrender, fired their last cartridge, and perished in the flames singing their Psalms. At an earlier period, John Knox must have sung the Psalms in this same version, when he was condemned to pull at the oar in the galleys, and while he was putting in shape his treatise on prayer.

Lelièvre says: 'The effect of the Psalms on the character of the Huguenots was wonderful. The songs of a people reflect their life, and we may say, "Tell me what you sing, I will tell you what you are." The Psalter of Beza and Marot helped to give to the Reformed Church of France a character of unexampled firmness, and even sternness. It penetrated the family, sanctified its joys, and consoled its sorrows; it was a breviary for the living, and a viaticum for the dying. The Huguenot character received from this its tone at once religious and moral, energetic and tender. We must say, at the same time, that certain mistakes which cost them dear, and certain defects in their views, came from an exclusive use of

the songs of the Old Covenant. But it is nevertheless true that the Psalms have nourished the moral life of a race of men such as the world will never perhaps see again. We need to-day a generation nourished on this *marrow of lions*. If we may judge by its weaknesses, our age uses little of this food. It seems to seek its moral aliment in any place rather than where it was found by the heroic singers of the Psalms.'

Herder, in his *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*: 'Not only for its contents but its form, is the use of the book of Psalms a benefit to the spirit of man. In no lyric poet of Greece or Rome can we find so much instruction or comfort, and in none such a variety and rich change of the poetic mood. These flowers can be carried to every time and every soil, and they bloom in fresh youth. The book contains the simplest lyric notes for the expression of the most manifold feelings, and so it is a book of song for all ages.'

Tholuck. 'Songs which, like the Psalms, have stood the test of three thousand years, may well be said to contain in them the seed of eternity.'

Lamartine. 'David is the first of the poets of feeling—the king of lyrists. Never has the thought of poet risen so high and pure. Never has the soul opened before man and God in language so tender, so

sympathetic and moving. All the secret cries of the human heart have found a voice through his lips. If we think of the lyric poets of the most cultivated nations of antiquity, singing of wine, love, blood, the victories of mules and horses in the fields of Elis, we are seized with profound astonishment at the mysterious utterances of the shepherd-prophet, who speaks with God as a friend, who praises his wonders, admires his justice, entreats his mercy, and seems to be an anticipating echo of the poetry of the gospel, repeating the loving words of Christ before he had heard them. Read Greek or Latin lyrics after a psalm—they turn pale!’

M. Henry. ‘We have in the Psalms one of the choicest and most excellent parts of all the Old Testament; nay, so much is there in it of CHRIST and his gospel, as well as of God and his law, that it has been called *the abstract, or summary of both Testaments*. The history of Israel leads us to camps and council-boards, and there entertains and instructs us in the knowledge of God. The book of Job brings us into the schools, and treats us with profitable disputations concerning God and his providence. But this book brings us into the sanctuary, draws us off from converse with men, with the politicians, philosophers, or disputers of this world, and directs us into communion with God, by solacing and reposing our souls in him, lifting up and letting out our

hearts towards him. Thus may we be in the mount with God; and we understand not our interests if we say not, "*It is good to be here.*"

Johannes von Müller was the greatest historian of his time, and passed his life in the stormy period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars—a universally learned and widely experienced man. In a letter to his brother he says: 'The most delightful hour to me daily is that which I spend with David. There is nothing Greek or Roman, nothing in all the Western or Northern spheres like David, whom the God of Israel chose that his name might be set in song above all the gods of the nations. His song springs from the spirit and penetrates the heart, and never in my life before have I seen God so clear and so near. The Psalms can make a life of trial a life of joy.'

Hengstenberg. 'The book of Psalms is full of the noblest testimonies to the being of God and his perfections. It has contributed in this respect vast materials for developing the religious consciousness of God, and the Christian Church rests far more upon them for its apprehensions of God than might at first sight be supposed. To perceive to what an extent this is the case, we have only to search out the traces of the Psalms in our liturgies and Church-songs. Even the French Deists, the theo-philanthropists, sworn enemies of the Bible, could only make out

their liturgy by the help of the Psalms. This is one chief reason why the Psalter is so precious to the afflicted. It presents God so clearly and vividly before their eyes, that they see him in a manner with their bodily sight, and find thereby the sting taken from their pains. In this, too, lies one great element of the importance of the Psalter for the present times. What men now most of all need is, that the blanched image of God should again be freshened up in them. The more closely we connect ourselves with the Psalms, the more will God cease to be to us a shadowy form, which can neither hear, nor help, nor judge us, and to which we can present no supplication.'

Thomas Carlyle. 'David, king of Israel, a soul inspired by divine music, and much other provision, was wont to pour himself in song; he, with seer's eye and heart, discerned the godlike amid the human, struck tones that were an echo of the sphere-harmonies, and are still felt to be such. Reader, art thou one of a thousand, able still to read a psalm of David, and catch some echo of it through the old dim centuries; feeling far off in thy own heart what it once was to other hearts made as thine? To sing it attempt not, for it is impossible in this late time; only know that it once was sung. Then go to the opera, and hear, with unspeakable reflections, what things men now sing.'

[Carlyle forgets that it is not so long ago since they were sung by Huguenots and Covenanters with some effect, and that there are churches and homes where they are still vocal,

‘The strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion wi’ judicious care ;’

only that the measure must keep pace with the soul of the old psalm, not in pirouetting gyrations like the degenerate daughters of Zion, ‘mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet,’ but in ‘a grave sweet melody,’ as in ‘the night when a holy solemnity is kept!’ A great congregation sending a psalm heavenward, in such frame, can never be out of date till heaven is reached, and the song raised which is as ‘the voice of many waters round about the throne.’]

W. E. Gladstone. ‘All the wonders of Greek civilisation heaped together are less wonderful than is the simple book of Psalms—the history of the human soul in relation to its Maker.’

Delitzsch. ‘This book has no equal in the expanse of time which it reflects, beginning with the wanderings in the wilderness, 1450 years before Christ, and reaching down to the building of the second temple, 800 years later. It is without equal in the richness of the form and feeling of its poetry, for freshness of spirit and outpouring of the deepest emotion from still soft

prayer to the triumphant hymn of victory. To this we may add that it is without equal for the richness of its contents. It embraces nature and history, heaven and earth, the world around and the world within us, the experience of each and all from the darkest abyss of trial to the summit of celestial joy. It is unequalled in the depth of its secret soul-experience, and the power of expressing it—not the palpable and superficial, but the root—secrets of the inmost life, ideal and real, abstract and concrete, universal and individual—and so it possesses for the understanding of each reader and for the inquiry of the commentator a growing attraction towards something ever fresh and new. If it is the peculiarity of the classic that the oftener it is read the more beautiful and full of meaning it becomes, then are the psalms classic in the highest degree.’

Dr. John Eadie in his *English Bible*, after relating how the Gospels were rendered in early ages into our mother tongue, goes on to say : ‘But the favourite portion of Scripture for translation in these times, as in all times, was the Psalms; and one can scarcely wonder at the preference. The melody of the Psalmist has many moods, but the song is ever the genuine outburst of his heart, and the reader is lured into living sympathy with it; nay, as it throbs underneath the page, he is brought into immediate fellowship with the singer and not with his shadow. For the

singer himself, in his various changes, is embodied in his psalms, whether he sinks in deep contrition, or soars away in spiritual rapture ; whether he extols mercy, or sinks into awe before judgment ; or whether he lays his sword and sceptre at the foot of the throne in offer of suit and service, or in acknowledgment that the kingdom and the victory are alike from God. The Psalter is the poetry of spiritual life ; its beauty, power, and freshness never fail, for it does not consist of abstract impersonal effusions, or of subjective theological dogmas. Difference of age and country at once fades away. Therefore the Psalms have always been cherished companions, not simply because they are a body of divine truth, bearing on man's highest interests, but because they come home to human experiences, and tenderly touch them on so many points ; because they are not only the true elements of public worship, but may also be murmured in earnest soliloquy as the spirit of confidence and joyousness lifts itself to God.'

METRICAL VERSIONS OF THE PSALMS.

It is comparatively late, not indeed until about the period of the Reformation, that metrical versions of the Psalms appear. There is abundant evidence that psalms were used in the primitive Church, not only for private edification, but for common worship. Our Lord gave the example at the institution of the communion, Matt. xxvi. 30, when it is said that, at the close, he and his disciples sung an hymn. It was, no doubt, a psalm, part of cxv.-cxviii., with which the Jews were accustomed to terminate the celebration of the Passover. Other sacred songs, besides the Psalms, were employed by the primitive Church, of which some believe they find traces in Acts iv. 24, Eph. v. 14, 1 Tim. iii. 16, the Christian songs in the book of Revelation, and elsewhere. The hymns which, as Pliny tells us, in the beginning of the second century, the Christians met together to sing to Christ as to a God, must have been of this character; and they remain to us, both in Greek and Latin, from an early period. But still the chief material for praise was found in the Psalter. There were different

way - of employing it, reading, chanting, ~~singing~~ entire, or by responses, and in these the whole community of the faithful took part. As time went on, however, and as the New Testament view of the priesthood of all Christians was lost, the priests and officials shut the people out from active participation in the worship; and so it continued for dark centuries. The Psalms were still the spiritual nourishment of some in private, for the Council of Toulouse in 1229, which interdicted the Bible to the laity, left them the use of the Psalter; but their public share in it was for a long season withdrawn. When light ~~grew~~ grew with it; and as the sun is welcomed by the birds before his rays are above the horizon, so the faint fore-glimmerings of the Reformation were heralded by psalms and hymns among the people. The name *Lollards* was given to the witnesses for evangelical truth in the Low Countries, and in England and Scotland, from their habit of singing, and is connected with our word *lull* - to sing softly; they were *the sweet singers*. Song has been a feature of every new up-springing of truth, or marked deliverance at the hand of God. It showed itself at the birth of Christianity, the return from Babylon, the triumphs of the reign of David, the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and it is repeated in every revival: 'She shall sing there as in the days of her youth and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.' Hos. ii. 15. We know little of what there

Lollards sang, for most of the information we have about them comes from their enemies; but as we approach the Reformation, we have more precise knowledge of the sacred songs of those separated from the Romish Church. Two things marked them: they were in the mother tongue, and they took the form known as rhyme. The necessity for both of these had been slowly growing up. The only literary language of the West, for a long period, had been the Latin, and, as the mass of the people were ignorant of it, they were shut out from sources of knowledge; but now national languages had grown up fit to carry all the stores of thought, and the people demanded entrance to spiritual provision in their mother tongue. And as the Bible now spoke to them in their own language, it behoved them to praise God in like manner. But songs in the mother tongue implied a different poetical measure from that which prevailed in the classic poetry of Greece and Rome. The old Latin hymn-writers began to feel very early that the Christian spirit needed something more free and natural than the fettered style of the Roman lyrists, and they gradually found their way to a simpler rhythm, which many believe to be the original form poetry takes among all nations. However this may be, when the people claimed their share in the worship of the Church, it was in song through the mother tongue, and song fashioned according to what we call rhyme. This at least as a rule; and one benefit of

it is, that while the chant too frequently fell to trained specialists, the rhythmic song, in the form of psalm or hymn, remains often the possession of the entire body of the people, and will, we hope, always be claimed by them.

Coming now to the worship of praise in the Churches of the Reformation, it may be remarked that hymns belonged more to those of the Lutheran order, and psalms to those of the Reformed or Calvinistic. There was a reason for this. The movement of Luther had its source in the great doctrine of justification by faith, while that of Calvin took for its basis the word of God. It is true, these are not opposed; on the contrary, they illustrate and defend one another. Justification by faith, that is, Christ truly interpreted to the conscience, gives unity and consistency to the Bible; while, on the other hand, the Bible, rightly understood, finds its centre in Christ, and thus the two views are in harmony. Nevertheless, beginning at different points, the two movements have in some things taken different shapes. The Lutheran Church is satisfied with adherence to the leading truth and spirit of the Bible, and is less careful about the form. Luther's grandest hymns started from particular psalms as their keynote. *Ein feste Burg* from Ps. xlvii., *Aus tiefen Noth* from Ps. cxxxv., but they are not versions, they are adaptations, transfigured by the light of the New Testament and the view of Christ. Versions of the Psalms were

made in the German language, that of Lobwasser shortly after the time of Luther; but they did not take deep or general root, and have survived to our day only in a few localities. The religious poets of Germany adopted the hymn as the medium of praise, and they have given to their language a wealth of song, so evangelical in its savour, so warm and edifying and spiritual, that the use of it in the churches has done much to save the people from the chill unto death of rationalism. Yet it is a question whether the almost total exclusion of the Psalms from public worship has not contributed to the depreciation of the Old Testament, and to the severance of the Bible into two diverging, or almost conflicting parts; and to the fact that while Germany is so distinguished for its professional expositors of the Bible, the exposition of the Bible, as a whole, occupies so small a place in public ministerial teaching. Among the Reformed Churches, on the other hand, the use of hymns entered at a period comparatively late, in the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. At that time a new tide of emotion passed through all the German Churches under the influence of Pietism and the labours of the Moravian Brethren; and the hymns of the period have a sweetness, sometimes a sentimental lusciousness, by which they can be distinguished from those of the Reformation. They are specially hymns of feeling and self-inspection, more than of doctrine, and dwell

on the person of Christ rather than on his work. They found their way into England in the early part of last century through the Wesleys, whose own hymns and those of Watts have ever since taken so large a place in the worship of English-speaking Churches. They had great share in the remarkable revival movements of the time, and supplied a felt want in a season of cold formality and dead orthodoxy which was passing over into barren negation. Think of the fervid emotion of Watts' *When I survey the wondrous cross*; of Charles Wesley's *Jesus, lover of my soul*! of Toplady's *Rock of Ages cleft for me*, and then think of the affected literalism and cold culture of the old Presbyterians, languidly reposing on their private endowments, and it is easy to see how the one became a renewing and life-giving power, while the other crept forward in decay, almost to extinction. And yet we cannot help regretting that the psalm was so largely, almost entirely among Nonconformists at least, supplanted by the hymn; for the psalm was not at fault. It has proved itself in many a land and in many a time the friend of true revival, and has carried the souls of the singers in peace and in struggle, and in struggle more than in peace, to an enthusiasm unequalled in the history of the world. It corrects the hymn on the side in which it sometimes errs, and when sentiment becomes morbid and fancy superficial, it leads the soul into the depths of its own nature, and gives it for its strength the very

words of God. If the hymn awakens impressions and aids revivals, the psalm conducts more directly to the study of the word of God, without which revivals are shallow and short-lived. The flame that is caught from a hymn is most secure when its heart rests on the white heat which gathers round a psalm. Believing then that both have their place in Christian worship, we return to speak of some of the metrical versions of the Psalms in the Reformed Churches.

The earliest of all the versions of the Psalms in the tongue of the people was the celebrated one of Clement Marot into French. Marot's poetry was looked on as the mirror and model of the time. He held a distinguished place at the Court of Francis I., and was the fashionable hero with the wits and fine ladies who cultivated literary repute. He was in this way protected from the charge of heresy, for he inclined to the Reformation. But the Sorbonne became so vehement that he had to seek refuge, now in Geneva with Calvin, and again with the Duchess René in Ferrara, at which place he died in 1544. It is a curious picture of the divided state of the time, that some of his translations were made at the request of the Emperor Charles V., others at that of Calvin. Though the version is commonly known as Marot's, he translated only fifty psalms; two were by Calvin, and the rest by Theodore Beza, who to his many gifts added that of a poetic faculty. The melodies to which the psalms were first sung were the simple airs of the

popular songs and a number of the *psalms* were re-arranged, adapted, and harmonized by Gerdinel, whom he met at the Psalms to-morrow. Gerdinel was the most noted musical composer of the period, and at Provençaux and one of the remarkable victims of St. Barthelemy. The Church of Rome owed him something better, for he was the master of Palestrina, whose music is one of the attractions on high occasion in St. Peter's. The excellence of the translation, the *Metre*, some-what unimpaired, the variety of the rhythm and the beauty of the melody gave to the version of Marot and Bèze a wonderful popularity. In all the French-speaking countries it was the book of songs for the soldier as well as the cottage, for recreation or at work, for the lady in the hall, the weaver at his loom, the peasant at the plough. The wars of religion had not yet killed the people as they are regarded by the general use of this version of the Psalms and the Reformation that strong hold of France which held its position only by the bitter persecution of 1594 and later, when to *psalms* was to be a Psalmant they became more dear by their prohibition. They were not so common to the memory, but they had been so long they took a place in every respect, the wealth of the son-tang to children, the last words of the dying, the dying man. They were sung by the Huguenots at the peril of their lives, they were on their knees and the solitude of the woods, the valley in the midst of the hills, the church of the poor, the

slave's toil, soothed them on the rack, mounted with them to the scaffold, and, when the breeze was heard among the ruins of their churches, it shaped itself into melodies of their psalms. For the sake of the rhythm and airs, translations of them were made into almost all the languages of Europe, and some of the East; and they have an interest for us, in that they exercised an influence on the first Scottish Psalter of 1564. The variety of measure in it was prompted by the French one, and the old 124th in our present version has the same rhythm and air as Marot's, or rather Beza's; and indeed they were both composed in Geneva about the same time. Away in the mountainous Canton of Grisons, at the head-waters of the Inn, and in the highest inhabited land in Europe, the psalms of Marot's version may yet be heard to some of the melodies we know in Scotland. After being largely excluded from the French Hymn-book, they are now finding their way back, and in the edition published at the ter-centenary of the organization of the French Protestant Church, there are seventy psalms or portions of psalms with the original melodies included in the collection of sacred songs. It is pleasant to find the editors saying, 'A few changes made here and there enable us to restore the songs of the Psalmist, the want of which has been so much regretted. The grave solemn measures, and the strong sustained harmonies, give to this part of our work a peculiar value, which will soon be recognised by experience, and which will

commend to the taste and usage of the Church the majestic character of those old melodies bequeathed to us by the piety of our fathers, and admired wherever they are known.

In England and Scotland, before the definite triumph of the Reformation, there were metrical versions of a number of the psalms, and, though persecuted as keenly as their authors, they contributed greatly to the spread of the revival. Those in England were by Miles Coverdale, who was associated with Tyndale in the first complete translation of the Bible into English, published 1535, the prose version of which is still retained for the psalms in the English Prayer Book. Those in Scotland were by three brothers named Wedderburn in Dundee, and were known as the *Dundee Psalms*. John Knox quotes one of them as being sung by George Wishart and his friends at Cruggleton shortly before his death. How many were translated we cannot certainly tell, and in Scotland they were accompanied by versions of German hymns, with which the Wedderburns had become acquainted when driven from their native country by persecution. At that time the Scottish Reformers were more in contact with Germany than with France. Patrick Hamilton studied at Wittenberg under Luther and Melancthon, and also at Marburg, then in great renown, and frequented by students from all parts of Europe. It was Knox and the later Reformers who brought us into contact with France and Geneva, and here we

have to look for the first complete, or nearly complete, English version of the Psalms. It is well known, at least by name, that of Sternhold and Hopkins. We may trace its history first in connection with England. Thomas Sternhold was groom of the robes to Henry VIII. and Edward VI., and John Hopkins was a minister in Suffolk; but they were authors only of a portion of the versions, the rest being additions from time to time by various others. It was issued in parts, first in London, and then enlarged in Geneva in 1556, to which city its publication was transferred on account of the English-speaking refugees who took shelter there from the persecution of Mary. In 1563 it was completed, and under Elizabeth adopted as the metrical version to be used by the Church of England. It had a wide and strong hold of the people, for there were at least 309 distinct editions of it until 1698, when it gave way to the version of Brady and Tate. Its renderings of psalms are very unequal, some of them poor and disjointed, others possessing a dignity which has been seldom equalled. The version which took its place is certainly free from its rudeness, and smooth in syllables and metre, but with a frequent weakness and wordy inflation which must have made many a one even in that degenerate age say, 'The old is better.' Brady and Tate has not maintained its position, but has given way to hymns in most of the Episcopal churches. One of the merits, however, of the Book of Common Prayer is that it provides for

the people becoming acquainted with the Psalms through the prominent part it assigns them in its regular service. Among Nonconformists in England the version of Sternhold and Hopkins continued in use till the time of Watts. He made two separate endeavours to advance the service of praise. The one was by a version of the Psalms accommodated to New Testament thought and language, a graft of the Apostle Paul on David, which is not very successful, as it becomes a kind of metrical commentary with the old and new in perplexing conjunction, and Britain and Zion claiming attention by turns. Some of the renderings, however, have deservedly taken a permanent place in Christian psalmody as Ps. xix., LXX., 'The heavens declare thy glory, Lord;' xci., 'Our God, our help in ages past;' cxlvi., 'I'll praise my Maker with my breath,' and others. Watts rose much higher when he took another method. He was the first to open that stream of sacred song which was swelled by the Wesleys, Cowper, and many more, and which has refreshed and strengthened Christian feeling among all branches of the Church. It is only to be regretted that some distinct place has not been preserved for the Psalms, such as they had in the early Reformed Churches.

Having glanced at England, we come to the versions used in Scotland. The psalms and godly songs of the Wedderburns were limited in number, and had no more than a private circulation. The first version

employed in the churches after the Reformation was mainly that of Sternhold and Hopkins. Naturally it came with John Knox from Geneva, but it was not entirely the same as that adopted in England. Forty-one psalms had different renderings by various authors, William Whittingham, a brother-in-law of Calvin, and minister of the English refugees in Geneva; Robert Pont, minister of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh; William Keith, a native of the north of Scotland; and John Craig, colleague to Knox in St. Giles'. Some of these are to be found in our present Scottish version, and have a marked excellence. The 100th, L.M., is by Keith; the 124th, P.M., by Whittingham; the 136th, P.M.; 143rd, P.M.; 145th, L.M., by Craig, to whom also we owe a number of expressions in 102nd, L.M. Those by Craig have special merit, and it will be remarked that the whole of the above are departures from the common measure. This is a feature of the version as distinguished from the present one. It has a greater variety of rhythm with tunes prescribed for each psalm, and more freedom in the rendering. The complete version was first printed at Edinburgh in 1564, by order of the General Assembly, and continued in use till 1650. It was in great favour among the people, and *sang schules* were general for teaching them to sing it. The march of the four thousand men up the High Street of Edinburgh, when they brought back their banished minister, and made the air resound to the volumed unison of the old 124th, is testimony

to their proficiency. It was the psalm-book of Knox, Welsh, Melville, and the men who carried on the struggle with James VI. and Charles I. It cheered the prisoners in the dungeons of Blackness, sailed with them in their ships to France, consoled their exile, and sent its notes from Duns Law across the Merse to challenge the song of the Cavaliers; as Baillie delights to tell, 'Had ye lent your ear in the morning or especially at even, and heard in the tents the sound of some singing psalms, some praying, and some reading Scripture, ye would have been refreshed.' No doubt it cost Rutherford and Henderson a pang to part with it, but changes in the language had made many things obsolete, the tide of reform in matters civil and religious was running strong, and the idea of one Church in England and Scotland made multitudes in both countries anxious to have some common forms in worship as a bond. From this sprang the version of the Psalms now in use in Scotland.

The Westminster Assembly, among its other labours, addressed itself in 1643 to the selection of a version that might take the place of the existing one. After comparison with others, it adopted that of Francis Rous, and appointed a committee to confer with him on changes and emendations. Rous, a native of Cornwall, was a lay member of the Assembly as well as of Parliament, and a man distinguished for his learning and judgment. He died in 1654, Provost of Eden College. When the committee

England deferred the adoption of this Psalter, the General Assembly in Scotland took up the question for itself. It chose the version of Rous for a basis, and adhered to it as a whole. It modified it, however, in many things, and substituted for those of Rous a number of translations drawn from the old Scottish Psalter and other sources. Committees of superintendence were engaged for three consecutive years, having among their members, Robert Douglas, James Guthrie, Patrick Gillespie, Samuel Rutherford, John Livingstone, and Zachary Boyd. At length, after many remits and much pious care, the new psalm-book was ready in 1650, and there is mention that, in the midsummer of that year, it was used for the first time in Glasgow and in the town of Largo. The change from the old version to the new was very great, and few comparing them will refuse to admit that there has been decided improvement. In some things, however, there was loss. The old had a larger variety of metres, and special tunes adapted and harmonized to each psalm. Music appears to have declined from the period of the first Reformation. Some of the old tunes have been transferred to the present version, and are known, or should be, in our churches—Dundee, Martyrs, Old 100, Old 124th, St. David's, Elgin, Montrose. The new version has now become old, having reached an age three times greater than that of its predecessor. It has returned into England, crossed the sea to Ireland, America, and all the British colonies,

and has drawn to it the love of exiles, and the affection of a Presbyterianism sometimes more tenacious of its 'grave sweet melodies' than has been the land of its birth. No version has had so long an existence, if we except that of Marot, and certainly none has made a home for itself in so many kinds. If it has been loved, it has been much criticized—condemned as unpoetical and Galilean in speech, faulty in measure and rhyme, and affording little scope for musical variety from its monotonous versification. It is easy to seem to substantiate this through some quotations passed from hand to hand by people who do not know it, or who judge by the rule that smoothness is better than strength, and correct rhyme superior to scriptural fidelity. At the same time it would be foolish to deny that it has not a few imperfections. The want of variety in its measures is a defect; its rhymes, made in an age of vigorous manhood, fighting for great issues, rebel often against modern sweetness; and the handling of its syllables, to bring them under musical law, requires sometimes patient and loving skill. But when all this is admitted, we can claim that no version has ever been made which adheres so closely to the Scripture. It proceeds on the principle of giving every thought in the original, and nothing more, and in this it has succeeded to an extent which is marvellous, and which can be realized only by one who has tested it through careful comparison. It meets with some stones of stumbling, and often some

dislocation of words, by adhering to the line laid down ; but there is abundant compensation in the life and energy, the picturesqueness and colour, which it preserves by close contact with the old Hebrew soil. The thought stands out clear, distinct, forceful, not wrapped up in wordy paraphrases where David himself would have had difficulty in recognising his meaning, or liquefied into weak sentimentalisms from which his manly nature, to take no higher view, would have turned away ashamed. This too may be said, that those portions which the heart feels it needs in its sorrowful hours, over which it leans and pours in its deep musings, or from the summits of which it mounts as on eagle's wings in its moments of joy, have a tenderness, a quaint beauty, a majesty in their form peculiar to that age of the English language in which they were framed. Witness the 6th, L.M., the 23rd, 32nd, 46th, 63rd, 67th, 72nd, 77th, 90th, 93rd, 102nd, L.M., 103rd,—we stop because we feel we have omitted so many ; but the souls of those who seek refreshment and comfort know how to find them, as the feet of the hart carry it to the water-brooks. What could be finer, we do not say in the thought, but in the expression, than the description of God's loving-kindness?—

‘ For but a moment lasts his wrath,
Life in his favour lies •
Weeping may for a night endure,
At morn doth joy arise.’

Or the quiet repose of the soul in his presence ?—

‘Since better is thy love than life,
My lips thee praise shall give,
I in thy name will lift my hands,
And bless thee while I live.

When I do thee upon my bed
Remember with delight,
And when on thee I meditate
In watches of the night.’

Or again, that longing after God where the desire seems to pant in every word through broken cries :—

‘My hands to thee I stretch ; my soul
Thirsts as dry land for thee.
Haste, Lord, to hear, my spirit fails :
Hide not thy face from me.’

And then the view, which recurs so often, that he who counts the stars counts the pulses of the heart, and that since the mightiest is the most merciful, all shall go well with those who trust in him :—

‘Those that are broken in their heart
And grieved in their minds
He healeth, and their painful wounds
He tenderly up binds.

He counts the number of the stars :
He names them every one.
Great is our Lord, and of great power :
His wisdom search can none.’

While pointing out its defects, the views of very opposite critics have admitted its merits. Dr. James Beattie, the author of *The Minstrel*, speaks of it, 'notwithstanding many imperfections, as being the best—with numbers often harsh and incorrect, but having a manly severe simplicity, without any affected refinement.' Dr. Chalmers thinks it has 'a charm peculiar to itself.' Dr. Robert Lee, who devoted himself to the improvement of Church worship on other lines, describes it as 'sometimes rugged, occasionally sinking to doggerel, but upon the whole faithful, vigorous, and good—equal if not superior to any other; while it almost never fails to render well those psalms which in themselves are of the highest character as compositions, and best adapted for the service of song in the Church of the New Testament.' Sir Walter Scott, who had no prejudices in its favour, wrote to Principal Baird, the convener of the Psalmody Committee, hoping that, 'whatever change might be made, it would be with a lenient hand. Its expression,' he says, 'though homely, is plain, forcible, and intelligible, and very often possesses a rude sort of majesty which would be ill exchanged for mere elegance.' No doubt he was attracted by the antique chant-like style of rendering in which such historical psalms as the 77th, 78th, 80th, 89th, 105th, 106th, and others tell the story of the chosen people, as if a wailing breeze passed through them from the far-off times and grey memorial stones of his native land, and he was

unwilling that the moss and lichens which had gathered in the lettering of the record should be rudely torn away. But he was moved also by deeper tones. In his dying hours, when asked, 'What book they should read to him?' and he replied, 'Can you ask? There is but one,' they could hear in his wandering words, murmured snatches of the old version of the Psalms mingled with the cadences of the *Dies Ira*. Episcopalian as he was, he would have walked all the way with that Scotsman in England who was accustomed to travel twenty miles that he might get 'a guid sing at the auld Psalms;' and he would have been found in the company of the exiles in the Far West who were without regular ordinances, and convened from a wide circuit to a little church they had reared, where they could sing the Psalms of David as they had been accustomed, and read the Bible. There must be what Dr. Chalmers calls 'a peculiar charm' about a version that has drawn to it an affection so deep, kept it so long, and carried it so far over land and sea. While we think that some of the criticisms given above do it scant justice, we may admit a number of the imperfections pointed out. But with them all, and more, we should wonder at the taste of the man who would choose the flat watery smoothness of Brady and Tate before the arpeggiated power and quaint beauty which break so often from the old Scotch version. It is very much as if one were to prefer a lawn pond, with its environments of trim bushes and orderly beds

work, to the Fall of Foyers. We shall close our remarks on it with the expression of two wishes. The one is that an Anthology—a collection of its choice portions—should be prepared for our Scottish youth, that they may have in memory a standard of sacred song to keep them safe from the false and flimsy; and the other is, that the Presbyterian Church should take the whole old Psalter into its hand, reverently and kindly, and touching it here and there, give us something to sing, full of the past, and yet fitted for the present — something we might hope which could be joined in, as truly Catholic, by sister Churches of other names, and which might form a bond of union more free and wide than entered into the thought of the Westminster Assembly. A worthier work could not well be undertaken.

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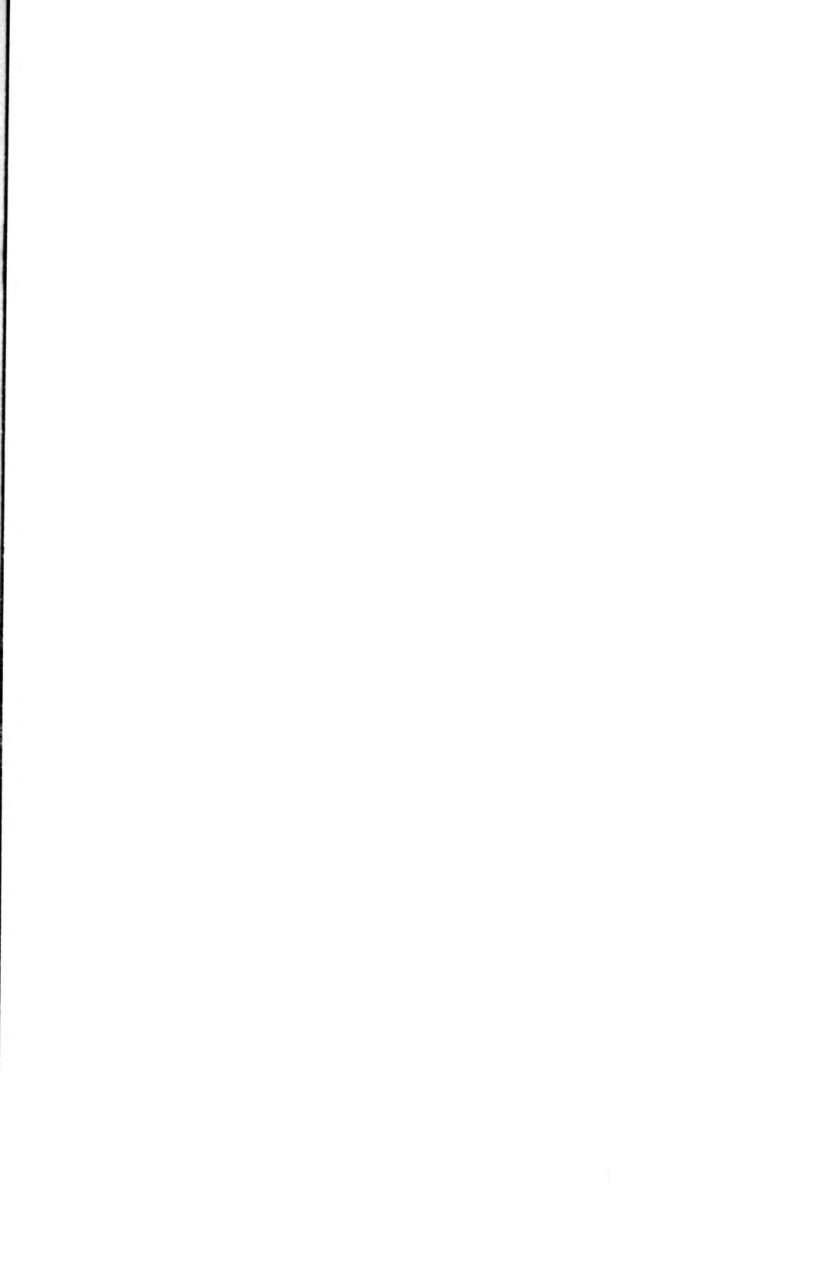
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