

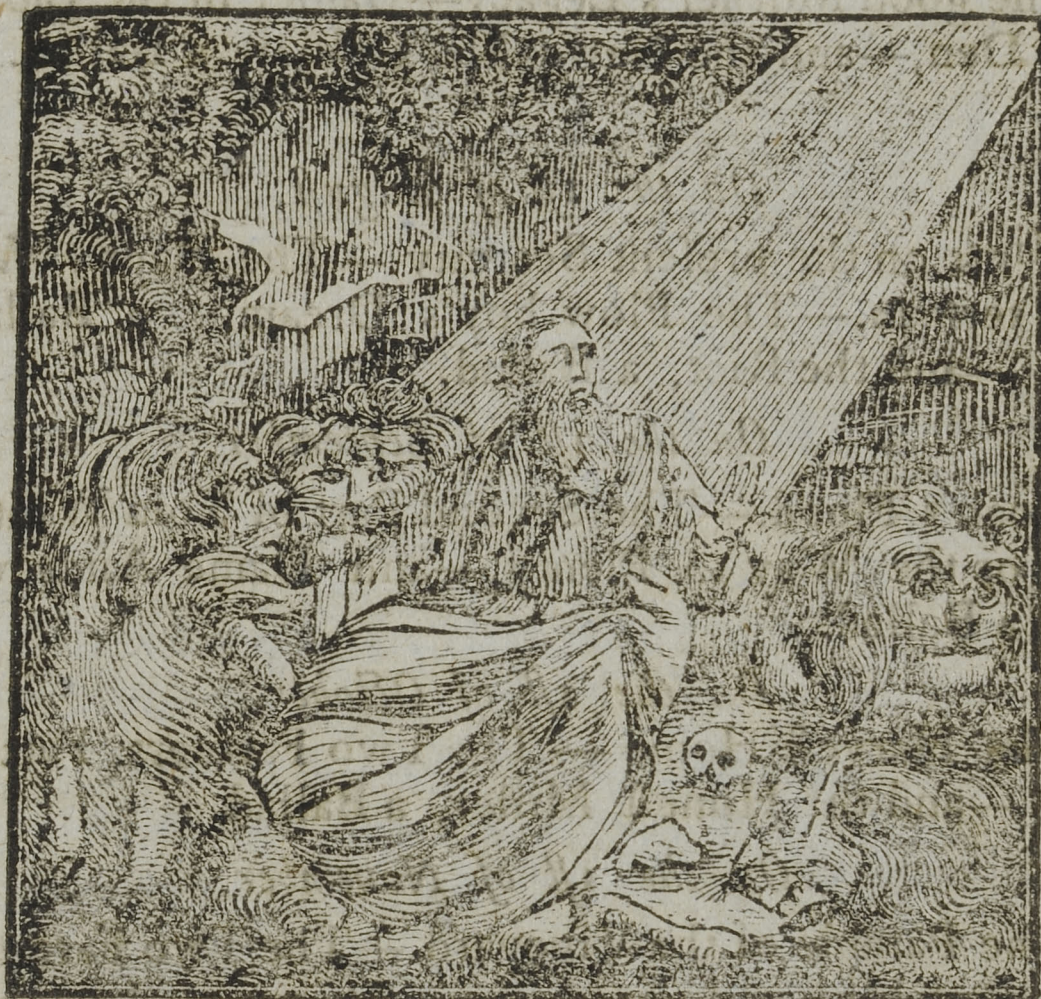
CHEAP REPOSITORY.

*Sunday Reading.*

DANIEL

IN THE

DEN of LIONS.



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*And other Pieces on a similar Plan, on the 1st of  
every Month.*

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*DANIEL*  
IN THE  
*DEN OF LIONS.*

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**T**HE Babylonian empire was one of the most extensive and powerful in the antient world. Nebuchadnezzar, one of its Kings, having conquered Judea, had carried away Daniel along with many other captives to Babylon; and he afterwards raised him on account of his great wisdom to the highest post in the government. In this station Daniel continued during the long term of sixty-five years, till at length Babylon was taken, and Belshazzar, who was at that time its King, was slain by Darius, King of the Medes and Persians. An account of this may be seen in the fifth chapter of Daniel, in which is contained the remarkable description

A 2                      description



scription of the hand-writing upon the wall.

Darius having thus become King over an immense territory, began to take proper measures to secure his government. He divided the kingdom therefore into one hundred and twenty parts, over each of which he appointed a governor; and over these he placed three presidents, who were to superintend the whole affairs of the kingdom.

At the head of these presidents we find the name of Daniel. This is remarkable, whether we consider the nation to which he belonged, the religion which he professed, or the employment he formerly held. His nation was that of the Jews, which was then in the greatest disrepute, his religion, though it was the true one, was accounted the grossest superstition, and his employment, as has been already stated, had been that of prime minister to the Monarch whom Darius had fought against and at length dethroned. Nay, it was probably owing to the counsels of Daniel, that Babylon had been able to resist, as it did, for near twenty years, his victorious



victorious arms. — What a testimony was it to the great worth of Daniel, that his conqueror could find no person more proper with whom to entrust the chief concerns of his empire.

*Daniel*, as the scripture observes, "was preferred above the presidents and princes because an excellent spirit was in him." The excellence of his *wisdom* appears from his being esteemed when he was but two-and-twenty years old above all the wise men of the East. His wisdom even became proverbial; and therefore while he was still a young man, the prophet Ezekiel (in the 28th chapter, and 3d verse) reproves the vanity and presumption of the King of Tyre, *who said in his heart, that he was even wiser than Daniel.* Such was also the excellence of his *piety*, that we find him honoured with the highest attestations to his worth from the mouth of God himself. He is ranked, even though still living, with Noah and Job, those men of the highest eminence, and it is declared of Jerusalem, in order to indicate the greatness of her guilt, that God would not spare her *even though Noah, Job, and Daniel were in her.*



Surely no other person in the whole compass of life ever had such honourable attestations to the *excellence of the spirit which was in him.*

*Then the Presidents and Princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful; neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.*

No virtue is so great, no station is so high, as to be free from envy. And we know little of human nature if we suppose that the many illustrious captains and princes who had shared with Darius in all the difficulties and dangers of his conquests, would bear without jealousy and indignation to see preferred before them, a stranger, a captive, a Jew, and an enemy. This Daniel was appointed also to inspect their conduct, and to him they were to account, *that the King might have no damage!* Would these high spirited commanders and princes bear this? No wonder that they sought occasion against



him. But here is a fresh testimony to the worth of this illustrious man; that even they, when their anger and envy conspired to render their search keen and minute could find no fault in him. What! when he had been prime minister of the largest empire in the world for sixty-five years, and his conduct was scrutinized with a jealous eye, could no instance of treachery or dishonesty be found in him? Amidst so many men as must have been disappointed in their expectations under his administration, so many delinquents as must have been detected by his vigilance, and punished by his justice, was there none who could step forward with the welcome discovery of some flaw in the conduct of this great man? No. *He was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.* Yet there was one part, it seems, of his character which gave them hopes of finding occasion against him. His attachment to his religion had been long observed, and it was justly concluded, that if he could be brought into such circumstances that his duty to the state and to religion should clash with each other, then his adherence to religion must be construed into a crime



against the state, and bring on his condemnation.

How does the character of Daniel rise still higher and higher the more we contemplate it! His enemies (and if Daniel had enemies, let no one flatter himself with the hope that greatness and piety will secure him from them)—his enemies could find nothing upon which to found their schemes for his destruction but his piety. Upon his piety they were to depend for the success of their plots. What an honour put upon his regard to religion!

We may observe here, that no situation in life, no multiplicity of business, no vexatious cares, no elevation of rank, can excuse a man from attention to the duties of religion. For we see Daniel, living in the midst of a most dissolute and luxurious court, bearing himself the chief burden of government, and yet retaining his piety as sacredly as if he had been dwelling in a desert. Nay, it was his regard to his duty to God which enabled him to discharge so faithfully his duty to the state: Had he not been so truly religious, there  
would



would doubtless have been found some blame or occasion against him. No time is lost by prayer. No advantage is gained by neglecting to seek the help and blessing of God. Could we see the influence which a strict regard to religion would have upon every part of our conduct, we should find, as in the case of Daniel, that it would be our best preservative against folly as well as against sin, and would enable us to go through the most complicated business with honour and integrity.

*Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the King and said thus unto him. King Darius live for ever! All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors and the princes, the counsellors and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O King! he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O King! establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not.*



*Wherefore King Darius signed the writing and the decree.*

Happy are we who live under a government so much more just, and in times so much more enlightened, that the proposal of such an absurd and impious law appears almost incredible. We must recollect that it was proposed in an Eastern country, where flattery was carried to a height which nothing could induce us to credit but the concurrent testimony of all historians. The law which I have just mentioned was, with respect to the King, one of the most artful pieces of flattery. It seemed to intend nothing but the confirmation of his power and the advancement of his glory. His power was so great, extending over one hundred and twenty provinces, his wealth so unbounded, increased as it was by the treasures of Babylon, his bounty so large, that there could be no occasion, it seems, to ask favours of any man but of him. To forbid favours to be requested of any other, was to invite all to come to him. And with respect to the petition forbidden to be made to any *Gods*, it may well appear strange indeed to us, but if we consider  
the



the variety of Gods worshipped in Babylon, most of whom were idols of wood and stone, and the adoration which was accustomed there to be paid to their Kings, we shall have less reason to wonder that the impiety of the proposal did not shock a Monarch, flushed with extensive conquest. The King therefore gratified by this distinguished honour which all the presidents, the governors, the princes, the counsellors, and the captains had consulted to pay him, readily signed the writing and the decree.

Doubtless the matter was known to Daniel before the royal signature was obtained; and the malicious purpose which it was intended to answer could not be concealed from him. Some also of those princes and governors there probably might be who were too just not to withstand such an iniquitous proposal, and some too much obliged to Daniel to consent to it: but they might be afraid of appearing, while they were defending an injured man, to oppose the honour of the King, and the generality would but too readily to agree to it, supposing that Daniel was a falling man unable to stand against  
such



such powerful enemies. Thus no effectual opposition was given to the proposal, and the destruction of Daniel seemed to be fixed and inevitable.

It pleases God to try in an extraordinary way the faith of his most faithful servants. Let no man therefore repine at his trials however severe; they may be the means of calling forth and purifying his grace; and the more severe the trial, the more conspicuous the grace of God which supports under it. Daniel was now placed in a most critical situation. He knew of his danger, and was sensible that the eyes of the whole kingdom would be upon him. Let us imagine we hear him reasoning with himself upon the occasion.

On one side, he might argue “ Not only the natural love of life; but even the regard I owe to the welfare of this great empire, and still more to the interests of my captive countrymen and of the church of God, require me to use all prudent means to preserve myself from the snares of my enemies. Here is a law made with the wicked design of destroying an innocent man. Shall I suffer that wickedness  
to



to succeed when I can easily prevent it? I may retire for thirty days into the country: or I may at least conceal for that time the *open profession* of my religion. In this I shall commit no positive evil: I shall not even be guilty of the omission of a duty, for I may *in secret* worship God as devoutly as ever, and he looks at the heart, and knows my integrity. I shall only prudently conceal what I am not absolutely required to proclaim, and that too in just reverence of a law which my Sovereign has been pleased to enact."

On the other hand, we may suppose him to reply to himself, "And what, shall such a man as I shrink from duty? Must I begin to be afraid, and to cling to life at the age of eighty-seven? Shall it be said that Daniel loved the dregs of life, and the remnant of his power too well to be willing to sacrifice it for the sake of his religion and his God? Shall my example be brought to justify the timid, or the lukewarm, or the temporizer? Is it not the highest honour to suffer for God? Does not such an edict as this call upon every one to stand forward with boldness, and to declare his adherence to God?"

What



What is it to serve God in prosperity? It is when we incur reproach, or are exposed to the loss of life that we have the opportunity of proving that our profession of regard to God is sincere. It is enough. Gladly, O my God! I offer up to thee, the giver of my life, the short remainder of it. Receive thy servant, and give grace to all thy people in this large city, to manifest an inviolable attachment to thy worship."

*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.*

It was the custom of every religious Jew, to offer up particular worship to God at the hour of the morning and evening sacrifice; the window was then opened towards Jerusalem, and the face directed that way, in order to manifest communion with the Saints then worshipping in the Temple, and to be partakers of the benefit of the sacrifices and prayers then



then offered up, according to the promise made by God to Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. Daniel therefore when he retired at those hours, and opened his window towards Jerufalem, made no ostentatious display of his religion, but only fulfilled one of its positive precepts and complied with the ceremonies it required.

Methinks I see this venerable man when the appointed hour of prayer approaches, rising up from the seat on which he sat, in the midst of the presidents, and princes, and counsellors and captains, who were sitting round him, and observing him with anxious looks. Methinks I see him walking through the midst of them with an air of dignity and serenity which nothing but innocence and faith in God could inspire: while his enemies retire on each side, abashed by his awful presence.

He is gone. They well know where and for what purpose. They follow him to his closet, and there behold him kneeling upon his knees, with his hands and eyes uplifted to God. Not even is the usual posture



ture varied, though the varying it possibly might have saved his life.

Behold the holy man upon his knees! What fervency would there be in his supplications! How would the thought of his situation, the trial he had to encounter, his instant appearance before God in judgment, the nearness and the awfulness of eternity affect his mind! With what ardor would he implore grace to support him! With what earnestness would he profess the obligation he owed to give up his life, whenever his Creator called for it. With what importunity would he intercede for his friends and the Jewish church, that they might continue faithful to God in this season of trial, and for the king and empire that the wicked acts of ungodly men might not draw down the vengeance of heaven.

But he gave *thanks* also. Was this a season for thankfulness? Yes. Not only would the remembrance of the goodness and mercy of God, which had followed him near ninety years, rush upon his mind, and inspire him with effusions of gratitude neither to be restrained nor  
fully



fully expressed, but he would find the greatest reason to be thankful to God for the present occasion; thankful that he was counted worthy to suffer as a martyr for the cause of God; thankful that he had been so kept by divine grace, that no occasion could be found against him but in the matter of his God; thankful for the boldness which then animated him, and the support he was at that moment receiving from his God.

In the midst of the devout aspirations of this excellent man, while his soul was conversing with the Father of Spirits, behold his enemies break in upon him.

*Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying, and making supplication before his God. Then they came near and spake before the king, concerning the king's decree. Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the Den of Lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Then answered they, and said before the king,*



king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeas'd with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he labour'd till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth, may be changed.

Alas, into what snares are men betrayed by their vanity and pride! The king was reduced, by the operation of these principles, to sacrifice one of his most faithful and beloved subjects. First, there was the vanity which occasioned that foolish law of the Medes and Persians, that whatever the king had ordered was not to be altered; as if every thing he did were necessarily so well and wisely done that there could arise no occasion to change it. Then there was the vanity of Darius, by which he allowed the particular law now spoken of to be so impiously made, in order to gratify his own pride; thus did his pre-



sent weakness and inability to save an injured and excellent servant, arise from that very flattery which seemed to exalt his power to the highest pitch. How short sighted is man! How liable is he to fall into the grossest errors, when he suffers himself to be influenced by his passions. Thus this high and mighty king, who had exalted himself above all men and Gods, cannot even save the life of an innocent servant and faithful friend.

And now this great man, grown old in dignity and virtue, as well as in years, is led through the streets of Babylon! What crowds attend to behold this illustrious victim of envy and malice! Methinks I hear on one side the insulting shouts and cruel mockings of base and rude men, who hail a rising power, by offering insult to that which is fallen. "Where now is his God! they cry, where now his boasted wisdom?"—On the other hand I see a vast multitude of aged men, fathers of the Jewish church, with silent sorrow beholding him, and lifting up their hearts to heaven in his behalf. There are collected the young and the weaker sex, fixing their eyes, for the last time, upon the Hope and the Protector of their nation, and



loudly bewailing his unmerited fate.— There too the crowd of those who have been deeply indebted to his bounty wait to bid farewell to their benefactor, and to offer him the last tribute of gratitude in affectionate and sympathizing looks.— There also the king waits to part with the man who was now raised higher than ever in his esteem.— What was their conversation at this affecting interview we are not told: doubtless it was worthy the piety and wisdom of Daniel. What sound advice would he give his royal master! What magnanimous consolation would he offer to him! What solemn lessons of instruction would he communicate, exhorting him to fear and serve the true God! What noble confidence would he express in the power of Jehovah to deliver him, if it so pleased him! What resignation to his will if he chose to accept his death— Even the heathen king was inspired also with confidence.

*Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. And they brought Daniel and cast him into the Den of Lions. And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the Den, and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his*



lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Would we look for a scene where human greatness is most conspicuous, and human glory is advanced to the highest pitch, seek not for it amidst triumphant armies, or in splendid palaces. Behold *Daniel in the Den of Lions*. See the savage beasts which just now roared with impatience to devour their prey, crouch with reverence, and lie down at his feet. —Behold this wonderful man, with the wild beasts around him, kneeling down, and with tears of gratitude and wonder, again offering thanks to God! What a scene! What were his feelings! I know not whether there was the visible appearance of the angel of God illuminating with glory the dark cavern, but I am sure he had the presence of God, and enjoyed the highest degree of communion with him. How would his mind be occupied with thoughts too mighty for utterance: with what wonder would he contemplate the power of the Most High, and with what praise behold it restraining the rage of the Lions! With what earnestness would he afresh devote to the service of God the life so miraculously preserved!



With what fervency would he again offer up thanksgiving and prayer for himself, and for the church of God! What a night was this, ever to be remembered both by Daniel and by all the servants of God!

Let us turn now to see what was passing in the city: By the enemies of Daniel the night was probably kept in feasting and revelry; they settled who should now fill the vacant seats in government: they congratulated each other on the success of their scheme, they planned measures of future prosperity, they derided the foolish adherents of the fallen president for their superstition—others kept the night in fasting and prayer. It was a season of sorrow to all the Jews, and to all who feared God, or respected innocence and piety. Above all, it was a night of sorrow to the king.

*Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste to the Den of Lions. And when he came to the Den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said unto Daniel, O Daniel,*



servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou serveſt continually, able to deliver thee from the Lions? Then ſaid Daniel unto the king, O king live for ever. My God hath ſent his angel, and hath ſhut the Lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and alſo before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they ſhould take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, becauſe he believed in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought thoſe men which had accuſed Daniel, and they caſt them into the Den of Lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the Lions had the maſtery of them, and broke all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

One obſervation only ſhall be made upon this ſtory. The part of it which moſt deſerves our attention is not the miracle which was wrought for Daniel, but the faithfulneſs which he exhibited in the hour of trial. The miracle indeed ſhews the notice God takes of the conduct of



his servants, and the approbation with which he beholds their faithfulness; but it would have been the same thing as to the glory of God, and the real honour of Daniel, had the lions been suffered to devour him; for we are to judge of the real honour of men, and the glory they bring to God, not by any events which may befall them, but by the dispositions which they exercise independant of the events. We have no right to expect a miracle to be wrought in our favour, but we may all be placed in circumstances in which we shall have an opportunity afforded us of manifesting the same kind of attachment to God and Religion which Daniel did. Nay, there is no man living who is not frequently placed in such a situation, that he may shew very plainly whether he is influenced by a regard to God, and whether he will make any sacrifice to his God and his Religion.—May this story teach us, while we admire the excellence of Daniel's character, to imitate him both in that constancy of prayer by which he attained such excellence, and in that reverence for God, which will incline us in like manner to part with every thing for his sake when we are called to it.

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