

ART. IV.—WHEN THE STORM BURSTS.

IN the month of April, 1874, the present Bishop of Peterborough, speaking in the House of Lords, made the following remarks: "Our Church at this moment in her history seems, as regards her political assailants from without, to be passing through that kind of lull which, we are told, sometimes occurs in the centre of some furious cyclone—the still spot in the heart of some furious storm. Let us beware of mistaking this for the entire cessation of the storm. The forces engaged for and against the Church of England are permanent forces in the life of the nation, and they will ere long be as furiously as ever at war; meanwhile, we have a brief breathing-space." It will be remembered that in February 1874, a General Election had placed the Conservative Party in power, and that they and the nation generally were looking forward to a continuance in office for some years. The turn of the wheel came in 1880, but all that it brought to Churchmen was the Burials Bill, which, uncalled for as it was, has, in its direct results, realized the expectations neither of friends nor foes. The question of our foreign policy on which that election mainly turned pushed into the background the issue of Establishment or Disestablishment, to the secret relief of many a Liberal candidate; and a similar office was filled by the question of Home Rule at the election of 1886. Only in 1885, and then but for a short time, did the impetuous zeal of some, and the timid opportunism of others, threaten to involve the constituencies in a conflict round the Church. That particular issue was, however, decided before the electoral battle was fought: in the most formal manner the Church Question was withdrawn from the official Liberal programme, and a vigorous denunciation of the "unauthorized" programme accompanied its withdrawal in the Edinburgh speech of Mr. Gladstone on November 10, 1885, on the very eve, that is to say, of the election. Virtually, therefore, we are justified in affirming that we have never passed out of the centre of the cyclone. Our breathing-space still continues. We have hitherto evaded, rather than met, the fury of the storm. We were caught in the edge of it in 1880; we saw it looming near in 1885; but here, in 1889, fifteen years after the Bishop spoke, we are still extending, developing and planning, unstopped, if not unimpeded, by the jealous and unfriendly action of anti-Churchmen.

We are still in the centre of the cyclone; but the more our breathing-space is prolonged, the fiercer will be the fury of the storm when it breaks. The critical hour cannot be delayed much longer; the time is not distant when, perhaps, it will

seem best for all that a trial of strength shall be taken, and the good ship, with its chequered but honourable record of so many hundred years, test her timbers and her crew against the violence of the surrounding elements.

The conditions have changed largely since 1874, and it will be wise to understand this. The assailants of the Church in the House of Commons were at that time little more than a faction. In the Parliamentary divisions of 1871 and 1873, Mr. Miall had been able to take with him into the division lobby but 93 and 60 members respectively, and these included only two or three who could by any stretch of imagination have been regarded as men of light or leading. On the other hand, the defence of the Church was in each case undertaken by a Liberal Cabinet, of which Mr. Gladstone was the head.

Much that is very strange, and which could not have been foreseen, has happened since then. Political exigencies have seriously affected Mr. Gladstone's attitude, if not his convictions. The party in England which has adopted the principle of Home Rule—there are exceptions, but the number is inconsiderable—is by something more than a mere coincidence the party of Disestablishment. Scotch and Welsh voters have had their sense of the justice of Home Rule quickened by an opportune reference to Disestablishment as lying behind it. The principle of Disestablishment has been accepted by the party which Mr. Gladstone heads, and if ever that party as such returns to power, an attack on the Church in Wales, as well as on the Established Church of Scotland, must be expected.

As for Mr. Gladstone himself, the once enthusiastic defender of the Church, he continues an enigma. He appears to be taken unwillingly along by his party, to say as little as he can, to qualify it as he knows how, and to put the drag on when the opportunity offers. At Hampstead, in May, and at Swansea, in July, 1887, he thought the question of the Church in Wales "ought to be determined according to the wishes of the Welsh people." At Nottingham, in the following October, when speaking to the delegates of the Liberal Federation on Disestablishment alike in Scotland and in Wales, he asked, "Are these questions ripe? are they opportune for decision, whatever that decision may be?" And, in answering his own question, he said: "The expression of my own judgment, and, as far as I know, the judgment of my friends, is that they are ripe for *decision*." This was both by friends and opponents taken to mean that Disestablishment should be carried out as soon as possible. Now, however, it would seem that Mr. Gladstone meant nothing of the sort—only that the question should be brought to an issue. Certainly, if he meant what he was generally understood to mean at Nottingham in 1887,

he went back on himself in December last, when, to the unconcealed disgust of the Liberation Society's organ, he announced at Limehouse that Disestablishment in Scotland and Wales was one of the subjects which is "ripe for *public discussion*." Is there any subject under the sun which is not ripe for public discussion?

It is possible, however, in forecasting the course of a great subject like Disestablishment, to over-estimate the importance even of Mr. Gladstone. His is a unique personality, and the influence he exercises has never been approached by any political leader. When the whole story of his relations to his party during the last twenty years comes to be told, it may be we shall learn, in respect to ecclesiastical politics, something of a restraint imposed not once nor twice upon the aspirations or predilections of individual colleagues, and a policy adopted which was to all intents and purposes a personal and not a Cabinet policy. It may be; but in any case, for good or evil, that dominant influence is passing. Mr. Gladstone is an old man, and those who know him well and watched him closely during the late autumn session thought that they saw in him a marked change and loss of power, which seemed to indicate that the end of his public career was not far distant. It is hard to realize this, and therefore it is not surprising if calculations are made in which Mr. Gladstone is regarded as being not merely alive some years hence, but as continuing a great political force.

For ourselves, we are becoming more and more convinced that the battle of Establishment or Disestablishment will be fought without Mr. Gladstone, and that while to the assailants of the Established order there will be the chance and forced expressions of Nottingham and Limehouse, to the defenders of the Church there will abide the full, frank and earnest language of whole speeches and treatises, the expression of his faith and conviction, within and without the House of Commons. In other words, for the Church defenders there will survive the historical disquisitions, the array of facts, the collation of testimony, industriously put together and declaimed with an enthusiastic eloquence; to the promoters of Disestablishment will be left the few grudging expressions of assent to a policy which he cannot approve, dragged forth from the lips, but not from the heart, of the hard-pressed partisan leader.

In every other way the removal of Mr. Gladstone from the scene, whenever it occurs, cannot but clear the ground, and largely alter the conditions of the conflict. He has given it as his conviction that, if ever Disestablishment were to be carried out, it would have to be with full regard to the prin-

ciples of equity; and there were those who were not slow to tell him that such a Disestablishment was not that which they desired, or were prepared to accept. We all know what are the tender mercies of the Liberation Society; and there are yet lower depths. A Disestablishment campaign, unrestrained by the presence of Mr. Gladstone, will, unless I wholly misread the temper of our assailants, be marked by characteristics of which the ordinary Churchman has little knowledge or apprehension, but which has been to some extent anticipated by the language of some of the more obscure agents of the Liberation Society and of the Welsh vernacular press.

The almost incoherent fury of these Welsh journals—the organs for the most part of various Dissenting sects, and edited by Dissenting ministers — is little understood by Englishmen. The continued presence of the old Church among them; the fact, not to be denied or explained away, that that Church is daily renewing its youth and calling back to the fold which their fathers left, but which their forefathers lived and died in, thousands of Welshmen and Welshwomen, old and young, is a standing provocation, a menace, they declare—a terror, without doubt. “Down with it!” “War to the knife!” they cry week after week, while, almost in the same breath, they call on Churchmen to surrender their trust forthwith, lest a worse thing befall them.

In North-Wales may be seen Liberationism run wild—men goaded into madness by fancied wrongs and undoubted jealousy, stirring up the ignorant and prejudiced, defaming and deriding the country clergy, and using at the same time the tithe agitation as a lever to cripple and discourage them. There is indeed no man who is at this time more deserving of the sympathy and substantial help of his brethren and fellow-Churchmen to-day than is the harassed and maligned rector or vicar of the dioceses of Bangor and St. Asaph.

The temper which characterizes the present agitation in Wales is not confined to Wales. It exists in England; but it is more under restraint. We have witness to its presence from time to time; and it must be conceded, I am afraid, that expediency rather than principle has so far checked its development and exhibition. But whenever the Disestablishment agitation becomes general, this is the temper we must expect to characterize it.

The battle of the Church will under such conditions be carried on at no small disadvantage. Coarse language, vile innuendoes are not weapons which will fit our hands; when used against us they must be otherwise rebutted. Such weapons, though successful for the moment, will not, however,

in the long-run promote any cause; a general use of them must inevitably turn to the advantage of the Church—that is, of course, if patiently endured and proved unjust.

This, then, is the result to which in my judgment we must look forward—a vehement attack, unrestrained by few considerations of accuracy or justice, and tempered by no such moderating influence as that of Mr. Gladstone.

I do not anticipate an early bursting of the storm, nor do I share the opinion of many others, that, when it comes, it will be short and sharp; but I am sure it is a conflict we cannot prepare for too soon, and the character of which we shall do well to study by the light of agitation in Wales to-day.

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ART. V.—BISHOP KEN.

THE Dean of Wells has made good use of his leisure. No sooner had he completed his Dante labours than he resumed his work on the “*Life and Times of Bishop Ken*,¹” and he heartily deserves the congratulations of all interested in Ken, on the production of a book which will do much to revive interest in one of the most remarkable figures of English Church history since the Reformation. The student has no reason to complain of any neglect in the province of the history of our Church since the Reformation. Canon Perry’s recent additions to Mr. Murray’s series of students’ manuals are excellent specimens of what such books should be. The Canon labours to attain a really judicial impartiality, and upon the whole succeeds. His account of the Elizabethan period is admirably done. To the “*Epochs of Church History*,” edited by Canon Creighton, Mr. Wakeman has contributed a volume on “*The Church and the Puritans*,” which possesses distinctive merits of its own. Mr. Wakeman never conceals his own opinions, but he is extremely fair to the Puritans, and his account of Laud’s singular career is full of interest. Mr. Benson’s sketch of Laud is a hasty and crude production; but there is, in spite of some grave errors, so much that is attractive in his spirited and vigorous writing, as to make us hope that he will re-write the whole story of the Archbishop’s life, and bestow more pains upon the theological attitude maintained by Laud. In the lectures and addresses of

¹ *The Life of Thomas Ken, D.D., Bishop of Bath and Wells.* By E. H. PLUMPTRE, D.D., Dean of Wells. Isbister and Co. 1888.