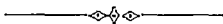


Himself. And God knows also that this is the special trial of our age, which in this respect strongly resembles that of which our Lord said, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" There is doubtless a melancholy satisfaction in finding out our own and other people's mistakes; but there will, one could imagine, be little pleasure in discovering that we have made the great mistake of all. And the great mistake of all is to convince ourselves and others that there is so much cause for disbelieving the whole environment of truth, that we come to disbelieve even the truth itself. It is unquestionably more important and more blessed, in an age of general uncertainty and unbelief, to get people to rally round the standard of the Cross and to help them to believe to the saving of the soul, than it is to show that there is less ground than we thought there was for believing any one of the articles of the Christian faith, that some are certainly less certain than others, and that so many are uncertain that we can scarcely be sure of any. Above all, it seems to be more than ever necessary to remind the younger clergy, and those who are contemplating admission to the office of the ministry, that one of the preliminary questions which they must answer before they are ordained, and to which, it is to be presumed, they will never as long as they continue to hold their orders give any answer but one, is this: "Do you unfeignedly believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?" and the answer is: "I do believe them."

STANLEY LEATHES.



ART. II.—ARCHBISHOP TAIT.

PART II.

THE simple and straightforward extract from the diary of Archbishop Tait, written immediately after his reception of a letter from Lord Palmerston offering him the See of London, must make a most favourable impression upon everyone who reads it. There is evidence of a natural misgiving, but at the same time it is clear that a strict sense of duty, so remarkable a feature during the whole of Tait's career, determined him to accept an office which he had not coveted, but which all his friends thought him well fitted to adorn. The letters received from Dean Stanley, the present Master of Balliol, Lords Lingen and Coleridge, and from a very different man, Mr. Golightly, must have brought to the mind of Tait an almost overwhelming sense of the responsibility he was about to

undertake. It is most interesting to note the great thankfulness expressed by Dr. Hook, arising from the conviction that Tait was a just man. Bishop Cotton, who was at that time Headmaster of Marlborough, in the consecration sermon, dwelt with special fervour on the greatness of the issues before the Church of England in the coming conflict against sin and misbelief. Indeed, it may be said that that remarkable discourse seemed almost predictive of the independent and moderate position which the Bishop at once assumed. Lord Shaftesbury, who had been alarmed at the nomination of Dr. Stanley to be the examining chaplain of the new Bishop, after hearing a sermon at St. James's, Piccadilly, expressed his earnest wishes for his future success. He began his career in London with the hearty good wishes of all who desired to see the great work of Bishop Blomfield extended and promoted.

The record of the first few years of his episcopate shows in a striking manner how desirable it is that an English Bishop should possess parochial experience. With every anxiety to be just and temperate in his dealings with all sections of opinion, it is certain that Bishop Tait did not at once fully gain the confidence of clergy and laity. He had real sympathy with the difficulties of the ministry, but he had not the power of expressing, as some well-known Prelates have had, his sense of the reality of the struggle, which so often almost overwhelms men who are oppressed with the burdens of populous parishes. He was certainly often tried by perverse obstinacy, where he might have looked for a conciliatory disposition. It is easy to be critical about the conduct of such matters as the long contest in St. George's-in-the-East, and every allowance must be made for a Prelate new to his duties. It is impossible, however, to help wishing that the Bishop had taken a somewhat different view of the situation. Two or three sermons preached by him in St. George's might in the early days of the struggle have allayed the violent rancour which took such unpleasant and revolutionary forms.

In 1858, two years after his consecration, the primary Charge to the diocese of London gave distinct evidence of the Bishop's independent attitude. He grappled successfully with the difficult problems of the day, and, in the words of Archbishop Whately, showed that he had "something to say, and was resolved to say it."

Canon Benham and Bishop Davidson have put the whole question of the "Essays and Reviews" and the Colenso controversy fully before the public. The letters which the Bishop of London received, his modest and manly replies, his anxiety to preserve old friendship, and yet to maintain unflinchingly his own position, combine to produce—we have no

hesitation in saying—a vivid picture of a mind bent upon preserving the real proportions of belief and Church order, and yet maintaining the proper liberty of a comprehensive National Church. It is perfectly clear that the Bishop saw the mistake which two of the Essayists had made, in associating themselves with men who had exceeded all reasonable bounds. When the famous Judgment was pronounced, Bishop Tait was subjected to many hard blows. It was entirely forgotten that some of the most objectionable sentences in the productions of Williams and Wilson had been softened or explained in their defence. Doubtless there was much to excuse the general panic and consternation, and the whole tone of the volume of "Essays and Reviews" was certainly not likely to disarm opposition. We are not prepared to defend every individual utterance made by the Bishop at this time, but we think that all impartial persons will pronounce a verdict in his favour. It was a time of real difficulty, and in the preface to a volume of sermons put forth by the Bishop there are calm and assuring words, which show how completely he saw the necessity for a reasonable judgment, and, it may be added, a suspense as to the issues of the Inspiration question. In the diary of 1860, Bishop Tait records some words of Bishop Thirlwall's in his famous letter to Dr. Rowland Williams: "I have for many years studied these difficulties attentively. I have felt their full force. I know all that has been written about them in Germany. I believe they are vanity and folly." Archbishop Tait made no pretension to deep acquaintance with German theology, but on more than one occasion he has been known to refer to these words of Bishop Thirlwall, as reassuring thoughts to those who were tempted to surrender themselves at discretion into the hands of the last theorist regarding the Fourth Gospel, or the origin of the Pentateuch.

We have no intention of entering upon the difficult questions arising out of Bishop Colenso's deposition, and the consequent action of Bishop Gray. The great length at which this subject has been treated in "Bishop Gray's Life," and in Sir G. Cox's "Memoirs of Bishop Colenso," made it, perhaps, necessary for the writers of Archbishop Tait's life to enter into considerable detail. The action of the Archbishop was much misunderstood at the time. He desired to postpone the hour when the link would be loosened which united the Churches of the colonies to the Church at home. But from the very first he made it clear that he had no sympathy with Bishop Colenso's views. The present difficulties as to the bishopric of Natal must lead, we think, even the warmest admirers of Bishop Gray's action to wish that there had been a little less haste in the formation of the See of Maritzburg,

and a little more of the caution to which at the time was given the hard name of Erastianism.

Popular delusions as to the ease and comfort of a Bishop's position in these days must, we think, be entirely dispelled when the account of Tait's labours in London and at Canterbury is read. The demands now made on a Bishop of the Church of England are enormous. The fatiguing routine duties largely subtract from the exercise of the judicial faculty so often in these times imperatively needed. In spite of feeble health, the Archbishop threw his whole soul into his work, and won from all who knew him the same admiration which was yielded to Sumner and Wilberforce.

The account of the Disestablishment of the Irish Church seems to us remarkably well done. We are glad that portions of the very important speech which made a deep impression on the country find a place in these pages. Although some were of opinion that the Bill might have been rejected by the House of Lords, we are inclined to think that the course adopted was, on the whole, the wisest. A prolonged agitation might have greatly injured the future of the Irish Church. The Archbishop was consistent to the last. The concurrent endowment which he had advocated many years before in the pages of the *Edinburgh Review* was proposed as an amendment to the Bill by the late Duke of Cleveland. The Archbishop gave the amendment his support, and experienced accordingly the wrath of many Protestant friends. Time works wonders, and not a few of those who have steadily opposed all concessions to Romanism in Ireland now readily admit that the evil influence of the Romish priesthood over the peasantry would certainly be lessened if some means could be found whereby their subsistence might be made more independent of the alms of their flocks.

After a severe illness in 1869 the Archbishop contemplated immediate retirement. It was certainly, however, well that he yielded to the pressure of friends, and delayed his resignation until a winter in a warmer climate had been tried. The experiment was successful, and we find him in 1871 giving thanks for his recovery in Lambeth Palace chapel, when his two brothers and his three sisters were able to be present: "a remarkable gathering," he says in his diary, "seeing how old and frail we all are."

The characteristic caution and love of moderation which distinguished him are seen to great advantage during the prolonged discussions which took place in 1871 on the subject of the Athanasian Creed. The Archbishop was placed, as usual, between two hot fires. Dean Stanley, it is well known, took one side with more than his usual vehemence. Dr. Liddon

threatened to resign his preferment if any alteration in the position of the Creed were attempted. The whole of the correspondence on this subject ought to be calmly studied and reviewed by all who have the interest of the Church of England at heart. The time has not, perhaps, yet come, but come it certainly will, when a movement declaring the Creed to be unsuitable for use in the public service of the Church will be found to be irresistible. A petition which was signed at the time by such men as Bishop Barry, Bishops Thorold and Moorhouse, Archdeacon Hessey, Mr. Kempe, of St. James's, and the late Canon Capel Cure, somewhat startled the Convocation of 1870, and the result was the declaration which probably satisfies only a very few. The conduct of the Archbishop from first to last showed him at his best. His own convictions were unaltered, but he was content to adopt the second-best alternative in the interests of peace.

Year by year the real statesmanlike ability of the Archbishop gathered strength. He was a great person in the House of Lords. It has been said of him that he really possessed the gift of winning votes in a most remarkable way. He had not the commanding eloquence of Wilberforce and Magee, but the same moral persuasion which gained for Lord Althorp the confidence of both sides in the House of Commons seems to have been enjoyed by Archbishop Tait in the House of Lords. Few passages in his life have been more canvassed and criticised than his conduct in the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act. We think that, upon the whole, the judgment of the Bishop of Rochester as to the real nature of the legislation of 1874 will be confirmed by all fair-minded persons. The Act in its final form differed much from the outline which had been approved by the majority of the English bench some months before. The principle, however, for which the Archbishop contended remained the same. It is quite true that it was "not the measure itself which pinched, but the resolution to have a measure, and to have it without delay." It is quite possible that the whole question might have been postponed to a more convenient season, and that it might have been well if the Convocations had been consulted. Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln, in a speech which commanded considerable attention at the time, declared his opinion that it was the manner of introduction of the Bill which had aroused opposition. The Archbishop himself was somewhat impatient as to details, and was hardly aware of the strong feeling which the procedure excited in the minds of many of the clergy. The imprisonment of some clergy, who refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the new court, was, to say the least, unfortunate. "As a matter of fact, there had, during the sixteen

years since the Act was passed, been only seven or eight prosecutions in all under its provisions. The clamour which these have caused has led many people to imagine that they have been, at least, ten times as numerous."

We turn to pleasanter topics. The extracts from the diary of 1874 give evidence of the Archbishop's interest in the ordination of his promising son; and, indeed, there is hardly a page in the diary of this and the succeeding years which it would be possible to spare. It is not easy for a hard-working Bishop to keep up his interest in current literature and theology, but Archbishop Tait seems to have had a wonderful power of turning from the grave occupations of his life to the thoughts of the men who were influencing public opinion. His criticisms on books are always worth reading, and the expression of his desire for a nearer and closer walk with God are stamped with reality. The shadow of sorrow again overtook him. The narrative of the death of his son and wife has been told by the Archbishop himself. The twenty-seventh chapter of the second volume contains some additions to that well-known narrative, and will deepen the feeling which was excited by the publication of the Archbishop's memoir.

It has often been said, and we think most unjustly, that the Archbishop had a fixed resolve to "stamp out ritualism." It is perfectly true that he could hardly bring himself to think seriously of the details of the ritual controversy; and the account which is given of his real attitude in the life we believe to be entirely correct. He was no persecutor, but what he did really most of all desire was that the clergy should be able to face the great questions of the day, and that the principle of authority should be wisely and firmly maintained. We believe that these volumes will be of inestimable service to the largely-increasing body of clergy and laity, who are sick of the details of litigation, and who long to see the Church free to do her great work without let or hindrance. The career of the Archbishop was, upon the whole, a great success. Bishop Moberly, one of the fairest and most judicious of critics, in the last sermon which he preached in Salisbury Cathedral, said that he believed to the last ten years of Archbishop Tait's primacy it was mainly owing that the question of Disestablishment had been indefinitely postponed. We have not left ourselves time to speak of the delightful traits of character on which Bishop Davidson dwells with loving appreciation. The humour, the kindness which never lost a friend, the unflinching sympathy in sorrow and bereavement, the real, true, unaffected piety of the daily life, make the close of these volumes intensely interesting. We cannot resist extracting a reminiscence of the venerable Bishop Whipple, of Minnesota, of a visit paid at Fulham in

the year 1864. "One night," he says, "as I was sitting in my room, Bishop Tait rapped at the door, and came in to ask me some question about a recent conversation. As he was leaving again, I said, 'Will you pardon me if I ask you a question? I know your theological views. Why do you permit the ritualism of those clergy in East London?' I shall never forget the deep feeling he showed, as with tears in his eyes he answered, 'Bishop, those men realize that those poor lost souls can be saved, and that our blessed Lord is their Saviour as He is ours. Who am I, to meddle with such work as they are doing, in the way they think best, for those who are going down to death?'" alluding, of course, to Mr. Lowder and his colleagues.

The account of the last weeks of the Archbishop's life will bear comparison with the close of Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, or Dean Stanley's account of the last day of Dr. Arnold. The letter from Dean Lake, one of his oldest friends, gives an admirable summary of the chief points in the Archbishop's character, and in his closing words we think all impartial persons will agree: "When we think of the manner in which, born and bred in a different communion, he gradually learned, in a time of great difficulty, to understand and even to sympathize with all the varieties of the English Church, and of his constantly increasing determination to do justice to them all—a determination which, I believe, would have gone much further if his life had been preserved; and when we remember his strong hold on the laity, no less than upon the affection and respect of the clergy, I cannot help believing that, in the opinion of all parties, very few Archbishops of Canterbury have for centuries discharged the duties of that great post with so much dignity, ability, and devotion."

We have already expressed our opinion as to the way in which Canon Benham and the Bishop of Rochester have done their work. We have only to add that the volumes are remarkably free from the indiscreet allusions to individuals which have unfortunately disfigured the pages of some recent biographies. We should like to see in future editions a passage in a letter of Bishop Waldegrave's omitted, which seems to reflect unfairly on the character of an amiable and excellent man, who, had his health permitted, would have been foremost in making his cathedral what Bishop Waldegrave desired it to be.

G. D. BOYLE.

