

*THE LATE PROFESSOR HORT.*

I.

No more serious blow has ever fallen upon the critical study of theology than that which has deprived us of the unequalled knowledge and acumen of Dr. Hort. In Cambridge especially a void is left which cannot be filled. When Bishop Lightfoot died, we tried to console ourselves with the sense that his two great colleagues still remained: when Dr. Westcott closed his books and left us, we still had Dr. Hort: but his death is our *τρικυμία* of loss, and for a time, at least, we cannot but feel orphaned and almost paralysed. But he has created for us an ideal of scholarly attainment and exquisite workmanship which must remain, not only as a standard, but also as an inspiration.

The aim of the present notice is to set forth something of his method as a worker, to endeavour to indicate what main services he has rendered to theological criticism, and to bring together some reminiscences which may serve to illustrate the kind of help which some of the younger Cambridge students were privileged to gain from him.<sup>1</sup>

It is somewhat obvious to begin by noting the extraordinary breadth both of his knowledge and of his intellectual sympathies. From the first he was unusually comprehensive in his range. His university degree included three First Classes: in Classics (bracketed 3rd), in Moral Philosophy, and in Natural Sciences (with special distinction in Physiology and Botany). During the Mathematical Tripos he was still weak from scarlet fever, and he was only allowed to take three papers, and not the three hardest, as he had requested; consequently he only qualified, so as to be able to take the Classical Tripos two

<sup>1</sup> The outline of his life and work is well given in the *Guardian* (Dec. 6 and 13), and need not be repeated here; and a vivid and inspiring sketch of him is drawn by Professor Ryle in the *Cambridge Review* (Dec. 7).

months later. At that time (1850) there was no Honours Examination in Theology. While still an undergraduate he had drawn forth from F. D. Maurice the important letter on *Eternal Punishment* (*Life and Letters*, ii. 15 ff.), and the close friendship which subsequently existed between them was not without its influence on both. To him Maurice looked as his guide in matters relating to the true text of the New Testament, and to Maurice's influence on him may perhaps be traced the careful study in the *Cambridge Essays* (1856), which still remains the completest account of Coleridge and his philosophical position. It is not generally known that he was joint-translator from the Latin of the hymn, "O Strength and Stay, upholding all creation," and that he wrote a poem, entitled "Tintern, October, 1885." He devoured all kinds of literature; but he was specially attached to Carlyle and Ruskin; he returned again and again to the "French Revolution," and he rarely left Cambridge without a volume of Ruskin among the numerous books that he took with him. He was in his own person a striking witness to the harmony of very varied forms of knowledge, and thus by his experience and his sympathy he did more perhaps than any one to obtain the recognition of the proper place of theology among the sciences of the University.

This width of range was not without effect upon his method as a worker in his chosen sphere. He was always large in his view; and notwithstanding his extreme fastidiousness and minuteness in investigation he always escaped the charge of pedantry. His mind was most astonishingly fertile in hypotheses. "It is a pity," he once said of an able investigator, "that he does not allow himself time to think of more than one theoretical possibility at once." This was a criticism which could never have been applied to any of his own work. A topic, he felt, must be approached from every side, before the expression of a judgment on it.

Even more remarkable than the extent of his knowledge was his accuracy. He never seemed to trust to memory. Book after book came down from his shelves in the course of conversation; fact after fact was verified. A patristic reference was generally accompanied by a comment on the value of the edition from which he quoted, and the use made in it of the extant MSS. In editing Marriott's Remains and Mackenzie's Hulsean Essay, he must have verified thousands of references. The printing of the New Testament was an education to the readers of the Press. The use of capitals, the division of Greek words at the end of a line, the spacings and punctuation—everything was based upon a principle, and carried out with the most patient watchfulness. A story is told of his troubled inquiry when an accent was unaccountably missing in the final proof, which he was prepared to prove had been rightly present in the previous one: the thin projection of the type had broken off in the printing! And again: "When we thought it was all finished, Dr. Hort went over it with a microscope!"

The work by which he will be longest and most widely remembered is this Greek Text of the New Testament. The principles on which it is based, and the decisions as to the readings adopted, are the result of the joint labours of Bishop Westcott and himself. They have told us that their conclusions were in every case reached independently in the first instance, and that where on comparison they were found to disagree the difference was discussed in writing until either the divergence disappeared or a final contrariety of judgment was declared. It is reassuring to learn that the vast collections which formed the basis of these arguments, as well as the important correspondence itself, are all most carefully preserved.

It was found necessary that the statement of fundamental principles should be drawn up by a single hand, and it is

to Dr. Hort's pen that we owe the *Introduction*. It is interesting to observe at what an early period his attention was given to the problems of textual criticism. As far back as 1855 we find him reviewing Tregelles' *Account of the Printed Text of the N.T.* in the *Journal of Classical and Sacred Philology*; and in 1858 he reviewed together the first numbers of the Texts of Tregelles and of Tischendorf (the so-called 7th edition), giving the palm for accuracy and discernment to the former, while declaring both indispensable. It is worth while to quote at some length from his review of Scrivener's *Codex Augiensis* in 1860, for it contains a striking illustration of his textual position.<sup>1</sup>

"It follows [from the evidence of quotations in the Fathers] that all our Greek MSS. except one (and for argument's sake we are willing to let that one go with the rest) were written subsequently to the appearance of those variations between which the modern critic has to decide. We possess however external criteria of Greek MSS. in versions and patristic quotations which are incontestably prior to most of the variations. These in turn require careful checking and testing; but to say, as some do, that the results obtained are necessarily precarious, is about as rational as for an astronomical amateur to deny that the motions of the planets can be accurately known, because he has become aware of the errors necessarily involved in every rough observation through the imperfection of instruments and the complication of physical laws. The elimination of errors, so far as they affect general results, is as possible in the one case as in the other. Every document can be tried by a reference to the numerous passages in which the abundance of early testimony leaves no moral doubt as to the reading and yet the numerical preponderance of MSS. favours what is clearly the wrong side. The process may be carried to any length, and all the minuter affinities and peculiarities approximately ascertained. And a document thus tried and characterized becomes in turn, by itself or in conjunction with others, a standard by which fresh evidence may be tested. The transcendent value of such a process arises from its enabling us to advance cautiously from the known to the unknown, to supply the lack of discriminative evidence in an immense number of passages by our knowledge of the special character of each important witness derived from more fortunate verses."

Here we see him already beginning to state great prin-

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Classical and Sacred Philology*, No. xii. p. 379 f.

ciples of discrimination by which the vast chaos of textual material, accumulated by the labours of others, might be reduced to some kind of order. The modesty of the *Introduction* would lead us to suppose that he had done nothing himself to contribute to the collection of evidence. But any one who reads carefully the Preface to the *Addenda et Corrigenda* of Tregelles' edition will discover that he must have verified practically the whole of Tregelles' work, besides adding very largely to the presentation of the patristic testimony.

The scientific character of the *Introduction* deserves to be insisted on. More than fifty pages, near the beginning, are devoted to explaining "the Methods of Textual Criticism," and, being totally devoid of any illustration, except by means of mathematical symbols, would apply equally well to Chinese MSS. as to Greek MSS of the New Testament. They expound the foundation principles of all criticism of the textual evidence of any writings whatever; and their careful study by the students of the classical Greek and Latin writings in especial might lead to very important results.

The reiterated charge against Dr. Hort's conclusions as to the New Testament text is that they are wholly unsupported by evidence. This is not the occasion on which to enter upon a great controversy, nor even to indicate an opinion as to the side on which the greater share of truth may seem to lie. But the accusation of building without foundations is a serious one, and in the present case peculiarly unjust. And yet it is urged with a certain plausibility. We are presented throughout with results, and with the character of the methods by which the results are reached. But the actual processes in each case are not as a rule disclosed. In the words of a great scholar, who was affectionately attached to him, though he questioned some of his textual decisions, "his New Testament criticism was based on a

huge induction of facts which has not been published ; and those who have not gone through the same work are not entitled to dispute his judgments.”<sup>1</sup> Under the circumstances this reserve was unavoidable ; as it is, the introductory matter fills 550 closely printed pages ; nor should it be forgotten that 140 of these pages are expressly occupied with “ Notes on Select Readings,” *i.e.* with important specimens of the application of the methods to particular disputed passages. And those who desire to watch the great investigator at work, and to follow every detail of the process, have only to turn to the first of the famous “ Two Dissertations,” to see at once the breadth and the minuteness which were both so characteristic of his treatment.

It would be a mistake to leave the impression that Textual Criticism engrossed his whole attention. The great article on “ Basilides,” one of his many contributions to the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, or his identification of the Latin Version of Theodore of Mopsuestia on St. Paul’s Epistles, would alone be disproof of this ; and, to give another single illustration, the letters on the “ Codex Amiatinus ” in the *Academy* showed his complete mastery of the whole of the Bede literature. Perhaps no one has ever been so free from what he once called “ that fatal lack of comprehensiveness which has marred so much of German theology.”

The reserve of argument which has been noted as inevitable, if the *Introduction* were not to have extended to a thousand pages instead of five hundred, may be said to have been to some degree characteristic of Dr. Hort. We were

<sup>1</sup> Curiously similar are the words of another of the ablest of living critics of the N.T. Text : “ Any opinion of Dr. Hort’s deserves the greatest attention. We suspect that it will have been the experience of many others besides ourselves that although they may begin by differing from that eminent scholar they often end by agreeing with him, the reason being that his published opinions frequently rest upon facts and arguments which are not fully stated, but which the inquirer discovers for himself painfully by degrees ” (*Guardian*, May 25, 1892).

brought to understand that his statements were the outcome of the most patient accumulation and digestion of all the available evidence. He seemed quite content to wait till we were enabled by fuller knowledge to reach the position which he held. When his statements were challenged on important points, and when his challenger carried away those whom he regarded as worthy to form a judgment if the evidence were before them, he felt a keen pain at the sense that the truth, as he saw it, was being temporarily obscured; but he rarely attempted to vindicate his position by controversy. He was satisfied to wait and be misunderstood for a time. Meanwhile he had himself carefully read and annotated the work of his opponent. "I cannot think that he has proved any one of his contentions." Thus much to set the mind of a younger student free from the over-mastering fascination which had beguiled his loyalty; but not a word of the reason for so stern a judgment. At last, when months afterwards some evidence is brought of a return to better paths, the quiet voice says: "I thought you would come to see it: I am only surprised that you did not see it sooner." And when some slight modification of a strong statement in the *Introduction* is cautiously suggested as possible: "No, I have not a word to withdraw." And the conviction grows that further study must restore the completest confidence.

Dr. Hort is to so many students little more than a book—or perhaps merely one of two familiar letters which appear in editions of the New Testament, like the symbol of a MS., as a kind of evidence to the text—that I may be pardoned if I try to picture him as we knew him in our midst at Cambridge. There was doubtless an occasional exaggeration in our talk about him. But he had so seldom failed us that we felt as if he really knew everything. Of the obscurest book we said, "Dr Hort is sure to have it"; of the most perplexing problem, "Dr. Hort knows the

solution, if he would only tell"; of any subject, "Dr. Hort will tell you all the literature." And indeed nothing seemed to have escaped him that had been done in any branch of theological research. If a younger student working at minute details in an obscure part of the field spoke to him of the progress of his work, he was sure to get more than sympathy: he heard of some other worker in the present or in the past, or of some *obiter dictum* of a foreign scholar bearing on a special point, and often he would find a letter on his table the next morning, supplementing what had been said in conversation, and containing a list of references which must have been a serious tax on time and patience the night before. Once he had kindly glanced through some proof-sheets; a long letter came, in which one sentence ran somewhat thus:—"Dr. — (a German scholar) made the same suggestion ten years ago, in such and such a number of such and such a Journal; I think it is probably right."

No one else could give this kind of help. Never did he for a moment grudge the time it took to give it. No wonder that a kind of cult arose among those who were privileged to enter his study or his lecture-room. What added to the spell was this. He would guide where guidance was really needed; he would always sympathize and encourage: he never seemed surprised at knowledge or ignorance; never shocked at the expression of the most crude opinion. But on the other hand he seemed to regard the formation of opinion as a very sacred thing; he refused to prejudice by arguing with one who was beginning the study of a subject. "What books would you recommend as the best introduction to the Synoptic question?" After some sympathetic preface came the words, never to be forgotten, "I should advise you to take your Greek Testament, and get your own view of the facts first of all."

Humility takes very different forms. Maurice, to judge



him from his writings, was intensely conscious of a mission, and at the same time loud in genuine self-depreciation. Lightfoot, on the contrary, was quietly conscious of strength, and never thought enough of self to speak either good or ill of it. Hort was different from both. His humility, which was very striking, came out in his extraordinary patience with a variant opinion. He treated it as he would treat a various reading, needing explanation of its genesis before it could fairly be set aside. To a dreadfully wild remark he replied with the greatest earnestness, "That is very important, if it can be established; Lagarde has expressed a very different view." In all this there was no seeming; the attitude of his mind was always that of patient learning. To a confession of ignorance as a disqualification for a certain undertaking, he replied in a careful letter: "Nor need you be perturbed by the consciousness of ignorance, though you must not expect to get free from it. As far as my experience goes, the more one learns, the more one's sense of ignorance increases, and that in more than double measure. We can only go blunderingly on according to the best of our lights, hoping that sooner or later the blunders will get corrected by others."

As a lecturer he was not popular with undergraduates: it was "too high art" for them, as they expressed it. But probably no Professor in any subject lectured to so many Bachelors and Masters of Arts. He taught the teachers; and he had little idea, I fancy, how wide was the influence thus indirectly exercised. He took infinite pains with his lectures: his words were most carefully chosen and guarded: he uttered them slowly, so that a rapid writer could take him down almost *verbatim*; and at one period he regularly spent the first twenty minutes of a lecture in rapidly repeating the previous one. As a rule he was engaged in the exposition of the New Testament, or of the early Patristic writings: most of the term being taken up with carefully

elaborated introductions. But two courses were of a different character, and seemed as though they were ultimately intended for publication: these occupied several terms and were entitled respectively, "Judaistic Christianity in the Apostolic and the following Age," and "Early Conceptions and Early History of the Christian Ecclesia."

When he published in 1854 some *Marginalia* on Eusebius, by Bishop Pearson—and this would seem to be his earliest contribution to patristic study—he wrote: "The scanty amount of Pearson's extant remains would surely justify a somewhat excessive care." We may well say the same to-day in reference to himself. I for one can testify to the valuable notes and references which lie in the margin of his copy of the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*; and in published writings he sometimes speaks of his "own margins." He spent a truly surprising amount of labour in editing with the utmost scrupulosity the works of others: may we not hope that some young scholars may be allowed the discipline of editing some of his Remains after his own model?

To those who did not know the master who is taken from our head to-day, the sketch which has been here attempted may seem unduly laudatory. I therefore gladly quote in conclusion some words of Dr. Salmon, the venerated scholar to whom I ventured to write while preparing this somewhat hurried notice, and from whom I have made one citation already. After some careful criticism, he says: "I tell you with perfect candour where I feel misgivings in my following of Hort, but you cannot exaggerate my feelings of love and admiration of the man, and are quite free to tell how highly he was thought of outside his own University. Alas! that I should have to call Cambridge his own. For born in Dublin he ought to have belonged to us."

I have said nothing directly as to his religious character;

but here, as in all else, he combined in a rare degree comprehensiveness of view with intense convictions, and he was a most loyal and devoted son of the English Church. The bowed head covered with his hands, as we sat waiting for the commencement of his lecture, made us feel that we trod with him on sacred ground; and his whole bearing was at all times that of one who realized a Higher Presence. There was a beautiful unity about his life, and the memory of it quickens diligence and faith and prayer.

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON.

## II.

It may be not unbecoming for one who cannot pretend to estimate Dr. Hort's merits as a theologian, to venture to add a word on the loss which ancient history has sustained by his death. In an epoch of surpassing interest in the history of the world, his work is a sure and strong foundation for the historian to work on; and it could never have been so if he had confined his survey to the Christian documents alone, and had not been guided by a wide outlook over the whole field of contemporary history. The early Christian writers were environed by the Roman Empire; and one could not talk for half an hour with Dr. Hort without seeing how clearly he realized that fact and the necessary inference from it, that the want of a vivid and accurate conception of the Roman world as a whole is certain to produce distortion in one's conception of the historical position of the early Christian writers. Many of the modern German theories about them could never have been proposed had the authors possessed a good and clear idea of the whole life and history of the period. From such falseness of view, and from other possible distortions in a different direction, Dr. Hort was saved, partly of course by his natural genius, but to a considerable extent by his

university training ; and I hope the day is far distant when theologians will start without such preliminary discipline in historical facts and method. Perhaps also one may express the hope, with which I know that Dr. Hort strongly sympathized, that the day will soon come when the historians will recognise how much they sacrifice by their almost complete overlooking of the early Christian writers as authorities for the general history of the period.

The first time that I had the opportunity of meeting Dr. Hort—in Dr. Westcott's house at Cambridge in 1887—was only sufficient for me to learn what a vigorous, sympathetic, wide, and masculine intellect his was. But the only occasion on which I could really profit by his knowledge was in June, 1892, when his health was already broken. Dr. Sanday ordered me (for his advice I accepted as a command) to call on him, and had arranged that my call should not seem an intrusion. The conversation was entirely about the lectures which I had just had the honour of giving at Mansfield College ; and I was much encouraged to find that many of the views I had expressed met with his cordial approval, and that his criticisms on matters of detail as a rule only strengthened the general position. In one point I owe him eternal gratitude. I mentioned that the period to which tradition assigned the New Testament documents seemed to me to be correct in all cases except one : First Peter appeared to me to be fixed inexorably to a period 75–85 A.D. Before I could go on to state the inference which appeared to me necessary, and which I had drawn in one of my lectures—that the Epistle could not be the work of the apostle—he broke in with much animation that he had always felt that there was no tradition of any value as to the date of Peter's death : the martyrdom was clearly and well attested, but its period rested on no authority. I caught from him at once the idea, which I have since worked out at some length, that First Peter,

though composed about A.D. 80, is still a genuine work. At the time he seemed very favourably inclined to this view, and suggested several points bearing on it. Perhaps on subsequent reflection he may have seen objections to it which did not come up in conversation; nor do I wish to claim him as finally supporting this view, because he for a short time busied himself in suggesting circumstances that told in its favour, several of which were of a kind that I cannot myself use, as I restrict myself to external and archæological evidence. But certain it is that I left him (after he had kept me so long that I feared it would do him harm in his obviously weak state) with the impression in my mind that he would work out the idea in lines different from mine, and in a way that I could not attain to. Whether he afterwards rejected it or not will now perhaps never be known.

Recently there have been in England at least two schools of ancient investigation which had no superiors in Europe: the school of Lightfoot, Hort, and Westcott in Cambridge, and the Numismatic department in the British Museum. The *Texts and Studies* is a pleasant sign that the Cambridge school is not expiring as its three great founders disappear from the University.

W. M. RAMSAY.