

But what a painful spectacle is this! A good man labors among us all his life; is attended in his ministrations, with repeated outpourings of Divine Grace; is blessed as the spiritual father of hundreds around; is loved with devoted attachment for his honest pure and earnest life for many years in another community; and for several years gives to this church his untiring labors, and they ascribe to all this worth no weight in the scale against suspicious circumstances!

One would not wish to be uncharitable, but it is really hard to know how to suppose that those men value character in themselves, at least for its intrinsic worth, who do not value it in others.

It seems inconceivable, how the several individuals who have been active in this prosecution, and who must be regarded as in fact judges as well as prosecutors, should be incapable of feeling the weight of this balance of positive good character, against the mere force of suspicion, in which there is, of course, nothing positive; or how they can be so unmoved by the fact, that what they call sufficient evidence to condemn a man to irretrievable ruin, has no such force in the view of such men as Judge Johnston or his son, or Dr. Spurden, or Mr. Armstrong, or Mr. McKerzie, or the rest of the twelve men composing the council, or, in the eyes of Mr. Payzant, a lawyer, lately a member with them, till driven away by his sense of their injustice, as well as many others I could name not to mention myself, also early trained to the law and the examination of evidence. But while the opinion of such grave and thoughtful men goes for nothing with this church, some of them are not backward to tell us of the weight they attach to the opinion of "the young men of Halifax"—a new sort of criterion to be adopted by a Baptist Church!

My own testimony was material. I had so intimately known Dr. Pryor for so many years, and had seen him under such a variety of circumstances and conditions, that it had become impossible but that I should have a perfect understanding of this man, and could read his every look and movement.

In these cases, you know, it is impossible for the most practised deceiver to hide from one who knows him perfectly, some look that shall betray him, especially if long conversations occur between them, with minute explanations of every circumstance in question. Now, such conversations I repeatedly had with Dr. Pryor, and always felt, that if suspicion or fear could have lurked about my mind, all must melt away before the sunlight of that honest truthful face, and those ready and natural explanations, given with a look, and voice, and manner, that I had known too long to be deceived in.

Now, in the balance against mere suspicious circumstances gathered from worldly witnesses, who in the cross examination before the Council most grossly damaged their own statements and general credibility, should you not have supposed, that my testimony would have been allowed some weight? The Granville Street Church allowed it none whatever. They may in words. They have evidently not done so in fact.

And then, when it is remembered, that while their witnesses, on either point, only gave testimony, if true, to suspicious circumstances, proved no crime in fact, and in several principal cases, showed themselves unworthy of belief by their self contradictions and absurdities; that in the matter of accounts, the idea of fraud could only arise out of a strained construction, the fairness of which none but themselves can see,—how is it possible to interpret their rejection of so much positive evidence in favor of Dr. Pryor, and violating their faith, to render a judgment against him, but on some unworthy ground?

Are these brethren inwardly conscious that if they were witnesses for a friend, they would shut their eyes against evidence, and make untrue statements in his support? I trust this is not so, and the true solution of this extraordinary conduct, is, I conceive, the disturbing influence of pride, or prejudice, or ill will, such as Judge Johnston testifies he continually saw, ruling among them, until at last it seems to have obtained the complete mastery.

After reading the written judgment of the Council, Dr. Spurden, the chairman, took great pains verbally to set forth the utter want of any evidence of fraud in several of the transactions in relation to accounts and business, which the church, or some of them, had stigmatized as dishonest.

On both points in question, the Council gave a statement in writing under their hands that they saw no proof to sustain the charge of crime; that is, they acquitted Dr. Pryor of that charge, and there was no verbal statement made, as of course, there could be none honestly, to contradict their written one.

Who could have supposed, that Christian men would have done other than rejoice to

find that twelve brethren on one point, and eleven on the other, (one being absent) six of whom were entirely of their own choice, brethren, all of them, entirely free from the disturbing irritations that had arisen in the church, could discover no guilt in the circumstances alleged!—yet the Granville Street Church—i. e. their leaders, went away from the presence of the Council, and the sound of their affectionate and solemn admonitions, to break faith with their injured Pastor, and in the face of all that had occurred, to excommunicate him acquitted as he was of guilt?

What will you say of this? Is it a fitting example for our churches to follow? If our ministers, at any time fall under the censure of a prejudiced church, are they to have no appeal? or is an appeal that has been consented to and decided in their favor, to be rendered nugatory, by an arbitrary rejection of the final decision?

These are questions you have to answer? you, brethren, have still a remedy in your hands; for, if you, as I believe, will not hesitate to judge of the conduct of Granville Street Church, despite its numbers, its position and its wealth, according to the facts; and at your several associations, give expression to that judgment, then however boldly churches may abuse their independence, at least we shall all feel, that we have, nevertheless, an ultimate appeal, in the expressed good sense and Christian feeling of our churches at large, of which no individual church can deprive us.

I am reluctant to protract these comments, but cannot withhold some further thoughts to which I must still pray your attention.

Affectionately your brother,

E. A. CRAWLEY.

ERRATUM.—In 21st line, for "then manifest," read "their manifest &c."

For the Christian Messenger.

Letters from Granville St. Church to the Baptists of Nova Scotia.

No. 4.

Dear Brethren,—

We have Dr. Crawley's fourth letter before us. We ask your attention while we endeavor, as briefly as possible, to meet such of his statements and arguments as we think wrong.

The first charge made, is, our eagerness to seize upon anything against Dr. Pryor, and our blindness to what made in his favor; and a case mentioned by Judge Johnston is referred to. Now, we say, we are not conscious of such an eagerness to destroy our late pastor. We do say, however, that we were fully determined to find out the real truth of the charges laid against him, and we allowed nothing to hinder us in this course. There were those among us who seemed disposed to pass the matters over lightly, but a very large majority were determined to do no such thing. They did not want to prove Dr. Pryor's guilt. Why should they? But they knew they had this duty to perform—in the sight of God, namely, to investigate every matter before them to the best of their ability; in order to get at the real truth, and be in a position to pronounce a correct judgment respecting their pastor. In regard to the case mentioned by Judge Johnston, referred to above, we have simply to say that his statements are not correct. He discovered an error which Dr. Pryor had made against himself, and pointed it out. We at first questioned it, but presently saw it to be an error. We are not conscious of shutting our eyes to it.

The next statement to be noticed is this:—"character for example has weighed with them not a rush except to talk of it in one of their church votes."

Here Dr. Crawley is coming to the point. He begins to weigh the evidence for and against Dr. Pryor. That is right. That is the great question, Is he or is he not guilty of the charges brought against him? Have we condemned him on insufficient evidence, or did he justly merit exclusion? Dr. Crawley balances the testimony in this way:—"On the one hand unimpeached and admirable character for so many years;" on the other "suspicious circumstances." "Positive good character" against the "mere force of suspicion." Now we confess that we cannot answer these statements to our own satisfaction without placing before you the whole testimony. But this we cannot now do, and that for many reasons. We can only take out here and there a specimen fact and consider it.

Now, what kind of facts had the church to deal with? On the one hand we had for example the "positive evidence," that on a large number of occasions, after Dr. Pryor had entered Mrs. McMillan's room, the door was locked after him. Now what was to be done with this fact? On what rational grounds can such an act be explained on the

supposition of innocence? Why lock the door after him? Give us a reason that will bear the test. Dr. Crawley thought he could see a reason for the blinds being dropped: they were let down to shut out the sun! But he did not, nor did any of Dr. Pryor's advocates, attempt to show that the fact of the door being locked did not necessarily point to guilt. Where it is proved clearly that a minister of the Gospel is repeatedly locked in with a bad woman in her bed-room, we ask what are you going to do with the fact? Will the fact yield or give away? If there exist a grave doubt as to whether such is the fact, then give all legitimate force to the past character of the accused. But then when it is a fact beyond question, you have to grapple with it, and what can you do with it? What amount of charity can give a favorable interpretation? Do you say he may have thought the woman's character was good. Why lock the door? What woman of good character would not be offended if she found a minister locking her door when he came into her room and that room being her bedroom? Such a fact will protrude itself through the thickest mantle of charity. You cannot get rid of it. It meets you at every turn. Its hideous countenance is ever upon you.

Such hard unyielding facts met us at every stage of our investigation. They did not absolutely demonstrate guilt. It is very seldom indeed in cases of uncleanness, that absolute proofs of guilt are found. The following extract from "The practice in the several judicatories of the Church of Scotland" edited by the Rev. Alex. Hill, D. D., will suffice to show what view is taken in that church in regard to this matter. "In many of the cases which come before a Kirk-session, and particularly in these of uncleanness, absolute proofs of guilt are scarcely to be had. The following are considered as pregnant presumptions of a man's guilt with a woman, and as sufficient to subject him to discipline if he cannot disprove them, viz. suspicious frequenting of her company, being *Solus Cum Solam loco Suspecto* or in suspect postures and the like." Let us ask in how many cases in our courts, any direct evidence of the commission of crime is given? Upon circumstantial evidence, men are deprived of reputation, liberty and life. Upon circumstantial evidence, husbands are divorced from their wives and wives from their husbands.

Dr. Crawley says his own testimony was "material." Now in the first place we say that he ought to have known "early trained to the law" as he was, that it was not proper for him to give evidence at all, inasmuch as he was Dr. Pryor's advocate, and no lawyer should plead and give evidence in the same cause.

If what Dr. Crawley says be correct, no doubt his evidence was material, and settled the question: "It had become impossible, but that I should have a perfect understanding of this man, and could read his every look and movement." Accepting that statement as correct and coupling with it Dr. Crawley's declaration that he could "stake his existence" upon Dr. Pryor's innocence, the whole question is settled. Had Dr. C. been the contemporary and friend of King David no doubt he would have been willing to "stake his existence" upon the innocence of the inspired Psalmist, while through the streets of Jerusalem ran the terrible story of the fall of that great man; and doubtless there were many of David's relatives and friends, who, remembering his past history and godly life, were incredulous, and quite prepared to stake their existence on his innocence. But what said the Prophet of the Lord when addressing himself to this man,—this piece of royal clay—but yet the anointed of the Lord—who had brought moral degradation upon himself and shame upon his people?—"Thou art the man."

Had Dr. Crawley been the contemporary, and friend of the apostle Peter,—the friend and daily companion of Christ—and heard him give utterance to the words, "though all men shall be offended because of thee yet will I never be offended" and "though I should die with thee yet will I not deny thee" he (Dr. Crawley) would probably have been just as ready to have "staked his existence" on the stability of the apostle. But this selected friend, and companion of Jesus—poor human Peter—ere many hours had intervened—ere the cock crew—had thrice denied his Lord. Yes, the apostle Peter, as well as "the Lord's anointed," was a fallible man.

What is the lesson to be learned from such scriptural teachings. Why, simply this—that it is a very unwise and unsafe thing to stake one's existence on the innocence of our oldest and nearest friends, even though they may have preached the gos-

ple acceptably for "a long series of years."

Dr. Crawley speaks of "individuals who have been active in this prosecution, and who must be regarded as in fact judges as well as prosecutors." We do not regard this as the correct or just way of putting the case. The church never assumed the attitude of a prosecutor until it was most improperly (as we think) forced upon us by the order of proceedings adopted by the Council. We protested against it at the time, but our protest did not avail. Dr. C. puts the church in a false attitude before the public. They have never been the prosecutors of Dr. Pryor except as they are apparently so in that position which they were forced by the Council to take. The reports prejudicial to Dr. Pryor were brought to the knowledge of the church by Dr. Pryor himself, and by persons who had knowledge of the facts—some of whose names the church learned from Dr. Pryor. The church was forthwith compelled to become, not the prosecutors nor the defenders of Dr. Pryor, but the investigators of these reports, and the defenders of truth and the purity of the church. The church in all its investigations sought to reach one thing—the truth of the charges whose demoralizing influences came "steaming up in the community." They were not prosecutors, but truth-seekers. A few members, however, seeming with Dr. Crawley to forget the real attitude which a church should assume in such investigations, became the advocates and defenders of our late pastor. Such persons assuredly disqualified themselves as judges; but the church did not.

We cannot at present notice other points in Dr. C's letter—we may however, in conclusion express our approval of the course marked out by Dr. Crawley for the churches to take—viz. Give expression to your opinion at your Associations and be guided "according to the facts." That is right. We have already submitted our whole conduct to a Council of twelve ministers and brethren, and we are quite willing to open our books and be judged by you "according to the facts."

Yours in Christian fellowship,  
By order and in behalf of the Church,  
B. H. EATON, Clerk.

P. S.—The church's Reply to Judge Johnston's letter will be published in a few days. Orders may be sent to R. T. Muir, or M. A. Buckley. Price 12½ cents.

B. H. E.

For the Christian Messenger.

DARTMOUTH, Feb. 3rd, 1868.

To the Editor of the Christian Messenger.

DEAR SIR—In the C. M. of the 22nd ult (29th) a communication of B. Eaton's in answer to a letter from Dr. Crawley contains the following remark: Page 35, first col., "At that session the representatives of the church were asked, whether they would agree to accept the decision as final, and they most distinctly answered in the negative, and the point was never after mentioned."

I have no wish to interfere in the unhappy controversy, but cannot allow the above remarks to go forth to the public uncontradicted. No such question was asked, and consequently no such denial, as that stated, was made by the representatives of Granville Street Church.

After the Council had organized, the question was put first to the representatives of the church, "Do you recognize the Council now organized, as that rec. immed by the Central Association and called by Granville Street Church." The answer was, "We do." Dr. Pryor was then interrogated in like manner, and gave a like answer.

Had the question been asked and the answer given, as in Mr. Eaton's communication, sure I am, that few members of the Council would have remained one hour in Granville Street, on the business which brought them to Halifax.

I cannot conceive how the writer of this article could have fallen into such a serious mistake as this. I, however, doubt not that upon further inquiry and consideration it will be corrected. Other members of the Council will, I presume, write you and corroborate the above.

Yours truly,  
A. S. HUNT.

For the Christian Messenger.

MY DEAR SIR,—

I have read Mr. Hunt's letter. Accept my thanks for your attention. Of the brethren appointed by the Church to act on its behalf before the Council, only Mr. Eaton and myself, I believe, were present during the early part of the first session. On the opening of the Council we were asked if we recognized the Council as now organized? Mr. Eaton replied that the Church considered that the Council had been previously organized, and read the resolution passed by the Church, Aug. 12th, which was to the effect that seven members be added to the Council. Some discussion ensued.