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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Review.

ECCE-CLASTICAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND, from the opening of the Long Parliament to the death of Oliver Cromwell. By JOHN STOUGHTON. Two volumes, pp. 1083. London: 1867.

Mr. Stoughton is a minister of the Congregationalist Denomination, resident at Kensington, near London, where he has laboured successfully for many years. He is the author of several valuable publications, and will yet live, we hope, to write many more.

The first volume of the work now before us treats of "the church of the civil wars;" the second, of "the Church of the Commonwealth." The history is derived from the best sources, and the author has enjoyed the advantage of access to the treasures preserved in the State Paper Office. Modern historians are greatly indebted to the liberality of successive governments for the free use of the documents stored in that office, and have succeeded, in consequence, in throwing light on many passages in our history which were before obscure.

Our readers will at once admit that such a work as this, if well executed, must be an acceptable addition to the literature of the age. No period of English history is so replete with events of momentous issue as the times of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, and no portion of our annals has been so misapprehended and misrepresented. Tories and high-churchmen have vied with infidels of the worst type in maligning the pious of those days, and have systematically ascribed to hypocrisy and baseness the noblest deeds which men have been honored to achieve. Like the "dreamers" referred to by Jude they have "spoken evil of the things which they knew not."—Mr. Stoughton, on the other hand, writes intelligently and impartially. He is evidently in sympathy with the great actors in those stirring scenes, and duly appreciates their principles, their motives, and their aims.

It was the fashion for nearly two centuries to treat Oliver Cromwell as a visionary and a knave. Thomas Carlyle unveiled his true character, in the "Letters and Speeches," and now the tide has turned. A juster estimate of Cromwell is formed; and there are few who will not admit, after allowance for weaknesses and faults, to which all are liable, that he was a truly great man—one of God's heroes, who "do exploits." Thus writes the hero, after the battle of Naseby:—"You have heard of Naseby; it was a happy victory. As in this (Long Sutton), so in that, God was pleased to use his servants; and it men will be malicious, and swell with envy, we know who hath said: 'If they will not see, yet they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at his people.' I can say this of Naseby, that when I saw the enemy draw up and march in gallant order towards us, and we a company of poor ignorant men, to seek how to order our battle, the general having commanded me to order all the horse, I could not (riding alone about my business) but smile out to God in praises, in assurance of victory, because God would, by things that are not, bring to nought things that are, of which I had great assurance, and God did it. Oh, that men would therefore praise the Lord, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men!"

Mr. Stoughton is by no means unnecessarily severe on Charles I. He exposes the deceit and trickery in which that son of the Stuarts revolved, and shows that he was a man whom no one could trust. His conduct respecting the Catholics was infamous. He was more than suspected of collusion with the Irish of that persuasion, and for the sake of securing their aid he would have trampled on the laws of the land. He was continually intriguing for that purpose.

"Of course, all this intriguing involved much duplicity. The collection of letters which were written by Charles in 1646, and which are now published, will be found to exhibit this prominent feature of the King's character. Whenever he formally conceded

any point, some quibbling about words, some dishonest reserve, some loophole out of which he might wriggle, is sure to appear in connection with a Jesuitical conscientiousness which was ever weaving casuistic theories, and starting ethical questions, in order to cover with a veil of seemliness the most dishonest and fraudulent acts. Charles was not rashly false; he did not heedlessly tell lies; he had undoubtedly certain notions of rectitude, which served occasionally to disquiet his spirit; and he wished to appear to himself honest and true, even at the moment of his wishing to deceive others. His mind, however, in these respects, is but a specimen of a large class of persons in this world of many-coloured falsehoods and delusions." Vol. I. p. 475.

Stratford and Laud were unjustly condemned to death, but they ought to have been put under perpetual restraint, to prevent their doing further mischief. They were traitors to the rights of the people, though the crime of treason, technically so called, could not be proved against them.

As for the execution of Charles I., we are inclined to adopt the views of the late Dr. Wayland. "I consider it rather an irregular proceeding, but it was really with Cromwell very much a matter of necessity. If he had not killed the King, the King would have killed him; and it would be difficult to prove that the King had a better right to the throne than he." (*Life*, Vol. I. p. 426.)

The sentiments on toleration held in those times were worthy of the middle ages. "Liberty of conscience," said Bailie, a Scotch Presbyterian, and toleration of all or any religion, is so prodigious an impiety, that this religious Parliament cannot but abhor the very naming of it." It was only among the Baptists and Congregationalists, and afterwards the Quakers, that the liberal views prevailed which are now maintained. The Baptists led the way, Leonard Bisher's "Religion's peace, or, a plea for liberty of Conscience," being published in 1614. The Independents (now called Congregationalists,) followed, though at first somewhat haltingly, inasmuch as they were desirous of confining the toleration to those who held the "necessary foundation." Popery had blinded the eyes of men so long that when the light at last dawned upon them they were not able to bear it, and fell into sad mistakes. Some of those mistakes are not rectified yet.

The account given by Mr. Stoughton of the state of religion in England during the Commonwealth is very interesting. That was another topic for the slanderous pens of venal scribes in the days of the Stuarts and the Georges. It is better understood now. Our female friends will thank us, we think, for the following extract—

"The ideal of the Puritan woman is one of the fairest types of womanhood:—face full of the beauty of modesty; eyes lustrous with the calm light of devotion; countenance expressive of firmness and gentleness, meekness and love; dress of subdued colour—of silk, or stuff, according to the wearer's rank; kerchief white as snow; no 'plaiting of hair,' but locks tucked back, smooth and glossy as a raven's wing. The bashful maiden sat in her garden bower, with lute and psalm-book; the matron, with her waiting women, in the fair oak parlour after morning prayer, her character formed on King Lemuel's model, 'Seeking wool and flax, and working willingly with her hands; laying her hands to the spindle, and her hands holding the distaff; stretching forth her hand to the poor, reaching forth her hands to the needy; opening her mouth with wisdom, while on her tongue is the law of kindness; looking well to the ways of her household, and not eating the bread of idleness.' This is a lovelier type of female humanity than can be found in any of Lely's pictures of Charles II.'s beauties, with luscious lips and dainty love-locks—with their outward adorning, and wearing of gold, and putting on of apparel. Modern painters, with the instinctive insight of geniuses, see and appreciate the fact, and hence depict not the Puritan in love with the Cavalier's daughter, but the Cavalier in love with the Puritan girl."

"Puritan houses exhibited Scripture texts upon the doors and over the fire-places; also upon the baby's cot, and even upon a wooden

skillet or a copper kettle. Godly verses hung on the walls, forming decorations destitute of all beauty, save such as might exist in the meaning of the words printed in rude type and upon coarse paper. The ladies, in fair white stomachers and silken skirts, plied their needles or read their books. A few copied the Greek Testament or spelt out the Hebrew Bible." Vol. 2. p. 378.

Cromwell's dying experience is also related at length. "He was very restless most part of the night, speaking often to himself. And there being something to drink offered him, he was desired to take the same, and endeavour to sleep, unto which he answered: 'It is not my design to drink or sleep; but my design is, to make what haste I can to be gone.' Afterwards, towards morning using divers holy expressions, implying much inward consolation and peace; among the rest he spake some exceeding self-debasing words, annihilating and judging himself. And truly it was observed, that a public spirit to God's cause did breathe in him (as in his life-time), so now to the very last, which will further appear by that prayer he put up to God two or three days before his end, which was as followeth: 'Lord, although I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in covenant with Thee through grace, and I may, I will, come to Thee, for thy people. Thou hast made me (though very unworthy) a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee service; and many of them have set too high a value upon me, though others wish and would be glad of my death, but, Lord, however thou dost dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love; and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation; and make the name of Christ glorious in the world. Teach those who look too much upon Thy instruments, to depend more upon Thy self. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are Thy people too. And pardon the folly of this short prayer. Even for Jesus Christ's sake. And give us a good night, if it be thy pleasure. Amen.'" Quoted at p. 519.

We thank Mr. Stoughton for this excellent work. It is accurate, impartial, distinguished by a dignified historical style, and pervaded by the spirit of christian charity. We are gratified to observe, too, that his references to the Baptists, though brief, are fair and brotherly.

Christian Reproof.

This is a duty which is enjoined upon us in the Bible, but which is very much neglected. Many are disposed to report what they hear to the disadvantage of others. Some cherish improper feelings against, and hold themselves aloof from wrong-doers. Others, when they get sufficiently angry, will scold and use hard words to those who have done wrong. But there are very few who are disposed to seek suitable opportunities for conversation with these they think have done, or are doing wrong, for the purpose of kindly and affectionately pointing out to them what they think to be wrong, and of persuading them to a different course.

The duty is a difficult one, and needs great care in performing it; yet it is a necessary one. There are a few cases in which public reproof is wise and proper, but generally it should be administered in private; and we should avoid unfavorable, and choose favorable seasons for attending to it. When a person is angry or is complaining of what he thinks wrong on the part of others, he is not in the most favorable mood for receiving words of Christian reproof himself.

We must be sure to manifest the right spirit in connection with this duty. We must be humble, remembering that we are fallible, and that it is probable that others see faults in us. We must be kind, avoiding every thing like mere fault-finding, and showing that our object is the good of those to whom we speak. And we should be influenced in this matter by a desire to obey God, who says, 'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.'

Attention to this duty will produce beneficial results, in restraining from sin, in pre-

venting backsliding, in leading back into the right path those who have wandered from it, and in encouraging sinners to turn to the Saviour.

And efforts of this character should be kindly received by those who are the subjects of them. We should not conclude that those who reprove us are our enemies, but should remember that "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful;" and that therefore we should take kindly the words of Christian reproof, and seek to profit thereby. If the things alleged against us are untrue, we should still be glad to know what is supposed to be wrong in us, and to have the opportunity of removing a false impression.—*National Baptist*.

For the Christian Messenger.

LETTER 2.

To the Baptists of Nova Scotia.

Dear Brethren,—

It is of immense moment that our churches should learn to wield the sword of discipline in tenderness and love, as well as firmness and faithfulness.

Of the two classes of qualities, I am afraid we are more liable to err by want of the former, than of the latter, by want of love rather than of faithfulness. Our self-esteem is more easily flattered by the one than the other. Love only grows as the Holy Spirit is actually present; firmness and seeming faithfulness may be nourished by many unworthy motives.

Churches are no holier or wiser than the individuals that compose them; and if, as individuals, they admit their liability to err, then they admit the liability of the church to err. The multitude of counsellors, may, indeed, bring wisdom; but the multitude inflamed by exciting influences may also easily blind one another.

We cannot therefore find it difficult to understand how the Granville Street Church may have been led into error in their mode of dealing with the case in view; nor how, having taken the first false step, they may have thereby driven themselves into many succeeding false steps.

The first false step consisted, perhaps, in hasty judgment, and in setting their Pastor aside from the pulpit as if guilty, before proofs; whereas, you know, it is every man's right to be considered innocent till proved guilty. And all the subsequent alleged prejudice, and passion, and ill-will, may have followed that first false step, from the wounded pride, that would not confess a fault, and that resented the complaints naturally made against them for this act by their Pastor's nearest relatives.

If prejudice and passion got among them, you all know, that, from that moment, they became unfit to judge their accused Pastor. Yet these same persons, in great excitement, and now destitute of a head, and in no scriptural condition to perform so weighty a duty, did proceed to the delicate office of passing judgment on the man, against whom they were inflamed.

This must needs have made matters worse; and we see, perhaps, why it became more and more difficult to induce them to consent to a Council, to which they ought to have been desirous in the first instance to refer the whole case.

The Central Association, however, recommended a Council to the Church, and one was at length obtained. You know the issue. They acquitted Dr. Pryor of the crimes alleged; but blamed him for imprudence, and carelessness in accounts and business.

The Editor of this journal must excuse me for wholly dissenting from the views he has published in his contest with the Editor of the *Christian Visitor*, in all those points which are of prime importance. The Council found no proof to substantiate the principal charges against Dr. Pryor, that is, they acquitted him of guilt.

The blame that they imputed to him, his nearest friends never hesitated to express, though they know, as others may not know, that those very faults arise from traits of character, that, in many circumstances, become amiable and even useful.

Now this acquittal, every kind friend of