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REVIEW.

LIFE OF JAMES HAMILTON, D. D., F. L. S.
BY WILLIAM ARNOT, EDINBURGH.
London, Nisbet & Co., Post 800, pp. 600.

Robert M. McCheyne, William C. Burns, and James Hamilton, were three of Scotland's mighty men. Intellectually, they differed much from each other; yet they were all men of first-rate talent; and they were all mighty in the ways of God. Each of them, too, "being dead, yet speaketh," in a well-written biography; so that for many years to come, it may be for centuries, the Church will be edified by the story of their lives, and her young ministers, especially, animated and urged to imitation.

James Hamilton was born at Paisley, Nov. 27, 1814. His father, Dr. William Hamilton was a very respectable clergyman of the Scotch Church. He died in 1835. James wrote a memoir of his father, which was published in 1836, when its author was not twenty-two years of age, and was regarded by the readers of those days as a biography of no mean value.

A liberal education developed and regulated his powers. He entered College at Glasgow before he had completed his fourteenth year, and soon distanced most of his fellow-students. Prize after prize fell into his hands, and none envied him the acquisition, for all felt and acknowledged his worthiness of fame.

He took pleasure in Natural History studies. To Botany he was enthusiastically attached, and became so thoroughly versed in that science that he was employed to write the botanical articles in Dr. Fairbairn's Biblical Cyclopædia. His sermons were frequently enriched by illustrations drawn from scientific sources.

There is no record of the time and manner of his conversion. His case was doubtless like that of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened." Of the reality of the fact there could be no question. His whole character and life bore witness to it. He was a living proof of the sanctifying power of the gospel of Christ.

Having accomplished a very successful career at College, both in the general and the theological department, he was licensed to preach Aug. 11, 1838. His qualifications for the ministry were quickly appreciated, and his services were in demand. He was assistant minister for a short time at Abornye, near Dundee. He then took the charge of Roxburgh Church, Edinburgh, and was fast rising in public esteem, when England gained what Scotland lost, by his removal to the National Scotch Church, Regents Square, London, where the eccentric Edward Irving had laboured some years before, till his wonderings and wildness led to his deposition. This removal took place in 1841. The union thus formed between the minister and a devotedly attached people, was productive of much happiness on both sides and received signal tokens of the divine blessing. It was terminated by death, Nov. 24, 1867.

Dr. Hamilton was a born author. He was only in his 17th year when he wrote a Life of Richard Baxter, which he offered to the Religious Tract Society. His pen was never idle. Scarcely a year passed in which he did not give the reading public some production of his prolific mind. His "Life in Earnest," probably the most useful of his works, appeared in 1844;—the "Mount of Olives," in 1845;—the Memoir of Lady Colquhoun, in 1849;—the "Royal Preacher," in 1851;—the "Life of Richard Williams," and "the Lamp and Lantern," in 1853. In 1854 he began "Excoelsior," in which he was assisted by other writers, who united with him in furnishing a large number of Essays, intended as "Helps to progress in Religion, Science, and Literature;" the work was completed in six volumes. He was several years Editor of the "Presbyterian Messenger," and he

edited "Evangelical Christendom" from 1864 till his death. Many other publications, some in the form of volumes, others appearing as pamphlets or tracts, bore his name; besides which, he contributed able articles to the North British Review and other periodicals. He was a popular author. His style was perspicuous, chaste, and elegant. His illustrations were always apt, and sometimes very striking. He aimed to promote the interests of truth, holiness, and Christian union. He never used the scourge.

The life of such a man was of necessity a continual whirl and bustle. The claims of a large Church and congregation (the number of communicants was latterly upwards of six hundred) required constant attention. He was the mainspring of the denominational machine, in England. All the great Societies supposed that he was bound to respond to their calls and to advocate their objects. He wrote two thousand letters in a year. He lost no time—for he read, and wrote, and sometimes studied sermons, even in railway carriages. We do not wonder that he died of a worn out brain, at the comparatively early age of fifty-three.

"I have often admired," says his biographer, "when I had occasion to be living with him in his house for a few days the facility and cheerfulness with which he submitted to interruptions, when he was engaged with his own severer work. He is sitting in his chair, with a miniature jointed desk attached to its arm, drawing from his brain the threads of thought, and tracing them quickly with his little crow quill, when a rap is heard at the door, and a stranger is introduced—a Presbyterian minister, or a general philanthropist from America. Forthwith the conversation begins. How goes it with slavery in the south? Do Yale and Princeton thrive? How do latitude, soil, and sea air affect the cotton crop in quantity or quality? He is immediately at home, and makes the stranger at home too. The conversation in due time draws to a close, and the visitor retires with a heart perhaps a shade happier and more hopeful. The student flings himself down again upon his chair with some quaint remark, at which he laughs heartily himself, and by which he shakes the sides of the friend who may be sitting at work in another corner. In another moment the big brow is knitting itself, folding and unfolding its long deep furrows. The end of the broken thread is caught, and the stream is flowing at once rapidly and smoothly. In a few minutes another rap resounds through the house; and if you happen to be looking in the right direction you will observe a twitch of vexation flitting across his face. It is but a momentary emotion, however; ere the new visitor is announced he is on his feet, springing across the room to meet him. In this case it is a man from the city whom he slightly knows, gathering up votes and items of influence with the view of placing an orphan in a certain hospital. Dr. Hamilton's word in such a case will go far with this and that other large contributor, and his recommendation will procure several votes. The case is good, and two or three notes are quickly written. The philanthropist departs with hurried and warm expressions of thankfulness; and the student betakes himself to the task of finding and knitting his broken thread again.

"Thus the wheel goes round; for even at his busy time he was not able to retire or hide himself. His power of recovering the thought after an interruption and of bearing the interruption without a symptom of irritation, was much observed and admired by his friends. This faculty however, was not a power that came of its own accord. The act as exercised by him seemed easy, as the tripping of a musician's fingers over the keys of an instrument seems easy, hardly requiring an exercise of the thought or will at all, but in both cases the facility has been acquired by much honest labour. In Dr. Hamilton's character two principles, in some respects antagonistic, combined to produce the result. By judgement and habit he set a very high value on time for the accomplishment of

life's great work, and a high value also on cheerful affability manifested towards all, as an effective practical recommendation of the gospel. Between these two he was sometimes very hard pressed. And alas! even when he overcame the difficulty and gave each its due, the effort overstrained his powers, and undermined his health." pp. 457—459.

Amidst all, he maintained the precious habit of nearness to God, and walked humbly before him. The following is taken from a paper written about two years before his death:—

"I see that my life has been a continual shortcoming. No worthy motive, no deed out-and-out well done, recurs to my comfort; and were it not that the possibility of these lines being read by others is a temptation to voluntary humility, I might enumerate many sins which did easily beset me, some of which seem only to have strengthened with the years. But whosoever may read these lines, I desire to record as my only comfort the truth which I have proclaimed to others. I believe in the forgiveness of sins. I believe in the mercy of God, and in the exhaustless efficacy of the great Atonement; and although it is difficult to understand how such earthliness can be made at home in heaven, yet moments of a happier experience sometimes enable me to hope for a sphere where God's service will be the true self-indulgence—when in God's purest light there will be nothing to conceal; where, in the superiority of others to one's self, will be nothing to awaken detraction or envy; where love will be pure and gratitude permanent; and amidst just men made perfect, virtues may evolve of which at present I do not see so much as the germ, and evils pass away so old and inveterate that I do not remember their beginning." p. 551.

We had marked many other passages for insertion, but space is wanting. An extract from a sermon preached by Dr. Hamilton on an occasion of the re-opening of his church after extensive repairs and alterations (Oct. 21, 1860), must not, however, be omitted.

"Every man, every member of the Church, in our own case the twice three hundred who are enrolled beneath the banner of the Prince of Peace, the Church expects every one to do his duty, and so expects the Church's glorious Head. Do it in the way of preventing evil, as well as in the way of doing good. Do it by speaking the word in season to those who come near you. Do it by sending the missionary to those whom you yourselves cannot reach. Do it in ruling your own spirit and spare a little to help those who are battling with the sin that beset them. Do it, scholar, in thy study; do it, preacher, in thy pulpit; do it, Martha, in the kitchen; do it, good work and honest, Simon in the tan-pit, Aquila in the tent-maker's yard. Do it, even although there is no one to see. Do it, even although there be danger in the doing. Do it, for if there be danger in the neglect. Do it, though there is no one to see; for even when onlookers are most numerous, the chief spectator is invisible, and when no one else is visible, He still is present. Do it, even although others should not do theirs; for if at first it seems a hardship, it is the highest honour not only to fulfil your own, but to supply the lack of other's service!" p. 503.

Dr. Hamilton sunk slowly into the grave and looked death in the face all the while with the calmness of a trusting believer. Here is a record of his last day on earth:—

"Next day, Saturday, was to be his last on earth. In the morning after an affectionate reference to his son James, then absent at school in Scotland, and who had been sent for, he reverted to the directions he had given earlier in the week, respecting his funeral. On his brother (Andrew), inquiring if he had any other wish than he had desired to express, he said, 'I have not any earthly desire; my only desire is soon to be gratified.' Later in the morning his brother, Rev. W. Hamilton, arrived from Stonehouse. He was able to

receive him with all his old affection, and to converse with him at intervals during the day. Towards the evening he said to him, 'There is one line in that hymn, which begins with "The hour of my departure's come," which exactly describes my feelings at this time,—

'I leave the world without a tear,
Save for the friends I love so dear.'

On his brother reminding him of his father's favorite verse which he frequently repeated in the pulpit,—

'Jesus! the vision of thy face
Hath overpowering charms;
I scarce would feel Death's cold embrace,
If thou wert in mine arms,'—

he replied, 'No, I had forgotten it; but but there is no cold embrace, William; there is no cold embrace.'

"About ten o'clock he grew rapidly worse, again complaining of oppressive tightness in his chest. To his brother William, he said, 'Would you feel my pulse and tell me if it has stopped for I feel that I am sinking very fast; perhaps as it is getting late, it might be well to send for Dr. Williams, for I should not like to disturb him if he were once in bed.'

"A little after this he took an affectionate farewell of his dear wife, adding, 'The Lord bless you and keep you, and ever be with you!' to which she replied, 'As he is with you.' A sweet smile of assent lighted up his features as he said, 'And with you!' After a short interval he clasped his hands upon his breast, saying, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come QUICKLY.'

"After this he spoke little, save to recognise gratefully the little attention rendered to him in extreme weakness, and to express his anxiety that his dear wife should not suffer through her loving care of him. By-and-by the shadows gathered but with them came the Master, and carried away this dear servant to his rest and his reward."

This is one of those volumes which kind friends should place in the minister's library. C.

A FUNERAL HYMN.

(Translated from the German, by the late Dr. James Hamilton, and sung at his funeral).

Neighbour, accept our parting song,
The road is short, the rest is long;
The Lord brought here, the Lord takes hence,
This is no place of permanence.

The bread, by turns of mirth or tears,
Was thine these chequered pilgrim years;
Now, Landlord World, shut to the door,
They guest is gone for evermore—

Gone to a realm of sweet repose,
Our convoy follows as he goes;
Of toil and moil the day was full,
A good sleep now!—the night is cool.

Ye village bells, ring, softly ring,
And in the blessed Sabbath bring,
Which, from the weary work-day tryst,
Awaits God's folk through Jesus Christ.

And open wide, thou Gate of Peace,
And let this other journey cease;
Nor grudge a narrow couch, dear neighbours,
For slumbers won by life-long labours.

Beneath these sods, how close ye lie,
But many a mansion's in yon sky;
E'en now, beneath the sapphire throne,
Is his, prepared through God's dear Son.

'I quickly come!' that Saviour cries;
Yea, quickly come! this churchyard sighs,
Come, Jesus, come! we wait for thee—
Thine now and ever let us be.

In this day when so much is said of organic law and protoplasm, it is encouraging to hear from Prof. Martineau, the leading Unitarian thinker of England, such words as these:—

"The facts of personal life, of moral obligation, of social ties, of ideal aims, of religious intuition are not altered or made unworthy of intellectual treatment by any previous development of the organism in which they appear. Protoplasm or no protoplasm, they press upon us continually. To ignore them is to ignore the more important part of our nature."—*Christian Era*.