THOMAS BINNEY:

HIS LIFE MIND AND OPINIONS.

by

E Paxton Hood

THOMAS BINNEY:

HIS LIFE MIND AND OPINIONS.

BY

E. PAXTON HOOD

Quinta Press

Quinta Press, Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire,
England, SY10 7RN

THOMAS BINNEY

HIS MIND LIFE AND OPINIONS,
Doctrinal, Denominational, Devotional, and Practical.
INTERSPERSED WITH

Anecdotes, Descriptions, and Criticisms.
BY THE

REV. E. PAXTON HOOD.

"*By the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace or God that was with me. Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.*"—1 CORINTHIANS xv. 10, 11.

"Quis fidem doctis reserare chartis
Aptior, cuinam graviore fluxit
Vena doctrina, studiisque fervens
Pectus honestis?

"Seu pios mores repetamus, atque
Integram dio sub amore vitam,
Quanta se virtus aperit, fidesque,
Quanta renidet?"

HYMN FOR ST. ISIDORE—THE ELISHA OF SPAIN.
Spanish Hymnology—Quoted in "Compitum."

LONDON:
JAMES CLARKE AND CO., 13, FLEET STREET.
1874.

PREFACE.

"*And let me beg you to be quick about it, sir, for ministers are soon forgotten.*" So said Dr. Winter Hamilton to the printer, as he put into his hands the manuscript of his "Life of John Ely." A similar sentiment urges me to this piece of work. Here and there, in the course of the years, a name survives the injustice and cruelty of time; but even famous ministers pay for the slight eminence upon which they are placed in life by the rapidity with which they are hurried out of memory in death.

I suppose the name of Thomas Binney is the foremost, most representative of influence and power—of what we mean by weight of character—in the English Nonconformity of these later times. I do not think it well that he should be permitted to pass away without some compendious summary of his life and works; some slight, suggestive crayon sketch of this many-sided man. I hope I am not guilty of an impertinence in attempting this; I have usually myself resented the interference of those who, outside of the family circle, have presumed to

meddle with the family will, and have attempted to exhibit suspicious feelings of affection. Yet I, cannot but notice how, while we have biographies, more or less entertaining, of little, comparatively uninteresting men, especially ministers—whose names it would be invidious and spiteful to mention—the names of men like Matthew Wilks, Caleb Morris, James Stratten, Thomas Lynch, and many others, pass out of sight and memory, and no memorial of them is preserved for the library. By-and-by, I think it must be, whatever may be the decision at present, that a complete, interesting, and adequate life of Thomas Binney will be written. England and Australia will be found to be rich in particu-

lars about him. I believe a large wealth of correspondence may be exhumed—and he was exceedingly happy in notes and letters; I dare say I have a hundred myself—these are, of course, sacred. I have neither dared to invade the sanctity of their confidence, not to seek such help from quarters where I knew it was likely to be found. My design is different. It is only to gather up into a small volume such floating impressions of the man as are already before the world, but especially to give a kind of index of his more impressive and peculiar manners and methods of speech. His was a broad, restless, active, even irritable intelligence. It was natural that it should be so. As he had the immunities of genius, so he suffered also its penalties. Certainly he was one who never overtook his own ideas, and for this reason—he always appeared to be at his best when beneath the pressure of

vii

necessity. I believe an after fastidiousness often spoiled the performances which in themselves had appeared most complete and splendid. Hence I shall, in the course of the following pages, present many illustrations from scattered sermons and speeches taken down in shorthand, and published in some ephemeral production of the moment, which are not likely ever to be collected, and which can only be discovered by a ready memory able to refer to the document of the time. Another reason urges me to this, which some may regard as a questionable performance. Some of the remarks since his death made by the many critics upon Mr. Binney's career seem to me to need refutation—I do not mean as to matter of opinion, but as to matter of fact. The lengthy and complimentary papers in the *Times,* the *Telegraph,* and the *Spectator,* however ably written, equally show ignorance concerning the man and his work. And as I notice no indication of this compendious design, which appears to me desirable, in a

spirit of reverence, such as I have not felt for many memories, I hurriedly—but, I trust, not the less carefully—compile and put together these pages, intending them especially to form a handbook of reference to the opinions of the revered departed patriarch of modern Nonconformity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER IV.

Dissent, not Schism.

CHAPTER V.

Thomas Binney as a Preacher.

CHAPTER XI.

Immortelles.

THOMAS BINNEY:

HIS MIND—LIFE AND OPINIONS.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST LINES OF LIFE.

THOMAS BINNEY was a Northumbrian; he looked a "hardy Norseman" every inch—his vast stalwart frame, blue, shrewd, tender eye, and light brown hair, all announced the descendant from the ancient Danes. He was born at Newcastle-on-Tyne, in the year 1798; he was naturally proud of the town which gave him birth, and not only of the town, he was proud of Northumberland, as well he might be, in the memory of what England has received from the genius of her Border sons. Mr. Binney says in his sermon on a late Duke of Northumberland:—"Our coal and coasting trade used to be the nursery for your navy. We gave you Collingwood, one of the most perfect and symmetrical of characters. We gave you a Lord Chancellor, who, whatever were his delays, had fewer of his decisions reversed than most others. We gave you the Prime Minister who carried your [first] Reform Bill. We

have given you poets and mathematicians; and you have some men in London now moving in the higher paths of general literature, who came from us. The subject of this discourse gave you your screw fighting-ships; and another north man gave you your Armstrong guns. What is still better, one of our colliers, or at least one who had to do with the Northumbrian coal-pits—a man who thought he was 'made for life' when he got twelve shillings a week—was the father of your railway system. And his son, inheriting his genius, has left a name that the world will

not willingly let die. The poor Killingworth boy earned for himself his public funeral, and now sleeps in Westminster Abbey with poets, and orators, and statesmen, and warriors, and nobles, and kings."

He was a thoroughly self-made man; for some years—as he testified himself only two or three years since, at the Weigh House—he was in a bookseller's shop, probably, also, in the printing-office—and the peculiar action of his fingers in the pulpit, especially in the more impassioned portions of a sermon, most graphically seemed to realise the distribution of type. While, however, thus engaged, he worked hard as a young student, and he himself gives a very graphic account of the way in which he prosecuted his studies, adding another to the innumerable noble instances of the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties; it contributes a very interesting little piece of autobiography, and is extracted from an address he delivered to young men:—"You are young men engaged in business, but have to improve your minds as best you can in your leisure hours. Well, I was once in the same position. I was seven years in a

---

3

bookseller's concern, and during that time my hours were, for two years from seven to eight, and for five years from seven to seven; under great pressure, I have sometimes been engaged from six to ten. But somehow, all the time, and especially from my fourteenth to my twentieth year, I found opportunities for much reading and a great deal of composition. I did not shirk, however, my Latin and Greek, for I went for some two evenings in the week to an old Presbyterian clergyman, to learn the elements of the two languages, and could read Cæsar and St. John; but my great work was English. I read many of the best authors, and I wrote largely both poetry and prose; and I did so with much painstaking. I laboured to acquire a good style of expression, as well as merely to

express my thoughts. Some of the plans I pursued were rather odd, and produced odd results. I read the whole of Johnson's 'Rambler,' put down all the new words I met with-and they were a good many—with their proper meanings, and then I wrote essays in imitation of Johnson, and used them up. I did the same with Thomson's 'Seasons,' and wrote blank verse to use his words, and also to acquire something of music and rhythm. And so I went on, sometimes writing long poems in heroic verse; one on the 'Being of a God;' another, in two or three 'books,' in blank verse, in imitation of 'Paradise Lost.' I wrote essays on 'The Immortality of the Soul,' sermons, a tragedy in three acts, and other things, very wonderful in their way, you may be sure!"*

Thus the framework of the mind of the future leader

* See an exceedingly interesting little memoir in the *Sunday at Home,* No. 794.

4

and teacher of men was formed; and it is an illustration of the common sense of the boy, and the manly independence of his own nature, that, while he wrote verse as the best means for acquiring a felicitous style of prose composition, he never fancied himself a poet; and while he read the ponderous style of Johnson, he obtained a knowledge of the language, without ever falling into the fatalities of that most invincible style, although some indications of his first master may be traced in his earliest published volume. In due time he entered for study for the ministry Coward College, then at Wymondley, in Hertfordshire, under the superintendence of that accomplished, amiable, and admirable man, the Rev. Thomas Morell, for whom Mr. Binney always entertained a most affectionate and revering remembrance. Mr. Morell was himself the author of several works, too good,

even tried by the most recent standard, to be forgotten by those acquainted with their value. In the first years of his ministry, when at Newport, in the Isle of Wight, Mr. Binney wrote the life of the son of his tutor, dedicating the volume to the father. The young Morell died at the age of twenty-four, and seems to have been a young minister of exceeding promise. Mr. Binney was two years his senior. This piece of biography is, in its way, a real curiosity. No one laughed at it more heartily than Mr. Binney himself. He did so when he put into the present writer's hands, a few years since, one of the few copies he possessed, and indulged himself in a fit of merriment at its remarkably free and outspoken intolerance upon things in general. Mr. Morell appears to have been the victim of some of the vices incident to

---

5

Congregationalism; and concerning those vices, in this volume the young author expresses himself with considerable vehemence. The volume, however, gave strong indications of a keen observation, and a most earnest nature, forming its own opinions, and shaping its own course of action. But we anticipate. In 1824 he became the pastor of the St. James Street Congregational Church, Newport, in the Isle of Wight. Here, in this then most retired spot, when there were no steamers nor railways to make the little insulated town very accessible, his mind had time to mature and strengthen itself; although even here it cannot be said of him as was said by Judge Topcliff, when Father John Ingram was being tortured in the Tower, that he was a "very monster of taciturnity." Dr. Bogue, of whom, perhaps, we may speak as the then beloved and accomplished patriarch of Congregationalism, perceived and appreciated the character of the unknown young man, and Mr. Binney himself acknowledged this both tenderly and gratefully. Some of his utterances from his pulpit, in that day, we can quite believe to have

had a very suspicious ring, if not of heresy, then of that manly, outspoken independence of sentiment and expression which is usually quite as fatal to ministerial eminence. It was amusing to read, in the estimate of Mr. Binney recently in the *Spectator,* that he held tenaciously to the last by the theology of Independent teachers! not affected by recent modifications, and that especially this was the case with reference to his views of eternal rewards and punishments! Any doctrine Mr. Binney held and preached was held very really, sacredly, and tenderly; but with reference to this doctrine, in particular, it

6

is remarkable that, even in the Isle of Wight days, it was a source of painful perplexity to him, so much so that, perhaps, rather by the negativeness than the positiveness of his teaching, it created some doubts of his "soundness:" and it was in Newport that we heard the story of his last words from the pulpit, as pastor of the church. He delivered himself somewhat in the following manner: "I cannot but know that some of my impressions with reference to the final awards of a future state have been a great trouble and grief to some of you; well, now I am leaving you, I have done with you, and you will be able to have it your own way; and all that I have to say is, that those of you who *want* to have everlasting punishment, *may* have everlasting punishment!"

Whatever may be thought of the saying, it was exceedingly like Mr. Binney to have said it; nor does the sentence convey anything like so dogmatic a statement of the doctrine in question, as it conveys a severe reproof of the moral state, at any rate, of some amongst his hearers.

It has always been surprising to the present writer that such a man as Thomas Binney was then, and especially with such a piece of work as the "Life of Stephen Morell" hanging round his reputation, found an entrance to the pulpit of the Weigh House; for he succeeded to the exact

and fashionable propriety sustained by John Clayton. The elder Clayton was a stranger and far abler man than his sons, but they' all belonged to the same *regime* of conservative, conventional propriety. They were the masters of deportment.

The writer of the memorial paper upon Mr. Binney in the *Nonconformist*—incomparably the ablest and most

7

appreciative of those devoted to his memory,—satirises pretty stingingly that despotism of ministerial deportment which was absolute before Mr. Binney appeared on the scene. The ministry was in the quiet, easy, gentlemanly possession of its silk and lavender—not many years had passed since the age of the silver shoe-buckle, black silk stockings, knee-breeches, and gold-headed cane. The *Times* writes absurdly—when it speaks of Mr. Binney as "the adequate successor and representative of the Claytons, Palmers, Tozers, and Burders;" and the *Nonconformist* is somewhat unjust, perhaps, by implication, to the Bogues and Burders. George Burder and David Bogue —especially the latter—were really noble men, but the ministry of Independency, and especially in London, was a kind of florid frost-work, in which religious truth was held in a cold crystallisation of sanctified Chesterfieldism, for ever fearing to offend.

Certainly these pages need not be devoted to many reflections upon what now must seem to many as a very singular manifestation of the kid-glove style of pulpit eloquence:—only here it may be said that all that the Clay tons were, Mr. Binney was not. His free, abandoned independence of manner in those days seemed to set conventionality at defiance; he was eminently a man who took his own way. He came, however, into the old King's Weigh House pulpit in 1829; there had been a brief interval between the pastorate of John Clayton and that assumed by Thomas Binney, during which Edward

Parsons the younger had been looked to as the probable future minister; he was a man whose extraordinary flow of perfect, classic, and yet florid eloquence seemed likely

8

to command most admiring congregations, but he was not there long; then, Mr. Binney stepped into the vacant pulpit; and while, for the first three or four years, he was comparatively unknown, the sense soon quickened and grew in men's minds that there was a prophet amongst them, and from that time to the period of his death, he was not permitted to remain long, at any moment, from the eyes of men, nor, we will add, from their hearts.

9

CHAPTER II.

THE KING'S WEIGH HOUSE AND THE OLD CITY DAYS.

IT will certainly be interesting to some readers to attempt to realise what manner or place that old King's Weigh House was into which Mr. Binney came; for the present noble and substantial building gives not the slightest idea of it. The *name* must seem to many inexplicable, and suggestive of interesting historical recollections. Before the Great Fire of London the King's Weigh House stood in Cornhill; its object was to prevent frauds by the weighing of merchandise brought from beyond sea by the King's beam; after the Great Fire of London it was removed from Cornhill to Little Eastcheap. The chapel, in which the earliest refugees of Nonconformity worshipped, was a kind of loft, erected over the warehouses and offices below; its first three pastors had all been ejected ministers—Samuel Slater, of St. Katherine's Collegiate Chapel in the Tower; Richard Kentish, of Overton, in Hampshire; and John Knowles, Lecturer in Bristol Cathedral; all for some time beneficed clergymen of the Church of England. Here, also, ministered Thomas Reynolds, at one time the colleague of John Howe; and it was during his ministry that the church. separating itself from the so-called Presbyterians—in fact,

10

the Arians of that day—united itself with the Congregational Board of London and became a Congregational church. Still retaining the name, it was in 1795 that the congregation erected a new, and for those times a handsome and more respectable building, still over warehouses. This was during Mr. Clayton's pastorate, the

building being still in Eastcheap. As compared with the present structure, it was small and insignificant, capable of accommodating about a third of the congregation of the present building. This edifice was the scene of Mr. Binney's first London ministrations. The times of service when the preacher entered an his duties were in the morning at half-past ten, and in the afternoon at three o'clock. The change of the latter hour to half-past six had the natural effect of greatly increasing the congregation; the place became utterly insufficient; the wealthy congregation worshipping within its walls naturally, too, became ashamed of their old conventicle-like looking building. In 1833 the foundation-stone was laid of the present King's Weigh House Chapel, on Fish Street Hill. It was thought a fine building for Nonconformity at that time, and probably no Nonconformist building up to that period had cost so much as this structure. Aided by the compensation they received for their ground in Eastcheap, the congregation was enabled to expend £16,000 an the chapel. It was an the afternoon of May 24, 1834, that Mr. Binney bade farewell to the time-honoured walls of the old chapel in Eastcheap, taking as his text, "*Arise, let us go hence!*" It was upon this occasion that he threw aside the gown which he had hitherto worn, like his predecessors, and which, although he never afterwards

---

11

assumed, was an innovation he regretted in his later years, when he was wont to compare an ungowned minister to "an auctioneer going up into his box." His successor has returned to the practice of the fathers of Nonconformity, although the modern gown can scarcely. be called a "Geneva cloak."

These references to the history of the place would be incomplete without the following extract from Mr. Binney's Bicentenary Sermon, comprising a most interesting account of

THE FIRST PASTOR OF THE WEIGH HOUSE.

"I now proceed to conclude this discourse by a brief reference to the first pastor of this church. Some time in the reign of James I., about or after 1620, the year in which the *Mayflower* sailed with the Pilgrim Fathers, a young clergyman came to London. He had been educated at Cambridge, and, for some time, had officiated in the country. From the circumstance of his entering the ministry when he did, he was, no doubt, episcopally ordained. In London he became the minister of the Collegiate Chapel of St. Catherine's in the Tower. It is recorded of him that in the year 1665, when the city was visited with the plague, and when many left it, he continued at his post, and endeavoured, by his good offices, to alleviate the miseries of the suffering inhabitants. It appears that he held his appointment at St Catherine's for nearly forty years, and a wonderful forty years they were, including, as they must have done, the closing portion of the reign of James I., the whole of that of Charles I., the long Parliament, the Westminster Assembly, the civil

wars, the period of the Commonwealth, and the return of Charles II. During the political and ecclesiastical changes of that extraordinary period the minister of St. Catherine retained his appointment. I infer from this that he was a quiet, unobtrusive man, and that his original view of church government became modified by Presbyterianism, and that he was able to accept the uses and forms of worship prescribed by the Directory; that he might possibly have subscribed to the covenant, in which case his preference for episcopacy and a liturgy may only have been repressed, and not extinguished, during the troublous times. But it was out of his power, as he deemed it, to accept the Act of Uniformity, and consequently to adjure the oath to respect the Commonwealth. But however this may be, we know that in 1662, on the approach of St. Bar-

tholomew's Day, Mr. Slater, for that was his name, had proposed with himself to leave the pulpit and people that had been his for forty years.

"He was an old man. From his having first ministered in a country parish for some time before he came to London, he could not be short of seventy years. In prospect of secession he preached his farewell sermon from the words, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols,' taking his text out of the Epistle of St. John; and I think he would stand up as the Apostle John used to do when he was old and hardly able to preach, and could only say, 'Little children, love one another; little children, keep yourselves from idols.' This was the text of the old minister's discourse. It is plain, serious, evangelical, expository, alike of truth and duty. It is free from all personal allusions till just towards the close.

13

The good man then notices his own position, and makes a practical appeal to his hearers in the following words:—

"'And now, yet one word more. I would not occasion any discomposure of spirit that is not becoming you. But this I must say: for aught I know, you have the words of a dying man, and we used to say that the words of a dying man are apt to make a somewhat deep impression. I mean a dying man, not according to nature, but if it should be so, I hope there will be cause of rejoicing on my behalf; but I speak the words of a dying man in respect of my ministerial office. I suppose you all know there is an Act come forth by supreme authority; it is not for us to quarrel with it, but to submit to it, and hold correspondency with it so far as we can with a good conscience. But there may be many injunctions with which many besides myself cannot comply, therefore we are willing to submit to the penalty inflicted. This I say: you have for many years had the ad-

vantage of my poor labours. I have now near up to forty years performed my service to Christ and His people, and, I bless His name, not without acceptance and success. My work, as far as I know, is now at an end. My desire is that you, whose hearts have been inclined to wait upon God in the way of my ministry, may keep faithful to God, and that you may have the blessing. of the everlasting covenant corning upon your souls, and that you may have the power of the doctrine held forth in this sermon put forth Upon your hearts; that as you do believe that Jesus is Christ, that as you profess these things, you may carry out suitably all your profession; that you may walk in love

---

14

to God, love to Christ, and love to one another; that you may labour to manifest a noble and generous spirit in a world of errors, corruptions, false doctrines, and unwarrantable worship; that you may in all things labour to approve yourselves to God. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Amen.'

"Being dead, he yet speaketh. He speaks to us by his conscious integrity, by the principles embodied in his conduct, and even by his words which have just. been read. Little did the good man imagine on the day when these words were uttered, that on its return 200 years after they would be uttered again, be heard by a larger audience, and be listened to as the utterances of one ecclesiastically: related to themselves. Being dead, he yet speaketh. He speaks to the world through the existence of this church, of which he was the founder, and by that line of ministers of which he was the first. The torch of truth held by him in the hand of love has come down—transferred from one to another of his successors—to the present day. Whether or not the flame may be as bright now as ever it was, I will not say; but this I will say—that the torch of truth and of Christian doctrine held forth in this place—I dare to say it—is held in a hand large and

loving. ready to be extended in frank brotherhood to every true Christian man, in spite of diversities of creed, extravagances of controversy, anger, wrath, and ridicule, bicentenary misapprehensions and temporary estrangements; in spite of all these we will hold to the culture of catholic sentiments; we will go forth in our sympathies with every member of Christ's whole Church throughout the world, and unite in the prayer, 'Grace be

15

with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.'

"Such is the interesting story of one of those men of whom the wicked and mendacious time-server, South, speaks, when he says, 'God will not accept their hogspy worship;' he was one the renegade doctor describes as *all* a company of cobblers, tailors, draymen, drunkards, whoremongers, and broken tradesmen, &c., &c."

It is interesting now to attempt to realise the altogether different City of London from that which we know at this present, into which Mr. Binney came; and the altogether different religious life, as represented either by the Established Church or by the denomination of which he was a minister. Widely different was the City of London when he accepted the call to minister within its walls to the London of the present day. Its religious life has changed even more than its moral adornments and facilities. Few persons now could realise the old world round Fish Street Hill. Old London Bridge was standing. Where now we pass down the crowded but commodious King William Street and Cannon Street, we then were hurried along narrow, dirty lanes; the long, straight, broad ways of modern City architecture were unknown; the suburbs, as we know them, were then not in existence; and the merchant princes even of London, and the crowds of wealthy tradesmen, did not then, as now, flock out to

elegant villas and palaces some miles remote from the Exchange. Not an omnibus ran through any street; not a railway—not even the London and the Greenwich—alarmed the Conservatism of those days. But how do all

16

these statements respecting civic life affect the position of Mr. Binney? In many ways: London then had a large, important, thoughtful population residing within its limits; the mighty middle Class, from which Dissent is constantly invigorated, lived then within the walls of the City, or within its immediate neighbourhood: especially the young men—clerks, shopkeepers, and others—found their homes there. Thus Dissent in London had great power and influence: its chapels, indeed, up to that period, or to a period immediately before, were singular enough,. and would have found no place in any order of architecture; but the Independents of London formed a stirring and united confederacy, with a very distinct stamp and seal of the old Puritan, alike upon their forms, their faith, and their worship. Plain and unpretentious buildings as their temples were, within they nourished very much of the earnest piety, the thoughtful devotedness of the men who ages before had retreated into bye lanes, into cellars and warehouses, from the cruelty of prelatical persecution, and not less from the negative Arminianism and Erastian and latitudinarian offensiveness of the Establishment, which to them was the realisation of Lord Chatham's famous philippic against it, that it had "a Popish Liturgy, a Calvinistic creed, and an Arminian clergy." Mr. Binney referred to the altered state of London in his review of forty years' ministry, and if it should seem that in the foregoing remarks I have availed myself, without acknowledgment, of his review, I may say that Mr. Binney himself evidently borrowed from a lengthy appreciation, entitled "Thomas Binney," in the *Eclectic Review* for Feb ruary, 1861.

17

Church-of-Englandism, also, was an edifice with an amazingly different frontage, alike in the City and over the whole nation; Ritualism was a phase of the religious life utterly undreamed of; in Oxford, indeed, young men —like John Henry Newman, Frederick Faber, Philip Pusey. and John Keble—the eldest of the cluster—were ruminating and meditating the ere-long-to-be-published *Tracts for the Times*. The mild Evangelicism of the Low Church party was represented by Baptist Noel in London, and Charles Simeon in Cambridge; but it may in truth be said, that all spiritual life in the Church of England was "cast into a deep sleep, and none of the men of might had found their hands." It is no other than Dr. Southey, High Church writer, who sums up Ecclesiastical representatives beneath the generalisations of "Shy the any Churchman, and Sophist the true-Churchman, and Smooth the all-Churchman, and Sour the no-Churchman, and Savage the no-Kingman, and Stiff the High-Churchman, and Supple the moderate-Churchman, and Sneak the Low-Churchman." This is not a Dissenter's summary: Charles James Blomfield, most respectable of High Church Bishops, in the *old* sense, filled the thrones of London and Westminster; the services of most of the churches were dead and drawling; it is not too much to say that, in general, the preaching was merely contemptible; of course, there were exceptions, but they *were exceptions,* and very remarkable too. It was into this state of things the preacher of the Weigh House came, and to some of his, utterances may be traced that sense of shame which seized upon the Church! and which, for good or evil, produced a remarkable change.

2

18

CHAPTER III.

THE FAMOUS SENTENCE.

SO heartily has Mr. Binney been abused for his supposed vehemence against the Church of England, and the bitter virulence of his spirit, that it may surprise even some readers to know that he was never at any moment of his life, even with reference to the Church of England itself, a man committed to extremes. For many years he was perhaps the best abused man in England, and one sentence attributed to him, that "the Church of England damned more souls than she saved," created a most indignant and anathematical rustle of Anglican surplices and robes, and chattering of Episcopal teeth; the flutter of indignation was even like the cackle of barn-door fowls, or the mustering turbulence of a congregation of old birds in their rookery, from pulpits, prebendal stalls, and even the thrones of Bishops; at any rate, it did something towards making even Mr. Binney very famous. Among Nonconformists, it seemed to confer upon him a somewhat unenviable notoriety. And severe as the sentence unquestionably looks when standing or quoted by itself, it is really guarded by a respectful candour and kindness. Here it is:—"Truth cannot be injured by fair and full discussion, and by open and uncompromising

19

statements. I have no hesitation about saying that I am an enemy to the Establishment, and I do not see that a Churchman need hesitate to say that he is an enemy to Dissent: neither of us would mean *the persons* of Churchmen or Dissenters, nor the Episcopal or other portions of the universal Church; but the *principle* of the national religious Establishment, which we should respectively regard as deserving, universally, opposition or support. It is

with me, I confess, a matter of deep serious religious conviction, that *the Established Church is a great national evil;* that it is an obstacle to the progress of truth and godliness in the land; that *it destroys more souls than it saves;* and therefore its end is to be devoutly wished by every lover of God and man. Right or wrong, this is my belief."

Thus it must be noticed that the sentence, ill-omened or ill-conditioned as so many thought it, did not occur in any public address at all; but in an appendix to his published address on the laying of the foundation-stone of the new King's Weigh House Chapel. And again, we may remark upon the changed aspect of things around us now, as compared with the day when the sentence was uttered. However that may be, the preacher soon found himself in a surprising kettle of hot water; he was thrown upon his defence, and "What? and Who says it?" and its sequel, by *John Search,* both abundantly vindicated the too-idiomatic preacher. As descriptive of those times, the sentence might well be vindicated now; and the present writer once remarked to *John Search* himself, that "it was an unfortunate thing some of the chapters from the life of Charles James, of London, had not fallen in his way before the publication of the vindication." As referring to

20

Mr. Binney's sentence, it may not be out of place to mention some two or three instances illustrating the Church of Englandism, brought before us in Bishop Blomfield's knowledge, and in his Episcopal relations. We learn, then, from his life that of 10,261 incumbents, 5,840 were non-residents. The shortcomings of the clergy were an enormity and a scandal to all who wished well to the Church of England. A clergyman might be a non-resident, a sportsman, a farmer, neglectful of all study, a violent politician, a *bon-vivant,* or a courtier. The

Bishop's memory was full of anecdotes illustrating the sad condition of clerical relations. Intoxication was a characteristic vice. When Bishop of Chester, Blomfield on one occasion reproved a clergyman for drunkenness. He replied, "But, my Lord, I was never drunk on duty!" "On duty!" exclaimed the Bishop. "When is a clergyman not on duty?" "True," said the other; "I never thought of that!" On another occasion he was called upon to reprove a clergyman for great irregularities of conduct, which had been brought under the Bishop's notice by the parishioners of this worthy. He replied, "Your Lordship is a scholar, both classical and Scriptural; you therefore know the Cretans were liars, the Cappadodans were liars, and all my parishioners are liars too!" Calling upon a poor man in a village in his diocese, he found him ill and in bed, and inquired "if his clergyman came to see him often." The good Bishop was gratified to find that the vicar's visits were frequent, until another question or two led to the discovery that the visitations were not occasioned by anxious pastoral oversight, but by the fact that the hills behind the house formed a retreat

---

21

for a good many foxes, and that this was just the place for starting them. We read that the chaplain and sons in-law of Bishop Brownlow North examined candidate-for orders in a tent on the cricket-field, the chaplain being engaged as one of the players. The chaplain of Bishop Douglas usually examined for orders whilst shaving. Bishop Porteous was an amiable, and is usually regarded as a conscientious prelate; but when asked by a neighbouring clergyman to preach a charity sermon he replied, "I only give one in a year, and next year's is promised." Bishop Watson never resided in his diocese during an Episcopate of thirty-four years. As to the preaching, it was something wonderful. Blomfield relates how once at church at Bury St. Edmund's, the Marquis of Bristol had

given a number of scarlet cloaks to some poor old women and on this particular day, as they appeared and sat all together, in the splendour of their new attire, the preacher, desirous of glorifying his patron, announced his text, with a wave of his hand towards the poor old souls, "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"! This worthy was capable of these things. On another occasion the local authorities distributed a dole of potatoes to the poor of the parish. It seemed to the preacher to be an event susceptible of improvement; so he chose as his text Exodus xvi. 15—"And when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, It is manna!" and he warned his hearers to "beware of desiring or taking more than their share of the potatoes." Perhaps the reader will think these anecdotes are sufficiently representative of clerical life in that day, and that in the recollection they are but specimens of multitudes

---

22

more which might be produced from every district in England. They seem to present a sufficient vindication of *the Sentence*. Gladly, cheerfully, gratefully, it is admitted how entire a change has passed over the spirit of Church-of Englandism. Charge upon her what we may now, certainly indifference is not her crime in the year 1874. She is simply now, without reference to any particular party within her fold, the most active organisation for every kind of religious energy in our land; albeit she exercises her

> "Mature digestion
> With thrilling reviews of the surplice question."

As to Thomas Binney, he might say, at any time of his life, like John Bunyan, "I bind these lies and slanders to me as an ornament; and if I am reviled, God and

my conscience bear me witness, I rejoice in such reproach."

23

CHAPTER IV.

DISSENT, NOT SCHISM

The Sentence was a sort of trumpet-peal, perhaps startling Nonconformists and rousing Churchmen to look about them. Mr. Binney, however, soon found an occasion to stir himself to a close hand-to-hand fight with the theory and spirit of the Church of England hierarchy. Charles James little knew the texture of the spirit of the young man, his near neighbour in Church life and ecclesiastical activities. A book was published, "The Letters of L. S. E." It was a wicked and most venomous production; its folly, falsehood, and filthiness were all in proportion, and all measured out to the extent of its author's powers; it was, indeed, a most virulent attack upon the principles and practices of Nonconformists, and no doubt it would have been instantly borne by its innate obloquy, whither it has long since been borne, into oblivion; but this bad-hearted and miserable-minded book, which may well be described as the production of a "foul-mouthed *soi-disant* Dissenting fakir, or newspaper Shimei,"* was taken beneath the lawn of the Bishop's sleeves into the Cathedral Chair of St. Paul's, and some of its most obnoxious sentences received the Episcopal commendation,

* See *Nonconformist,* March 4, 1874. Art.: "Thomas Binney."

24

such as the following, for instance:—"Dissenters in dissenting and separating from the Church commit the heinous sin of schism, which is, in my opinion, a greater sin than that of drunkenness, and therefore a great deal more frequently spoken of in the Word of God." And

again: "I look upon schism, in fact, as tantamount to a renunciation of Christianity. What is it hut a renouncing of the Church of Christ, a renouncing of her ministers, and, through them, of Christ Himself?" Again: "They, by their schism, cut themselves off from the visible Church, and cannot therefore expect to be considered as Christians, but, according to the command of Christ, as heathens and publicans. In a Christian point of view, we have nothing to do with them, we must leave them entirely in the hands of God; they are without the pale of the visible Church of Christ; and we are to act in the spirit of what the Apostle says, 'What have I to do to judge them also that are without? Them that are without God judgeth.' The curse of God appears to me to rest heavily upon them'!! [Our readers will need to take a long breath after these precious gems of Ecclesiological and Biblical criticism.]

Principally in reply to this book and to the Bishop appeared Mr. Binney's well-known sermon, "Dissent, not Schism;" and certainly whatever amount of bitterness of expression may have entered into the speech of our author —and really bitterness we find none, though we do find idiomatic strength of expression—the Establishment had most industriously given him his occasion.

The Bishop's charge, and the commendations of the passages we have cited, were like a ringing gauntlet of

---

25

defiance flung down with an accompanying challenge of scorn. It, naturally enough, roused the spirit of the Nonconformists; it roused the spirit of Churchmen even; Dr. Lushington addressed a pamphlet to the Bishop, entitled. "A Remonstrance addressed to the Lord Bishop of London, on the Sanction given in his late Charge to the Clergy of that Diocese to the Calumnies against the Dissenters, contained in certain Letters signed 'L. S. E.' By Charles Lushington, Esquire." The Congregational

Board of London called on Mr. Binney to be the vindicator of Dissent from the insignificant charges of the anonymous letter writer, accepted, endorsed, and made dangerous by the Bishop. Such was the occasion of that which cannot be called less than a great oration; it was lengthy. It was delivered on Tuesday morning, December 12th,. 1834, in the Poultry Chapel. The large chapel was crowded. The author of the *Metropolitan Pulpit* says: "I know of no man who can make a more masterly display or more brilliant exhibition than Mr. Binney. I was present in the Poultry Chapel when he preached his celebrated sermon, 'Dissent, not Schism,' and I must say that an abler discourse, or one more effectively delivered, I have never heard; his delivery produced as great an impression as that produced by Dr. Chalmers's preaching; it was with difficulty that the audience could refrain from audibly applauding its more brilliant passages." All that was in him seemed to rise equal to the occasion. Mr. Binney was not a scholar, but he brought Greek enough to confute the narrow ecclesiastical theory from the New Testament; but when shaking him self free from these preliminary necessities of the argu-

---

26

ment, he leaped into the arena of logic, a logic all on fire, and impassioned—even in reading, it seems irresistible and overwhelming. Of course it was no sermon, bore no resemblance to a sermon; it was a great human utterance, in which every principle dear to the individual Christian was involved; and those who listened might have seen, as those who read may see, that its line of argument was not aggressive but defensive. His purpose was well summed up when he said, in what may be called

THE DISSENTER'S GOLDEN RULE,

"Let us watch over ourselves, and guard against every circumstance that may diminish candour, pervert the judgme;nt, or poison the affections. *As Christians, let us war*

with what separates man from God; as Dissenters, with what separates Christian from Christian. Let us seek the nearer approximation of church to church, and the ultimate recognition and union of all. Let each of us so enter into the spirit of our faith, and so feel the propriety and understand the reasons of our ecclesiastical position, as to be able to say, I am a Dissenter because I am a Catholic; I am a Separatist because I cannot be Schismatical; I stand apart from some because I love all; I oppose Establishments because I am not a Sectarian; I think little of uniformity because I long for union; I care not about subordinate differences with my brother, for '*Christ* has received him,' and so will I. Thus cultivating the spirit of universal love, 'I am hastening, I hope, that day when the world itself shall become the Church, and preparing, I trust, for that world in which the Church shall be ONE—one in faith, in feeling, and in worship, in a higher sense

---

27

than can be witnessed here; while here, however, so far as the *spirit* and *expression* are concerned. I am longing to witness and realise some approach to what I anticipate hereafter, anticipate in that region where, amid the lustre and the loveliness of heaven, the jars and the jealousies of earth shall have passed away."

The piece was not wanting, of course, in satire, for which the opportunity gave abundant occasion in the singular charge that all churches, so called, were pretty sure to be infallibly damned if unrelated to Episcopal authority; that, as the preacher said, "all availed nothing; the indications of piety and the appearances of zeal and of success are all false, nugatory, and deceptive, for *the men by rejecting bishops have rejected Christ!*" This was not going too far, for some of the writers to whom Mr. Binney referred, speaking of Dissenters, had said, "the offences they commit are spiritual, and the punishments eternal! the offence is resistance to the love, the wisdom, and the

power of God, and the punishment is the wrath of God!" It is not to be doubted, perhaps, that such are the sentiments still of large numbers of the Anglican, as well as of the Romish hierarchy; but while they were in those days loudly brayed forth, they are now uttered with bated breath. The following is a nervous passage, refuting

THE EXTRAVAGANCE OF HIGH ANGLICANISM.

"In the first place, their very extravagance refutes them. There is something in every bosom in which Christian charity is not dead; something more rapid than reasoning, the logic of the heart, often sounder and safer than that of the understanding, which irresistibly and

---

28

peremptorily rejects such conclusions. It is impossible not to suspect that there must surely be a mistake somew here in the reasoning that terminates in such tremendous results, and that there must be something dreadfully wrong about the soul of that man who can survey them, not only without anguish, but with apparent satisfaction. What a scene of darkness and devastation do these sentiments discover! The whole kingdom, if not indeed the whole Christian world, withering under the blast and ban of the Almighty, and exposed to His 'eternal' displeasure and 'wrath,' except a favoured flock, which enjoys at once health and protection, not from any obvious superiority in the richness of its pasture or the whiteness of its wool, but because ('hear it, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth!')—*because of the form of the fold in which it happens to be gathered!* No hope of salvation, or very little, a mere faint, stray, solitary beam from the 'uncovenanted mercy,' for all who reject the authority of diocesan bishops, who *enjoy* not the services of one man episcopally ordained, and the 'presence and persistency' of another episcopally consecrated, the latter being the 'direct successor,' and the 'express image' of an apostle, on whose brow, while sense sees nothing but a humble imitation of a cloven

tongue, faith, 'the evidence of things not seen,' penetrating to what is invisible, beholds the lambent circle of glory, the miraculous symbol of the descended Spirit! I do not hesitate to assert that on such principles Christianity, regarded as a system intended to be universal, may be pronounced a failure, an entire and impotent failure, for, considering the nature of mind in *all* men, and the present and probable condition of opinion in the best, those who

---

29

are not only themselves the 'excellent of the earth,' but who are the most zealous and active in filling it with their likeness, it is impossible to conceive that this arrogant episcopacy will ever become the religion of the world."

This last expresses very much the pith and sting of the famous *sentence* to which we have already referred. The vexed Churchmen translated it in one sense. Mr. Binney, however he might have had a covert look that way, intended it in another, as asserting, what is assuredly on every hand undoubted, that *the theory of High Anglicanism hands over to God's wrath and to everlasting damnation all who have not received its Sacraments!*

Such were the circumstances which introduced Mr. Binney into what may be, perhaps, rather spoken of as, in general, a field rather of great notoriety than fame; his fame was no doubt aided by his work as a pamphleteer and a polemic, but it arose at length from higher and far more substantial merits. We must not, however, forget that he was, perhaps, the first pamphleteer of his day; in truth, he came into London at a time when the literature of the pamphlet was fast passing away—so many newspapers, and such capacious ones; so large an amount of leader writing, Doth in the daily and in the weekly press. have quite stripped from the pamphlet its old significance and importance. He plied the pamphlet well; he seemed always, to almost the latest period of his life, well disposed for this kind of warlike activity; "he was a man of war

from his youth." Church-of-Englandism in that day gave the occasion; he early came to be recognised as a sort of leader of Nonconformity. He published a letter to Baptist Noel, in reply to two letters from gentlemen, one of whom

---

30

charged him with going too far, and the other with not going far enough; and this illustrates his position. Church dignitaries at that time were, from the circumstances of the moment, especially and extravagantly insolent, the more so as it was only two or three years before, when he came to London, that Nonconformists had received any recognition, it may almost be said any toleration, from the law of the land. He, at a most critical moment in the history of Nonconformity, was placed upon a prominent and elevated platform, from whence he was able to exercise an influence such as no other man throughout his denomination could have been found to exercise. He, from the centre of the kingdom, was able to reply in language of which even the *British Critic* (the High Church organ) said: "Certainly he is not polite; he does not mince matters; but there are many things for which we like him. We like him for the vigorous, idiomatic English of his style; we like him for his downrightness; we like him for the manly and straightforward determination with which he deals his blows. *He* does not keep us in doubt or suspense." It is true, he not only served his Church by standing in the attitude of defence, and occasionally even venturing upon sorties of aggression into the camp of the Establishment, but during these first years of his public life, this gave him especially his prominence and his power.

As to the Episcopal Establishment of England, we must consciously distinguish between this and the Episcopal Church, which is not a political hierarchy at all, but the congregation, more or less visible, of just so many faithful, and holy, and spiritually-minded men and women as

31

are in communion with it, finding within its enclosure their best spiritual food, and admitted not by the hand of —the ordaining or confirming Bishop, but by the Spirit of the living God and by fellowship with the great Head of the Church. In contra-distinction to this, then, *the Establishment*—the Political and Hierarchical Establishment of the country—is a very nondescript animal; it has plenty of "muscular Christianity" at its command; it can deal very hard blows; it has talons, or claws, with which it can occasionally tear and rend, even now; but the marvel of the creature is, that it has a skin neither pachydermatous nor even healthily epidermatous; wonderful that a creature so constituted as to have no conscience skin within it, capable of any feeling, should have a mucous membrane upon it, covering over every part, so singularly sensitive and tender. The Establishment and its ministrations (we draw the distinction between these and the ministers of the truth as it is in Jesus within its walls) are remarkably able to inflict pain on others to any extent; they would trail to prison still very cheerfully; they would still fine and confiscate; they would still excommunicate from the Lord's table; they would deny a body in the churchyard burial, reckless of violating the feelings of survivors and friends; and it must be admitted, that the ministers of the Establishment gave to Mr. Binney plenty of occasion for any amount of severity in which he could indulge towards them.

And then, in addition to this, if the Anglican clergy found in Nonconformity some things very much exposed to their satiric touch, the keen eye of Mr. Binney detected,

32

and exposed with quite sufficient satire, the curious relations which entered into the singular combination called

the Church of England: the following quotation from the two letters of *Fiat Justitia,* has often been admired; and, indeed, is worthy of Swift:—

REFLECTIONS ON A LUMP OF ICE.

"The reader may sometimes have observed in a lump of ice, feathers, bits of straw, pieces of earth, and fragments of crockery, all bound together, and kept together in one united mass, by a power distinct from that of natural affinity or attraction between the substances themselves. This (let him imagine other intrinsically valuable substances to be there, and the figure will be complete)—this is no bad emblem of the *kind* of union that exists in the Church, and the kind of freedom it enjoys from parties and heresies. Even when mechanically ONE, you can see something of the heterogeneous character of the substances that form the 'united mass;' but when the sun dissolves the force that unites them, the impossibility of their natural cohesion is evinced. So in the Establishment. There is much *now* to show to those who will either observe or reflect, what *that* is, whose oneness is so lauded; but, if anything were to dissolve the *force* by which its discordant parts are held in adhesion, it would then be seen of what contending materials it is composed, and how 'contrary the one to the other' are many of those 'ministers of Christ,' and 'undoubted successors of the apostles,' at whose feet the writer now quoted sits so delightedly."

Yet, upon many things in the Church of England it is

33

quite evident Thomas Binney looked with a loving eye. Dissent, he says, he regards as an evil. Sorrowing that he is unable to unite in the ministrations of its services; to Episcopacy he has not much objection, the strength and vehemence of his Congregationalism have never been on that side; neither has he been a vehement dissenter from liturgic services and forms; but he has maintained

a decided hostility to the Rubric, and to the Prayer Book; not, indeed, to the greater portion of the spirit or theology of the last, but to the slavery of its formulary, and to the too-frequently Popish twang of its absolutions and comminations—its confirmations and baptismal regenerations. Hence, he has kept a watchful eye upon all the movements within the Establishment in his day, just holding them up to the light, and surrounding them with that illustrative commentary calculated to show the utter absurdity of a Christian religion of the New Testament, expounded and defined by lawyers; and, hence, in the person of John Search, he indignantly explains, referring to the great Gorham case;—

WHAT JOHN SEARCH SAID.

"A whole world-full of modern men, with the thoughts to think and the work to do belonging to their age, have been obliged to listen for weeks and months to the jargon of the schools, to metaphysical distinctions and theological niceties that *they* can only regard as important who draw the pabulum of their internal life from the past-*man's* past, not God's—the times of councils and popes and priests, who suspended eternity on whatever attached importance to themselves! Why, who cares what this

3

34

council, or that, or the other, thought or determined? What is it to us, who have got something else to think about and do, in this nineteenth century of the Christian redemption (and society nothing like redeemed yet), than to hear what was thought, hundreds of years ago, on matters, it may be, which nobody believes, or about which we can judge better ourselves than any old ecclesiastical conclave could judge for us."

Severity and satire are the only weapons that can ~e employed upon some moral skins. And ministers of the

Establishment have shown the way to wield the thong of religious satire; listen to the hootings of "The Owlet of Owlston Hedge," and its pleasant companion, "The Curate of Cumberworth, and the Vicar of Roost." If clergymen treat so smartly the sins of their Church, surely they can scarcely be surprised if they find that the men whom they treat with indignity for dissenting from their communion, employ the same weapon. Moreover, Mr. Cunningham, of Harrow, a highly respectable clergyman. had employed the same weapon in his for some time famous, but now forgotten, "Legend of the Velvet Cushion." Very singular is the position of Church-of-Englandism, and it needs to be expounded to Englishmen —it holds together the most perplexing and startling incongruities; the *Saturday Review* and the *Record* are both organs of the Church of England; the authors of "The Tracts for the Times," and "The Oxford Essays," alike minister from the altars of the Church of England—one thing holds all together; take that away, and everything tumbles to pieces—that one thing is not the authority of the bishop—not the Prayer Book, for that is insufficient—

35

not the Word of God, and the rule of salvation, *they* are out of the question—it is just a bit of red tape.

Mr. Binney is to be characterised rather as a religious Nonconformist than as a political Dissenter; he never took part in any political agitation; he seldom appeared on the platforms of any public meetings, although he very occasionally stood forward to protest against some great Church and State outrage; and many will remember the happy humour of his speech on the reception of Mr. Shore after his liberation from prison, in which he had been confined by the Bishop of Exeter; his parody of Dr. Watts' well-known verse was just the thing for such a meeting, and was received with deafening shouts of cheers and laughter:—

"The men that keep Thy law with care,
And meditate Thy word,
Grow wiser than their *Bishops* are,
And better know the Lord!"

Some circumstances must have burnt with moral caustic into his feelings the sense of the monstrous iniquity and wrong which canonical and rubric law will assist a clergyman in perpetrating. He says—and the instances may now be regarded as even biographical, and they constitute

A PRETTY PAIR OF CLERICAL INSULTS—

"Two facts came under my notice. A clergyman in London refused to bury a, child which I had baptized. The parents wished it to sleep in a grave they had in the churchyard; and I therefore went to the clergyman to request him to perform the service. He said, 'he could not do it conscientiously; he dared not to violate his convic-

36

tion; he did not regard the child as baptized according to the meaning of the Church.' 'But you know,' I said, 'that it has very recently been decided in the Court of Arches that lay baptism is valid, and that you have no legal ground of refusal.' 'I know the decision, but I cannot accept it; I must decline.' 'You are aware that the consequences of refusal may be very serious.' 'Yes, I know that; God, I hope, will support me, but I must obey my conscience.' 'Well, my dear sir,' I said, 'God forbid that we should do anything to hurt any man's conscience. I will bury the child myself, for I can do it in a way which will entail no evil consequences on either of us.' The poor man seemed greatly relieved. I could not go into the churchyard to bury the child, because to have opened my mouth on consecrated ground would have exposed me to a prosecution; but I went *to the outside of the*

rails, near to which the poor little innocent's grave happened to be. The weeping friends stood round it. I prayed and spoke, addressing words of comfort to the bereaved parents; and then I explained to the people who had gathered about, the reason of the singular spectacle that had attracted them. I thus saved the clergyman's conscience, which compelled him to resist the law; but I certainly thought that either such laws should not exist, or that such men should not remain under them. The other case was worse than the foregoing. A friend of mine, who had been a most useful member in the town where he had resided some thirty years, died. He had a vault, his own property, in the churchyard, in which lay two of his children. He, it happened, had been baptized in the Church of England. The clergyman. however, re-

37

fused to bury him on the ground that he had been a schismatical Dissenting teacher; for, though baptized in the Church, and never formally excommunicated, he had, by being a Dissenting teacher, *ipso facto* canonically excommunicated himself. Nothing could move the man. The family had not the means of going to law; nor would they have gone if they had. There was no general cemetery in the place, or my friend's family-vault would not have been in the churchyard, nor would a stranger have been required to bury him. A grave was dug in the chapel in which he had preached—in front of the pulpit —and there we laid him."

Readers will, no doubt, remember that this last instance was that of the beloved and lamented Rev. Thomas Guyer, of Ryde, in the Isle of Wight; and it was the occasion of Mr. Binney's sermon—"*The soul of the saint received into glory, the body denied a grave.*"

In the light of great civil and social wrongs like these—and such cases might easily be multiplied—what a mockery

it is to talk of the bitterness of Dissenters! surely, indeed, such instances abundantly justified the ill-favoured *sentence;* a man insults your friend's corpse, and spits upon his coffin, and then complains that there is too much point in your syntax—very good, indeed! So there can be no cause for wonder at the solemn soliloquy with which, in his "Conscientious Clerical Nonconformity," Mr. Binney sums up his determination neither to subscribe nor to take orders.

THE DILEMMAS OF A CONSCIENCE.

"What would this demand—to what would it expose me?

38

I must sophisticate my understanding. I must fetter my intellect. I must shut my eyes and close my ears to much that at present seems distinct and loud. I must call things by their *wrong* names, and that, too, where mistake may be infinitely hazardous. I must say to God, in an act of worship, what I should repudiate to man in confidential conversation. Acts like these would be pregnant with painful and punitive consequences. I should lose, I fear, the love of truth, or the power of pursuing, acknowledging, maintaining it. I should cease, perhaps, to be affected by evidence; plain words might come to be lost upon me; if I got over some that are lying here, I seem to feel that I could get over anything; that there would be no language I could not pervert, parry, resist, or explain away. With my views, the act of subscription would either indicate the death within me of the moral man, or it would inflict such a wound that he would soon die—die, I mean, *so far* as those things are concerned which must be lost sight of to subscribe at all, and of those which are to be done and said after subscribing; or, if he lived, and continued to live, I should be daily obliged to be doing something, which would lacerate and pain him, and pierce him to the soul. The very services of religion would be sources of anguish.

Prayer itself would consist, at times, of words which I feel I can never approve, and which, ever as I uttered them, would renew my misgivings, and disturb my peace. *My* nature, in its highest essence, would be injured. My moral sense would be sacrificed or seduced. I CANNOT DO IT. I will not. This, too, would be '*great wickedness and sin against God*.' It would be sin against myself.

39

I never will consent to pay such a price for the advantages which clerical conformity can confer. I see them all. I feel their attraction. Principle as to some, preference as to others, taste, habit, association as to most, strongly induce and impel me towards them. I could wish them mine. I should be glad to secure them. I would give for them anything consistent with honour. *It should not be heroism to refuse that.* I determine to refuse it. To all the inducements to enter the establishment, I oppose one thing, and but one. With my predilections, I have little else; but *with my opinions,* I ought to have *that—a living conscience.* By God's help I will strive to retain it. It shall be kept by me, and kept alive. It and I must part company, if I offend it by deliberately doing what is wrong. God of my strength, preserve me from this; '*let Thy grace be sufficient for me,*' '*keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sin,.*' with the light which Thou, I trust, hast poured into my soul, and the love with which Thou hast replenished my heart, I dare not permit myself to sanction and to say, what I feel I must, if I consent to use these forms and offices. '*A good conscience*' is to be found only in withholding that consent. I am determined to withhold it. I go nowhere unless conscience can go with me. I am satisfied to remain wherever it remains. This is my feeling; and *on account of this*—and *of this only*—I HERE RESOLVE TO REFUSE ORDERS."

This is great; this is noble. And here it is to be said that this—which, at the time in which it was spoken, revealed a still more magnificent attitude of spirit than

40

it might do now, when so many changes have been effected—*this* is Thomas Binney's great claim upon our most affectionate homage. The moral intrepidity with which he took his stand, and indignantly refused to palter and chaffer about *doctrines of reserve,* and those dreadful expedients by which men are able to put their hands to items and articles in which they have no belief.

41

CHAPTER V.

THOMAS BINNEY AS A PREACHER.

WHATEVER were the services he rendered to the cause of religious liberty and Congregational Nonconformity, they are, however, far transcended by his exercises in the pulpit; perhaps, at this moment, the active intelligences amongst us are scarcely able to realise the power he manifested in his best days. He was, in his time, the most splendid illustration of the Oratory of Independency. The oratory of Independency proper is not the oratory of Methodism; it is not the oratory of average Church-of-Englandism; of course, also, it is not the oratory of Romanism. It has always been supposed to minister to thought, and to be rather anxious to build up character than to excite surface emotions. It is the history of free speech, and the Independent minister, in a peculiar manner, has illustrated the freedom and vitality of thought and expression, and, compared with the essential servility of other orders, it is very interesting to notice that while independence withers, decays, and dies, it is in the independence of the ministry that the sensitive form of freedom rises, and stands again upon her feet; but this, of course, must be in the proportion in which the minister is independent of the power of mere ecclesiasticism.

42

Richard Watson amongst the Wesleyans, and Barrow and South in the Church of England, are very representative of the Congregational pulpit, but they were exceptions from the entire communions to which they belong. Thomas Binney had much of the physical resemblance to Richard Watson—he had the same castellated, majestic head; the same tall, thin frame *young* Binney brought with him to London; the architecture of their minds was

similar; boldly speculative, and yet eminently practical, and they both were able to invest their thoughts in a calm, majestic, impressive eloquence, both of diction and manner.

It may be confessed that, at the time of Mr. Binney's appearance in London, the oratory of Independency was at rather a low level, even lower than it is at present. There were not wanting eminent names in the pulpit of the metropolis, but none of them representing any singularity of force or genius. James Sherman and Dr. Campbell entered London soon after Mr. Binney. Dr. Collyer was at Peckham, and Andrew Reed at Wycliffe Chapel; Joseph Fletcher was at Stepney, George Clayton at Walworth, and John Clayton at the Poultry. Caleb Morris was in Fetter Lane. Dr. Pye Smith and Dr. Bennett are not to be spoken of as preachers in the sense of men who could obtain by their speech purchase over mind, character, and opinion. They were large, careful, thoughtful scholars. The only great orator of Independency in London was John Burnet; and certainly, the splendour of his senatorial eloquence, which ruled thousands in any meeting he addressed, by his wit, humour, and sustained dignity of speech, seemed quite to desert him

43

when he entered the pulpit; although, then, he was always able and eloquent. The greatest preacher of Independency in London was James Stratten; but calm, sharply incisive in manner, rich in natural pictorial description, he did not plough up deep furrows, but he was a genuine representative of the best Puritan eloquence of the old school.

The chief representative of the oratory of Independency in England was James Parsons; but great and pre-eminent as was not only his fame, but his excellence also, in his own line of eloquence, *his* is not what we mean by the oratory of Independency; it bears no resemblance to that of Watts, Bates, Charnock, or Howe; and I very well

remember how, with a certain tone of admiration and hope, his first exploits were spoken of by the ministers I knew; if with much hope, still with some doubt as to how far such a pulpit method was in harmony with the traditional oratory of Independency. The climaxes of James Parsons, and the floral wreaths and chaplets of Bengo Collyer, were both invasions of an order of things very different. Dr. Collyer, indeed, seemed so much in the way of trope and imagery that he was compelled to vindicate himself for his practice in this particular by some papers in the *Evangelical Magazine* between fifty and sixty years since.

Thomas Binney and James Parsons sustained their places, in their respective paths, to the close; one survives, revered amongst us still. I stayed, a few years since, at the house of the venerated Thomas Rees, of Llanelly, the week after they had both been staying in the same house together for the opening of the new English chapel in that town. So different as had been their experiences

---

44

and their work, it was very beautiful to hear of the entire abandonment and playfulness of the two old men with each other. Thomas Binney always spoke to James Parsons as "*Now, York!*" and James Parsons to Thomas Binney as always, "*Now then, Weigh House!*" and, altogether, I remember the impression produced upon my mind by Thomas Rees's relation—was a very beautiful idea of the child-like spirit of the two distinguished old men.

The oratory of Independency proper has always realised an amplitude of thought and knowledge; an indisposition to call, in the masses and the multitudes; a very serious and determined pressure upon men as thoughtful, intelligent, responsible beings. I believe, from the very first, Mr. Binney was hailed as a lineal descendant from the grand old Puritan and Nonconformist apostles; he had sown

all his wild oats at Bedford and Newport, and from the first in London he was looked upon as a trusted man; his pulpit became the scene of a life of thought, and he brought along with this such a freshness, such a vivid newness, that at the touch of his eloquence the old things seemed to pass away, but only to present themselves, instead of dry, formal statements, in aspects of living power. Throughout his preaching, from first to last, he used very little colour, but his words, especially by the effect of his *accent* of voice *and hand,* had, in listening to him, all the effects of colour—all and more. A landscape is full of colour, but one never notices it; the colour of the field, the rock, the wood—it is a harmony, a perfect harmony. I believe he was the greatest master of *accent* in speech in our day. I do sometimes greatly wonder that

---

45

the greatest men in the pulpit are singularly deficient in this, which ought to be the orator's consummation and crown; one or two, I remember, who have it, but almost all I could mention, or you would think of, run their words along like engines on a line of rail. It is only accent which has entrance into soul—innermost soul—arid it is that faculty of the orator in which he most nearly approaches to the gifted singer. Hence comes the victory of tears, the orator's greatest victory. "I reckon," said St. Augustine, "I have done nothing until I have seen the people weep." No man more disclaimed the artifices of speech than Thomas Binney, artifices of ornament and artifices of emotion; but I have seen, and many will remember to have seen, again and again, the large Weigh House congregation bathed in tears. His printed sermons do not seem to reveal this; even those very sermons, if they were printed, perhaps, would not reveal this, excepting to those who are able to recollect the preacher's manner of pronunciation and action. He had a singular power of *whispering* in the pulpit, but the

whisper made itself heard over the whole average audience. It was passion informing accent, and producing the effect of what we call colour. In delineations of character he could throw in a most tender effect; his heart was full of tender, emotional insight, and so he often drew out the heart of a character; a pitying tenderness for the lost and for the sorrowful. Something like this we see in the following for poor Drusilla:—

PAUL BEFORE DRUSILLA AND FELIX.

"Well, he so reasoned then. What was the effect on

46

Drusilla? Nothing! Of the effect on her nothing is said. There is something fearful in that silence. Poor Drusilla! She was a beautiful creature, and only eighteen. She was sitting there, lovely and splendidly beautiful, but —immoral! She had no business there. She had left her husband. She had been seduced by Felix; she had violated the covenant of her God; had departed from loyalty and duty, and lived in infidelity and adultery. And, when a woman is lost, she becomes hardened, hopeless; and society, I fear, has much to answer for, in the way that society treats its erring daughters and its erring sisters. There is no door of return, no place of hope. You make them hopeless, and, by making them hopeless, you make them hardened. Hence, they become utterly un impressible, because they feel there is no return, no restoration. And, perhaps, there might have been something of this feeling here, though she was young. Drusilla heard the argument, but was calm, unaffected. But '*Felix trembled*.' *He* trembled; he might have been saved; but he procrastinated, and was lost. Yes, he was a wicked man. He had a bad conscience—a black and terrible memory. As I told you, he was the son of a slave. He was a freed man, and rose up to the elevation he occupied, not by the best and justest means. He was assisted very much by one of the priests; and the priest

thought, in his simplicity, that, as he had been of service to Felix, he might take the liberty of expostulating with him about his injustices and his vices. He did so; and Felix hired a robber to murder the priest, and then he cheated the robber of what he had bargained to give him. He was cruel, tyrannical, and licentious, and the words of

---

47

Paul troubled his conscience; and he, a judge, a Roman magistrate, sitting upon a throne, trembled before the prisoner, before the messenger of truth. Oh! had he encouraged that feeling! But, perhaps, he saw the eye of Drusilla upon him, and on her countenance something like a sneer at his weakness—a tear trembling in his eye. To hide his emotion, he was glad to find an excuse for getting rid of Paul. It was not his hatred of sin, or a deep spiritual or moral perception, that moved him, but a fear, a terror of the consequences of his sin; and so, to get temporary ease, he said, 'Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season I will call for thee!' Could any time be more convenient than this? Had not the man made his arrangements, and appointed the hour to meet the Apostle? Could any time be more convenient than that particular time? 'Go thy way'—anything to get rid of an uneasy conscience—'and when I have a convenient season I will call for thee!'"

Or take the following, as an illustration of his passionate love of children, and a kind of expression of his heard from his pulpit; indeed, involving a favourite theory of his, and one on which he more than once spoke to me as presenting a soothing view of life:—

THE DEATHS OF LITTLE CHILDREN.

"I am fond of children. I think them the poetry of the world,—the fresh flowers of our hearths and homes:—little conjurors, with their 'natural magic,' evoking by

their spells what delights and enriches all ranks, and equalises the different classes of society. Often as they

48

bring with them anxieties and cares, and live to occasion sorrow and grief, we should get on very badly without them. Only think—if there were never anything anywhere to be seen, but great, grown-up men and women! How we should long for the sight of a little child! Every infant comes into the world like a delegated prophet, the harbinger and herald of good tidings, whose office it is 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and to draw 'the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.' A child softens and purifies the heart, warming and melting it by its gentle presence; it enriches the soul by new feelings, and awakens within it what is favourable to virtue. It is a beam of light, a fountain of love, a teacher whose lessons few can resist, Infants recall us from much that engenders and encourages selfishness, and freezes the affections roughens the manners, indurates the heart:—they brighten the home, deepen love, invigorate exertion, infuse courage. and vivify and sustain the charities of life. It would be a terrible world, I do think, if were not embellished by little children; but—it would be a far more terrible one *if little children did not die!* Many, I dare say, would be shocked by this assertion, It may be true, however, nevertheless."

Sentiments related to family emotions and circles; sentiments which were not merely sentiments; utterances which, although they belonged to what some would call the sentimental side of life, instantly, and vividly related themselves to strong realising experience of many hearers in any congregation. The following seems tender, while it speaks to exactly the opposite impression of the last quo-

49

tation; it is from the funeral sermon for his predecessor the venerable John Clayton (senior).

THE AGED.

"The very aged man stands alone. He outlives his friends, and, what is worse, he outlives the capacity of forming new attachments. The fact is, that second childhood is very much like the first. The child is interesting, but to a very few; those immediately connected with it, that can bear with its petulance and dependence, and on whom it does depend. In the first childhood there is this little circle, to which, and to which only, the child is interesting, and the world is stretching before it; it has not entered the world, and the world knows it not; and if it dies, and is buried, there are just surrounding its grave the few that knew and are interested in it. And in second childhood, when the man hath lived very long, the world is behind him—gone dead—and a new generation hath sprung up that knoweth him not. And again he is dependent, and he is surrounded and confined just in a little circle of those immediately about him. And, though in the funeral, for instance, of our departed friend, there were several that came and gathered round his grave, and it was beautiful to see the hearts that were beating, and the tears that were falling there; yet it was nothing to what it would have been if he had been cut down in the pride and splendour of his days. Thus it is, that man comes at the one end of life to be limited very much as he was when he entered it at the other. Oh! the aged, they cannot very well sympathise with new hearts and new persons, new modes of thought and

50

feeling. And I often think how different it is with God—the eternal and ever-living God! Generation after generation cometh, and He yearneth not for ancient friendships. He hath His fresh and young affection for every generation as it comes—an affection as fresh as at the beginning; and every generation may come to Him, and look up to Him, with the same cordiality and the same confidence as the first."

I have myself been so unconsciously impressed, from my earliest years of mental consciousness, by what to me seemed the majesty of Mr. Binney's eloquence, that I not only greatly demur, I apprehend in common with many others, to the verdict of the *Times,*★ that he was" very seldom eloquent," but, in addition to presenting the readers of this volume with some passages which I think will place his relation to this department of what the ancients considered as a branch of the fine arts in an unquestioned light, I would a little inquire into the nature of that eloquence of which I believe he was a very distinguished master. It must be admitted, I think, that his eloquence did not "*blaze;*"—I use the term because David Hume, in his charming essay on the Eloquence of the Ancients, has made so much of this as an attribute of their eloquence in contradistinction to our own. In fact, of such eloquence I could almost believe we have seen the last. I fancy that Cicero would now be intolerable, and Demosthenes would be sustained chiefly by his power of rough—I will even say coarse—invective. I

★ See *Times* newspaper, Feb. 25th, 1874; art.: Rev. Dr. Thomas Binney.

51

incline to think that the only instance, or almost the only instance, into which Mr. Binney's eloquence "blazed," as

David Hume would say, was in the oration, "Dissent, not Schism; "and in that we may be quite certain that the ancients would have talked after altogether another fashion. Mr. Hume cites one or two instances. Demosthenes, when he breaks out, "No, my fellow citizens; no, you have not erred; I swear by the spirits of those heroes who fought for the same cause on the plains of Marathon and Platrea!" And then Mr. Hume says, "Who could now endure such a bold poetical figure as that which Cicero employs, after describing in the most tragical terms, the crucifixion of a Roman citizen, 'Should I paint the horrors of the scene, not to Roman citizens, not to the allies of our State, not to those who have ever heard of the Roman name, not even to men, but to brute creatures; or, to go farther, should I lift up my voice in the most desolate solitude to the rocks and mountains, yet should I surely see those rude and inanimate parts of nature moved with horror and indignation at the recital of so enormous an action!' With what a blaze of eloquence," says Mr. Hume, "must such a sentence be surrounded to give it grace, or cause it to make any impression on the hearers!" Yet Mr. Hume evidently admires this. Cold sceptic as he was, he seems to regret the loss of it, and remarks upon the torrent of eloquence which must have concealed beneath its violent passion the artifices by which all was effected, and is led to inquire, "Does any man pretend to have more good sense than Julius Cæsar? Yet that haughty conqueror, we know, was so subdued by Cicero's eloquence, that he was in a manner constrained to

52

change his settled purpose and resolution, and to absolve a criminal whom, before that orator pleaded, he was determined to condemn." Of that rush of feeling, that torrent, that cataract of words, mirroring as it rushed

along tropes and images, with a corresponding action exhibiting the extraordinary inflammatory passions boiling beneath, or *seeming* to do so, Mr. Binney's eloquence was entirely innocent. I incline exceedingly to think that the world has outgrown its Ciceros and Demosthenes, and that Mr. Binney, amongst his other good works, was the foremost man in the pulpit of England who inaugurated an altogether new style of eloquence—the eloquence of the *real* and the *true,* the sublimity of natural pathos, and the majesty of simplicity. Hence, although his eloquence did not "blaze," it shone; and the luminous sunshine which gilds and lights up the landscape, and gives vitality to wood and water, to the garden and the grove, is, I think, more to be prized than the garishness of that glaring beam which rather obscures the vision, and is the property of the morning redness when mists are abroad, before the master of the day has asserted the luminous effulgence of the simple and unobstructed light. Of such oratory it is not too much to say that it is studious, rather of action than of argument; it possesses more words than sentiments; more sentiments than passion; more passion than thoughts; and that it is, in a word, as Hamlet would say, "cavaire to the multitude." I would not be unjust. I suppose there are great names which, with honesty and conscience, seem to have used vehement passions; but this can only be in certain most aggrandising moments of

---

53

national history. Robert Hall's eloquence unquestionably sometimes "blazed," but perhaps only in such great national pieces as the "Thoughts Suitable to the Present Crisis." I suppose of the orators who "blazed," perhaps Thomas Chalmers may be cited as a very conspicuous instance; or Robert McAll, who breathed an eloquence, dazzling and delightful, a combination of words so radiant and so rich, that one wonders by what happy magic they

fell together in their sweet proportions of passion and sublimity. It is very remarkable that Edmund Burke whose eloquence is such that it seems most to resemble the old fiery and splendid vehemence of the ancients, notoriously produced very different effects in his ordinary speaking, and is satirised as one who—

> "Too deep for his hearers, still went on refining,
> And thought of convincing while they thought of dining."

But Thomas Binney came into the world of London exactly at the time when the disenchanting process was going on, and apostrophe, and prosopopœia, and trope, and metaphor, and rigmarole were losing their sway over the human mind; and men were beginning to think, and demanded justice and nature, even in their fancies and imagination. Ah! would it be possible to lift even common sense, the sense of the ordinary multitude, into a region where it would be smitten with wonder and admiration;—made to love, and adore, and believe, and weep? This, then, was the characteristic of Mr. Binney's eloquence. He really did this difficult thing. Courting no extravagant passions, he moved deep feelings; condescending to no rhetorical arts, he caused pictures to start

54

and pass before the eye; indulging in no elocutionary movements, he became a great dramatist; confessing obligations to no recognised laws of ornamental speech. he hung round his public addresses charms which, at a certain period of his speech, were captivatingly sweet and overwhelmingly terrible. A writer in the *English Independent* says it was once remarked by a hearer that "Mr. Binney could appear one moment as a fiend, and the next as an angel." Strongly said, but no doubt true; the secret being that he disdained every art not proper to an honest man, and, stripping away all falsehood and seeming,

addressed himself as a man to men. I may seem to be exaggerating, but I repeat. that it was not only an era in the history of Nonconformity, but an era in the history of eloquence and public teaching, when he commenced his ministrations in the Weigh House. And here, perhaps, we may avail ourselves of some remarks pertinent to this department of thought from the author of "The Lamps of the Temple":—

"A characteristic of Mr. Binney's preaching, to which we have incidentally reverted, is his power of painting. His soul is filled with poetry of the richest order; he does not, like some artists, overcolour to conceal the poverty of his conceptions; he does not attempt to atone for the weakness of his epic by the pomp of his phraseology; his colours are simple, but they are exquisite; he presents to us gems like those of Anthony Waterloo, or Wilkie, and he frequently gives to us a depth of scenery like that we admire in Cuyp. Yes, yes, he can describe gloriously. He throws in the shades of pathos, and then he holds all

55

the hearts of his hearers in his hands. And now a summer tint, and the eye recognises it, and the heart resumes its courage; he must have the eye of an artist—keen, detective, discriminative; he does not care about finishing the pictures he holds up; it is sufficient that the likeness is seen. He seldom dips his pencil in yellow and purple; the gamboge and the chrome do not here, as in many pictures, make the eye ache with their glaring rays. Then he does not crowd many objects together (another freak with many painters), to bewilder you with the many, and so prevent your criticisms upon the one. No; but the living picture seen by the audience is reflected to their eye from its lying warm upon the preacher's heart. Such is the story of the meeting of Jesus there with His friends, and

"THE PICTURE OF BETHANY.

"Jesus must have rested during the Sabbath, from six o'clock of the preceding evening till six o'clock of the day in question, at some little distance from Bethany, or He might start time enough before six o'clock to accomplish a 'Sabbath-day's journey' before the Sabbath closed; or, even, as Lord of the Sabbath, and as opposed to a rigid attachment to what was ceremonial, especially when substituted for vital religiousness, He might choose to walk a greater distance than was usual, or was tolerated on that day. He arrived, at any rate, at Bethany, as the Sabbath was closing, or soon after it closed. He was expected; a supper was prepared for Him, friends and neighbours were invited to meet Him. The day had been one of rest and worship. People would be at leisure. After six o'clock business might commence, or any secular pur-

56

suit be engaged in. But Simon and Lazarus, and others like-minded with them, instead of thinking of the shop or the farm, dedicated the evening to a social entertainment in honour of the Lord. The day that had been passed in quietness and devotion was to be closed in hospitable and friendly intercourse. The little village of Bethany, pleasantly situated on the high-road running over the Mount of Olives, some two miles or so from Jerusalem, was much endeared to Jesus by His having frequently sojourned there with a beloved and loving household. Here lived Lazarus with his two sisters, Martha and Mary. Here, too, Simon, who had been a leper whom Jesus had miraculously cleansed from his leprosy. even as He had recalled Lazarus from the grave. Other disciples, no doubt, resided in the village and in the immediate vicinity, who were all rejoiced whenever the steps of the Master brought Him in their neighbourhood. On the present occasion He came, it is likely to be, as was His wont, the guest of Lazarus, but the evening meal was to be taken with friends

at the house of Simon. It might be larger and more commodious for the purpose; or in this way the two friends might have agreed together to divide their attention, and share the honour of receiving Jesus. Martha was busy in preparation and service; Mary was happy in her listening love. It is interesting to notice in the Gospel narratives, how every character once introduced, retains throughout its own identity, and this often under very great alterations of circumstances. It was perfectly natural that Martha and Mary should just do what they are here said to have been doing. Martha's occupation is here described, and Mary's we can readily conjecture. The

---

57

Evangelists are the most simple, the least artificial writers in the world; their preservation of the harmony and unity of a character was not the result of design, but *itself* resulted from their just recording the truth as they knew it.

"As the evening proceeded the company was startled by a remarkable incident. Mary, after looking at the Master as He lay on the couch, appearing, probably, fatigued and sad, rose up, went behind Him, and, taking 'an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very costly,' 'very precious,' 'a pound's weight,' she broke the seal that secured it in the vessel, and then 'poured it on His head' and 'on His feet.' All present were taken by surprise, and 'the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.' It was an act of love, gratitude, respect; it required at the moment a strong impulse; but it was not merely the result of impulse. The act had been meditated. She had, most probably, saved and husbanded, that she might make the purchase; she had 'kept' it for some time. The fitting opportunity was at length afforded, and her hoarded treasure and her hoarded love were poured out at the same moment and in the same act.

"'*And there were some that had indignation!*' Some of His disciples—His, who was thus honoured—looked on,

not only without approval, but with apparent displeasure. They *felt* indignant, then they 'murmured,' and then what was 'within them' they put into more distinct and articulate speech; they called it 'waste' (as if anything could be wasted on *Him!*), and they asked *for what purpose* such waste was. They began to calculate the value of the ointment; they might, perhaps, exaggerate it. Some thought it might have been sold 'for much'; others fixed

---

58

on 'three hundred pence' (between £9 and £10) as what it might have fetched; while Judas asked 'why it had not been sold' for that sum and 'given to the poor' —that is, given to *him,* to him as the keeper of the bag, to whose custody the twelve entrusted their little store; 'not that he cared for the poor,' but 'because he was a thief,' and thought that from such a sum he could have stolen largely without detection. It is really terrible to think how the greatest virtue and the greatest villany, the largest and the meanest soul, self-sacrificing love and intense selfishness, ineffable goodness and sordid lust, may come together into nearness and contact in a world like this! Only think, *Jesus* and *Judas in the same room!* But it is so still. Such sorts of contact can yet occur, though not of beings so largely apart. A delicate, loving, pure-minded woman may have sat in the same public carriage with a murderer or murderess, reeking with blood, and fleeing from justice! In the same company may be conversing together eminent piety and secret sin! Touching each other, in the same pew, in the church of God, may be one who is 'simple concerning evil,' and another to whom vice has left nothing unrevealed! In spite of her magnanimity and her approving consciousness, Mary was 'troubled' by the murmurings that arose around her. But *they* were silenced, and *she* was reassured, by the words of the Master, which were reproof to *them* and approval of *her.* He gave an interpretation of what she had done,

above the meaning of her will, and rewarded her by a prediction *beyond her feelings of desert.*"

I do not know if Robert Browning ever heard much of

59

Thomas Binney; I know that he sat for long years, an admiring and loving listener to Thomas Jones, now of Swansea, when ministering at Bedford Chapel, in London, —no unworthy representative of the oratory and eloquence of Independency,—but he might have found in Thomas Binney a pretty complete exemplification of that eloquence of the pulpit he has demanded in such a vigorous and wonderful manner in his "Christmas Eve and Easter Day"—a lengthy poem, devoted, for the most part, to an anatomy of the shortcomings and the satisfactions to be derived, in modern times, from pulpit workmanship; the principles he appears to have laid down were those upon which the preacher at the Weigh House framed his earnest, straightforward, and direct appeals to the conscience of his hearers.

"Take all in a word; the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed;
Though He is so bright and we are so dim,
We are made in His image to witness Him:
Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of what right is, than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts that we bow before:
This last knows better—true, but my fact is,
It is one thing to know, and another to practise.
And thence I conclude that the real God function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already."

And hence we may perhaps surprise some persons by saying that Mr. Binney was, in an eminent degree, one of the most practical preachers of his time. We can only appeal now to a mass of reported sermons. He went straight into the conscience of living men—that "interior

60

apartment" which John Foster has so wondrously described, "where, in solitary state, Conscience sits, surrounded by her own thunders, which sometimes sleep and sometimes roar, while the world does not know." In no hypothetical nor dreamy fashion, he entered straight into the conscience, appealed to primitive feelings, which he knew to be there, though slumbering. and roused them; roused and terrified the man within; he appealed to innate instincts, to God within the soul, and set before men—especially working at young men, whose moral skins were not seared and blistered—*themselves;* the dignity of the law within; the penalty attending on the violated law. It was a poor, sinning creature who said to us once, after hearing Mr. Binney discoursing at great length on that old text, "There is a skeleton in every house,"—"Upon my word, I saw the creature; I heard the bones rattle, and the teeth chatter!"

He pursued many methods in the pulpit; he was a man of a manysided and various character; those who have met him in conversation have probably seen three or four men in him, appearing in almost as many minutes. More of this, when we speak presently of another aspect of his character. His distinctive attribute in the pulpit has generally been supposed to be that he entered armed in an entire panoply of thought; it has been intimated already; he had not only an instinctive affection for deal. ing with abstract truths, but he presented them in a commanding and winning freshness of manner; he clothed the abstract, and created a very thoughtful

style. Let the reader look back, and he will find that no Robertson, Maurice, Bushnell, nor Ward Beecher had

61

possession either of the pulpit or hearing of men in those times. The things and the processes of thought which they have made comparatively popular with us were then quite unknown, excepting in the library, and not so much known even there; they were unknown in the pulpit. It is not less than true that he made young souls capable of feeling the glow of enthusiastic ardour, heave with a sense and assurance of their real immortality; he seldom adopted the popular expedient of doing this, either by describing heaven or hell; it may indeed be said that he seemed to be keeping along a line of plain, irreversible common sense; but the most exalted effects were produced. I remember one famous instance of this, in a sermon which is almost unknown, and which he, perhaps, had forgotten, on "Thoughts which Perish;" it was preached to a very large congregation in Great Queen Street Chapel, and published in the *Pulpit* of its day, and I somewhat wondered that he did not give it a place in his last collected volume of sermons; the reader is not likely to have seen it; glance then over the following extracts;—

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE MIND.

"You see, the sacred writer fixes upon the great thing which distinguished man, while he is living and acting, and fulfilling the ends of his being, and then affects our minds by representing that thing as having departed. I suppose, this wonderful faculty of ours, this faculty of thinking, is the great thing which distinguishes us. The lower animals have minds—some kind, probably, of immaterial mind. Very extraordinary are some of their

62

capacities. And yet I apprehend that the eye of one of these inferior creatures, as it takes in, just as our eye takes in, all the mighty universe of things, and there are lying upon it all the glories of the heaven and the earth—I apprehend it sees nothing but just form and colour. But what do we see? From having this MIND, this power of thinking, in association with this organ, when time is brought before us, and painted (as it were) before that mind all the glorious forms of the things in heaven and earth; why, we see that which is *not* seen; we see, and make out by our thinkings, Him that is behind all, whose hand gives the form of beauty, whose hand throws out all the colours, who is speaking and uttering to the ear of reason, to the thing that can think, in the midst of this. We can make out all this, while I apprehend there may be eyes, many eyes, in this lower world, of other creatures, that take in precisely the same things; but from their incapacity to think see nothing of that which we see. By our capacity of thought and meditation upon these things everything becomes animated, vocal, eloquent, full of life, speaking to us of spiritual things, spiritual realities. What a wonderful power is this! Power to do this has made the world what it is. After the fall, you know, there was a man, lying like a poor, naked, shipwrecked sailor; there he was, lying upon the world just in this condition; and he had to start up upon his feet, and God said to him, 'I will suffer you to live, and I have given you a mind to think, and I have given you hands with wonderful power in them, and now go and just do with the world what you can; go and do with the world what you can.' And what has man done with it? What has he done with the uni-

63

verse round about? What has he done with the raw material of creation? How he has covered the surface

of the earth with the wonderful productions of his power and genius! How he has sat here, amidst all the clouds, and mists, and darkness of his fallen condition, and he has looked out—and out—and out upon the great and wonderful objects that are around him, and with amazement and astonishment, and confusion he has thought—and thought—and thought—and the thing has become regular and systematic, until he can pierce into the secret of things, and he can predict and tell you what is to take place a thousand years to come. It is wonderful what he has done. This poor, naked man, this wreck, when you look at him lying there at the beginning of the world—he has risen up, and he and his progeny have done all this. And it is very affecting to think, when we look at him and see his movements, and expressions, and doings, and accomplishments, that the moment comes—and then 'the wonderful counsellor, and the eloquent orator, and the cunning artificer,' all seem to have gone, and he lies before us a piece of clay; he has become *a thing*. 'In that very day his thoughts perish.' It is well for us sometimes to think about this mysterious life of ours. What a beautiful thing is a little child! It seems so fresh and new, as if it had just dropped down from the hand of God—quite a new thing. Wonderful is it to think now, that there is not a particle of that matter, that looks so new and beautiful, but what is as old as the creation. And the real new thing is *the mind,* the real new thing is the thinking thing. That which thou art touching, which appears so soft and beautiful, so new and fresh—it was

---

64

made before Adam—every particle of it; but *there is* a new thing—there is a new thing born within it—there is a new thing that will never die. When all the earth, the rocks and mountains, and all solid matter shall have faded away, this thing that has been brought into being within this material structure will live, and live for ever. Oh! it

is wonderful, this; a wonderful thing that matter is thus doing: bringing, as it were, spark after spark continually away from the great fountain of intellectual life, and sustaining it for a little while, sustaining its intellectual faculties, and then dismissing it to its kindred and its home, and that mind going on and on, and having to go on for ever as long as God."

THOUGHTS THAT PERISH.

"I think to some good purpose in this way: that all the thinkings of men that are not really and thoroughly true, however beautiful and magnificent they may be, and whatever favour they may find with their parents, or whatever favour they may find with man, to whom they are presented—all the beautiful thoughts that men may have in their minds—when they come to die they will find that they all 'perish,' and become nothing if they are not true; and then when the mind enters into the world of truth, pure truth and intellect, it will find it can carry nothing but truth with it. Oh, what a Babel will fly off from many a mind as it is just passing from this world of darkness and error, and entering into the world of truth! And what thousands of thoughts, that are now wrapped about the heart and esteemed most precious things, and in which we exult as if we had treasure in them, will all pass

---

65

away, and the mind will find that it cannot take a single particle of that into eternity along with it! 'The wisdom of the princes of this world that come to nought!' 'The princes of this world;' great and distinguished intellectual men, that have been 'princes' and giants in their day intellectually. and have had their domain and their empire, and have sat as kings and lords, and have given taw to masses of men, who have bowed down to them, and have said, 'Yes, the thing which thou sayest is true;' and they have received it. There have been many such great 'princes,' intellectual 'princes' like these. Ay,

but much, a very great part, of the empire of many of them has just been in the clouds. It has not been truth. They have said, 'Thus and thus it is,' and men have believed them; and they have died, and they have found thus and thus it was *not*. 'The wisdom of the princes of this world that come to nought!' How that was proved before the appearance of the Lord of glory, the Lord of light and truth! What glorious systems some of these ancient men had in their speculations, some of the 'princes' and teachers of the world then! But what did they ever do? What did they ever come to, in the way of producing substantial virtue, of ever filling the mind with true thoughts with respect to God and nature, and truth and life, and death and immortality? What did they do with respect to the production of substantial virtue and calm peace in the souls of men? *Nothing*. And when God came forth with the simplicity of His plan, but in the might and majesty of His wisdom and His truth, these things fell before it, and the fishermen—the fishermen stood up and said, 'Thus it is;' and the 'princes

5

66

of this world' retired, and their 'wisdom came to nought.'"

NOTHING IMMORTAL, BUT WHAT IS TRUE.

"Marvellous is it that men will not learn a lesson from these things, so that with a great deal of pretension to reverence for God's Word, a great deal of pretension of the just and important principle that now it is not for us to say, What thinkest thou? but it is for us to say, What readest thou?—very sad that, in spite of all this, men will still be going on, and indulging their dreams and their speculations, instead of coming with docility and lowliness to the teaching of the Spirit and mind of God. My dear brethren, oh, let us get our hearts impressed with this

thought. What a glorious thing it is to have truth; what a glorious thing it is to have God's truth in one's mind! Oh, for a human mind to be in possession of thought, in such a sense as to have a humble hope and feeling. 'Now this thought lies in mind here as it lies in the mind of God; there is some coincidence between my perceptions of this thing and the perceptions of the Divine and Infinite mind; and this thing, because it is true, and because it lies in my mind as it lies in the mind of God, has become part of my very nature; and wherever I go, to any world throughout all eternity, *this* will go with me, and it will be my companion and friend!' What a glorious thing it is to have the heart filled with a desire and a pure love towards God's truth! Oh, what a thing to have the mind enlightened, and, by the Spirit of God, to be led and taught His own truth! Ah! my brethren, 'in that very day his thoughts perish.' This has been true with respect to

---

67

many a learned theologian, many a man mighty in controversy; many a man who has spoken and preached and taught and written much about truth. He has had his mind filled with the great Babel of his own imaginings; and when he has died he has found it *nought—nought*. Nothing will go into the presence of God with us, and nothing will bear the eye of God in religion (I am now speaking about religion and truth) but what is really 'the true sayings of God,' the utterances of the Divine mind. Let us try to get up to this thought, and let us not care how far we agree or disagree with one system or another if we can but come and sit at the feet of Christ, and, by His Holy Spirit, be led into the truth, 'as it is in Him.' And a great many things that fill and please the imaginations of men—much of what is imaginative in religion—at the day of death will 'perish.' 'We see through a glass, darkly.' We see as in a mirror —in enigma. Many Christian men have their minds

filled full of certain colours and forms and imagery about the unseen. There is a great deal in the minds of Christian men, which, to themselves, appears very clear, and has its outline and form and colour, and apparent substance, and they think 'thus and thus and thus it is in eternity,' and 'this and this is the thing that is about to be revealed.' Now, I imagine that a vast deal of that will be found to 'perish' in the day when we come among the realities of the spiritual state. I do not know that we can have much better notions about the world into which we are to be born than a child has about this before it is born. It has life; it is a living thing; it has

5–2

68

got faculties and capacities wrapped up in it, which are intended for the light of day, and (or God's glorious universe; it is being prepared for this revelation; but if it had the power of thinking, in its dark mansion, could it conceive of anything like the glorious night, with its moon and bright stars? Could it conceive anything like the light of the earth, when the sun is upon it? Could it form any notion concerning the colours which meet us in creation, and the mountains and the fields? Could it form any notion about the faces, the countenances, and the bright eyes of its parents, and its brothers and sisters, who are about to welcome it and rejoice over it? Could it know anything of the reality of activity and enjoyment which there is ready for it in this world? Ay, I fear that many, many of our notions, many of the thoughts and the dreams which we have about the world into which we are to be born, are just as imperfect as that mind could have of the world which is before it. And, therefore, there are many things which men are clinging to, many imaginative things in religion, which I hold very cheap, and which, I think, will just perish and pass

away from the mind, as it enters into the glory about to be revealed. And it will be a happiness that they do, because it will find the reality so much greater and brighter and better than it had before conceived."

WHAT THEN?

"Ay, if our time permitted, this idea would afford, I think, illustration of many things, how the cherished intentions and purposes of men have come to nought. There is one

---

69

man who is just going to make his last voyage, *and then!* This other man, his last speculation, *and then!* He is just going to do this thing, *and then!* And then *what?* Why, before it comes all his thoughts 'have perished,' and his plans and purposes are gone! How this should come home to the heart of some who have been thinking and purposing about religion, and have just gone so far, and no further! They have been thinking about it, and planning, and purposing, and resolving; and they are doing that now, which they have been doing for years. Ah! my friend, take care—take care! The moment may perhaps just be at hand, when all these purposes shall perish, and thou shall perish with them. And with respect to some men, that have been great in council in the Church—for instance, in connection with its benevolent machinery and movements; they have had their minds full of purposes and plans, which were to be realised, and which, if realised and brought to bear upon the Church in its movements and progress, were expected mightily to prevail, and they have died. They have had thoughts growing up in their hearts, plans and purposes which they have not uttered, which they were nursing; and they have died, and these have perished with them. And so with respect to intentions of benevolence; and with respect to purposes of sustaining this and doing the other; and so with respect to many a Christian determination that they will do more than they have done, purposing to do this and that for

such and such a cause; thus they have been going on, and their heart has been warmed with the idea of what they really intended to do; and they have died, and the

---

70

thing has *not* been done, and the whole purpose has 'perished.'"

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE RACE.

"I will not dwell upon what I might—the propriety of our thinking frequently, if not perpetually, of what at any moment may come to ourselves; that so far as the present life, with its activities and enjoyments, is concerned, we may at any moment cease to be connected with it. I know very well that the laws of God's providence and the continuance of our lives, the general law embracing the whole race. God's purposes require that man should live; God's purposes require for their fulfilment that there should be men and women, thinking, and moving, and acting in the world and in the Church; and therefore, considering the constitution of our nature and the purposes of God, and what is requisite for these purposes, with respect to many of us the probability is that for some time we shall go on to live; that is the general probability. But ah! it becomes us to remember that while God requires *the race,* He does not require anyone particular *individual;* and anyone particular individual at any moment may drop, and the great stream roll on, and bear the vessel of God's mighty purpose. And that one individual may be *ourselves,*. and at any moment it may come, and our thoughts and our purposes may perish. Ay, brethren, it does become us to think of this, and to have it impressed upon our hearts."

DOING AND THINKING.

"But another lesson which I should like you to learn from

71

this subject is this: the vast superiority of anything that is really *done* to anything that is merely *thought*. Men may have fine thoughts and purposes and projects in their mind, they may have beautiful and magnificent things within them; but if they are only there, and go no further, they are but of little worth. A thing that is within a man's mind and has never come out of it may yet be a very great thing to that man, because God searches the heart and looks at the thoughts, and a thought in a mind is an act in relation to God—to another mind—the Great Spirit; and, therefore, the thoughts that are in men's hearts and minds and have never come forth, never been uttered at all, they may yet be very great things in relation to God's view of the character of that mind, and the influence of that upon its destiny. But still things which merely exist in the mind, thoughts however beautiful and magnificent, what are they if they stop there and never come out! Purposes, projects, intentions, determinations cherished in the heart, and going no further. Let something be *done;* let something be achieved; let something be taken out of the mind and heart, and substantiated and embodied in an action. Oh! there is far more worth in that. Why, there is far more worth in a single cup of cold water—a real thing; a thing done—there is far more value in it, both in the sight of man and of God, than in all the finest thoughts and the finest feelings of the sentimental voluptuary, or the wishes and prayers of the man whose faith is dead. I say, again, let something be *done*—let us arise and do something. You may take the plan of an architect as it lies upon paper; the drawing is very beautiful, and the shading is correct, and the architectural edifice,

72

as it lies before the eye, is magnificent. But you cannot live in it. It will not defend you from the storm or from

the heat. But let the thing be realised; let it cease to be merely a picture, merely a thought which exists in the mind, and let it come forth and be embodied, and be a real thing, and you can walk in and out, and have the happiness and the conveniences, and the comforts of life in it. Now, there is just the same difference between a thought in a man's mind, however beautiful it may be, and a thing really accomplished and done. Ah! then it becomes a living thing; it becomes a thing of power. For real living *things done* time has no grave, nor eternity either. They are living, immortal things; and it is by them that the Church is sustained and that the providence of God is carried on, and the glory of Christ accomplished in the world. Oh! brethren, there is all the difference between mere thinking and acting that there is between reality and nonentity; for we really do nothing as to the actual business of the world while there is only thought existing in the mind. Thou hast a heart; God has given thee a heart to do something; oh! let us have it impressed upon our minds to do it. If we do not, we may just be approaching that moment when it shall be said with respect to us, 'In that day, his thoughts perished,' and there was an end of them."

These foregoing extracts, all from one sermon, and that an ordinary one for the preacher, show the amazing munificence of mental wealth with which his sermons abounded, although we have indeed long regarded this particular sermon as one of the noblest pieces of pulpit oratory in.

73

our language. It is an illustration of his sustained manner when his whole theme lay clear before him, and of the tax he levied upon his hearers' attention. It is an eloquence in the highest degree forensic; but a forensic sermon is somewhat different from a forensic argument, and the reader must now be put in possession of that other charac-

teristic of Mr. Binney's preaching which still belongs to the same mental order and attribute as that we are now considering. I will take two illustrations—the first from the Tower Church sermon, "The Law our Schoolmaster," preached in 1848. The argument is addressed to the theory of Strauss, the mythical theory, then just emerging into notice and wonder; and it will perhaps be believed that amongst all the arguments said in confutation since there has never been at once so concise, effective, and overwhelming confutation. The satire is concealed; but its effect, even while merely arguing, is to flout the whole idea with ridicule. Not a word of ridicule occurs; it is all grave and serious to the last degree; but contempt for the hypothesis possesses the mind of the Christian believer nevertheless, while he feels that the mythical enthusiasts are introduced to a quagmire of difficulties from which they may wade out just as well as they can, or more likely sink beneath the weight of the argument in the way of their own difficulties.

We may take this as a fair illustration of Mr. Binney's. *argumentative and philosophical method* in the pulpit:—

THE MYTHICAL HYPOTHESIS OF THE GOSPELS.

"The hypothesis is something of this sort:—The writings of the Old and New Testaments are the utterance and

---

74

embodiment of the inner subjective life of the Hebrew race. Thus and thus was it, as these books in their old style relate, that the great mystery of the universe shaped itself to their conceptions. Thus and thus they thought about the visible and the invisible, the heavens and the earth, God and man, the infinite and eternal, duty and sin, guilt and forgiveness. Throwing their internal impressions into the form of a splendid ritualism, and associating this with rude myths of flaming mount and supernatural voices that gave to it a Divine origin and descent—thus and thus it was that this singular people at once made palpable to themselves, by

visible objects, their subjective ideas of spiritual truth, and indicated the profound earnestness of their souls by their full persuasion of heavenly guidance. At a subsequent period, stimulated by the recent appearance and extraordinary character of an illustrious individual—to many of his contemporaries a great prophet—to even modern unbelievers a person singularly gifted and singularly virtuous —the best if not the wisest of men—thus and thus it was in the second portion of their writings that this same people, or large portions of them, with certain powerful minds as their leaders, threw *their* strong subjective conceptions of spiritual truth into the supposed facts of the history of Jesus, and the Christian interpretation of the Jewish ritual—an interpretation which attributed to it a previously prophetic design, and superseded it by an asserted supernatural fulfilment. The impression of the greatness, and the memory of the transcendent virtue, of Jesus so deepened and grew in the minds of His contemporaries, and of those who were immediately affected by them, that there came at last to be no adequate mode in

---

75

which this deep feeling and these sacred and reverential memories could be bodied forth, but in an imaginary miraculous record of His life—in something superhuman being associated with His person—and in the extraordinary notion of His having in some way given a reality to the spiritual idea of the old law.

"Without dwelling on the extreme improbability of this —this making into honest and truthful men, persons, by no means fools, who *professed* to record actual miracles, and *pretended* to direct intercourse with heaven—without dwelling upon this, let us allow for a moment the hypothesis referred to, let us accept it as the solution of the facts, and then notice, briefly, one or two of the things that would seem to result from it. In the first place, it must certainly be conceded that, taking all the facts—the

way in which the several pieces constituting what we called the Bible was composed—the sort of book they make when put together—the connection between the two series of writings, and the two supposed religious dispensations—taking these and kindred things, and looking fairly and honestly at them, it must certainly be conceded that anything parallel to such facts is not to be met with in the history of the world. True or false, the Jewish and Christian religions are the most wonderful things of which there is any account in the records of the race. What an extraordinary people that Hebrew people must have been, who in the wilderness commenced, and in subsequent ages perfected, a Ritual system embodying in its significance some of the profoundest truths afterwards to be demonstrated by logicians and philosophers, and who did this by no Divine or supernatural assistance, but simply

76

from the impulses of their own inward religious life, which struggled to express itself, and which found utterance in this way! How wonderful that this rude people should go on, perfecting their ideas and multiplying their myths, till they took a new form in the history of Jesus, and in the spiritual or transcendental interpretation of the old Ritual system which that introduced! What a marvel it is, too, that the whole thing should have been so constructed, and so carried out, as to seize on the human mind *beyond* Judea, to subdue the most cultivated portions of the race, to supersede all other myths, theologies, and philosophies, with which it carne in contact, and to be spreading in the world, as a regal power, to the present day!

"But, while this general fact is a presumption of something singularly powerful in the genius of the Hebrew people, it should be next noticed, that the extraordinary nature of the Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Ritual is itself worthy of specific remark. The idea of

taking the tabernacle, or temple, the altar and priesthood, with all the accessories of the Ritual service, and giving them a significance, finding for them a design and a reality, that should at once fill the earth and reach up to heaven! think of *that*. After the prophecies, or supposed prophecies, which for ages had stirred the national heart, filling it with splendid anticipations of a regal and conquering Messiah; after He was supposed to have come, and then to have departed, and to have so departed as to have disappointed the hopes cherished to the last by His immediate followers; after this, what an idea it was to turn the very fact which shattered their expectations into a fulcrum

77

on which to fix an engine that should move the world! What an intrepid and sublime *daring* there is in the thought of Messiah the Priest being placed in the foreground of Messiah the King; the wide earth the place of sacrifice, the cross of ignominy the altar of propitiation, the upper world the holy of holies, the way into it being opened and sanctified by the resuscitated Redeemer, who passes through the veil of the visible heavens, as into the interior of a temple, 'there to appear in the presence of God for us,'—for *us,* for humanity, and for the accomplishment of those spiritual objects which humanity spiritually needs! However the truth of all this, objectively considered, may be denied, the whole thing rejected as fanciful, as being nothing more than the imaginative forms in which strongly-excited and fervid minds threw their conceptions of spiritual things, from their inability to find for them fit expression and adequate embodiment in mere language;—however this may be, it must certainly be admitted that there is a stupendousness about the theory—a magnitude and a magnificence, that should lead to the recognition of it as of something to be classed with the creations of genius!

"We shall have a miracle of human genius, instead of one of Divine power; a prodigy of earth and nature, instead of an actual 'sign from heaven!' All things considered, it will be found, I suspect, that to admit the Divine origin of our religion, makes a much smaller demand on our credulity, than to accept the hypothesis for accounting for its existence suggested by philosophic naturalism. Waiving, for the moment, higher motives, we might say, 'That as men, we are believers for the credit of our understand-

78

ing; as, if we were Jews, we should be disposed to become believers for the credit of our ancient faith."

This piece may be regarded as one of the most splendid pieces of cumulative argument, heightening into eloquence, in the range of modern theology and preaching. It is right to say that I have omitted one or two paragraphs, having regard to space, which, however, tightened the girth and compression of the whole.

Not dwelling at all, at present, on what must be regarded as the splendid mental endowments surely indicated by a passage like this, we select the second illustration of what we have denominated Mr. Binney's cumulative and forensic power in driving on an argument to its natural issue. He argues the absurdity of materialism, and

THE FOLLY OF DENYING THE SOUL'S IMMORTALITY.

"The atheistic hypothesis, which denies the personality of God and the possibility of a future life for man, cannot of course involve in it anything miraculous in the sense of what is supernatural, because it admits nothing superior to nature; but it may involve in it what is *un*-natural, and it does so, as I think, to such an extent as is far more incredible than any *Christian* miracle that was ever heard of. Some philosophers cannot believe in the forgiveness of sin, because that must mean, if it means anything, the positive annihilation of the results of action; but atheism

goes a great deal further than this, for it provides for the absolute annihilation of the actors! It annihilates *mind*. According to it, matter is immortal, but mind dies. The one changes its form, but continues to exist as an essen-

79

tial entity; the other is destined to absolute nothingness. Nay, matter is employed in *production* of mind; it virtually creates; it brings into existence what masters itself, comprehends the universe, counts, numbers, and measures the stars, is capable of a noble spiritual life, invents God, is the inspirer of holy thoughts, and the source of heroic achievement! There is the ever-rolling tide of newly-created minds gushing forth through the action of matter—this matter never being annihilated, but, through ceaseless changes, remaining the same, invested with the attributes of eternal being; no particle of it is ever lost, ever has been, or ever can be; but the wonderful entities we call minds, for which all things would seem to have been made, and to which they are subservient, *these all die!*—they are made to be lost, annihilated, destroyed! that is, they are *wasted;* —the most prodigal sort of waste that can be conceived; and this, too, in a universe in which nothing is wasted; and by the movements and constitution of that nature whose very soul and essence seem to be *thrift!* In everything else she is penurious; she never wastes a patch or a thread; she preserves her old clothes, her gowns and petticoats, her frills and furbelows, her odds and ends, and bits and fragments; she makes everything up again, contriving to make her cast-off and tattered garments look like new; but, *she destroys all her children!* She is extremely careful of their dirty frocks and tattered rags, and discoloured ribbons, but she murders *them*—slays them outright, extinguishes them for ever! What is more wonderful still, she so manages matters that the clothes actually create the children! The very same articles may be fre-

80

quently employed, too, in the same sort of process, in different ages and in many lands. But the children—the spiritual, intellectual, moral product—genius, capacity, power, greatness—all these die and perish, cease and determine, and can have no new existence, no different form of life! Think of it, my friend—perhaps it never occurred to you—you, the father of that new-born child, who are gazing upon it with such looks of wonder and love; do you know that every particle in that little frame, which seems such a fresh issue from the mint of life, moulded and stamped like a new shilling—do you know that every particle of it is as old as—ay, older—than Noah, or Adam either? that it existed before the flood, and had a local habitation, if not a name, throughout all the long geological periods of the history of the earth? It is even so; but the *mind* of your child is *a new thing;* it is a sort of creation; it is an actual *addition* to the present sum of being in the universe, which the body of your babe is *not;* yet, this wonderful, newly-created thing, which may become a Newton to comprehend all material forms, or a Bacon to invent methods of philosophising, or a Plato to clothe sublimest thought in the language of the gods, or a Shakespeare to depict all the aspects of humanity, 'exhausting worlds and then imagining new;'—*that* must be lost—it will die, and become *nothing*—yet, some of the very particles of that body may become the clothing of another soul, and help one day to bring it into the world, here—or at the Antipodes! For that mind, however, to live again? Never! Now, there is here such a miracle of annihilation, or such a series of miracles—which, if not *super*-natural, is *un*-natural—something so

81

like an interference with all that belongs to the ordinary and established system of things, which does not save,

indeed, but which literally *destroys* the souls of men, and goes on doing so, everlastingly, age after age—there is something, I say, here, so miraculously contradictory to the order of the world, that it really does seem to surpass belief! It is not *like* Nature in anything she does. I am well aware how the argument might be retorted by an application of it to the inferior animals. I am so satisfied, however, of the unique wonderfulness of the human spirit, its essential superiority in comparison with theirs, that I am willing to leave the force of what I have said to the irresistible verdict of your common sense. The idea that the mind of man is the mere foam, as it were, on the ever moving undulations of matter—somehow produced by it —bright, beautiful, sparkling for a moment, and then vanishing away and ceasing to be, while the material image remains the same, altering in form, but in itself an immortal and ever enduring essence—it *cannot* be! I, at least, have not credulity enough to believe the wonder. He-that can receive it, let him receive it."

As a great teacher, we may now venture to assert, after having given these illustrations, that there never was a more glaring mistake made than that of the writer of the still courteous and able leader of the *Daily Telegraph,* if in which Mr. Binney is supposed to be behind the culture of the age; indeed, apparently, to be singularly deficient in culture; and the wonder expressed that he did not exert

* Attributed by some to Mr. Matthew Arnold; we should rather suppose it to be from the pen of a disciple and imitator.

so large an influence as Thomas Carlyle or Dr. Newman; indeed, it would be the most gross violation of all moral honesty to compare him with either of those two most extraordinary men. But Thomas Binney was far from

deficient in culture. What is culture? Is it the knowledge of languages and sciences? These may be possessed without it, and culture may be possessed without these. Who is the first great apostle of modern culture? Well, take Schiller, for instance. Were his attainments in the languages and the sciences very considerable? Proverbially, they were not; but he had a most circular knowledge of nature, man, society, and the principles of things; so, Thomas Binney—his acquaintance with languages, sciences, books, &c., &c., was probably very inconsiderable; he was a faithful reader of the *Times* newspaper, and he seemed to know everything; he had that large and mighty range of sympathies which, directed by an adequate and corresponding understanding, that delicacy and clearness of observation, all of which, in combination, are sure to result in culture that is the. development of *all* the man.

Reversing the verdict of the writer in the *Daily Telegraph,* I would rather maintain that, as a preacher, he was not behind any even of the very foremost of our time, in the introduction into the pulpit of those themes, the discussion of which implies an acquaintance with those thoughts which are the aliment or the perplexity of cultivated minds. This shall be illustrated in another way, and by reference to another critic. The *Spectator,* in its estimate of our departed friend, written with that amount of courtesy and intelligence Mr. *Spectator* usually brings to the criticism of any matter or cha-

---

83

racter pertaining to Nonconformity,* very distinctly charges upon Thomas Binney exceeding narrowness of theology, and persistent and veracious adherence to the old views. in contradistinction to those accepted as the theology of the Broad Church; and very intelligently asserts that he had no sympathy with such views, for instance, as those of the late beautiful and beloved Mr. Lynch. This is rather singular, that perhaps the greatest

denominational *fracas* in which Mr. Binney ever found himself involved, arose from his sympathy with Mr. Lynch. Further, his ignorance is implied in that he adhered to the old doctrine of inspiration; that he was perplexed by the new schools of thought emerging in his denomination, &c., &c. Now, it seems rather singular that ignorance must essentially be attributed to the teacher who stands resolutely by the old theology. What an exceedingly ignorant man Father Newman must be! But this matter has been dwelt on so long for the purpose of remarking that throughout Mr. Binney's preaching, there was a very constant and distinct unfolding of a system of Christian philosophy; no teacher of our times more sedulously attempted to enter into the law of the Christian creed and doctrine; he only became dogmatic when he was able to say, as we must have heard him say a thousand times, "There now, you see, *that* is the *Law!*" One might construct a *Summa Theologia* from the pieces he has left behind him, and each thus should be found to have passed in some fresh and instructive way through his own

⋆ But Mr. *Spectator* was a Nonconformist himself once, and this may account for the scant courtesy with which he treats his quondam friends.

understanding. I have no liking for the word Philosophy, used in this way, but, as representing the fine analytic, resulting in a concrete form of thought, there is, perhaps, no other word. He was an eminently philosophic preacher;—keen, searching analysis was his forte; he studied theology with the passion of an analytical chemist, not indeed from the writings of the school-men; with Augustine, Anselm, William of Occam, Aquinas, and even with Jonathan Edwards, and the masters of his own peculiar church theology, I dare say he was unacquainted; he

studied in the great University of the Human Soul:—the Bible and the Human Soul, from these he shaped that Christian philosophy which stood up so complete and entire—especially in some of his greater pulpit pieces; and, while Mr. *Spectator* supposes that he ignorantly and blindly adhered to the old, the truth is, that one of the strong charges long urged against him by some of his own body was that he often perverted the simplicity of truth by the fine, thin, subtle thread, along which he followed her through the labyrinth, until he stood, with rapture, in the centre of the maze. It is not, I hope, to be found as a defect in Mr. Binney's teaching. that it stood on the great highway of the theology of the Church of all ages; that it was the theology of Augustine, Calvin, Howe, Charnock. and Baxter; and I am quite aware what difference these seem to imply;—he assuredly, stood on the Calvinistic side of truth; that is, he believed that the universe was governed by law, and that the law had a fore-ordaining and determining law-giver; creation and salvation both rolled on the wheels of law. There was nothing loose or *rose-waterish* about his theology; nothing pretty, nor poor,

---

85

nor sentimental; it had the infinity, the mystery, and the glory of the lights of the everlasting firmament; and whenever he took a text for illustration, he sought so to pierce into the heart of it, that he might relate its throbbing heart to everlasting law. And now some two or three illustrations shall justify this generalisation we have formed.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF GENERAL LAWS.

"Of course we can understand that the world is governed by great general laws. Great general principles and laws are ever at work, and we may depend upon it that they will not be suspended for us. There is a young mother, on a beautiful spring morning, sitting there by an open window. She is looking at, and enjoying the landscape —and something far more lovely than that, for she has

her beautiful baby—her first-born—upon her arm. She turns her eyes for a moment, and the little child, chirping and cooing, makes a sudden movement, and is. out at the window. It falls down on the pavement below, and is picked up bleeding and mangled—maimed for life. If you have been the governor of the world with your particular affections, with your attention to the little, and the individual, you would have interfered to save the child. God could have done it, but that would have been a miracle. But the law exists, and it must act in spite of everything. If the twelve apostles were walking upon a railway when the train was rushing along it would go over them if they did not get out of the way, and the whole twelve apostles would be crushed to atoms. God would not interfere. Yon are to understand, then, that that is the general law. If we go back to the question, 'Why should things be so

constituted?' we may ask further, 'Why should there be a world like this at all?' Enough for us, however, to know that it is so. But we believe that along with these general laws there is a place for prayer, there is a sphere for God's agency; but we are to remember that there is a constant operation of these laws. It could not be otherwise without a miracle; and it is better that we should not be living under the reign of miracle; that God should not be constantly interfering with the particular. If it were so, we should never learn the lessons of manhood, never learn the lessons of self-government and self-direction; never be raised up into men able to regulate ourselves, and to act on the principle of calculation and forethought. It is because we are living under the constant operation of general laws; because we know what the issue will be if we stand in the way, that we come to be what we are. If every time we got into danger or trouble there was to be a Divine interposition—as a poor, silly, indulgent mother always comes in between the child and

the consequence of its fault—we should never be anything."

It is in the same spirit he gives to the infidel the *argumentum ad hominem* when he speaks of the

DIFFICULTIES IN THE BIBLE OF NATURE.

"Why should there be suffering and sorrow in the world has been, you know, a question pressing upon humanity in all ages. If God be omnipotent, why? If God be benevolent, why? If there be a God at all, why? Read the oldest book in the Bible, and you find a constant

---

87

argument upon these mysterious, deep, and dark judgments, and how to reconcile them with just conceptions of Deity and of providence. Into the question of moral evil, the existence of sin, we will not go; but it may be remarked, that much physical evil is the direct issue of sin. There are many forms of suffering in the world that would not be here but for sin; yet there are other cases, like the present, that seem to have no relation to moral evil, being separated entirely from the will of any man, and are what we call 'accidents,' or the 'visitations of God.' The anti-supernaturalist may be found objecting to the Bible *because it contains so much that is mysterious;* but we would say to him, 'There is as much that is mysterious in your Bible as in ours.' Supppose him to be one who believes in a personal God, a personal governor of the world, and he says, 'I cannot receive your Bible, because I read in that book such extraordinary things, about what God has done and said, that I am shocked.' My dear friend, have you read your own Bible? Do you meet with no mysteries there? Can you understand all the pages and passages in it? Are there no terrible facts occurring on the surface of the earth? Is everything that happens in harmony with your conceptions of a benevolent Governor? Would you allow that gallant vessel to be dashed to pieces

on those rocks? Would *you* have permitted twenty tons of iron to descend the shaft of that pit? Your God did not prevent it; the God of your book, the only book you acknowledge—this world. It is not a fine and beautiful page always. You may talk about fruits and flowers, and admire them, but do not shut your eyes to the great and terrible facts that confront you. Do you pretend that your

Bible, the Book of Nature, will explain these things? I do not tell you that I have got a Bible to explain all these things. I have got a Bible to teach me a great deal more and something higher; and it may be that the Bible comes to me with parallel, and analogous things in it just that I may understand and know that it comes from the same God, that the Creator of the world is the speaker in the book; and that it is for me to listen and to obtain the higher revelation. And perhaps through that I shall come to understand the mystery. In reading the one book or the other, we had better just stand dumb and thoughtful, endeavouring to extract from the great mystery a religious advantage. There are things which we cannot comprehend by our understanding, but in which we may acquiesce by faith."

And as showing how he extracted the law of the Christian life from single texts, take the following, from the intercession of Abraham for Lot and Sodom:—

THE POWER OF INTERCESSION.

"I think it may tend to direct the exercises of our minds; it may help us to look about and observe many things that should facilitate our reception of the Gospel, may, being blessed for the sake of something out of him, for the sake of another being, for the sake of what God sees *there,* because there is a connection established between Him and the faith of the man who receives the truth and pleads the Word of God—man, one being, blessed

through the medium, or mediation, or for the sake of another—why, all Providence, that we see continually

89

before us, is rising up and giving its testimony on behalf of this principle. It is thus continually in the common intercourse and concerns of life that one man is blessed through another, and for the sake of another. You may see a criminal reprieved or pardoned, the consequence of the intervention and mediation, and pleading and advocacy of another. And you may see a necessity for the thing, when law is personified and rendered visible in the judge—a guilty man that is a judge—a man with a man's heart in him, but clothed with a judge's office—where law simply is supreme, and, in spite of the feelings of the judge, and whatever may be the sensibilities of the man, and though tears may be streaming from his eye on account of the criminal before him, he positively cannot help it, and has nothing to do but to pass the sentence, and to deliver him over unto death; the law is above the judge, the law is above the sovereign—the sovereign ruling and governing by law; and in a certain sense, without impropriety it may be said, that law—the great principle of law—is superior alike to God and man. Now, in this idea of the grandeur and majesty of law (we may see it illustrated in governments and in providence), we observe the necessity there is in certain cases, that if an individual is to be helped, and blessed, and aided at all, it must be by something extraordinary to meet the crisis —something coming in, which shall make the feelings of the sovereign harmonise with the principles of the law, and enable him to depart from the letter of the law, and maintain the spirit of it. So God is 'just and the justifier of him that believeth.' In this way, I think, the principle we have been looking at ought to facilitate the

90

reception of the Gospel. Another result that I should expect from serious meditation about these things is this: that *your* Christian men, who profess to know what prayer is, and to believe in it, should be encouraged to pray with greater earnestness and with greater faith. You are authorised to believe that, in a subordinate sense, becoming advocates thus and mediators for others, you may do on earth what Christ is doing in heaven. You may do for your friends what Abraham did for his, and by your hearty and earnest intercession offered to God, you may come in and be the medium of blessings being communicated to those for whom you pray. I should like you to take these words just for what they mean, and take the statements of the New Testament in the simple, absolute, literal sense; believe that by intercession you can benefit another, and go and offer that intercession. 'Pray to thy Father which seeth in secret,' for others as well as for thyself, and He will not only bless thee, who prayest, but those for whom thou prayest. And thy friend, thy child, the man on the other side of the earth, for whom thou prayest—God may bless him because He remembers thee, and remembers thy prayer."

And again, another extract from the same remarkable sermon bearing the same lesson:—

THE WORLD SAVED FOR THE CHURCH'S SAKE.

"I believe in God's Church; that God has a Church, a great company of holy men, in this bad world; men to whom He has given the spirit of adoption, and who are, in a peculiar sense, spiri-

91

tually His children—in peculiar spiritual relation to Him. Here they are, in this world of ours, mingled with the population thereof, and I believe that for their sake, and because of them, God is perpetually blessing the world

of mankind. If God had not a Church in the world I do not think He would have a world for a minute longer; He would not maintain it; He would not 'bear up the pillars thereof.' 'Day unto day,' 'night unto night' would cease to speak, and all things would come to their determination, and the grave of the universe would be opened, and the universe would die. But God hath a Church in the world, and because God hath that Church, and I had almost said for the sake of that Church, 'kings reign and princes decree justice,' and Governments exist and nations are. The sweet light of the morning, and the shades of evening, and spring and summer, and autumn and winter, all continue, because God hath His eye and His heart upon His Church; and because there is that connection between Him and holy men, for their sakes and because of them, numberless blessings are descending continually, in His providence and through the working of His government, upon the general population of mankind. I believe this. I believe it is the doctrine of the Bible, the teaching of God's Word. It is just the illustration of the principle to which I am referring—that one man, or that many men, may be blessed for the sake of others and through others. And it is another form of the same illustration (only narrowing the circle), which I think it is possible sometimes to observe, when the ungodly, unconverted relatives of devout and godly men are blessed, not only through them, but apparently for their sake, and on account of them."

92

One of the finest instances of this style is to be found in his great sermon before the London Missionary Society, "Messiah Suffering and Messiah Satisfied." This, and his funeral sermon for Algernon Wells, "Light and Immortality Brought to Light by the Gospel," flamed with revelations. Doctrines long regarded as true burned as convictions into the mind, and stood forth clear and luminous as necessary truths. We must cite some extracts

from both these remarkable sermons, especially from the first, which also is one now out of print; indeed, I am not certain that it was ever published beyond the pages in the *Pulpit* of the week in which it was delivered in 1839. Perhaps those who may remember the delivery of either the one or the other of them will recur to them rather as great spoken poems, than as great orations. We scarcely need mention that the text of the missionary sermon was, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." It occupied nearly two hours in the delivery.

THE MESSIAH.

"Let us just remember, then, the great truth, that our Lord Jesus Christ is not to be considered as one in a long lineage and procession of prophets, or even at the head of them, the most illustrious. He is not to be considered as a link in a chain, each of the rest having properties in common, a purpose and an agency of a kind with His. He is not to be considered as a light or a light-bearer associated with others, He having His place and portion of illumination and they theirs independent of Him, as the stars of heaven and the lights of the Church are independent of each other. He is not to be considered as one

---

93

among a number of God's servants and messengers to mankind, a unit of a class, from whom He differed not either in the constitution of His person or in the nature of His work. Were this the case, He would be of the Church; were this the case, He would be one of the saved from among men Himself; were this the case, the 'satisfaction' of Christ arising from the results of the Gospel, though it might differ in degree, would not differ in kind, from that of other prophets and apostles, since they, equally with Him, accomplished their assigned and allotted service, and 'finished the work given them to do.' The Bible, as it seems to me, from the beginning to the end of it, opposes and repels a classification like this—the

including Christ under the same category as the saved from among men. From the moment that the mediatorial dispensation was established, intimations were given respecting the Mediator; and ever, as we trace them, we find them rising in interest, splendour, and elevation, till they conduct us to the very throne of God, and exhibit Him as the object of Divine worship, regaled (and rightfully regaled) with the homage and the honours of heaven. The promise of Messiah mitigated the curse, and sustained man under his first awful apprehensions. It was the spirit of patriarchal institutions and the theme of patriarchal song; Abraham 'rejoiced to see Christ's day,' though he saw it 'afar off,' and descried it faintly. Levitical ceremonies derived their meaning from Him. Prophecies and types sustained the expectation, and augmented the importance of His promised advent. With a view to that, the course of nations and the history of the world was controlled. He appeared at length in 'the fulness of time;'

94

He was 'made flesh, and dwelt among us;' He tabernacled as the true and eternal Shekinah in the body that 'was prepared for Him.' He came and He departed; He came, and 'the kingdom of heaven' was His being with us; He departed, and now heaven is our being with Him. There, separate and distinct from apostles and prophets and martyrs, from angels and men, He receives the homage and the adoration of them all, participating with 'Him that sitteth upon the throne' the worship and honours, that from angels and men rise rapturously and for ever. It is perfectly obvious, that He of whom such things are spoken (and spoken they are) must be regarded as differing in nature from every other Divine messenger, and therefore appropriately represented as enjoying a 'satisfaction' which none of them can share, something with which they cannot intermeddle."

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

"The sufferings of Christ, whatever they were, in fact, resulted from the presentation of Himself as a real sacrifice, the sacrifice of a living, sensitive Being in an offering made by fire unto the Lord. The fire, indeed, was spiritual, like the thing it touched; yes, and from that very circumstance it was the more terrible. It was not that element that can become the servant of man and minister to his wrath, and be made to seize upon and destroy the body, and after that hath nothing more that it can do; no, it was fire which nothing but heaven could furnish, something which God alone could inflict, and which a spiritual nature could alone feel. That fire descended upon the soul of the Redeemer, and, if I may so speak, like the

95

fire which descended upon the altar of the prophet, 'which consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.' Sufferings flowing from a source like this necessarily transcend, not only the power of language, but the power of thought. And yet for all these Messiah is to be recompensed. He is to receive, as it were, an adequate compensation for enduring that infinity and eternity of anguish, which was compressed into the one mysterious hour when He was called to take from the hand of the Father the cup full of trembling and astonishment. He is to be recompensed; He is to 'SEE HIS SEED,' He is to BE 'SATISFIED.' 'A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world.' Agonies the most exquisite are in a moment rewarded by the sight of her offspring, and by the rise and gushing within her of those deep and thrilling emotions, which fill her heart with a calm but irrepressible rapture. And it is thus, it is said, but in a higher degree, that Christ is to be rewarded

and gratified at last. The inconceivable grandeur of those results which shall flow from the Redeemer's sufferings, may thus be inferred from the inconceivable intensity of those sufferings themselves, by which they are produced, and by which they may be measured."

CHRIST SATISFIED.

"When we speak of Messiah, as you have already seen by our previous remarks, we speak not merely of the man Jesus, but of that Divine Person mysteriously in Him as-

---

96

sociated with humanity—the eternal Word, that was 'with God and was God,' 'by whom all things were created, and without whom nothing was made that was made.' It would, therefore, be perfectly legitimate, you see, if time permitted, to illustrate the supposed and anticipated glory of the new creation by adverting to the extent and splendour of the old, and to the capacities and views of the mind that produced it. When we think of the fabric and furniture of the material universe, the beauty and the elaborateness (so to speak) of the infinitude of things existing upon earth, and the vastness and magnificence of celestial objects, it becomes us to remember that all this was necessary to 'satisfy' Him that made them, and to realise and embody His great idea, His idea of what it would be proper for Him to do in producing a work worthy of Himself. All that we see in the heavens above and on the earth beneath; and far more which we see not, which 'the eagle's eye' hath not seen, which man can neither reach by his instruments, nor can realise without them—it took them all to content (so to speak) the mind of their Maker, when giving adequate proof of His power. Oh, how much sublimer, may we suppose, must those spiritual results necessarily be, with which He is to be 'satisfied,'—'satisfied' as the mirror of His moral perfections, of His holiness and mercy, of His tenderness and truth! The new creation, the materials of which (if we

may use such an expression) are to be redeemed and sanctified minds, may be reasonably expected to surpass as far the old and earthy as the human intellect is superior to dead, brute matter, or as the love of God's heart must necessarily exceed the work of His hand. For Christ to

---

97

he 'satisfied,' when the new creation shall not only be completed, but be pronounced good, there must be that in it on which He can exercise complacency proportionate to the view He can take of what it would be proper to admire in His highest work of compassion and love. When we consider the infinite capacities of His mind, the ideas He could form of moral beauty and excellence; when we consider how superior He must be, how far removed from whatever is low, limited, or mean; when we consider the unfathomable recesses, the inaccessible heights, which there must necessarily be in His conceptions, we cannot but feel that it will be impossible for Him to be pleased or 'satisfied' with any results but what shall correspond and harmonise with the grasp and grandeur of His own mind; especially so when those results are to be regarded by Himself, and to be regarded by all worlds, and to be regarded to all eternity, as the product of extraordinary means and mighty preparation."

HE SHALL BE SATISFIED.

'"He'—pre-eminently I think—'*He* shall be satisfied;' as if to intimate, that were He not, whatever else might be achieved or felt, nothing comparatively would seem to be done. All things connected with the salvation of the world are to be so ordered, as to issue in affording to the mind of Messiah a perfect and plenary satisfaction. He shall not have to acquiesce in results, which He may believe to be right, but which He cannot comprehend (which we, I apprehend, will have to do throughout all eternity); nor, however others may be permitted to enter into His *joys,* will all His joys be such as they can share.

7

98

He shall have a delight and blessedness of His own; it shall be peculiar, incomprehensible, complete; He shall be filled with an eternal and ineffable satisfaction, of which He Himself shall say, 'IT IS ENOUGH.' And it would seem to be indicated by the words before us, that if this were not the case, all that has been done would have been done in vain, and as if none, till *He* were satisfied, would either be disposed or could be permitted to rejoice."

And the following is from the same sermon as the preceding quotations:—

VARIETIES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

"Various and affecting, my brethren, is the fate of those who start together on the spiritual voyage, as represented by the images of Scripture. Some, 'putting away a good conscience, concerning faith make shipwreck.' They apostatise and perish. Other some are *all but* wrecked. Inattentive to their instruction, negligent and unwatchful, sailing on without taking their soundings or consulting their chart, they get damaged or endangered by many adverse and hurtful entanglements. Still they are saved, 'yet so as by fire;' 'they suffer loss;' they escape with life and nothing else; they struggle to the shore and they appear before Christ naked and ashamed. Others, again, enter the haven in full sail; they advance calmly and safe, under the beams of a bright sun; borne onward by a smooth sea, and, amid angelic sounds of congratulation and welcome, they have 'an abundant entrance' into 'the kingdom and joy of their Lord.' 'Speak I these things as a man? Saith not the law the same also?' The law surely; surely we are speaking the mind of

99

Christ. Of the three classes of persons just mentioned the last of course contribute most to the Redeemer's joy, the second but little, the first nothing. Oh! my brethren, few are here, few are here, we trust, whose course and character portend an ultimate apostacy. Some few (dare we say more?), some few are here, who are so acting as to be preparing for the 'abundant entrance into the kingdom of their Lord.' But the greater number, we cannot but fear, and we dare not conceal it—the greater number, if saved at all, have perhaps little to expect beyond that, which, while it is a mercy, is also *a disgrace*—salvation by fire."

And again:—

THE DEIST.

"He assumes that a system of religion, if true, would soon and certainly become universal—that it would be so plain and attended with such evidence, that no one would be able to misapprehend, to doubt, or to reject it—and that because it is possible to do all this in relation to Christianity, and because Christianity is not universal, therefore (he infers) it is not and it cannot be true. Now in reply to this popular and prevailing demonstration, it is sufficient to say that it condemns Deism far more than Christianity, and that the man who employs it is silenced (or ought to be) by his own argument. If a religion, being true, must of necessity be so plain as to prevent mistake, and so soon universal as to demonstrate its divinity, how comes it that Deism, which on the objector's hypothesis is true, and is a religion, and the only Divine one, has yet the least pretension to universality of any —that it is utterly un obvious, all the world over—that all

100

nations in all times have failed to find it? and this too, not because (like as it is with us) its documents were ungenerously withheld by those to whom they were committed for dispersion; no, but with the volume and the writing revealing the truth perpetually before them, above their heads in the canopy of heaven, and beneath their feet in the spreading earth. The Bible of the Infidel, containing as he affirms the exclusively true and only faith, has been unfolding its ample page in all times and before all eyes; and yet instead of being universally received and understood, it has the least claims to these marks of a true religion, for all idolaters, as well as all Mahometans, Jews, and Christians, agree in rejecting it. The want of universality of what is called Deism, under these circumstances, seeing that its preachers and its documents have been everywhere, condemns it; but the want of universality on the part of Christianity condemns, not it, but *Christians*."

These passages never received the advantages of Mr. Binney's personal correction, but I can testify to their faithfulness, and to the delightful and extraordinary faithfulness of innumerable sermons, published through the same vehicle; it was with a glad avidity I hastened to purchase sermons reported to which, in those remote times, I had, with a youth's rapture, listened.

The second sermon is better known. It is to this, especially, that the author of the "Lamps of the Temple" refers when he says:—"But we have not reverted to Mr. Binney in his sublime moods, and it may be supposed, if we leave our sketch thus, that he is only the graphic painter, the humorous delineator, the attractive preacher;

101

it now remains, then, to be said, that his imagination and judgment, his vigour of thought, are often sublime; his ideas are frequently not merely original, but they present

themselves, sometimes, in the highest regions of poetic apprehension. Philosophy robed in poetry, and crowned with piety—this is the appropriate description of his powers. Often are the hearers at the King's Weigh House startled by a lofty sublimity of conception—the preacher's great forte—by ideas that stand colossal in fully proportioned, lonely grandeur. He soars aloft with all his surging robes about him, and utters thoughts that remind us of the "Samson Agonistes." On such occasions, like our great bard, he flings all ornament aside; he does not condescend to adorn. He thrills his hearers with the majestic—the awful thought. He will not weaken by tricking it forth in the tinsel of unnecessary words. The architecture of his style on such occasions is not florid Gothic; but, ordinarily, it is plain, dignified, and simple." Some such conceptions meet us in the funeral sermon for Algernon Wells. Take, as illustrations, the following:—

GOD A BEING CONDITIONED BY HOLINESS.

"Advancing, then, to the third of the four adversaries of man—death, the grave, sin, and law—we ask, could a God, by power, destroy sin? Can He by a physical act annihilate *it?* Could He, which is substantially the same thing, by pure prerogative, pass it by, treating it with indifference, and showing that by Him it was nothing accounted of? Could He make a seraph out of a Tiberius or a Dorgia, each retaining his memory and consciousness, as He can make an angel or archangel out of nothing?

102

God has the physical power to do many things which yet we say He *cannot* do; that is, He has the physical power to do wrong, for right and wrong are not things that He can make for Himself, or unmake, but have an existence distinct from His will, except as that will is the expression of His own eternal and necessary righteousness. He could throw the whole material universe into confusion; could suspend the laws of all planetary harmony, and

dash suns and worlds against each other as if all the stars were drunk or mad. But it would not *become* Him to do this—it would not be fitting in *Him*. It would not exalt His character in the view of created intelligences, or be in consistency with what he owed to Himself. Therefore, we say, He could not do this; He could not throw the material universe into disorder. But much less can we conceive it possible that He could throw the *moral* universe into disorder! and He would do this if by physical omnipotence He destroyed sin; because this would amount to the virtual or actual destruction of the law—moral law."

RELIGION HAS CLAIMS UPON US IRRESPECTIVE OF OUR IMMORTALITY.

"I do not see, indeed, that, even as we now are, we should cease to be religious, though we were certain and assured that there was no life to come, provided we be lieved in a personal God. With a nature like ours, and a world like this, whatever may be thought to have happened to either of them, life appears to me so great a thing—its capacities are so vast—it may be made so beautiful and felicitous or illustrious and wonderful. It has in

---

103

it, even with its struggle, and battle, and work, so much that makes it a glory and a joy to have been born, that I do not see that we should cease to worship, to love, and to obey, even if God had not destined us to be immortal. We were nothing, and deserved nothing, and He made us *men*—placed us here, with our foot on the earth and our face to the sky—the lords of the world, with heads for thought and hands for action; capable of comprehending the idea of duty, and of cultivating towards Him self-devotion and love. All things beneath us—the spacious earth, the arena for achievement; nature—the raw material for skill; the successive steps and stages of our being, pregnant with such elements of interest, that the story of

a life may be the progress of a poem. Why, to be *a man,* simply A MAN, and nothing more, is so much, that I do not think we should abrogate our manhood and sink into brutes because we were not to become angels."

And yet one more citation from this fine poem:—

THE PERORATION—IMMORTALITY.

"'*Then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.' 'So let all Thine enemies perish,' O Christ! and 'let them that love Thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.' They shall *be* this, for they shall be 'sons of light,' being 'children of the resurrection;' and 'shall shine as the stars, and as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever.' As a wreck may sink in the sea and the ocean close over it, so that not a vestige of its existence shall remain, nor a ripple on the surface tell what it *was,* so shall mortality be *swallowed up of* LIFE—immortal

---

104

life—life, sinless, God-like, Divine. Nor shall there be wanting the voice of rejoicing, as heard at the termination of successful war, for 'death shall be swallowed up IN VICTORY!'"

We have often thought, in reviewing our impression of Mr. Binney's sermons, that his mind moved in a path of light; even when apparently labouring with his subject, it was like the sun struggling through clouds, sure to be dissipated, and from which the majesty would emerge at last. He had nothing of the mystic in the temperament of his mind; he never could have possessed his large field of popularity had this been the case. No mystic can ever attain to a very considerable eminence as a public or popular talker. Curiosity might go to listen to such an one now and then, or for an occasion or two, but neither Ephraim Syrus, John of the Cross, nor Jacob Bohmen, could have,

nor, in a world like this, would it be desirable that they should have, many auditors. No more than he was a mystic was he a mystical or transcendental metaphysician —he would have been as impatient of Berkeley as of Bohmen; he was fond of a sure foothold, and his most elevated sweep of thought, feeling, or expression mounted up from a proposition; and if sometimes he at first seemed inapprehensible to his hearers, before he had done with the matter his meaning was very distinctly perceived. The enjoyment one feels with a mystic is often in that he "passes all understanding," and yet one feels *sure*. The enjoyment one felt in Mr. Binney was in that he gave one the "full assurance of the understanding." Such a style is impatient of adornment and ornament. No pretty

---

105

fancies, no fine and flowing expressions wrapt his ideas; none of the artifices of rhetoric; his idea stood out colossal, and alone. Yet, sometimes, really, his arguments and accumulations of necessary particulars took the shape and had the charm and the effect of ornament; or his delineation of a character became so special as to be romantic; and, while very free from any but the most simple and ordinary action, his voice and manner were often highly dramatic.

How well he has described the false and feeble style, which amplifies a description only to amputate its strength in the following:—

TOO MANY WORDS.

"A preacher by the exposition of a narrative unusually pathetic, will, in all probability, fail to produce any impression superior to what attends the simple reading of the text; for all his audience have hearts as well as himself, and, to these, the inimitable language of Scripture bas already appealed, and excited, perhaps, all the emotion of which the heart is capable. That emotion is not to be described, for words cannot describe the operations of

sensibility. It is not to be increased, should the preacher attempt it, for all he can say is already in the mind of the hearer; and though the hearer could not, perhaps, express it in words, he can feel and enjoy it in itself. The slow process of language is outstripped by the rapidity of thought. A single word will open a stream of ideas, or give rise to an instantaneous flow of feeling, which it is luxury to indulge in the silent possession of the soul, but the very charm of which will be destroyed and dissipated

106

by the intrusion of multiplied expression. Every attempt, in fact, of such intrusion will look like impertinence. It is no wonder, therefore, that we find, at the close of a lengthened exposition of some touching incident, that we never before *felt* so little of its power to affect us, though we never before heard so much effort employed in describing it."

Some readers will remember his happy delineation of David, a perfect picture to the hearer's eye through the ear.

THE EARLY LIFE OF DAVID.

"The shepherd boy was bold and brave, manly and magnanimous, and had in him from the first the slumbering elements of a hero and a king. His harp was the companion of his early prime. Its first inspirations were caught from the music of brooks and groves, as he lay on the verdant and breathing earth, was smiled on through the day by the bright sky, or watched at night by the glowing stars. Even then, probably, he had mysterious minglings of the Divine Spirit with the impulses of his own; was conscious of cogitations with which none could intermeddle, which would make him at times solitary among numbers, and which were the prelude and prophecy of his future greatness. He became a soldier before he was twenty. Ten years afterwards he was king by the suffrages of his own tribe. During most of the interval his

life was of a nature seriously to peril his habits and principles. He was obliged to use rude, lawless, and uncongenial agents. He had to live precariously by gifts or spoil. 'He was hunted like a partridge on the mountains.'

107

By day providing for sustenance or safety, and sleeping by night in cave or rock, field or forest. And yet this man, in the heat of youth, with a brigand's reputation and a soldier's licence, watched carefully his inner-self, learned from it as a pupil, and yet ruled it as a king, and found for it congenial employment in the composition of some of the most striking of his psalms. When his companions in arms were carousing or asleep he sat by his lamp in some still retreat, or 'considered the heavens' as they spread above him, or meditated on the law, or engaged in prayer, or held intimate communion with God, and composed and wrote (though he thought not so) what shall sound in the church and echo through the world to all time! There is nothing more wonderful in either sacred or profane literature than the combination of the circumstances and employment of David from his twenty-fifth to his thirtieth year. To the lamentable lapse, the penitence, and the punishment of David we owe some of the most spiritually instructive and consolating of his psalms—psalms that have taught despair to trust, and have turned the heart of flint to a fountain of tears!"

And then, as another illustration of the ornamental method, take the glowing description of the comprehensive, orchestral, and thousand-voiced melody of the Book of Psalms, which, amidst the multifarious writers on that inestimably precious book, has, we believe, never in any age been surpassed.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

"The songs of Solomon were a thousand and five; but

108

how shall we describe those of the PSALMS? Than Solomon's fewer in number, but of higher inspiration and richer thought. As to their *form,* they include all varieties of lyric composition; they are of every character as to the nature of their subjects, and of all shades and colours of poetic feeling; but as to their *essence,* they are as a light from heaven or an oracle from the sanctuary. They discover secrets, Divine and human; they lay open the Holy of Holies of both God and man, for they reveal the hidden things belonging to both, as the life of the One is developed in the other. The Psalms are the depositories of the mysteries, the record of the struggles, the wailing when worsted, the pæans when triumphant, of that life. They are the thousand-voiced heart of the Church, uttering from within, from the secret depths and chambers of her being, her spiritual consciousness—all that she remembers, experiences, believes, suffers from sin and the flesh, fears from earth or hell, achieves by heavenly succour, and hopes from God and His Christ. They are for all time. They can never be outgrown. No dispensation, while the world stands, and continues what it is, can ever raise us above the reach or the need of them. They describe every spiritual vicissitude, they speak to all classes of minds, they command every natural emotion. They are penitential, jubilant, adorative, deprecatory; they are tender, mournful, joyous, majestic, soft as the descent of dew, low as the whisper of love, loud as the voice of thunder, terrible as the Almightiness of God! The effect of some of them in the temple service must have been immense. Sung by numbers carefully 'instructed,' and accompanied by those who could play 'skilfully;' arranged in parts, for

109

'courses' and individuals, who answered each other in alternate verse: various voices, single or combined, being

'lifted up,' sometimes in specific and *personal* expression, as the high service deepened and advanced; priests, Levites, the monarch, the multitude—there would be every variety of 'pleasant movement,' and all the forms and forces of sound, personal recitative, individual song, dual and semi-choral antiphonal response, burst and swell of voice and instruments, attenuated cadence, apostrophe and repeat, united. full, harmonious combinations. With such a service, and such psalms, it was natural that the Hebrews should love with enthusiasm and learn with delight their national anthems, songs, and melodies; nor is it surprising that they were known among the heathen as a people possessed of these treasures of verse, and devoted to their recitation by tongue and harp. Hence it was that their enemies required of them (whether in seriousness or derision it matters not), *the words* of a song,' and said, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'"

The many sided preacher—take another characteristic—in the Domestic delineation and instruction, he frequently put into his sermons: to this department belong, especially, his discourses on the Book of Proverbs; he certainly did not confine his attentions wholly to Men and Young Men, as though he supposed they only had the making of the world. He was, in a very gifted sense, the Young Woman's preacher too. He spoke to her in no fastidious, lackadaisical tone: no affected tones of superiority nor of sentiment; he spoke to her like a brother. He often made his hearers smile while developing his

---

110

ideas of Domestic life; Domestic economy for young women, and civil, social, and Political economy for young men, were subjects upon which he often dilated. He believed in the power of woman over society. Women loved and revered their teacher. His "Christian Spinster," and "Hebrew Wife," were from a series of

discourses. When published, he gave a copy of each to all the women of his congregation; they are full of quaint remark, and homely beauty. The following are extracts:—

AN IRISH PROVERB.

"I think it is the Irish that have the proverb, '*A man must ask his wife's permission to be rich.*' This is true in all cases—and such cases are most numerous—in which a competence is to be *saved* and not *made*. It is to be admitted, indeed, that many men are very blameable in not making their wives acquainted with their actual circumstances when these circumstances are seriously affected. There is a great want of moral courage in such cases—a denial of conjugal confidence, and a cruelty and a wrong inflicted on the innocent. When the crisis comes, and the astonished wife wakes up to the reality of ruin, a worse reality than that awaits her; when she discovers, to her dismay, that for months, perhaps years, things had changed, and that she had been suffered to go on all the time in a style and at an expenditure which she fully believed were justified by her husband's circumstances, and which she would have been prompt to alter had she been told that they were not. She is perhaps thought of and spoken about in society as if she had caused, or had helped to accelerate her husband's misfortune; which

misfortune, in some cases, might have been prevented, or would have been diminished, if that husband had done *justice* to his wife's understanding; if he had placed in her that confidence which would have saved him from concealed and solitary suffering before the event, and from self-reproach after its occurrence. The model woman, then, described in the text is, in respect to her mode of expenditure, and her profitable merchandise, a model as to a *principle*. She teaches the possibility of combining elegance, comfort, and economy, in the management of

a house, the importance of frugal and provident habits along with present appropriate appearances, and the necessity of wives concurring with their husbands, sympathising with their object, and aiding them to achieve it, when they wish and endeavour, like prudent men, to keep preparing for increased expenses, for possible or expected future wants; for the advancement of their children, and the evening of their age. There must be, moreover, the conscientious discharge of maidenly duties. It is the good *daughter* and good *sister* that may be expected to become the exemplary wife. Those who have failed in one relation can hardly be expected to be successful in another; while those who have fulfilled first duties may be confidently counted on for any that succeed. Just views of the greatness of life, and of the serious responsibilities of marriage and maternity, are also important to be invited and cherished, though the young heart may rather, perhaps, ponder than speak of them. In this way, you may depend upon it, the woman before us became what she was. The *basis* of all matronly excellence was laid in the virtues and piety of her youth.

112

She looked forward to the fulfilment of the great 'mission' of her sex; prepared for its demands, in some things, with conscious intention, though in respect to others she was *being* prepared for it without this—by the exercise of faculty for the pleasure it imparted, and the cheerful fulfilment of the ordinary duty of the passing day. She had power over herself to reject the unworthy, however plausible; married like a woman of piety and sense; committed herself to a man of honour, goodness, intelligence, and religion, scorning the idea of being fascinated by a spendthrift, a rake, or a fool."

A MODEL WOMAN.

"She does not choose, either, in her more intimate social relationship to be a plaything or a toy. She knows

better than to fancy that it is the privilege of womanhood to be weak and helpless; to be incapable of doing anything for themselves; to be ignorant of common, domestic duties—or to be always ill—or to live on the attentions, and to exact the service, of a previous period. To be delicate and fragile, and to be upheld and sheltered, and to be petted and indulged, as if it were an evil to set foot to the ground or face to the weather, may do all very well for a little while; but men get tired of this—it is not of a piece with the rough task work they have to attend to in the world; they come to feel that they want in a wife some thing more than can be strung into a song or set to music, and something certainly very different from an everlasting appeal to tenderness and compassion. In the prose history and real every-day battle of life, while there is plenty of the material of true poetry, this will always be best

113

enjoyed when it is found associated with the 'sinews of war.' The romance will change to the ridiculous or the tragic if there is not in both the personages of the story an enduring basis of earnest strength. Men need, in a world like ours, women for their companions who have good sense and everyday knowledge—who have tact and judgment—who can manage well—can control expense and make their accounts 'come right;' and though these may seem very unsentimental and unpoetical virtues, they are those on which much of the poetry of life depends—of that life, at least, which is lived in houses and is not merely to be found in books. The woman before us knew all this, and with her strong will and resolute character firmly pursued what she felt to be the duties of what God had made *hers*. With all this, however, as we shall see presently, she was a thorough woman—soft, feminine, loving, attractive. Her portrait has as much beauty as power. If the bones are iron the flesh is velvet. 'Honour' is her clothing as well as 'strength.'"

THE OCCUPATION OF THE HEBREW WIFE.

"Woollen and linen fabrics, however, can now be purchased both cheaper and better than they can be made, and hence the hands of the females of a family are set at liberty for other occupations. The *principle,* however, that I wish you to notice as running through the whole of the Scriptural picture of domestic industry is this: *the reality of the work and the earnestness and decision with which it is attended to.* The woman before us does not choose 'to eat the bread of idleness.' She has no idea that she has married a husband to support in inactivity,

8

114

or to find money for the payment of those who are to do everything for her. Her attention to work is not pretence, it is no mere listless amusement—a sort of elegant idling that means nothing, a constant expenditure of time and labour, material and skill, or what is little better than industrious trifling. She works well and earnestly. 'She girds her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.' She rises early, proceeds upon a plan, has the work of the day arranged clearly before her, is never in a hurry, never in a muddle, everything is done with *quiet force;* her husband and children know nothing of the machinery—have no annoyance from its din and dust, but all the enjoyment of the silent and steady production of its results. Now, without in the least recommending this woman as a model, *in respect to the actual nature of her employments,* we do beseech you to study the *principle* which underlies them all; and, whatever you have to do —whatever be your work, according to modern customs and habits—see to it that it *is* work, something real, useful, and dignified, and do it 'with all your might.'"

The preacher began his work at a time when, usually, to *read* sermons in the pulpit was accounted an unpardonable sin; what was called *the lecture*—an occasional, but not at all uncommon exercise—might be read; but the reading of an ordinary sermon would have made all the deacons look grave, and have extracted "great searchings of heart" from the formidable row of old women, whose approval or disapproval, in those days, constituted the very thermometer of pulpit success. I do not think we will smile at this last altogether; those old women, who

---

115

sat like the very *Fates* of a congregation, and very frequently snipped a reputation with their fearful Atropos scissors, were very shrewd judges of the depths of experience, of the soundness of theology, and the general usefulness of the ministrations; we do not think the less of Philip Doddridge, or Jonathan Edwards, because we read that when the "burden laid upon them was greater than they could bear," they started away from their books and studies, on a round of visits to their old women. A really sanctified and converted "Mrs. Poyser"—and the character is not very uncommon—might do any man or minister good, with her familiar talk. However that might be, the old women did not like read sermons; I do not know that they like them any better now, and few great pulpit successes have been achieved in spite of the reading. Chalmers read—read, as we should say, slavishly—but his vehement words rolled and foamed along like a torrent, literally *foamed;* splashing and spitting over all in his neighbourhood. McAll read some of his greater pieces; Melville always read. Reading has now become general. Throughout all his best days, Mr. Binney *spoke;* usually, not a shred of a note before him. Of course, such a method has its penalties as well as its powers; it is admirably well when the man is perfectly happy. and all things in the congregation are

harmonious with his own mind; but it is a remarkable thing that, young as he was before he came to London, he had discussed within himself the whole question of the *reading* or *speaking* sermons, and he gave the verdict, in his "Life of Stephen Morell," in favour of the former practice, and here is what he said in 1826:—

8—2

116

"I deny not that preaching is better adapted than reading to promote popular excitement, and to gratify, by the captivating excursions of eloquence; but this is not the question. To aim at the last is sinful; and to bestow supreme attention on the first is not much better. A person, simply desirous of religious benefit, will soon become disgusted and. dissatisfied with both. The question seeks the best method for regular and habitual instruction, so as to ensure the greatest sum of good upon the whole. That an orator may impart more pleasure, and produce stronger emotion, is not to be denied; but that he will do more permanent good is, I believe, as false in fact as it is improbable in theory. That an extemporary preacher will often surpass the reader of sermons in animation and vivacity may be granted. He will sometimes surpass himself. There are seasons of free and felicitous feeling, moments of unusual intellectual enlargement, when the speaker, rising into rapture, pours forth the stream of argument and emotion—feels as if he were the instrument, and nothing but the instrument, of some higher intelligence, and is himself, perhaps, positively surprised by the vigour of his conceptions and the intensity of his appeals. But then this cannot be frequent; and, if it were, still it is not worth the price at which it is procured, for he will be far oftener *beneath* himself—beneath what he ought to be, as the regular instructor of others; and beneath what he would be, were he encouraged, in general, to read his

discourses. It is not necessary for a written composition to be tame, or its delivery inanimate. It may be written with freedom and force, with vigorous images, and fervid declamation; it may be composed for the hearing of

117

numbers, and not as for individual private perusal; and then, if delivered with the earnestness of nature, sincerity, and zeal—I do not say there will be the grace and polish of the finished elocutionist—but there will be something far surpassing such useless accomplishments. The power of sustaining attention will seldom be *less,* while the sum of good, the order and propriety of the instruction conveyed, will, on the whole, be *more* than that secured by the general employment of the opposite instrument."

I do not believe Thomas Binney would have been at all the man we knew beneath that name had he *read* his sermons—we should have lost the orator. Reading charms from nervousness, and nervousness is the charm of the pulpit. Reading produces self-possession, but there is another thing equally desirable in the pulpit—self-abandonment; and the people miss the preacher's eye when it is fixed on paper. Ordinarily, Mr. Binney seemed to hold himself in considerable self-possession; but it was a curious thing, sometimes, to see him working his way through an argument, apparently not quite certain where he was going, or what he was doing; picking up a word just dropped, running his hand through his hair, hastily; throwing out his long right arm, the thumb closed upon the two fore-fingers, yet, evidently, with the sense in him that he was catching some fleeting thing, then the more still and quiet sense that he had it to his satisfaction, the left hand brought forward, and the fingers of the other hand resting upon it, as sentence after sentence cleared out into the light, and revealed that he had now made his way. Then the start back, the glance round to the gal-

118

lery, usually to the right; and the close of that portion of the discourse reached, a deep sigh, sent forth from the chest, as of one who said, "What a mercy I have got through that, at last!" indicating, too, that, perhaps, even then, the heart felt its insufficiency for the weight of the work which pressed upon it, as one has said, like a panting engine all but unequal to bring the long train into the station. All this would have been missed had the discourse been read, and, in truth, the read discourse can very seldom rise to the height of oratory, because, whilst it perfects the *æsthetic,* it subdues the *human* in the speaker.

And then there was another eminent attribute he possessed as a preacher which could never have manifested itself had he read—Humour. He was the most charming humourist in the pulpit of our time; of course, to many this must seem a most questionable kind of excellence. The author of "The Lamps of the Temple" enters into a lengthy defence of Humour in the pulpit, in forming his estimate of Thomas Binney; and he vindicates its exercise by a reference to the distinguished names of Latimer and South. His words need not be quoted here; it is sufficient to say that Humour gave a very considerable point to a great deal that went on in the Weigh House pulpit. Something much broader than a smile frequently irradiated the faces of the congregation, because the man was free there; and it must be confessed the swift impressibleness of his own nature often found him very much at the mercy of a fancy that shot up within him, or circumstances happening around him. Humour and Human, etymologically, are the same—they are twins. He who has the one is the other; and hence he had a

119

quick eye for incongruities, and it was not very certain, as his people very well knew, on all occasions, what was

coming next. Sitting in the front of the gallery at the Weigh House one Sunday morning, some twenty-five years since, was a burly, farmer-like looking sort of man, who—probably the leader of some small village or little town chapel—had in his visit to London been drawn to hear the famous preacher at the Weigh House. The preacher arrived at the close of a department of his discourse. As usual, he took a long pause; the people, too, took breath. Our friend the farmer drew from his pocket his handkerchief, and upon it

> "Blew a blast, so loud and dread
> Were ne'er prophetic words so full of—"

well, say impressiveness. The achievement startled the preacher; he looked at him, but his auditor had not done yet; there rang forth another peal; the preacher looked again, the whole congregation looked; you never knew a clarion like that sounded twice without a third; it came; our friend composed himself. During this time, the preacher was looking at him, and waiting till such time as the hush of silence should fall over the startled scene; *it* came, "*and now,*" he said, "I think we can go on to the third particular;" but the allusion was so utterly unmistakeable, that the "*now*" had to be suspended for another moment, while the audience collected itself, not only from the shock of wonder, but of risibility. He had such a human manner that he deceived his hearers; they often did not know that they were in a place of worship listening to a sermon. So highly oratorical at times, his talk was

120

frequently so colloquial. Before I heard Mr. Binney, I had never heard the colloquial in the pulpit; of course, it was to me an experience of altogether a new kind and style of public speech; it really justified, in his instance, the use of the designation given, so far as I can see, without

much propriety,—to the orations of Lacordaire, Felix, and Hyacinthe, in Notre Dame, of "*Conferences.*" People frequently so felt that they were being talked to pleasantly, familiarly; hence, I dare say, it was that once—one Sunday evening—the place was thronged, the aisles crammed, the children's gallery full, the preacher closed his sermon —it was one of a course of lectures on some of the popular aspects of the infidelity of the time; he was about to give out a hymn, when some man—a working man—evidently thinking that great injustice had been done by the representation of some of his principles, exclaimed in an aggrieved, loud tone, "*But, Master Binney!*" It was not the flash of a second; the preacher sent his eye out straight at him, and saying, "Now, my good man, don't stand up there and make a fool of yourself; if you fancy you've got anything to say, come down here and say it to me in the Vestry—such and such a hymn." The audience rose, the singing went on, the man looked round about him perfectly scared and bewildered to find himself transfixed so instantly. I suppose this is what the irreverent might call a shot from Coward's Castle, but it was the house of God, and it was Divine service; it seemed wondrously sensible at the time, and the effect was instantaneous.

Such, then, was something of the manner and method pursued by the man who has been naturally regarded as

---

121

the foremost orator of Independency in his day; certainly, he was a man of whom eminently it might be said his "eyes were in his head."

We have had repeated to us a tradition of our preacher. Called somewhere to address some students, a very demure and well-intentioned brother was fated to precede him. He divided his homily into two parts—"And first," said he, "young men, remember that you are to be men of one book, the Bible; that is the book you have to read

and expound, and you must know no other; and remember, as you pass through great cities, pray, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;' let your eyes look straight on; the shops are nothing to you, their shows, their prices, and their gauds," &c., &c. When Mr. Binney rose, he said he was "so unfortunate as to have to give them advice exactly opposite to that which they had just heard; hence," he said, "although the reading of other men may be slight, for amusement or professional, you must read everything. Look at all books—bad books, that, if necessary, you may brand them, or point the bad page to the readers of them—good books, that you may commend them; then, as you walk through the streets, having prayed in the study, keep your eyes open there; look at all things—prices and people—how they buy and how they sell—the sellers and the purchasers—the hours of labour and the hours of rest; try to look at all; try to know the whole tariff of trade; and do not be afraid to find in it all matter for your sermons. You are teachers! Commend 'yourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' Know, then, the world's thoughts and the world's ways, that you may be the world's masters

---

122

and ministers." These words must have greatly astonished the first tedious brother, but how much more human and good!

His very nervousness was an element of power. I was present at an ordination service, many years since—and there are others, whom we know, living, who were also present—when a curious incident occurred, singularly illustrative of his power when promptitude and self-possession held in check the nervousness of the moment. It was in a chapel near London: an evening service, on a very unpropitious night. In the middle of his charge to the people, Mr. Binney made some apparently very irrelevant remarks upon the duty of Christian courtesy in the house of God,

commenting upon the frequent inattention in permitting persons to stand in a place of worship when there was room near at hand in the pews; and he would cite, he said, an instance from his own experience. He was preaching, he said, in a chapel, not overcrowded, and in one of the aisles of the chapel stood a young woman, apparently not too strong or robust, leaning on a pew in which were two young men—only two young men—and "would you believe it?" said the preacher, "there they sat, and never opened the pew-door for the young woman; and there was no occasion for them to vacate their seats, although that might not have been *too* much in a crowded chapel—had they been gentlemen, and had she been a servant girl. No! there she stood, and *there* they sat! How strange the coincidence," continued the preacher; "it was just such a chapel as this; the aisle was just like yonder aisle; ay! it was just this day of the week too, just this day of the month—yes, and this very

123

year, *and—and* in this very place; it is this very night: *there* the *aisle! there* the *pew!*"

Happy will he be who shall collect together all the odds and ends of this kind which are spread, we believe, over all England, about Thomas Binney; for he was odd, and he had his oddities—unpremeditated queernesses constantly waited upon him. In later years he never wore the gown in the pulpit; but surely gown was never carried up by preacher in more singular fashion than upon one Sunday morning, at Dr. Raleigh's, in Canonbury, when the deacons had seen him fairly lodged in the pulpit, and the audience expected him to commence the service. The Hare-court pulpit has an open railing, and Mr. Binney was seen to hurry out of the pulpit, and presently to return with one or two gowns, which he proceeded to arrange and fasten before the rails. If the "Lord took not pleasure in the legs of a man" it amounted to an argument prohibiting

that pleasure to the people. Anyhow his nervousness was excited, and he could have no pleasure in the services until the cause of the nervousness was removed. But the stories of such nervousness in the pulpit are innumerable. I was myself the subject of it once, about thirty years since. I found my way to the Weigh House one Sabbath morning just before the sermon was commencing. I was standing in the aisle. The singing was just closing, the text was announced, the sermon commenced. He saw me standing in the aisle. "Put that young man into a pew," he said. Sometimes his recognitions were not so courteous. Once, preaching the anniversary sermon of Cheshunt College, On the moving of one of the ministers beneath him, he said, "There now! I forget it. The creak-

---

124

ing of that man's boots has put what I had to say quite out of my mind." It was at another ordination service—a morning service—he had to give what is called the charge to the minister, before which comes what is called a statement of the nature and constitution of a Christian Church. The brother who did this last was not only very long-winded, but dry, dreary, desultory, and doleful—perhaps not altogether displeased with the opportunity of shedding the coruscations from his darkness over the mind of so unusual an auditor as Mr. Binney. But his distinguished hearer was very fidgety, amounting even to the being badly behaved. His own deliverance was to come shortly, and this was not a nice prelude to it. He stretched his legs, he gaped —such a gape!—but at last the end came. He rose to his full height. As the speaker said "*Amen,*" said Mr. Binney, "*That's a merry!*" and darted away into the vestry.

The author of "Lectures on the Vocation of the Preacher"★ if compares Mr. Binney to Father Lacordaire. He says, "I should astonish some hearers, and perhaps

make Count Montalembert indignant, by describing the Father as a Thomas Binney with an additional flash of quicksilver in the blood, a higher fence of solitude in the life, and a broader platform from which to throw his voice over the church. Greatly alike in this, that they have both sought to bring themselves into vigorous relation to the intelligence of the age." And I may, perhaps, without impertinence,—availing myself of a right vin-

⋆ Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets: Lectures on the Vocation of the Preacher.

125

dicated by no other than Archbishop Whately—quote two or three paragraphs from the work to which I have referred.

"It is, I presume, a fact, that genius of the highest order seldom finds its way into the pulpit; it is true now, as ever, that still 'the foolishness of men' is the channel for 'the wisdom of God.' In the world without the Church there are so many sources of fame and emolument—

> "'Man may range
> The Court, the camp, the vessel, and the mart—
> Sword, gown, gain, glory: offer in exchange
> Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
> And few there are whom these will not estrange.
> Man has all these resources,'

and none of them point especially to the pulpit at all, and certainly not to the Dissenting pulpit. The pulpit of the Church of England has ever been, but for its friction against Dissenting power, notoriously feeble in comparison with its great power in the cloister and the press. With a few fine exceptions, the great men of the Church of England seem to lay aside all the peculiar attributes of

their genius as they enter the pulpit. There are splendid exceptions; but considering that the Church exists to teach, how very few the exceptions are. And it must be further said that a certain restrictiveness has done much to keep down the freedom of soul, which is the inborn heritage of genius. In very rare instances only will genius succeed in the pulpit, perhaps never in the smaller country town; there is more hope for it even in the small country village, where departure from an established and conventional order of expression is regarded

126

with more charity and toleration. Usually, in the small town, the people require a solemn homage to ancient platitudes; and eschew all new experiences; and suspect the very soundness of the faith if it be proved by an argument too original or daring in its colours of texture. Hence it has come to pass, that many people, cultured people, suppose that genius has no home in the pulpit, and some that it has no business there. And yet, how rich in all that belongs to the highest moods of human soul is the pulpit literature of our land. Surely, the man who should closely look through its lore would find no lack of the purest gold; if in its pages could not be found the undisciplined fancy of the master of fiction (though even this questionable faculty is not wanting), here are noblest tones of poetry, the most subtle and profound touches of feeling, the most intimate acquaintance with the ways and workings of the human mind and heart; here stand in the pulpit library the words of the masters of sentences, the words of the wise; here are the ornate, and the more stately and cold, the monarchs of parable and illustration, and those who follow the lofty and consecutive chain of thought to its wondrous and unexpected close; and if the pulpit literature of the present age do not equal that of the past, it is not wanting in genius;

some recent additions giving us great hopes for the future."

"It is said when St. Francis entered a town to preach, all the clergy went forth to meet him, accompanied by the youth, the women, and the children, waving their branches of greeting triumphantly before him. The preaching of the minister of the Weigh House would

---

127

never awaken any such homage; but then St. Francis spoke to a larger congregation, as when he began his great sermon in the square in Spoleto with the words '*Angeli, homines, Dæmones;*' the preacher who omits all apostrophe to the angels and devils, and contents himself with talking to men, cannot expect so mighty a mustering. Much more after the order of homage accorded to Mr. Binney, was that paid to St. Jerome; when he preached in Padua and Milan, and other cities; the doctors and masters ceased their lectures, saying to their scholars, 'Go, hear the preacher of the best sentences and the worst rhetoric; gather the fruit, and neglect the leaves;, and that is a better compliment than to say, 'Go, and hear what a rustling there is among the leaves, and as to the fruit, if there be any, try to get it.'

'For to Mr. Binney's style we may apply a remark by way of characterisation he has himself used in prefacing one of his discourses:—'It is of that rough, rude order—that artificial and somewhat exaggerated sort of utterance, which *I desigmdly adopt* when writing what is to be read to a mixed multitude.' Artificial, in the ordinary sense of the world, his style call never be said to have been, only in the fact of a conscious usage of forms of expression, which it is well known will strike and tell. It is often the case that a man describing a style of thought or argument, describes his own; this, too, he has done when he says—'An illustration is not a mere prettiness—an ornamental phrase that might be left out without detri-

ment to the train of thought—it is something which really *lights up* that train of thought, and enables the reader or hearer to *see* the aim as well as feel the force of

128

the logic, when the understanding having done its work. passion and genius shall crown the whole with some vivid illustration, which shall make it stand out with a distinctness that shall never be forgotten! *It is one great faculty of the mind, holding up a lighted torch to the workmanship of another.*' This is a very fair description of all the greater efforts of our writer, and of his usual style in the pulpit. It is a rare thing indeed to find in union such a force of thought, so wholly free from dialectic bands, and winged by so much passion, yet with no action, ever breaking against *the calm* and dignity of the lofty purpose; there are no prettinesses in the style—no elegant tropology, or fancy dandyisms of dress and adornment. Everything there seems necessary—passion and thought hold each other in check, and so produce a truly admirable unity; hence thought never seems cold, because it is winged by genius; and the genius is never undisciplined or wild, because it is compelled to keep the pace of the more serious and orderly thought.

"This orderly procession of thought leading on and up the attendant train of all the faculties, is the great charm of the preaching of Thomas Binney. and it may be said he is only happy when he sees clearly; and happy are those moments to the hearers, too, when the understanding and the emotions are *en rapport.* The reason at any time any speech is uneffective upon the hearers, is because either the statement is not clearly seen or clearly felt—with Mr. Binney, eminently, not to see clearly is to be unhappy in ministration. But all speakers who speak not merely words of rate, must well know that state in which the mind is pursuing its way in public, attempting

129

to set forth thoughts, perhaps, rather pondered, than either perceived or felt; the mind arrives at a certain stage of its journey, where it drops the spark which sets fire to the concealed, the hitherto unknown wealth—there are juices and spices for the incense—there is fuel for the flame, there is oil for the lamp. Admirably has Mr. Binney himself described this state when he speaks of ministers 'who are never visited by gushes of light irradiating the word—never filled with emotions of solemn rapture from the vivid impressions and enjoyment of its truths.' The argument is in a blaze, and this is indeed the value of preparation, clear, long, and earnest, for the pulpit, or for the great occasion; then if the mind be free, or capable of freedom, and the self-possession of the soul be equal to its instincts, then the notes and papers.. all discarded, or only in brief prompting hints before the eye—then when long preparation has toned down all the superfluous and, meretricious adornments, or appendages of the subject, *then* how sublime is the power! Of course the free mind, the heart that lives its teachings and its uttered impulses, to whom it is impossible to preach traditions, must often fail—fail perhaps beneath the very weight of 'the burden of the Word of the Lord.' But even in the failure of such souls there is the sign of that which is greater than the finest successes of other men; even as when Robert Hall broke down in the pulpit in his first efforts, his failure sent old Dr. Ryland to his knees in prayer, that so promising a spirit might be kept for the Church.

"We remember to have heard of the subject of our sketch, that he had engaged to preach on some very

130

special occasion in one of the great towns of the north. He went to the house of his host, and having continued with the family till they were retiring to rest, he then intimated a wish to be shown into the kitchen, and left alone with the fire, a Bible, and tobacco; and in the morning he would speak to no one, but would breakfast by himself; and at the chapel—it was a morning service—he would speak to no one, but went straightforward to the pulpit: and that sermon is described, by very competent judges. as at once one of the most commanding and electrical of his efforts. Sometimes, on such occasions, his sermons are very long-two hours in length—but thus sacredly and seriously prepared; the order of the thought established in the mind, and the emotions felt. but held in leash, ready for the spring. Surely this gives some conception of the way in which men may preach; and while there is, perhaps, no necessity that this should be the ordinary process of preparation, yet men who have really been prophets, and have had communion with souls, have usually prepared thus; and thus men must prepare if they would have their preaching to become a power. Hence, although Mr. Binney's books are mostly small, they are thought-books. A sermon is sometimes a closely compacted compendium of the process of thought, and the delineation of truth on the subject of which he treats. Far from being mere sermons in the ordinary sense—that is, a slight, sketchy illustration of a text—they often, like the sermons of Barrow, exhaust a subject, thus—'The Law our Schoolmaster;' thus 'Salvation by Fire and Salvation in Fullness;' thus 'Life and Immortality brought to Light;' each is an edifice of Christian

131

theology. But Mr. Binney rears for himself; scholastic scientific theology is unknown here; the preacher's

soul, the Bible, and the Spirit, build together and alone."

And, of course, he believed in the pulpit—believed that it should be a fountain of refreshment; a battery of electrical power; and, in those great days of his, went into it determined to do his best to make it so. As he said, in a sermon preached at the Wesleyan City-road Chapel, "I do not believe the pulpit to be dead, and therefore I will not consent to hold an inquest over its remains. I think tbat the pulpit is still alive, and that it will be felt to be a power still."

When I commenced writing this chapter I intended, before closing it, to present two or three digests and outlines of sermons which seem to me eminently complete and effective as illustrative of his manner in sustaining a consecutive argument, and his power in dealing with a very tender range of exalted emotions; but I must not attempt this now. I will, however, refer, for the latter, to his ineffably beautiful sermon, "Gethsemane." Others beside myself, it would seem, have felt this to be a very beautiful and complete piece; at any rate, I know of its having been delivered in several pulpits by other lips than those of its rightful possessor. To have heard it from Mr. Binney, I think, must have been a great experience: it throbs with emotion; and not only so, but it most reverently winds its way into some of the most sacred secrets of our Lord's most afflictive hour. I give an extract or two; but the sermon must be taken as a whole,

132

in order that its perfect chrysolite-like beauty may be felt.

JESUS IN GETHSEMANE.

"There are men so formed and constituted that they care nothing about, and feel no want of, the sympathy of others. They feel a strong personal independence—a sufficiency in themselves for anything they have to accomplish or endure, to which the company or concurrence of others can add nothing, and which even the opposition and ridicule cannot diminish. There are other men, more distinguished by tenderness than strength, whose susceptibilities are acute and keen, tenderly alive to insult or friendship, and by whom the *sympathies* of friendship are greatly valued as a frequent source of consolation and vigour. This latter class are not *incapable* of acting alone. They *can* accomplish unaided labours, and endure solitary suffering; but they cannot do either from natural and constitutional inflexibility; they need, in order to do it, to feel laid upon them the stern and strong necessity of *duty,* to be constantly kept up by this; and even then to be without the company and concurrence, deprived of the sympathy, or exposed to the opposition of others, is exquisitely painful. To this latter class Jesus, considered as a man, belonged. As a man His natural susceptibilities and feelings were acute and tender. I think it likely that there was something of elaborate fineness and perfection about His bodily structure, that not only rendered it singularly sensible to pain, but gave increased intensity to the feelings of His exquisitely soft and loving spirit. It is intimated that He was keenly sensible to 'shame' and

---

133

insult. He *felt* 'reproach,' and He clung to the society and sympathy of His friends. They were endeared to Him by 'continuing with Him in His temptations.' He especially and anxiously wished them to be near when His Borrow was great upon Him, and by this anxiety indicated *its* greatness. He knew, indeed, that the hour would come, and was very near, when they would be, stricken and

scattered, and would leave Him alone; and, though He felt that He would still have the Father with Him, so appalling were the first approaches of His agony, so fearful the alarm and agitation of His spirits, that He seemed to dread the solitary conflict, and besought the three to remain nigh. '*Tarry ye here and watch with Me.*'"

HIS SOUL WAS EXCEEDING SORROWFUL.

"The seat of His suffering was the *soul.* But then it is again and again affirmed that He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;' that He was 'without spot,' had no speck or stain of guilt upon His conscience, and *could* not be oppressed by any feeling of personal demerit. He had no frailty, no defect. He had never erred in thought, word, or deed. He had no conscious deficiencies to oppress Him—nothing to acknowledge and confess with shame; no necessity to pray for *mercy;* no iniquity to fill Him with terror at the thought of God. In spite of this, however, 'His *soul* was *troubled*'—was 'exceeding sorrowful even unto death;' overpowered and beset with bitter anguish.

"I know of no principle on which this mental suffering of a perfectly innocent and Holy Being can be rationally accounted for, except that which refers it to the fact of

---

134

His being a sacrificial and propitiatory victim. 'He bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows.' 'He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.' 'It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and put Him to grief; Jehovah laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' His mental sufferings were the *travail* of His soul—the pangs and throes through which a guilty and dead world might be re-born, and rise again to the life of God. 'He suffered the just for the unjust.' '*He* was made sin for us who knew no sin.' 'He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' 'By His stripes we are healed.'

"The great doctrine of redemption by sacrifice—'God setting forth His Son as a propitiation through faith in His blood'—appears to me to be distinctly stated in these and many similar passages of Scripture. We are redeemed from the penalty and power of sin 'by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' It is quite possible, we think, to show, by very sufficient and satisfactory arguments, the consistency of the doctrine of Atonement with right reason; and the necessity which there is, in the nature of things, and under the government of a Holy God, for some positive ground for the exercise of mercy, distinct from and additional to, both the repentance of the sinner and the paternal tenderness of the Divine mind. That part of the subject, however, we entirely waive at present, and, taking the fact as we have stated it, that Christ suffered as a propitiatory victim, we ask if any account can be given, on *this ground,* of the causes and the nature of this extraordinary *mental* agony and terror?

135

"The Scriptures, I think, seem to refer to three sources of this distress and anguish. There was some mysterious conflict with the great adversary of God and man, from whose tyranny He came to redeem us. When discomforted in the temptation, the devil, it is said, 'departed from Him *for a season;*' and in Gethsemane he seems to have returned. It was then, as Christ Himself expressed it, 'the hour of *the power of darkness*.' I know nothing of the mode of the tempter's approach, or of the nature of the hellish suggestions by which he disturbed the serenity of Jesus; I do not pretend to understand the *possibility even* of the thing itself; but that it *was,* the Scripture just quoted seems to assert. Here, then, is one source of mental conflict. The subtlety and malice of the devil—the combined forces of the bottomless pit—were brought against Him, and in some way, impossible to be explained,

overwhelmed Him with darkness, discomposed His spirit, and alarmed His soul by infamous temptations. Then it is also said that it 'pleased the *Father* to bruise Him and to put Him to grief;' that '*Jehovah* made His soul an offering for sin;, that *He* called for the sword, and awoke it against the Shepherd, and pierced and smote Him. There was some mysterious infliction direct from the hand of God—some wonderful withdrawal of His countenance and complacency, or at least of their sensible manifestation; fire descended from heaven to consume the sacrifice.

"Again, I add, I can explain nothing; I think the *fact* rests clearly upon Scriptural statements, but I can go little beyond its simple assertion, that little, however, perhaps the next particular will lead us to suggest. It is said, then, in the third place, that our iniquities were laid upon

---

136

Him, and that in some senses, He bore the curse and penalty of transgression. I need hardly say that we reject the notion that He *literally* endured the punishment of sin; this would have been impossible, since that includes actual *remorse,* and Christ could never feel that He *was* a sinner, though He was treated AS if *He were* (nor would it have consisted with the nature of the Gospel, and the display of mercy, since the *literal* penalty exacted, *mercy* would be impossible, and the sinner might demand his release from justice); still, there *was* suffering in the mind of Christ flowing into it from human guilt; His pure mind had such an apprehension of sin, such a view of all its vile and malignant properties, its possible attributes and gigantic magnitude so rose and spread before Him, that he started as in amazement from the dreadful object, and trembled, and was terrified exceedingly. Sin was laid upon Him, and it sank and crushed Him, and, in some sense, its poison and bitterness entered into His soul. The conclusion to which I am led, I confess, is *this,* that, while, as I have said, I deem it impossible for Jesus

to have endured that *literal* remorse which is the natural and direct punishment of sin; yet, I do think that His agony of mind was the *nearest to this* which it was possible for Him to experience. He was so affected by the pressure of sin upon Him on all sides, that He felt something of the terror, anguish, and agitation of a burdened conscience and wounded spirit. His mind was in a tempest when His agony was at its height; it wrought upon His frame till His sweat was blood; the arrows of God seemed to have entered into His soul; He had all the appearance of a sinner stricken by his sins. I again repeat, that this

---

137

could not *literally* be the case; I only say that it was the *mares!* to it that the Christ could feel, or God inflict; and I see not that there is any more mystery in something of this nature being felt, than in the fact of a perfectly pure and spotless being suffering at all."

As an illustration of his other manner, the sustained argument running through the whole discourse, I had thought of selecting "Christ Demonstrating to the Sadducees concerning the Doctrine of the Resurrection." It is a very fine and connected chain; it was preached many years before his celebrated sermon, "Life and Immortality." In it he anticipated some of the things he said in the later piece, and, great as was the last, I have often thought that some of the passages in the earlier performance had a greater, keener, and—I hope it does not seem out of place in such a connection to say—a more highly dramatic power. I think the first piece quoted here vindicates that expression. The reader will be able to compare the following passage on "The Four Adversaries of Man" with its fellow passage in the subsequent sermon. But, indeed, the first, like the last, flamed like a revelation.

THE FOUR GREAT ADVERSARIES OF MAN.

"This is what we call the Gospel. Christ came, so to speak, not merely to preach the Gospel; in my view He came to *be* the Gospel. He came not merely to convey thought, to teach something that was to come into my understanding; He came to *do* something, to accomplish something. And my faith is to receive this fact of what

---

138

He accomplished; and, if I understand that, I shall find that that great fact throws light upon the universe of God, and upon all the laws and principles and views by which God acts in relation to His creature.

"The Apostle Paul puts the matter in an interesting and plain manner, as it seems to me, in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. He says—Here is man, sinful man, guilty and dying man; holy is he to be a glorified immortal? The Apostle says—There are four enemies, *four great adversaries,* standing in the way and preventing it; and they are the *Grave, Death, Sin,* the *Law,* the image and manifestation of the infinite virtue and glorious perfections of God. There they are, all these four great adversaries, to keep the way to life, and to prevent man—sinful, guilty, and dying man—from becoming a glorified immortal. Now, what is to be done? The argument of the Apostle is this: and let me say, it is the whole revelation of the plan of mercy, the way to be saved, the propitiatory and sacrificial work of Christ, which is the Gospel in my estimation, and nothing else. What is to be done with these four adversaries? God could destroy by mere power, by mere force, the *Grave;* and He could call man up from the grave, though he were dead, and bid him live; but there would be *Death,* another adversary, ready to push him into the grave again. But God could destroy *that* by mere power, and by mere omnipotency He could give man to stand upon this earth of ours, an immortal man. Ah! but that is not the kind of immor-

tality Paul means, and not the kind of immortality we covet. Then the question comes—Could God, by mere power, destroy *Sin?* by mere omnipotency, by mere pre-

139

rogative, by saying, 'I am content to count it nothing; it is a violation of My law—what then? it shall be nothing; though man is thus covered over with guilt, chargeable with guilt, I will esteem it as nothing; by mere power I will extinguish it, it shall be nothing; and then let him become as pure as an angel, and immortal as Myself.' Ah! *could* God do that? People forget many times that there are limits to omnipotence. I think God could not do that; I think, in a moral affair, in being a matter of moral administration, God could not act by mere omnipotency, and that He could not pass over sin by a mere act of prerogative and good pleasure. God has, if I may so speak, the physical power to do many things, which He cannot do; He has the *physical* power to do wrong; He has the *physical* power to suspend all the laws of the universe, everything that produces order and harmony among the suns and systems and revolving globes of this great and wonderful theatre; He *could* suspend those laws, and thus throw suns, and. systems, and worlds, and comets into disorder, dashing against each other, the whole universe broken up. He *could* do that, He could suspend the laws of physical order, He has the power; but *would it become Him?* Would it dignify *Him.* in the view of intelligent natures, that He has made, and to whom He has given reason to judge, and to discern what is right and proper even in Him? Would it exalt and dignify *Him?* No; *therefore* we say *He could not do it, though* He has the physical power. And much more I believe, that He could not treat sin as nothing, or annihilate it by power, for that would be to suspend all the principles of moral harmony. If *He* were to put forth

140

His hand, by mere power, to destroy *Sin,* the same stroke would go through the *Law,* that other adversary standing 1here, the mirror of Himself, the representative of His own infinite excellence; He would. destroy and shatter that by the very act; it would be a suspension of all the principles and laws by which He reigns. Law, as we say, is above both God and man; and therefore He could not, by mere power, destroy sin. Hence the Gospel revelation is given; and the New Testament discovers the Son of God, manifested in the flesh, becoming a sin-offering, and, by a great redemptive act, presenting a sacrifice to God for sinful man, furnishing a satisfactory reason why God should be just, and the justifier of the ungodly. And so it is, that while sinful man comes and pleads that great act of Christ as the Lamb of God, God can pardon sin as a moral act. He can be just, and manifest His just and righteous law, at the very moment when He receives to His bosom the trembling and contrite penitent. And then, when *Sin* is thus got rid of, *Law,* unbroken and uninjured, comes to the side of man, and acquiesces in his deliverance, and in his becoming an immortal and holy creature in the presence of God. And thus, by a great moral act of His sacrificial work as our High Priest, Christ meets these two adversaries; and by power, by omnipotence, He will destroy the other two: for we look for the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, 'who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working, whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.' Thus, the resurrection of the dead, man becoming an immortal creature, is intimately associated with the redemptive act

141

of Christ, and the revelation in the Gospel of what He is as our Priest and our Atonement."

The following paragraphs are in harmony with that strain of meditation and teaching Mr. Binney liked to indulge, and very especially in his preaching to young men—that severe line of argument which illustrates the Calvinistic theology, and shows, whatever suspicions there may be to the contrary, how surely, like Thomas Carlyle, he hails from it in everything belonging to his teaching.

NOT ONE TITTLE OF THE LAW SHALL FAIL.

"'*If is easier for heaven and earth to pass.*' Just fetch an illustration, for a moment, from heaven. There are the heavenly bodies in their order and beauty and harmony, acting under the influence of law; but, you will remember that there may be considered to be something moral even in them, because the laws which produce the order and beauty, and preserve the regularity and harmony of the solar systems, are mirrors and manifestations of moral and spiritual things—the attributes and perfections of God—so that in proportion as you have a knowledge and can form a clear conception of the heavenly systems, your mind is impressed with their beauty and grandeur. and with the manner in which they illustrate the Divine wisdom and power. All are harmonious, because all are moving according to law which God has impressed upon them. But suppose all this to be set at nought; suppose the satellites to start off from the parent planets, the planets to move off whither they please, the suns of dif-

142

ferent systems to become wandering stars, a comet to dash off into system after system, deluging or burning the worlds which it meets on its way, and the whole thing to go to crash and confusion—do you think God could permit that? Even if there were no spectator of it but Himself, could He look with complacency upon it? But when He has a whole universe of intelligent, thoughtful, moral beings, that through and in this mirror can form

some conception of Him, could He suffer it to be broken and fractured in this way—the whole of His statutes set at nought, and Himself misrepresented? It is easier to conceive that God would give the whole of the heavenly bodies back to nothing than that His own law, or any tittle of it, should fail in any way.

"The same with respect to this earth. Here we are, under a great system of physical law, which we call nature. Day and night, morning and evening, the tides rise and fall. Certain seeds thrown into the earth give back their kind; labour devoted to the field is repaid; the earth neglected is covered with briars and thorns; fire burns; water refreshes; poison destroys, and so forth. Now, suppose all this were to be interfered with, and everything to be thrown into confusion. That one man, for instance, cultivated his field, and threw in grain, and, in spite of rain, and sunshine, and labour, he got poison, or nothing at all; while another man sowed nothing, and slept, and, when he waked, beheld his field covered with wheat: or that one man set fire to his house, and the fire burnt, and the house was not consumed, but was a very beautiful and picturesque thing, something very sentimental, something to make poetry about; while another

143

man built day after day, and night after night, most laboriously, and his work was continually being taken down, so that he could not get on. Now, only think of everything thus failing, and being forced into confusion, by the violation of these laws. We should not be able to anticipate; everything would be brought to a standstill; all hope would cease; the whole physical forces of the world around us would be, as it were, in enmity to us. Can you conceive that God would permit that? Why, He would sooner send the earth and all its contents to nothing, than that His laws should fail, or man be tantalised, or

Himself misrepresented, by their failure and opposite action.

"I know very well that there are some parts of the physical system which are pregnant with evil, such as storms, volcanoes, and so forth; but still they are parts of a system, and we can see that they work out good. Besides, we know them, we can understand them; but if they were to alter their conduct, if ships were to go down in a calm, and if storms were never to endanger anything, that would not do. There have been times, I know, in the history of the world in which there have been interferences of this kind. Iron has swum on the water; man has walked in fire, and not been burned; one has walked on the sea, and another has gone up to heaven in a chariot of fire. The fixed laws of the world have been set aside, but it was for a certain purpose. Many and many a great and mighty law may be interfered with, and seem to fail, so long as God has a purpose to accomplish, and man has a mission to him from God; but it would never do for such interferences to happen generally. We could

144

never get on if the whole daily government of everything around us were to be of this character—that any man, for instance, could rise up and bid the sun to stand still. Life would become a different thing; human beings would cease to be able to exercise prudence, discretion, forecast, or any of the great properties which are to be called forth."

THE LAW UNDER WHICH WE LIVE.

"The same with social life. Industry, probity, intelligence, uprightness, activity, labour, prudence, discretion, folly, vice, idleness, vanity, expensive habits, neglect of business, disrespect to employers, disobedience to parents. giving way to mere mirthful indulgence, frivolity, and pleasure—these things must all have their results. Young men, understand that this is a law, which is to be seen

illustrated by facts, every hour of every day, in life—that real character, upright, honourable principle, activity, industry, probity, temperance, and so forth, are the introduction and the seed to success in life, to advancement, and to the accumulation round about you of the respect of your fellows, and to the increase and the advance of the comforts which God vouchsafes to us, and which we enjoy; and, on the other hand, that the neglect and violation of these, the indulgence in what is merely frivolous or sensual, will, in the long run, affect character, and happiness, and fortune, and standing—yourselves, your children, your souls, your estate, your time, your eternity. That is the law. There are some exceptions, as we shall see by-and-by; but the great point is that which I have just named to you, depend upon it. Providence

145

(if I may use a very familiar, I hope not low illustration) keeps a store—a great mart of commodities. You young men come, and Providence says to you, "Here is reputation, advancement, wealth, honour, a calm conscience, and so on. I have all these for sale. I do not give them. I have given you something—I have given you being, thought, judgment, a head, a hand, a conscience, a capacity for activity and advancement; but these things I sell, and if you want them you must bring the price. You must bring your manly virtue, in your devotedness to habits of prudence, economy, and purity, keeping your feet from evil, cleansing your way, and cultivating everything by which you can come with tact, and talent, and activity, to do that work in life which Providence has allotted to you. Bring the price, and you shall have the thing; but do not steal it, or pretend to pay with bad money, as men sometimes do. Men sometimes defraud and steal, to get the thing, who have not purchased or earned it, or who have not given a fair price for it. These may get off for a time, but by-and-by

they will have some revelation to teach them that heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than one tittle of God's law, under which we live, shall fail. Providence will send His police after them, and apprehend them, and they shall learn, in the consciousness of their moral nature, in their shame at exposure, in the prison or the stocks, that Providence and nature cannot be defrauded, and that there is a law by which men must move forward in society, and honourably purchase and earn a thing before they can wear it with honour and satisfaction to themselves."

10

146

Passages lying before me, which I should like to quote. are so numerous that I know not where to stop, and yet in this department I must cease, for there are other aspects and points of view to be introduced; but, as the mind passes on and reviews its impressions, it recurs to so many recollections of the preacher's happy power—how happy, often, in the broken, abrupt, and unexpected natural apostrophe. How well I remember his touching description of the tired, sleeping factory girl startled by an imagination of the factory bell at half-past five on Sunday morning. "No, no," he exclaimed, "it was not the bell. Lie down again and rest, rest, poor child; it is God's day. Take a longer rest. No noise to-day of the shuttle and the loom." It had no connection with what had gone before further than that he had been congratulating labour on the possession of a day when there was a cessation from the tax: of toil.

Preaching on the midnight dissipations of London, quite suddenly, and with his own peculiar force, he exclaimed, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" And the impression produced was something

tingling and thrilling, albeit some might think, perhaps, not very reverent. Anyhow, it is well remembered by some whose names are of the best known connected with the Weigh House, as he introduced the watchman, dazed and stupid, beneath the confusion and clatter of carriages taking up their owners from the theatre and the ball, and the reeling of men home from hells and houses of dissipation, giving a fairly suggestive picture of London by night, and houses with their fronts off, exclaiming, "Watchman,

147

what of the night, *indeed?*" and following it with his long-protracted sigh.

But especially we love those pictures in which the humanising power of the preacher is seen shedding over his subject a pathos and a beautiful tenderness as melting as it was unsuspected. Who can forget that vivid picture in "Salvation by Fire" of

THE POOR CATHOLIC GIRL?

"Look at that poor Catholic girl there, doing her penance and counting her beads; repeating her 'aves' and saying her 'paternosters;' lighting a candle to this saint, or carrying her votive offering to another; wending her way in the dark, wet morning to early mass; conscientiously abstaining from flesh on a Friday; or shutting herself up in conventual sanctity, devoting her life to joyless solitude and bodily mortifications! She is imagining, perhaps, that she is piling up by all this a vast fabric of meritorious deeds, or at least of acceptable Christian virtue. She may expect on account of *it* to hear from the lips of her heavenly Bridegroom, 'Well done, good and faithful' one; 'enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' 'Thou shalt walk with Me in white, for thou art worthy.' *We,* however, believe that 'she labours in vain, and spends her strength for nought;' that she is building with 'wood, hay, and stubble;' and that the first beam of the light of eternity will set fire to her worthless structure, and reduce to

ashes the labours and sacrifices of her whole life! Be it so. Her '*work* may be burnt;' she may 'suffer *loss;*' but *she herself* may be mercifully '*saved.*' In the midst of all that mistaken devotedness to the gathering and amassing of

148

mere lumber as materials for building up a Divine life, even in connection with the strange fire of an erring devotion flaming up towards saints and Madonnas, there may be in her soul a central trust in the sacrifice and intercession of the 'one Mediator,' which shall secure the salvation of the superstitious devotee, at the very moment that she witnesses the destruction of her works. The illustration is an extreme one. I purposely select it because it is so. The greater includes the less."

It is possible that some readers may imagine that our conceptions of Mr. Binney's power and presence as a preacher are dictated by too partial a spirit. Some years since a little volume was issued, characterised by many of the traits of genius, entitled, "Pen Pictures of Popular English Preachers." It was from the pen of a genuine child of genius—Mr. William John Dix, the author of the "Life of Chatterton." By education and taste he was a Churchman. He was, I believe, a friend of Southey's. Thirty years since I knew him well. I think such a volume as this would be incomplete, if I did not present the reader with some passages from his characteristic portrait. Passing by his graphic preliminary description of the locality of the old Weigh House—he appears to have heard Mr. Binney there—he says:—

"The moment we saw a gentleman ascending the pulpit stairs, we felt assured, from the description we had previously been favoured with, that he must be the minister

of whom we had latterly heard so much; he was tall and large-chested, but the head and face were the most strik-

149

ingly intellectual in their developments we had ever looked upon. In a tone of voice so low as to be heard with great difficulty, even by us who were so near him, he read a chapter: the prayer which succeeds the reading of the chapter in the Bible is eminently devotional; the voice of the minister is deep and solemn, and his manner that of one who feels how infinitely great He is with whom he has to do. There is no familiarity, no bawling, no hurry; all is calmness, earnestness, and quiet supplication; the prayer—a short exercise—concludes, and another hymn is sung. The utmost stillness prevails as Mr. Binney rises to begin his sermon; that he is excessively nervous, is easily perceptible from the anxious look which he directs to some part of the chapel, whence a slight noise proceeds, and by the occasional twitching of his facial muscles. In a very low tone he names his text, and then a pause ensues, during which he runs his long fingers through the thin locks of hair which partially stream across his forehead, and appears to be collecting his powers for some great effort. At length he begins, still in a low tone, but with so much impressiveness of manner, that the few words which he utters slowly, and with intervals between every short sentence, produced twenty times more effect than if they had been bellowed forth by some son of thunder. As he proceeds, we at once perceive that a man of amazing power stands before us, and we listen with the utmost attention lest a word should escape us. Indeed, to hear Mr. Binney to advantage, the attention of the hearer must not flag for one instant; he is a metaphysical preacher, a sort of Coleridge in the pulpit, though not so dreamy or

150

vague as that great man; an orator who, perhaps, can only be fully appreciated by those whose minds have been sedulously cultivated; seldom raising his voice, on he goes, now appearing to struggle with the ideas which crowd on his mind, and now pouring them forth in a continuous stream; his action is peculiar, and chiefly consists in his placing the forefingers of his right hand on the palm of his left, or in the before-mentioned running of his fingers through his hair, then tossing it about in the most careless manner imaginable; at length he draws to a conclusion, and thus none—not even the humblest minded of his hearers—can misunderstand him. In stature, Mr. Binney is tall, but that grand head of his—we never beheld such a lofty, massive, highly intellectual forehead as Mr. Binney's—it seems piled up story upon story of brain, built each over the other, and yet it is symmetrical. Why, we should think there was even cerebral matter in that cranium to serve for half-a-dozen moderately clever men. As we looked on that immense forehead we thought of the heavy brain of Napoleon and Byron, and wondered how much Mr. Binney's might weigh. You had better have been thinking of something else, perhaps some one will say; possibly so, but for the life of us we could not help it. Since then, we have heard him deliver sermons remarkable for their grandeur, and we have listened to discourses so feeble that we could scarcely believe that Mr. Binney could be their author; but his excellences far, very far, outweigh his failings, and, spite of his peculiarities, he is a very great preacher."

This sketch, from the pen of one who was a great poet,

151

and a competent critic, must be an impression of Mr. Binney's very earliest day.

After all, it must be admitted that the success of Mr. Binney as an orator was singular, and even remarkable. He had not that popular and irresistible charm of ugliness. which has been an unquestioned element of oratorical success, in spite of some few exceptions, from the days of Demosthenes to those of Brougham—perhaps the fear of appearing invidious restrains us, by a silken delicacy, from stepping forward from the times of Brougham to our own. There is something very natural in this attribute—usually what we denominate ugliness is only the bold handwriting of a very strongly individual character on the forehead and features, on a countenance from whence determination, resolution, and passion have swept away all indications of the smoother amenities, and indented lines not indicative of the most amiable temper. A very suggestive and entertaining, even scholarly, paper might be written, enforcing upon students the importance of possessing a frontispiece of ugliness, of *outré*-ness, with a view to the obtaining command over audiences. Of course the success is not invariable in proportion to the ugliness of the speaker, and some will charm their spirits by the memory of such instances as the bland gracefulness of Cicero and Canning Perhaps such instances rather prove and illustrate the position. I fancy this grace of manner, this charm of courtier-like breeding, would make little impression on the multitude or the mob. However it may be,—and perhaps the two aspects indicate two varying orders of eloquence, and there may be much to be said on both sides,—unquestionably ugliness has been famous in its day in command-

152

ing the tribune of the people. Is it not so still? It may relieve the monotony of this disquisition if I just introduce the memory of a dear friend of mine, who, when a girl, was taken by her father, an old friend, by-the-bye, of Coleridge, Southey, and Cowper, to hear some preacher whose invincible guiltiness of deformity in feature was

something even more than ugliness, and ought to have, made him, upon the principle I have been laying down, a most eminently successful orator. With the deep, sonorous gravity, and slow, solemn emphasis of the days of old, he announced his text, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in *Thy* likeness." It was too irresistible. The father turned to his daughter, my dear friend, and said, "*Any* likeness, my dear, *any* likeness, I should think!"

Ugliness, then, did not enforce Mr. Binney's eloquence. So far from being possessed of this, the orator's chief and most irresistible charm, we have even heard it said that il was a means of grace to look upon him, especially when his whole face lighted up with his most radiant and ineffable smile—so few men can smile; it is even more rare than laughter; and when lip answers to eye, and intelligence and affection spread their light over features harmonious in their beauty, and powerful in their will, in the wise and aged man especially, it is far more than, those wonderful rose lights that shed over mountain summits at evening at once the sense and assurance of departing and returning day; and such indeed was Thomas Binney's smile.

Also, from the depravities of modern sensationalism he was altogether free;—the tricks which take the vulgar, the pompous audacity, the gaseous inflation of the

153

windbag school, the livid or the lurid, the vermillion or lamp-black style of men who, I suppose, cheat themselves in some extraordinary manner into the belief that they are preaching the Gospel, and conducting Divine service, when outraging every social decency and every holy feeling, approximating the pulpit to the theatre, and tickling the sensationalism of society, whilst describing its sins; all these were unknown.

Good taste is only another name for good sense; some later exhibitions seem to have assured us that neither

one nor the other is likely to succeed very eminently in the pulpit; that the striking, the glaring, the outrageous violation of decency and order is more likely to succeed; and that, in a word, nothing is more likely to command success than that a man has made himself a public nuisance by his quips and cranks, his oddities and gesticulations. When it is remembered that the chief end for which men and women are supposed to assemble on Sabbath-days is Divine service—certainly not to be invited to sleep; on the other hand, certainly not to be tickled or amused, not even principally to be instructed, but to have the mind filled with Divine and devout sentiments—it must be admitted that a pretty considerable number of the successful preachers of our time have missed their way, and in New York and in London there are some things we hope to see reformed.

Mr. Binney, I believe, did *not* miss his way. I have admitted that his strongly marked individuality gave to. him frequently an oddity of expression when circumstances came before him; that is very different from the going into the pulpit determined to do and say odd things; and

---

154

good taste, which, as I have said, is good sense, governed the service and guided the strain of meditation, argument, and speech. And yet I have abundantly shown that his discourses were not "innocent little sermons," any more than they were of the elegant, ornamental order; heaving with power; they were not rugged and Cyclopean, any more than they were Corinthian or composite in their architecture. I believe he had at a certain period of life acquired a style; the man who has done this by study in early youth, who has with delight conned and compared fitnesses and harmonies of expression, will not be so painfully under the necessity of labouring at a style in those days when he has come to move among men as their teacher. In the very last paper he wrote for print, he

admirably said, "The object of the study of style by one earnestly preparing for public life is that he may have to do without it; that the study shall have such a result that words will come at his call, or without being called; and that his thoughts will at once find for themselves fitting phraseology." And again the following is very finely expressed: "How wonderful the power of the practised speaker becomes! How marvellously he will carryon a sort of double mental process at the same time, in the very act and ardour of utterance! While apparently absorbed by the passion of the moment, he will be exercising a secret, sentinel-like attention, looking ahead, choosing and rejecting among different terms which suggest themselves to his mind, that he may clench his argument or close his appeal in the manner best adapted to his purpose."

Before I close these remarks on the preacher, I will

155

refer to some of the words in the *Spectator,* to which, I venture to think, many of my previous remarks and quotations have given a tolerable refutation. The writer says, "His were the qualities of a strong, limited, sagacious, earnest—not specially refined, and by no means mystic religious nature—he looked at doubts as definite things, to be got rid of by a certain process of argumentation—not as elements of haze, which touch the edges of almost every question, and enter in streams of paralysing influence into almost all the departments of moral life." Of this *latter* estimate, the reader is not to believe a word; there never was a man who felt this tyranny of doubt more keenly and profoundly. It was, perhaps, sometimes the case, too, that he even aired his doubts in the pulpit; he knew the *haze* as well as any man; if not a mystic, as I have admitted, he had that subtlety of sense which is an element of the mystical character, but in his preaching he usually attempted to find a foothold, firm and strong.

The point at which the doubt shaded off into something beyond, touching the edge of some other department, he knew and perceived; but that of which the *Spectator* speaks as the aim to get rid of some definite doubt, was, in truth, the effort to find and to give to others a sufficient security for the navigation of *this* particular coast or sea —whatever great rolling oceans there. might be beyond, unexplored and unknown-and something like confidence in the possible exploration of those seas was imparted by the assurance of safety in the navigation of *this bay* or ocean to-day.

Referring to the place and power of Mr. Binney, I have been reminded of what Dr. Johnson said of Dr. Watts.

156

Watts, like Mr. Binney, was regarded by many as the greatest preacher of his day. Even Johnson and Southey, both High Churchmen, seem to confer upon him this honour. Johnson says of him, "He was one of the first that taught the Dissenters to court attention by the graces of language; whatever they had among them before. whether of learning or acuteness, was commonly obscured and blunted by coarseness, and inelegance of style he showed them that zeal and purity might be expressed and enforced by polished diction." This is appreciative, and if scarcely just, there is considerable truth in it. In the same way it may be said of Thomas Binney that he broke open a new and altogether undiscovered world of pulpit power; I believe thoughtful minds can scarcely be offended if he should be spoken of as even a kind of Columbus of the pulpit. In preaching he, in a marvellous manner, humanised all Bible incidents and anecdotes, and drew them out into the light of a pro found philosophy, and a large culture of heart and mind. He had a most swift and vivid insight into the meaning of characters and events; if in the full unfolding of his powers his sermons would happily have been taken down.

so that we might have the opportunity of reading them now, I think it would be felt that long years before Frederick Robertson was in Brighton, exactly the same kind of subtle inquisitiveness in the affairs of the heart. and the same painful *exquisitiveness* in the affairs of a tortured universe, formed the staple of the teaching at the King's Weigh House. I remember such sermons preached thirty-five years since; and when, many years after, I came to read, with much gratitude, instruction.

157

and delight, the world-renowned utterances of the Brighton clergyman, I felt how much of their best material had passed before my mind, and especially how many of the incidents forming the staple of most suggestive discourses had been handled in a most similar manner by the elder preacher. But Thomas Binney was a Dissenter and a preacher at the time when Dissent was more branded than now: and Robertson was a Church clergyman, which makes all the difference, even to the influence of the noblest intelligences of our country! But *this* was not his *greatest* work, after all; the preacher must be *vox et præterea nihhil*—a voice, and nothing more; in nothing is death so painfully triumphant as in that he carries away the accent and the smile, and the subtle power of soul which runs along the sentences, and informs them with something more than themselves, and bids them live; and the man is a poor preacher who is not in himself greater than any words he utters.

158

CHAPTER VI.

DEVOTIONAL, AND IN RELATION TO DIVINE WORSHIP.

MORE important by far than the defences in which he engaged for the outworks of Nonconformity, I would regard the impulse he gave to a higher strain of devotion within the churches of the denomination. It is a wonderful thing that the relation of the minister to the "Service of Song in the House of the Lord" should ever have been broken. Yet nothing is more certain than the fact, that for generations the minister handed over this as a part of the worship in which he had but little concern; and, in many instances, he principally exercised his influence only to repress all efforts which might be made to restore to the service harmony and beauty. Very industrious even were the energies put forward for a long time for the suppression of all taste and art; and, inasmuch as Romanism had made beautiful things to be an abomination in religious service, it was thought that a barn-like architecture, and a music where all chords were only used for discordance, were most fitted for the production of Divine impressions. This had long been felt by the churches. The value of the great central man of action is, that he had power and genius to interpret a popular

159

sentiment, and to supply a want. This, Mr. Binney did. "The Service of Song in the House of the Lord" was greatly instrumental in awakening a new feeling throughout the denomination, and in creating in our midst a sublimed psalmody. The prayers of Mr. Binney, too, introduced another element. Too frequently prayer had de-

generated into mere confessions of faith—the mere answers to a catechism—statements of a creed. Perhaps the perfection of prayer would be the preservation of the spirit of the Liturgy, without the form, combining the special prayer of the hallowed Christian heart, and the wail of man as a creature. Prayer is of a region above criticism-almost above remark. Perhaps the only thing we should permit ourselves to say is, "Did not our hearts burn within us?"—but, in a very eminent degree, both by his personal power of prayer and by his general aid to the great work of the sanctuary devotion, Mr. Binney has aided the Divine services of his denomination.

I think one of the finest estimates I ever heard of Mr. Binney was in the impression I heard of him as produced upon an intelligent hearer, that "he was a devotional man talking intellectually." He had an intensely devotional nature; those who have talked with him intimately have probably heard him express grief—fully his regret at his sense of falling below his own standard: it is a very fair test of the reality of a nature. I believe before he made a great impression as a preacher his prayers in public took people by surprise. I remember an instance of this about—I cannot exactly speak to the year—1835. It was a special service, on a week-day morning, at the

160

old chapel in the Borough, then John Arundel's. It was a communion service. connected with the antique history and associations of the place, and Dr. Robert Vaughan preached a sermon devoted to the memories of the old Nonconformity; but Mr. Binney opened the service. His prayer was very long, but not less wonderful than long. The sermon was a stately piece of workmanship, and excited admiration; but the prayer threw the sermon into eclipse; and as I was walking away with a friend, now venerable, a man of large intelligence, when I expressed my

admiration, he said, "But the prayer!—did you ever hear such a prayer?" and again and again he came back to the extraordinary devotion of the prayer. It is safe to speak of this now he has gone from us, otherwise the last things of which a man would desire to be remembered are his prayers. A richly emotional nature, with a correspondence of high reverence, and the power of fitting and affluent expression. ought to be wonderful in prayer. Probably the first impressions I received of prayer in my earliest experiences of public worship were not very favourable to the idea of devotion; they were very much like what the Church Service would be confined simply to the Creed, without the Litany, the Confession, the Absolution, or the Collects. In the pulpit Mr. Binney made very much of the devotional parts of the service; and he introduced, by the freshness of his own nature, a new element into the service of the sanctuary. The spirit of this is manifested very much in his fine discourse, "The Closet and the Church." It was preached before the Congregational Union, and we may suppose the announcement of his text would a little startle a large congregation

---

161

composed chiefly of ministers—in truth, a painfully suggestive text,—"*The pastors have become brutish, and have not sought the Lord; therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.*" And it is in this sermon there occurs a singularly effective passage on the influence of prayer on ministerial happiness, usefulness, and success.

THEY DO NOT PRAY.

"*They* 'do not prosper,' and their flocks are 'scattered,' —for they have become 'brutish,' and '*have not sought the Lord.*'

"This, then, is the defect that poisons everything;—they are not men of *frequent, earnest, private devotion.* They have great abilities—but *they do not pray.* They are

ministers of Christ, according to outward order—*but they do not pray*. They are good, and, perhaps, even great preachers—*but they do not pray*. They are fervent, pungent, persuasive, convincing—*but they do not pray*. They may be zealous and enterprising, leaders in the movements of public activity, the first and foremost in popular excitement, frequent in their appeals, abundant in their labours, working zealously in various modes and in divers places—*but they do not pray*. They are men of integrity, purity, and benevolence—*but they do not pray*. And THIS ONE THING, their 'restraining prayer,' their not 'calling upon God,' their 'not seeking after,' nor 'stirring up themselves to take hold of' Him; this, like the want of love in the Christian character, 'stains the glory' of everything else; it renders worthless their genius, talents, and acquisitions; obstructs their own spiritual prosperity;

11

162

impedes their usefulness, and blasts their success. Though a minister were an apostle, *and did not pray,* his 'speech and his preaching' would *not* be 'with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' 'Though he had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge; and though he had faith that could remove mountains: *and did not pray,* 'he would be nothing.' 'Though he gave all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burnt: *and did not pray,* 'it would profit him nothing.' 'Though he spake with the tongues of men and of angels,' *and did not pray,* he would be but 'as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.' He might be 'like unto one that hath a pleasant voice, and a lovely song, and that plays well upon an instrument;' but the music of the lip and the hand only will never charm away the evil spirit from Saul; nor can it have in it that Divine and life-giving harmony which 'of stones can raise up children unto Abraham.'"

Hence the absence of devotion, either in feeling or expression, jarred upon his nature; and to this we are to attribute his successful efforts to give a nobler and more melodious psalmody to his own place, which, in its effects, inspired a successful effort to change, to beautify, and improve the service of the denomination. It is very singular that the mere act of chanting had been looked upon with horror, as something Popish, and is still so regarded in some quarters. It was to call the attention of his people to the importance of a really devotional and sacred psalmody that he delivered his most perfect and beautiful little piece to which reference has already been made, "The Service of Song in the House of the Lord;" and

---

163

this sets the moral, religious, and intellectual character of its author in its highest and purest light. I have quoted two beautiful passages from it already, and cannot quote more; but a full-hearted religiousness pervaded all his services; its spirit was manifest in the sermon, and it was frequently remarked, that when the *sermon* was below himself,—and he used often jocularly to remark that he believed he was the only man in England who had the courage to preach a bad sermon, and know it—that the *prayer* was full of every happy, and suitable, and even instructive influence. The alliance of devotion and good taste had been very distinctly appreciated by him before he came to London. It is in his first work he says of

POETRY AND DEVOTION.

"The influence of poetic taste, properly exercised, is more important, perhaps, in a *moral* sense than is generally supposed. In this light it becomes a Christian to examine whatever he indulges; he has a criterion to which his feelings must be brought; everything is valued by the consistent believer in proportion as it is adapted to promote the great end of existence—the glory of God in his attainment of perfect virtue, and his personal pos-

session of that happiness which virtue confers. If that particular taste to which these observations refer be judged with relation to this object, I am not certain that it could be justly condemned. Those by whom it has been cultivated in such a manner as it becomes rational and religious beings to cultivate every power which Providence bestows, possess what will infallibly refine and improve the character. It gives to their very amuse-

164

ments a rational importance and an ameliorating tendency. Their 'Hours of Idleness' are passed in dignified relaxations. Instead of stooping to low pursuits to relieve exhaustion, or being abandoned to the curse of absolute inactivity, they find in the excursions of fancy both pleasure and repose; and, their minds, familiarised with images of the beautiful and sublime, imbibe a portion of that elegant and exalted character impressed upon the objects of their habitual contemplations. The natural tendency of poetry is to soar; to raise the soul above the grossness of material and sensual existence; to expand its powers by images of grandeur and examples of enjoyment superior to the surrounding phenomena of earth. In whatever is seen and felt, she can expatiate with rapture; but yet these only afford elements for her own surpassing creations. Combining all that is beautiful, and giving permanence to all that is fair, expanding the conceptions of visible nature and the emotions of experienced delight, she rises to a higher existence, and lives amid the scenes and serenity of a diviner world; and by the capacity of pleasure and improvement she develops in the soul, which nothing actually existing is adequate to supply, she affords the strongest proof of approaching immortality. The spirit of Christian devotion is the spirit of sanctified poesy; it

admits and encourages the exercise of well-regulated imagination. Without this power it is impossible to participate the most exalted emotions of religion. We live by *faith,* and not by *sight*—by that principle 'which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things invisible,' which' gives nearness to what is distant, im-

165

pressions to what is spiritual, and reality to what is unseen.' The Christian is to have his conversation in heaven, hill affections fixed on things that are above; the mind is to be occupied by the habitual contemplation of those surpassing sublimities which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart imagined, independently of that instrument by which God hath revealed them. Prophets and apostles have given stability and truth to what exceeds the most exalted creations of fiction; and what poetry has been employed to describe, a similar sensibility can most adequately realise. Poetry and devotion are thus nearly allied, and they are naturally so. There never was a poet whose first effusions were immoral. The corruption of human nature has yet to be manifested by the *innate* perversion of genius. The raptures of the child of song have always been produced by the visions of a world, not only fairer and happier, but more virtuous than this. The first sounds of his lyre have generally retained the tones of that heaven of holy love from which the Muse descends, and towards which she directs and carries her adorers. It requires the apostacy of the poet, the extinction of his original and spontaneous emotions, before he is able to adorn pollution, and to celebrate criminality."

I have already linked together the names of Thomas Binney and Dr. Watts; and I found myself, whilst I was sitting in the chapel waiting for the funeral, and whilst following the hearse, connecting the two men most irresistibly in my mind. I believe it to be simply true that

no man since the days of the beloved, sweet singer of Abney Park has so influenced—and influenced to change

166

—the religions life of what, for want of a better term, I am compelled to speak of as Nonconformity. Abney Park! I thought, near to this spot the *one* lived, wrote, and walked 'midst its gardens, and died, and hither to this same place the *other* comes, in an altogether different and transformed world and church, to rest from his labours. In many external particulars the two men seem utterly unlike. Binney strode along like a giant; nor shall I hint here how possible it is that much of his pulpit impressiveness was aided by that towering and majestic form, that magnificent height; as some have spoken of it, that Apollo-like brow,—altogether proclaiming him, in this as in other things, "a head and shoulders above his brethren." In stature Watts was even diminutive—some such person as the good Dean of Westminster, although in natural dignity of manner he must certainly have been at least the equal of his illustrious successor; but their work was similar. Watts came into a church where his exquisite nature was soon troubled, even from his very earliest years, by people singing doggrel ditties. He created the hymnology and psalmody of England; and Thomas Binney came into the same church, and his soul was in like manner soon troubled; for I suppose it must be admitted that if the people had noble hymns, they sang them most dolefully—not to say dreadfully—until the delivery of that ineffable oration just mentioned; and what came of it? Old Walker and the pitch-pipe were the sons of Korah in our services; indeed, it is a very curious priesthood of melody to look back upon—that which officiated with fife and fiddle, giving such effect as we may suppose to most of the services of our temple.

167

Thomas Binney was the first to break up all that. The lectures on psalmody delivered in the Weigh House, to which "The Service of Song in the House of the Lord" formed the prelude and introduction, initiated a new and altogether more delightful order of worship. Of course, the change was not only needed, it was wanted, and worshippers and ministers were waiting for it; but, as it is with everything else, so here, we honour the leader who takes his own way and initiates the work. Some think the work of the renovation of our psalmody has been very greatly improved even since Thomas Binney made the first successful attempt; and I am not unmindful of our great obligations to Dr. Allon; to the "Bristol Tune Book," and innumerable others I need not name; but the change emanated from the Weigh House, and in this Thomas Binney's influence, in itself and its results, seems especially to resemble that of Dr. Watts, and justifies me in blending their names.

168

CHAPTER VII.

MAKING THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS.

MR. BINNEY, nearly twenty-five years since, was called upon to lecture to the Young Men's Christian Association, at Exeter Hall. He tells us that he had just preached a sermon from the text, "Having the promise of the life that now is, and the life that is to come." It seemed to him that it suggested the expansion of the matter into a lecture, and thus came about his well-known little book. And it really seems that, if there be any guiltiness in the hypothesis of this two-sidedness of real religion, the Apostle Paul must have some share of the blame. It is, moreover, certainly true that Mr. Binney never professed to be an ascetic; he probably always

entertained orthodox sentiments concerning the cultivation of the comfortable side of life. Congregationalism never has been favourable to the cultivation of the ascetic temper; it is in the Church of England that we are to look for those who believe that this life is to be forfeited that the next may be gained,—at any rate we are told so. Mr. Binney, in himself and in his congregation, experienced instances of the possession of much here with the expectation of much yonder. I had to call upon him once

---

169

at the house of a largely wealthy, well-known Christian man. After sitting some time by the fire in the noble household room, we walked round the garden, round the lake. Mr. Binney accompanied me to the gates; he was aware that some remarks of mine upon his book were not very favourable; he said to me, "What do you think of all this?" I looked at him. "Why," said he, "I should say it is making the best of both worlds!" The author of "The Lamps of the Temple," in 1856, spoke of Mr. Binney as the Golden Lecturer of Independency. "He stands in the midst of the city of London, he looks round on his congregation, and finds his eye resting on the masters of trade, the burgesses and citizens of the mightiest mart in the world; it may well influence his. judgment in some measure." The same writer says, "It might make our preacher look wonderingly about him to find himself styled by the Holyoake school 'the secularist preacher,' to stand before the office of the *Reasoner,*★ and find his portrait in the *Reasoner,* with a sketch of his life. under this denomination. It is well for Mr. Binney that he occupies the unequivocal position he does; for humbler or less-known men this honour would be fatal,—such a victory would be infinite defeat; in truth, the age likes to hear this gospel of gold preached, but the age does not need it." The writer goes on to say—"To our minds, it is certain as any proposition in arithmetic, it is

impossible to make the best of both worlds." I never regarded the title of the book as expressively happy, yet it must be remembered it is not an affirmation, but a ques-

* A periodical, edited by Mr. J. G. Holyoake, which has had its "day, and ceased to be."

170

tion, "*Is it possible?*" Unfortunately, our miserable nineteenth-century estimate of things has leaped to the conclusion that the possibility only exists with very large means of wealth. "Is it possible to make the best of both worlds?" and the auditor instantly supposes that to imply, "Is it possible to make twenty thousand a year, and go to heaven?" There may be some things in Mr. Binney's book which give too much colour to this impression; but they cannot have read it at all who suppose this to be the chief end of his argument. "The best of both worlds" does not imply at all, necessarily, an immense income, or large success here. It implies the extracting from earth all the enjoyment consistent with the walking in the light of the heavenly places. Most, even Christian, men of wealth, with whom I have been acquainted, know very little of the *best* of this world; and I never met with a man, the owner of ten thousand a year, with whom I would change places. Very few men of wealth know what the best of this world means. They seem to have very few faculties for enjoyment except in the warehouse, the counting-house, and the House of Commons. The *wealth world* is not the *best* of this. The luxury of doing good is better; the luxury of activity is better; the world of taste, of books—the enjoyment of all these is consistent with the enjoyment of the world in the life beyond. No doubt, for the purposes of real enjoyment, and making the *best* of *this* world, the essential conditions are a finely-organised nature, with a limited, by no means a large, income, and

both held in solution by a sense of Divine service. I never had an idea that Mr. Binney had made the

171

best of *this* world. But the *best*—the *best*—*what* is the *best?* "Blessed are *the meek,* for *they* shall inherit the earth." "*They* have all things, and abound," and "delight themselves in the abundance of peace." It certainly is a defect in Mr. Binney's book that there is very little in it of this Divinest aspect of "*the best.*" Hence, no doubt Mr. Binney's book has been treated with great injustice. But the chief and most ill-conditioned sneerer, perhaps, was Dean Goulburn. I confess that his "Thoughts on Personal Religion" had been, up to the time of his sneer at Mr. Binney, one of my most choice and chosen companions. His ungracious and untruthful sneer threw a shade altogether over his exalted standard of personal religion. Snugly ensconced in one of the best English Deaneries—not indisposed, it may be certain, to the acceptance of a bishopric, denying the possibility of making the best of both worlds, he justifies the reply of a very severe *ad hominem.* If it be not possible to make the best of both worlds, what becomes of bishops, archbishops, prebendaries, and rectors, not to speak of multitudes of the secular aristocracy, who, while they have stately palaces and mansions on earth—whatever Dean Goulburn may say to the contrary—really do hope for, and, we trust, really will receive some share in the "inheritance of the saints in light," in the "house eternal in the heavens"? The *Eclectic Review* at the time remarked, "We are surprised to find so admirable a man as Dean Goulburn among Mr. Binney's assailants. The standard of the author of 'Thoughts on Personal Religion' has always seemed to us so high, that we are amazed at the words of misrepresentation and wrong

172

from him." The *Spectator,* in its article on Mr. Binney, says he was much hurt at the satire with which his lecture on the question was greeted and regarded. He was hurt at the *injustice,* and especially hurt at the transposition of his question into an affirmative, "*How to make,*" &c. His short and compact reply, however, to Dr. Goulburn is among his most effective things; and here it is:—

A CATAPULT FOR DEAN GOULBURN.

"Some one has asserted that *the book is the exposition of the religion of* CAIN. *If it be so, I can only say that its a great pity we are not descended from Cain instead of Adam.* If Cain had realised in himself the Divine idea here set forth, and had' begotten a son in his own likeness'—and the world had been peopled by such—what a world it would have been! Without, however, further reference to things of which this a specimen, I will conclude this Preface by the only *personal* allusion which I choose to make.

"'THE REV. EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN, D.D., *Prebendary of St. Paul's, and one of Her Majesty's Chaplains in Ordinary*'—I take the description from the printed book I am going to refer to—delivered a lecture, January 10th, 1860, before the same Young Men's Christian Association to the members of which the outline of the argument of this work was originally addressed, and for whose sake it was expanded and published. The subject of Dr. Goulburn's lecture was 'Blaise Pascal.' In the very first paragraph, grouping together Pascal and the poet Cowper, he thus spake:—'Both were eminently devout men.

173

Christians in deed as well as in name. The characters of both were deeply tinged with melancholy, which in the one took the form of despondency as to his eternal pros-

pects, and in the other that of a sour and unnatural asceticism. The views taken by both of them of life, of men of society, were, in conformity with their common temperament, sombre. The private lives of both were unhappy lives. One feels of both such men that in an emphatic sense, over and above that in which it is true of all good Christians, their portion was not here below. *If* it is possible *as has been alleged,* to make the best of both worlds—to taste very considerable secular comforts and enjoyments, while not relinquishing the crown of glory,—certainly neither Pascal nor Cowper was *initiated into the secret of doing so*.' Very likely; but what then? Are men without hope 'in relation to their eternal prospects,' or the victims of 'a sour and unnatural asceticism,' to be set up as model and representative Christian men? Is Dr. Goulburn himself either one or the other? Does *he* know nothing of the suspicious 'secret'? Does not a 'Prebendary of St. Paul's, and one of Her Majesty's Chaplains in Ordinary,' 'taste very considerable secular comforts and enjoyments,' and that, too, we should hope, 'while not relinquishing the crown of glory'? Surely he does not wish us to believe that every dignified and well-to-do clergyman is to pay for his present 'comforts and enjoyments' by the future and eternal loss of his soul! or that it is *not* 'possible' for him to retain them without some poor or unbeneficed brother 'taking his crown'? The thing is absurd, and Dr. Goulburn knows it is. Was it right, then, for him to indulge in the sneer that lurks in

---

174

his words, and that, too, before the very young men whom I had urged to aspire after that 'godliness' which is the fruitful mother of all that is 'true, honest, pure, praiseworthy, and of good report,' and which *his* Bible says, as well as mine, 'has the promise of this world, and of that which is to come'? Had Dr. Goulburn ever read what he condemned by insinuation?

"Did he really know anything of what had been alleged? Had he taken pains to understand its limits and conditions? I do not believe he had; he knew only the *title* of the book,* and put his own sense upon it, otherwise he would never have used words which, by what they suggest rather than by what they say, imply what amounts to a misrepresentation and a wrong."

"Is it possible to make the best of both worlds?" however, is probably Mr. Binney's most successful utterance through the press. For the first twelve months it sold, as he informs us, exactly at the rate of a hundred a day, excluding Sundays; one of my copies (1865) is the fifteenth edition.

* It would seem he did not even know that, or purposely misrendered it.

175

CHAPTER VIII.

VISIT TO AUSTRALIA.

IT was in the year 1857 that circumstances transpired which led Mr. Binney to pay a visit to Australia. Nothing could be more natural. Mr. Binney was not a great traveller; he knew very little of the Continent of Europe, and indeed seemed to take very little pleasure in realising the impressions of foreign cities and scenery; at the same time I do remember his sitting and listening, apparently with a good deal of enjoyment, to some of my experiences and descriptions of places he had not seen, after a lengthy visit I had paid to Italy. Many years since he went to the United States, and it was very pleasant to notice how he retained his interest in many places he had seen, and many friendships he had formed whilst there; but Australia was different. We all regarded him as the chief of our denomination in this country, but it is much more

true that he was the chief, the Bishop of Congregationalism in Australia, not only in the fact that he was regarded —as he was indeed—as the founder of the Colonial Missionary Society—a society which has a very special charge in supplying some religious means to the wilderness and the sheep-walk, the diggings and the bush- but, I suppose, to an extraordinary extent, the success-

176

ful men of Australia have been connected with the Weigh House; multitudes of them were young men, or youths, during the period of his most invigorating ministry. Then he had relationships there, and altogether, it was a most natural thing that he should attempt to overcome the difficulties of the voyage, and pay this visit. It was indeed feared, when his intention was distinctly known, that it was not so much a visit as a retirement to Australia. It was at the close of the period of the "Rivulet" controversy—that ecclesiastical storm in a teacup—of which now, he who utters the fewest words must have the best of it; the memory of that strife is not honourable to the history of Congregationalism. Mr. Binney, it will be remembered, was one of those who signed the document in vindication of Mr. Lynch; the Congregational Union was thrown into a hurricane of agitation, inconceivable by those who do not remember it. Enough to say, wearied and worn by the strife, something tremendous to Mr. Binney's nervous and irritable temperament, he availed himself of the opportunity and made the tour of Australia; and judging from the Australian newspapers of the time, we should suppose that his following and popularity there were greater during the brief stay than they had ever been in England. Churches were crowded long before the time for the commencement of the services—immense edifices, as in Sydney, crammed from floor to roof. The *Sydney Morning Herald,* for instance, says, "Such a congregation, we should fancy, both with respect to numbers and power of

appreciating the lofty thought and eloquent illustration, has seldom been looked down upon from any colonial pulpit." Of course, as he travelled over the colony, he

177

laid under contribution the most apt exercises of his pulpit power in England. Naturally, he was left no time for preparation or for study there. He was not only called upon to preach, but, wherever he preached, to lecture. "What did you lecture upon, sir?" said I to him once, as he was reciting some of these excitements to me. "Well, when I meet St. Paul in heaven," he answered, "I shall thank him; for talking about him carried me safely through Australia." It was, I suppose, while preaching to an immense crowd in Sydney, that a friend of mine, a man of some position in the town, but a singularly able reporter, engaged in reporting the sermon, fell beneath Mr. Binney's eye, and was instructed by the fidgety preacher to get out of the way of his eye, and, if he, must report, to report somewhere where he could not notice the movements of his pencil. A writer in the *Sydney Morning Herald* remarks as follows on the

CAUSES OF MR. BINNEY'S POPULARITY.

"We have heard that one gentleman, who wrote a paper on Mr. Binney, assigned as a principal cause of his popularity the possession, in a large degree, of humour, as distinguished from wit, which in him most frequently flowed forth in delicate irony or trenchant satire. With this acute remark, to a great extent, we agree. His, however, is not the grim, inferno-like humour of Swift or Carlyle, so merciless and savage, but genial and loving,—like that which throws its sweet witchery over the fascinating page of Scott; though a tendency to controversy, and a delight in hitting an adversary with 'the gloves off' often imparts to Mr. Binney's humour the pungency and

178

sarcastic power of that old Puritan-hating South. We have already given it as our opinion that the creative, or, limiting it to its philosophic signification, the imaginative, is the predominant faculty in Mr. Binney's nature. That belief, however, we cannot now further argue, and therefore can only ask our readers who may dissent from us once more to weigh our previous statements. Next in prominence undoubtedly stands in Mr. Binney the reasoning faculty; that glorious gift which, when love of truth overshadows its exercise, and the pure syllogism becomes its guide, leads its possessor from the city of ignorance, rescues him from the sloughs of despair; and, though the path it chooses may pass very close to Doubting Castle and the Temple of Indifference, though it may even ne cessitate a contest with Apollyon, eventually lands him safely in the 'land of Beulah, where the flowers, the grapes, and the songs of birds never cease, where the sun shines night and day, and where are plainly seen the golden pavements and the streets of pearl.' From the first faculty comes Mr. Binney's synthetic power, and his breadth of thought, a manifestation of which we have in his 'Is it Possible?' and in his well-known sermon, 'Salvation by Fire, and Salvation in Fuiness;' and from the second, his great subtlety of analysis, that penetrative power he displayed so strikingly in his lecture on St. Paul, delivered in the church in Pitt Street, when with exquisite delight we listened to him dissecting ideas into their component parts with a touch as delicate and firm as ever Liston showed when engaged in any of his complex surgical operations. So also we account for his logical exactness. You may refuse to admit his premises, and so

179

escape from his conclusion, but grant his major and minor, and you will find the deduction too clear and

exact to be overthrown. A result of this logical acumen, is his clearness of conception, from which again directly springs his luminous style, and these are the things which have made the pulpit of Weigh House Chapel a centre of power, and installed our preacher as Golden Lecturer to Young England. These are his glory as a preacher—these the fountains of his eloquence. As Sir James Stephen somewhat finely says, 'The cloud-compelling Jupiter shrouded himself in darkness, because he dwelt in an abstracted and silent solitude; but the God of day rejoiced in the light, because he was also the God of eloquence.'"

The excitement his visit created throughout the Colony was not only very great, it was healthful and beneficial in promoting the Catholic Christian life of the Colony. His pathway was thronged by the *élite* of wealth and intelligence of all denominations and orders of opinion. Episcopalians were amongst the most ardent of his admirers; there seemed even at one time a probability that he would preach in the Cathedral of Melbourne. And an interesting correspondence took place, in consequence of an application made to the Bishop, between the Bishop and Mr. Binney, which may be described on both sides as not only respectful but fraternal. Mr. Binney's visit gave abundant proof that there is *mind* in Australia, in every part of the Colony, and his own impressions of it are fully described by the text he took upon his return to his own Weigh House pulpit, "For the Lord thy God

180

bringeth thee into a good land; a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive and honey;

a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

But his shrewd and prescient eye had, many years before this, seen that Australia would be the true land of promise to Great Britain, and hence his earnest early efforts in inspiring the foundation of the Colonial Missionary Society—an institution in whose welfare he felt the heartiest sympathy to the close. The last public meeting I attended with him was its last annual meeting, at which I spoke, by his own especial wish. He presided at the meeting.

Did my space permit, I ought here to refer to his earnest interest in the aborigines of our colonies, and speeches in connection with the Aborigines' Protection Society. Some of my readers will remember his lengthy, noble address on "The Duty of the Mother Country to the Aborigines," I think, in connection with the valedictory service to Robert Moffat, at Exeter Hall. I have not it before me now, but it may be found in a file of the *Patriot* of the time. I believe it would be still worth the reading; I remember the effect it produced in the delivery.

The first service Mr. Binney held at the Weigh House on his return home, while it was entitled a "Sacramental Meditation," was chiefly devoted to the memory of the many friends either belonging to his own church, or eminent in the denomination to which he belonged, who had

---

181

been removed by death during his absence. The last paragraph of the sermon is tender and elevating.

MEMORIES OF THE DEPARTED.

"Let us thank God for the pious dead; that that 'genecal assembly and church of the firstborn' is, as it were, being gathered, is receiving constant accessions. Somewhere in God's universe there is a gathering of the living souls of Godlike men. In Rome mysterious manner the

spirits of the just have been gathered together. 'Absent from the body, they are present with the Lord.'

"We don't keep saints' days; we never meet together in honour of this or that saint, but we can commemorate All Saints. On, the first day of this month you know a large number of the visible Church keep the feast of All Saints. They give thanks to God for all the glorified dead. But every day may be All Saints' day. I think it ought to be more frequently than it is. We should think of them that have passed not only into their rest, but to their glory—into the state of blessedness and hope, looking for that which will be—the perfection of humanity, after the resurrection. But still whatever may be the mysteries that surround the conception of the disembodied, we rejoice that, age after age, they who have fallen asleep, the good and the humble, the obscure and the eminent together, have entered into their joy.

"And now, brethren, I conclude this meditation by saying that the words were suggested to me by the thought that so many whom I have known, privately and publicly, in this land and in this city, have passed away during my absence. I suppose it is natural for men at my

---

182

age not to look forward much, but to look back, and around; and when I got the monthly file of news—which I always read as soon as I could get it—I did as I usually do, as if by instinct: went to the obituary first, to see who of my contemporaries had fallen. And I never, any month, took up the list but I saw some name or names of men either eminent in the ministry, or in literature, or in the world—mostly in the Church—or the names of some of my own private circle. Several have fallen whom I have long known in the ministry:—Dr. Stowell, Robert Philip, Dr. Henderson, Dr. Morison, and Angell James. All more or less had lived and laboured well—the last the greatest of all in labour, devotion, and faith. Without

great genius and wonderful originality, for many years he was the most faithful. Angell James was the most faithful to his trust and to the gifts that God had given him of any man I ever knew. His conscientiousness, his feeling of responsibility for the gifts entrusted to him, his constant, life-long industry and devotedness, his simple aim at usefulness, the edification of the Church, and the conversion of men, were marked and beautiful characteristics of our friend. And so Dr. Morison and Dr. Henderson, in their particular spheres of literary or public labour, were patterns to their brethren; and they were men distinguished also for their devotion to God, the strength of their principles springing from inward life.

"I could but think, as I came back, and touched this my native land, of how many had fallen. I have not mentioned all. Many others have fallen who had worthily occupied positions in the Church of God; many in our own denomination, whom we humbly hope and believe—

183

yea, believe with confidence and rejoicing—that they have entered into that communion which is the beginning of the great assembly and Church of the first-born.

"And in our own congregation and church, one and another have fallen. I look around, here, and there, yonder, and faces are absent. I don't say dead. No; we hope and believe they are more alive now than ever they were in the world of life where all is life—where every one is filled full of the life of God—perfect. Let us give thanks for the happy dead—the holy dead! 'I heard a voice from heaven, saying, write'—let it stand out to all time as one of the true sayings of God—'write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labours "and enter into the joy of the Lord."' May we be followers of those who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises."

184

CHAPTER IX.

MR. BINNEY IN VERSE.

YES! I suppose he was a real poet; well, he certainly possessed the three things which made a poet—vehement passion, great nobility of conception and power of realisation, and exceeding felicity of diction. I have not seen much of his verse, but all I have seen confirms the impression that he might have been a poet. Certainly, he is one of the few men made immortal by a single hymn; there are several of whom we have nothing excepting a single hymn, and we are greatly interested to know more about the writer, because of that hymn. "Eternal Light" is well known now, and need not be quoted here; it is one of the most perfect hymns in our own or in any language; if the reader notice, it comprises every sentiment proper to devotion, adoration, confession, objective and appropriating faith; pity, indeed, that as yet we only have this one hymn from his pen. But if the writer of this volume had cared to make his requests known, he might possibly have enriched the pages by many pieces from the pen of Mr. Binney, in the possession of friends, for many have come beneath his eye; we know that when he began his

185

mental exercises, he wrote, as he jocosely tells us, dramas and epics, "all very wonderful, you may be sure," he says. "Did you ever write any more poetry," I said to him once. "than that hymn?" "Cart-loads," he said, with a laugh. There is, no doubt, a good deal lying about which, discriminated by a judicious eye, would give him no pain to know as published, and give his friends some pleasure to read. Evidently, he always loved the poetic exercise, although I doubt if he read much poetry, and he knew

what it was, and what it meant, as the following remarks may show, written at a very early period:—

POETIC SENSIBILITY.

"That indiscriminate love of poetry, to the neglect of solid and useful reading, by which some silly men and women are distinguished, is equally contemptible and ridiculous. The sentimental nonsense of such characters, especially when combined with attempts at personal composition, has frequently contributed to excite in others a tendency to the opposite extreme. Persons may sometimes be met with who profess an utter insensibility to the attractions of song, and who seem to regard every approach to poetical pleasure as an indubitable indication of weakness. If such a constitution of mind be natural, if the individual possessing this indifference feel it, it is a defect, a defect which nothing can supply which must render him incapable of much that nature has provided for the enjoyment of feeling and sensitive men, and which, it is possible, may sometimes be indicated by other and worse results, by the absence of much that

185

would establish character as well as of that which augments happiness. If, however, as is perhaps mostly the case, it be *pretended,* it is affectation; a mistaken attempt to attract distinction, by the display of an intellectual superiority that despises the softness of sentiment; or it may be sometimes assumed even by those most delicately alive to poetic influence, from disgust at the sentimental affectation of others, and reluctance to be confounded with the silly and the contemptible, for what, in itself it is 'neither silly nor contemptible' to feel. A capacity to feel and appreciate the genuine effusions of genius must ever be regarded as a source of the most refined and rational enjoyment; he who possesses and has cultivated this capacity possesses a spring of perpetual pleasure; nor does he necessarily depend on the efforts of other minds.

Poetry is everywhere to the man whom nature has taught the secret of enjoyment; it is the spirit of the universe; the whole system is instinct with inspiration; the commonest sight and sounds, in which others perceive nothing to create attention, or awaken sympathy, appear to such a mind clothed with beauty and pregnant with music. He who is thus solaced by such cheap and daily satisfactions will, if a devout man, experience emotions of no ordinary gratitude towards that beneficent Being who so greatly increases the happiness of existence by imparting along with it a susceptibility like this of exquisite and innocent pleasure."

The following characteristic sonnets were published by him some years since:—

186

WRITTEN AFTER READING AN ARTICLE ON DRESS, IN THE "QUARTERLY REVIEW," MARCH, 1847.

"Women must know three things—their '*station,*' '*age,*'
And their '*best points*'—if they, by dress, would seem
Something between a substance and a dream,
Attract deserved attention, and engage
The eye and heart at once,—stir and assuage
Love's tender, tremulous fears. The braided hair,
Or flowing ringlet, suits a different brow
And fashion of the face—majestic now,—
Now round or oval,—ruddy, dark, or fair.
The ample shoulder, the contracting waist,
The swan-like neck, the foot, the rounded arm,
Each part in which there lives or lurks a charm,
May be, by dress appropriate, shown or graced,
As by a poet told, or painter traced."

"'Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let

it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price.'"

TO ——.

"Note *this:* And let thy *best* adornment be
That which the Word prescribes. The braided hair,
Glittering with gold and pearls, gems rich or rare,
Leave to the crowd, who in such baubles see
What can attract or move them. I, for thee,
Would frame a higher wish; let thine heart share

188

With mine the aspiration. I would fain
Help thee to dress thy soul—in robes of light
Would see thee beautiful to God, whose sight,
Piercing through all the visible and vain,
Beholds 'the meek and quiet spirit' graced
With His own image on its essence traced,
As a Divine apparel. Let no stain
Deform those robes which Christ on thee hath placed."

It would seem the sonnet was a favourite method of expression with him when the fit of verse-making sought utterance. The first of the following was published many years since, at the commencement of the little volume on "Womanhood," to which we have referred. It was re-printed, with its succeeding piece, in the *Evangelical Magazine* for 1872, beneath the signature of "J. S. E."

MARY AND MARTHA.

"Happy the man whose Mary at his side
Unites with him in listening to the Lord!
Happy the pair to whom His pregnant Word
Reveals its treasures vast and prospects wide.

Hallowed the house thus filled and sanctified
By truth and love! But happy, also, he
Whose Martha, not neglecting higher things,
Busies herself with that which daily brings
Content and gladness; making home to be
The seat of earthly comfort; household care,
With placid smile and brow, presiding there!
But happier he whose lot it is to find
(Alas! in this imperfect world how rare!)
MARY and MARTHA in his mate combined."

189

The following seems to us to be a truly exquisite sonnet:—

THE LITTLE CHILD.

"Have you anything to send to Mr. E.?" "Yes, two kisses and two 'oves."

"'Two kisses and two loves!' The darling child,
No longer, now, shall she remain unsung;
Her gift's enough to make an old man young;
The *half* will one day turn some young one wild!
'Kisses and loves,' she said. I think she smiled
As the sweet words dropped from her innocent tongue.
Then, with a sudden consciousness, she hung
Her head aside, her eyes in an eclipse,
The soft lids let half down, her pretty lips
Being pressed together, while a sly glance stole
Over her serious face. I've seen the whole
Once and again. Tendrils of memory twine
About the picture, which I thus entwine,
Of Pa's and Ma's dear little pet, and—*mine.*"

The following pair of sonnets were written in Australia:—

ON SEEING A YOUNG GIRL KILL A LARGE SNAKE THAT CAME CRAWLING ON TO A VERANDAH, WHERE SOME LADIES WERE SITTING AT WORK.

"Oh! for the muse of him by whom was sung
The war of angels;—the resplendent birth
Of visible nature—how the heavens and earth
Rose out of chaos;—how upon the young

190

And virgin world he saw the serpent steal,
With secret fraud, and make his bland appeal
To her whose innocent, unsuspecting ear
Drank in the poison! Unto me belongs
A nobler theme—to me, whose feeble songs
Flow from no source Divine. A maiden here
Sees in the garden, as was seen of old,
The wily serpent; but, in virtue bold,
She scorns and smites it; ere it can retreat,
Wounded it turns and dies at the fair victor's feel."

THE TWO FRIENDS.

"The heavens are glorious in this southern land,
The stars magnificent. The brow of night
Sparkles with countless gems. A holy light
Streams from that sacred sign! But as I stand,
Awed and entranced, I feel on every hand
Drawn and attracted towards a beauteous sight.
Companion stars come forth! Two here, two there;
Bright stellar twins are shining everywhere,
Loving and lovely. Types are they to me
Of some I know on earth. In them I see

Nina and Blanch, sweet sister friends who move
Linked to each other by their radiant love.
Resplendent souls! As free from mundane dross
As sister-stars that crown the southern cross."

The following short poem was written by Mr. Binney more than fifty years ago, and was intended to be the first insertion in an album:—

191

"WHOSE NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE."

"There is a book in heaven, an ample scroll,
On which the eye of the Eternal rests
With joy ineffable. In characters
As beautiful as light, as permanent
As those enduring pillars that sustain
The dwelling-place of God, the book is writ!

"No record it contains of enterprise,
Discovery, or achievement. Science there
Has spread no treasure. Never on that page
Has Genius written her seraphic song,
Yielding the tribute of her praise to Him
Who gave, from His own altar, all her fires.

"The annals of eternity? The facts
Of universal being? All that passed
Within the Eternal bosom, when in long,
Mysterious solitude God lived alone,
Himself the universe? The ecstasy
Of all the elder-born, and thrill
Of rapturous exultation they sustained
When conscious of existence?—the delight,

Mingled with awe, with which they first beheld
The birth of worlds, and all the beautiful
Arrangements of creation? the dread shriek
Sent from a falling system, sinking back
From life and living glory—back, through age,
To night and chaos? All that ever was,
Or is, or shall be, stated, bodied forth,

192

In language suited to the ear of God,
Are these—oh! say—are these the things contained
In that mysterious volume? Is it thus
They stand expressed before the Eternal eye,
And constitute the image of Himself?
Is it Himself He contemplates?—Himself,
As seen in this vast record of His works,—
The wonders of omnipotence, the depths
Of wisdom infinite—the bland delight,
Ineffable and boundless, breathed through worlds
Pure and surpassing number—are these acts,
These emanations, these sublime events,
And still sublimer consequences felt
By intellectual natures—are these there,
Drawn and described by an angelic pen,
A writing fit for heaven?

"No; these are not included in that scroll
To which the eye of God delighted turns,
On which it dwells delighted. These are not
The source of joy to Him.

"NAMES—*names* alone,
Fill up the ample page!—It is the book

Of merciful remembrance; it is that
In which the Lamb, with pencil dipped in blood,
And characters of crimson, hath inscribed
The catalogue of His vast family.
It is 'the Book of Life,' filled with the names
Of all who, like the primal patriarch,
Are called the 'friends of God;'—the names of all
Who, purified and perfect, shall emerge

193

From earth and evil, to attain the sphere
Of glorified immortals!

"In that book
May all be found who place in this the sign
Of earthly love! Let Friendship pause and ask,
Ere it insert its fond memorial here,
Whether the record kept in heaven contains
The names of those who pledge it?

"When, at last,
That awful volume is unveiled—when He,
Who died to ransom, and who lives to save,
Shall spread the scroll before the astonished sight
Of an assembled universe, and show;
Whom it contains—at that tremendous hour
Of awe and interest intense, may they
Who read this page, and he who thus employs
His pen upon its surface, find their names,
And those of all they love;—possess the right,
Partake the rapture of a world redeemed,
And join the jubilee of God and man!"

The Man.

"*A man, greatly beloved.*"—DANIEL.

"*Wherefore, I praised the dead, which are already dead, more than*
the living, which are yet alive."—ECCLESIASTES.

"Was it not great? Did he not throw on God,
(He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment!
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it, and does it.
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it;
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred, soon hit;
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This throws himself on God, and *unperplexed,*
Seeking shall find Him."

ROBERT BROWNING—"THE GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL."

"And we also bless Thy Holy Name, for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear; beseeching Thee to give us grace to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of
Thy heavenly kingdom."—PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT —COMMON PRAYER-BOOK.

197

CHAPTER X.

THOMAS BINNEY, THE MAN.

OF every noble piece of humanity it must be said, however great the work was, the man was greater than the work; it is only of the lesser and the lower that it can be said—and we hope not altogether of them—the work was greater than the man; and the former is eminently true of Thomas Binney. We may venture to say that there was even a great and unnatural disproportion between the work done and what the man was. Having got so far upon our way, it will not be suspected that this writer, at any rate, has any disposition to underrate the work of Thomas Binney. But I shall repeat once more that, in my estimation, his work bore no proportion to his powers. The great master artists, builders, painters, and poets seem, by their performances, to have been much nearer to themselves than he seems to have been to himself. Robert Hall appears to have disappointed both Sir James Mackintosh and John Foster. They had a sentiment that he might and ought to have done more—*might* and *ought,* but for the hackling visitations of pain. That is exactly what I feel about Thomas Binney: he might and ought to have done more, *but* for material contingencies—a

198

frame, a temperament which hindered him. However, so it was—and all his intimates know it—that he was far greater than his work. Whatever else he might have been, he was, in a most eminent sense, *a man.* Now, it has been well remarked—Arthur Helps, I think, some where remarks it—we may have a great astronomer, great mathematician, historian, and even poet, and yet in neither of these a great *man.* The glory of life or achievement is when the *man* stands higher than *it,* and when from *it*

we can look up to *him.* No person ever spoke to Mr. Binney without feeling that, whatever he might have known of him before, had heard about him, or heard from him, there was a large, inexhaustible humanity behind. It has been said he was a man of many moods. He could be uncommonly rough—rough, even to great rudeness; and, in truth, the higher type of men—those who are "leaders and commanders of the people"—cannot be worth much unless they are capable of something of this sort on occasion. You see a man in the senate, at the bar, and, as in this instance, in the pulpit, letting off torrents of indignation, satire, scorn—in a word, many-waved passion—do you suppose it is all got up for the occasion? I tell you, *No;* it is all in him. Oh, no! if he be a real man, it is not marionette work, Chinese doll-squeaking thunders: *no,* there must be something awkward, ugly, even not altogether desirable in him—he is an Adam's child, with tremendous potentialities and possibilities in him,—there is the difference between the artificial frost-work man, the beautiful refrigerator, who manufactures your ice-cream eloquence, and your flaming Etna-soul, with real passions all alive and at play. I

199

think this is a great nature. "A sanctified devil," said Mr. Binney once to me, "would be a great creature in the pulpit!"—a being with all that blazing red-hot passion, all its wrath and vehemence, all its *red* fire burning *while.* The thing is quite capable of meditation; but, for the present, when we see a man alive, passionate in the pulpit, tear-compelling, wrath-provoking, mirth-exciting, we may depend upon it there is a very full, sad, and somewhat terrible nature behind. Was it not so with Burns? Must it not be so with our dear Thomas Carlyle?—far are we from saying to the same degree, but of the same order is it with this great and most saintly teacher. He had a great human heart; if I may

say it reverently, a heart on which the processes of sanctification were not easy—his understanding and his emotions were often in conflict; but in innumerable instances the essential, noble manliness of the man was constantly making itself manifest in his daring independence from his early days; in his almost indignant love of rectitude and straightforwardness; in his chivalrous and passionate love for womanhood; and in his wonderful tenderness and sympathy with sorrow, even when not *quite* of the order the world calls *respectable*. I well remember one instance; he had heard of a young minister of some measure of eminence. I knew the instance very well; the young man was not free from the world's difficulties; but his character stood high and well. Mr. Binney wrote to him; he had never met him; knew nothing of him beyond his acknowledged position. He invited him to spend a morning with him: towards the close of the conversation he said, "But do your people only give you

200

(such and such a sum)? How can you live?" In the course of a few days he sent {or him again. "I have got a hundred pounds for you," he said. "I was dining the other day with three or four of our big-wigs, and they said that they were raising a large sum for Richard Cobden, whose magnanimity had brought him into difficulties. I just told them about you, and I said your magnanimity had brought you into difficulties, and they must give me a hundred pounds down, and they did so;" and the young minister had it. Perhaps it may remind the reader of Sydney Smith's definition of an Englishman's benevolence, that when he "saw a deserving case he always hoped that somebody else would give to it half-a-crown." However that may be, the young man felt very grateful and reverent for the tender way in which his senior had sympathised with his sorrows; and we will be bound to say that there is no other man in the denomination who

possessed or possesses the power to perform such an act. But we have heard of far nobler instances than those of this order.

When, starting in life from a post and place of no observation or reputation, a man, without pursuing any factious or factitious means—only holding on his way in such a quiet course as a lowly Dissenting minister can command—when such a man, dying, attains the honour of such a funeral as followed the outer tabernacle of Thomas Binney to his resting-place, it becomes very natural to inquire, What was the cause of it, and what were the means by which he secured so large a tribute of affection? Of course, in a sense, he was a representative man; but, no doubt, had he been a greater man, both the affection

---

201

and the following would have been less. He was not the builder of a system; I think he had no power of organisation. I take him to have been eminently a desultory man; let no person suppose this is spoken to depreciate. It is said that we may range him beneath his mental order. The world has need of these desultory men; from some points of view, they are the world's most charming spiritual freightage. Montaigne was a desultory man—so John Foster—so Emerson; great and superior preachers ought usually to be so, but some have possessed, and some do possess, the inborn love of the prescient, manipulating, organising faculty. They are not satisfied with the concrete in thought—their thoughts must be concrete in fact and shape too. You wonder at them; possessed, it sometimes seems, of less power than ordinary men, they achieve extraordinary results—things fall into harmony around them; there is nothing desultory or dreamy about them. Sometimes this is associated with the higher faculties of the mind—usually not. Thomas Binney's absence of organisation is not merely to be noticed in that he did not build round him in world work—you see it

in his books; he could build a noble argument, but he could not build a book. His best books are desultory; you see the organising mind, apart from what we should call objective labour, in the books of Dr. Newman: "The Development of Christian Doctrine," "The Apologia," "The Grammar of Assent,"—magnificent pieces of book architecture, Michael Angelo in paper and type., Thomas Binney had no *forte* of this kind; this is what I mean by designating his as a desultory mind—a great, suggestive intelligence, but a desultory mind. How typical men are!

202

A small type reminds you of the vast and large state of the same type. The lives of desultory men seem frequently broken; fits of feeling come over them—moods which mar them, sometimes also helping to make. With the other it is not so; should the mood accost him, he tightens his lip, compresses feeling, and commands it back-remembers that he has an engagement just now to see this person, that he must put on his hat, and step forth to see that that piece of the organic symmetry is going on well.

> "God has conceded two sights to a man—
> One, of men's whole work—time's completed plan;
> The other of the minute's work—man's first
> Step to the plan's completeness."

It seems that the desultory man is rat her the worker for the minute, throwing out his jets; scattering abroad his seeds. The man does not ever carry the seed-basket and the sickle into the field at the same moment; and in the life-time of the ages it usually happens that one of another generation from that which carries the seed carries the reaping-hook. So thoughts become marshalled and organised, and the insanity of one day is the common sense of the next. What did he *do?* is often asked after

a man has passed away whose form looked large upon the disk of his times. Thousands of persons have asked it of Thomas Carlyle,—What has he *done?* Oh heavens! what has *he* done? And there are men who seem to have done nothing, and they have scattered abroad what has enabled whole generations and nations to *do;* indeed, this preaching and writing business, tried by the creed of the

---

203

"Northern Farmer," does seem to be a most bootless and unprofitable affair.

"*He* preaches one sermon a week,
And *I* have stubbed Thornaby Waste."

Yet, even in the most hard and material sense, mind counts for something. Of this faculty of organisation, however, which to some seems the most admirable, Mr. Binney possessed few intimations. Much of the large hold that he possessed over men arose from the fact that he stopped short of being either a chief man of action or a chief man of contemplation. He did possess the best of both of these points. He was not an original discoverer in celestial mechanics, but he was a marvellous lecturer on astronomy. and gave you sublime and overwhelming exhibitions and pictures of the universe. His words were as the eloquence of Nichol to the discoveries of Lord Rosse. Then, as to action, like Carlyle, he exactly knew what was wanted, and gave indications of the way. He had not a single attribute of the statesman's power; his ideas were larger than his will. The statesman—the man of organisation—must reverse that—his *will,* his own; his *ideas,* those of other men. We do not get from statesmen originality of conception; it would be a dangerous gift. We call upon them to bend into a system the best things of the best minds. I dare say in many things it was so, that Thomas Binney had not the

resolution to follow the shadows which haunted him. The men who do this are the astonishing few. They cannot be useful to the many, the multitudes. Thus the type of his mind was of the eminently useful order.

204

It was even utilitarian, but chiefly in that he infused confidence in principles of action into the minds of those who are able to labour. Sometimes, at a careless, casual glance, it seemed as if his teachings hung loose-jointed, bony, inarticulated; as if his mind were always tentative and questful. There is one test by which you may assure yourself that it was not so. His words, his teaching, never paralysed the activities of life. There are teachers —such teachers!—to hear their words is the same as taking a dose of opium—they unnerve and benumb. After hearing them, you wake up with a delightful conviction that, at any rate, you have been conducted *nowhere*—and seen *nothing*. It is of such men the prophet speaks, when he says, "They have followed their own spirit, and they have seen nothing." There are writers who produce this effect upon you—the lazy influence of a dreamy summer day, with not a breath abroad to brace to action.

> "In the hollow Lotus land, they live and lie reclined
> On the hills, like Lotus eaters, careless of mankind."

If Thomas Binney ever seemed to near this description. please to notice that it was in his physical self; the inner man seems to have been articulated and symmetrical; men are to be taken as *a whole*. What is the effect on the whole in the long run of their teaching? One of the most delicious and charming of writers is Montaigne; but, in the end, he always leaves you an unhinged man. Thomas Binney's utterances often seemed to lie loose and

apart, but see, at a breath, how they start up a great army, bone to bone, and joint to joint. His physical nature

205

had, as with all of us, to bear a heavy responsibility—it is a painful thought that we are what our bodies are. Sometimes it happens so, that a weak-looking frame, which it seems a zephyr might blow away, has a wiriness of texture that holds on and out by the innate tenacity of a concentrated will; but how often the robust-looking frame is, in reality, a very weak one. We have heard Mr. Binney spoken of as "possessing, no doubt, a robust constitution." I should think a greater mistake could not be made. What do we mean by a robust constitution? An oaklike strength, the child of over-joyousness, standing laughing at the winds, and unshaken in the storms; a power of long-sustained endurance, an ability to make a bath perform the work of a night's sleep, and after the sleepless vigil, devoted to work, to start away fresh, and ready, and fit for any conflict. There are, and always have been such men. I do not believe Mr. Binney was one of them, and the mind had frequently to obey the body—that tiresome. worrying, wearying janitor, standing sentinel by the mind, and robbing it of its cheerfulness, juvenescence, and repose. What, it seems, might not some minds have effected, but for repeated fits of head-ache, of dyspepsia, of nervous irritability, which is only a mode of describing the unhappy marriage of body and mind. Body and mind, well hemisphered, must make a rejoicing and victorious nature—by such a very condition, an inferior nature, however noble it may be—for what can be said for a mind of which you can only give the verdict that it is admirably equal to its bodily necessities and conditions —surely in that case, a mind that runs along a low level—at the best a pleasant upland, but from whence it sees no

206

towering peak, no inspiring prospect? But the physically disjointed are the unwisely irritable people. They have not got everything within them in good order.

"And thus mind shows its brother
That the two were not meant to live long with each other."

There was a time when at the Congregational Union once Mr. Binney was greeted with a storm of hisses, or certainly sounds of strong dissent. He forgot himself, and, in his tart, petulant manner, he exclaimed, "Be still! Can't you hold your peace?" That is not the way to overcome a public meeting, and he found it so, for the sounds of disapprobation rose to such strength, that it was with difficulty he was able to obtain a hearing at all. How differently the perfectly self-possessed, easy man of the world takes possession of such a scene, and very frequently coerces his adversaries into admiration—rides successfully round the ring, and terminates amidst the acclamations of friends and foes! These instances of irritability were very common with him. For my part, I know that irritability of mind is all but always a bad condition of body, and especially in noble-natured men. The mind is unable to make the body fulfil itself. It ought to be said with this. that if he ever tripped in this way, or rather when he tripped, no one could hurry forward more instantly. readily, and generously to repair the mistake he had made before it came to a breach.

He had a strong, full-hearted nature, and it was manifesting itself in many ways, so far as I can hear, throughout his life. The fullest hearts, those whose gifts we most highly prize, are not always to be relied upon as the most

207

courtly or courteous. Courtly, I think, he could in no sense ever have been. Courtesy, I think, was not always in his capacity, and yet he made a great deal of this last. I remember, some thirty-five years since, in the old Barbican Chapel, a sermon he preached on "Christian Courtesy." Some of us went to hear it, for the subject was announced; and we had no difficulty in prophesying what the text would be before we heard the sermon—"*Be courteous;*" but in his own life I think he fulfilled the etymology of the term better than the conventional idea—be *hearty,* and that he always was; and sometimes after a gruff kind of fashion. I think human nature was dear to him; he loved men and women, life—human life, in all its interests, was real and pathetic to him. Hence such words as the following:—

LET US BELIEYE IN ONE ANOTHER.

"Oh! let us have more faith in one another. Even though we may sometimes be deceived, though we sometimes lean upon a reed that will pierce our hand, and perhaps pierce our heart; still do not let us give up faith in man—in Christian man. Do not let us give up a hearty and an honest faith in manhood, truth, sincerity, righteousness, and purity of motive and purpose. Let us live with one another, as if we believed there really was such a thing as brotherhood; and do not let us go through the world always frowning with suspicion, and always acting towards others as if we were afraid what they would turn out. I do think that if we are 'simple concerning evil' there will not only be guilelessness in ourselves, but there will be a noble, honest, hearty, candid, confiding faith in one another."

208

This overflowing spirit generally comes out in a right kind of way if in a rugged. I remember a meeting many years since in the old Congregational Library, in a pretty

considerable amount of confusion of opinion, and after a time he got up and moved that "we should all adjourn until that day fortnight to Ephesus."* The laughter was immense, and thereupon we all broke up and adjourned. He had certainly a nimble happiness for saying something very neat, and at the same time very hearty. Upon the occasion of my first meeting him, very many years since, he was very kindly interested in my history, and I—I hope not too garrulous—talked on, winding up by saying that I hoped I might look back and feel and say like David, that on the whole "the Lord had been on my side." "Then," said he, "I should say you have always had a majority of *one!*" And the poor chatterbox felt that it was a very luminous and comfortable word on that occasion. I introduced him to a returned old missionary. He did not. know him, and I told him that he had done a hard day's work, and that he had suffered a good deal of persecution,. and had not made much out of it, and had now come home. "Ah, then," said he, "you are looking out for good interest in the morning of the resurrection!" I believe his life had a redundancy of happy words, which might easily be-picked up—"let us gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost"—for his was a spontaneous

* "Some, therefore, cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and the most part knew not wherefore they were come together. And the Town Clerk appeased the people, and when he had thus spoken he dismissed the assembly."—ACTS xix. 32–41.

209

mind, heart, and tongue; and these are they who say things worth remembering. I dare say he said rugged and rough things, therefore "let us gather the good into the garner, and cast the other away." Things which touched the universal heart charmed him. How he wept for the Queen when she lost her mother, the beginning of her great sorrows! If you could turn back to the *Christian World* of that day you would find what a great weeping

there was at the Weigh House, and how he seemed to prophesy that there were more and deeper sorrows to come for our poor Queen. Hence, also, the tenderness and pathos in the following reference to our dear Queen's behaviour in a well-known calamity:—

THE QUEEN AND THE HARTLEY COLLIERS.

"Then there is another thing we should not forget—the way in which a calamity like this calls out human sympathies. Who can tell whether a far greater number of hearts have not been softened and bettered by this calamity, than have been caused to suffer by it?

"'One touch of nature'—

And when it comes in the shape of sorrow, one touch of *sorrow*

—"'makes the whole world kin.'

While the fate of the men was yet uncertain, the Royal Widow sent a telegram inquiring after them:—'The Queen wishes to know if there may be any hope of the recovery of the men, *for whom her heart bleeds?*' How precious would such words be to those who were suffering on the surface! And then, when the end came, and all

210

was known, the Queen expressed her sympathy with the widows—ay, and in a way she never did before with any widow upon earth. Those widows had previously sympathised with the Queen in her sorrow. One of the reporters tells us that he was riding in a third-class carriage, shortly after the death of the Prince Consort, along with a number of those very women, accompanied by their husbands and children—their boys and girls all about them, and

their noble, brave partners, by their side—and they were saying one to another, 'Oh, our poor Queen!' They felt for her in her widowhood, and now she feels for them, and sends her sympathy. Is it not beautiful to see how all rank and condition, all external circumstances, are forgotten in the sympathy of grief?"

And it ought not to be an item against him in the memory of any that he was very much, as I have said already, a man of moods. Even I, who have seen him sublime in his tenderness, have seen him ludicrous in his vexation. I heard a story of him the other day. Some years since he had promised to preach in one of our suburban chapels, and he found himself on the spot, and was found on the spot in one of his unamiable moods; he testified to our good brother, the minister of the place, that "he did not know what they had sent for him for—that he could not preach—that his preaching days were over—no one would come to hear him now—it was a week evening, and there would be no congregation;" and he comported himself to those to whom he was introduced in a gruff manner. He was introduced to a lady. "Excuse my rising," he said; "I'm tired." Then the

---

211

service began. He said he would try and talk, and get through it as well as he could. The friends were alarmed; there were many persons, whose good opinion was worth cultivating, who were coming to hear the notability. He would not go into the pulpit, but stood in the desk. The chapel filled; he announced his subject; it was all his own—"Moses climbing up to Pisgah to die." He began to glow with the glory of the Hebrew hills, and the vision of the dying law-giver; he took fire, rose higher, and the testimony is that he was never more wonderful than in the things he saw and said that evening. I can well believe it; for in a simple service, in a

parlour, at a home baptism, I have heard him say things which seemed to me wonderful in their homely point, their introspective tenderness, and their out-looking loveableness. He had a very ready mind, and it was not difficult to him to hang a sublime sermon upon any peg. I truly believe that in his best moods he did not know himself. Self-consciousness in his later days became sometimes a kind of *little* vice, but he could rise out of it beautifully. I remember a Sabbath evening he spent with us in our house; he was very uncomfortable until after his morning deliverance was over, and then the man changed. A carriage had been placed at his disposal. I was staying behind to attend to some matters at the chapel, intending to walk home. I had seen him deposited in the carriage, and was, therefore, presently surprised to find myself taken into custody by him, in the aisle, dragging me along, insisting that I must go in the carriage with him; then came the evening when all was over, and, of course, we expected him to lead our family service.

14—2

212

"Now," said he, taking up his position, Englishman fashion, before the fire, and beaming round upon us all, Binney fashion, "I'm tired; we won't read, but I'll do as I frequently do at home—everyone shall mention the text they have heard preached from in the day." It was an unfortunate business; he had preached from two texts in the morning; they were a little involved. I declare, to my shame, I could. not give them. Even dear Mrs. Binney and my wife were in the same predicament. We had a beloved brother minister with us, who had been preaching that day; he was ready with his texts. Our servants did not shine, but with curtsies and bobs they made the best of it. We all got through it somehow—not creditably, I am afraid, then he repeated to us his text,

and, his dear, venerable form standing there before the fire, he talked a little more about it; then he knelt down and prayed with and for us—a pleasant, beautiful scene, never to be forgotten; only the oddity of it all was that this was to save himself the trouble of reading a few verses or a short Psalm. (I remember similar anecdotes of Robert Hall under such circumstances, although they have never found their way into print.) He had heard me preach that evening—it had been in my way to describe an imaginary rich man; a Christian man of whom I had spoken as "one with the morals of a miser, and the manners of a stable boy"—he looked at me across the supper table, and said, "I knew whom you meant tonight"—he was not wrong—and then he gave me some other anecdotes of the same character which justified the generalisation. Pleasant, beautiful, little memorable scene! never-to-be-forgotten! gratefully remembered! I hope

213

it is not wrong to introduce it here. I only do so from the revering love I have for him. He was a large-hearted man; if you were in trouble you found this out. How well I remember a brother minister who had met with some undeserved disrespect from the town in which he lived, and from his brethren in the ministry, too; and it was then, at that very moment, when the world was looking very cold and strange, and when, with the exception of Charles Spurgeon and Henry. Gamble, of Clapton, all the other fine metropolitan brethren fell away, Thomas Binney went down to the help of his younger brother because he was in trouble, and threw over him the shield of his consolation, sympathy, and name. Depend upon it, *that* man bears Thomas Binney in loving and grateful homage.

A pleasant story of the paternal, full-hearted man has been told me by a minister, now living, and about Mr. Binney's own age; it must have happened not very long

after his coming to London—some seven or eight years after, perhaps. My friend was the minister of one of the most time-honoured old tabernacles, in the midst of the loveliest scenery in the south-west of England; I think I see it now, "most beautiful for situation," the joy of the whole neighbourhood; it stood upon a kind of promontory, on the brow of a hill; "thither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." There came a time of great excitement; the chapel had been repaired, I think enlarged; was to be re-opened—such seasons were very important at that time; they were not usual, and there were not so many chapels, and the neighbourhood in which this was placed was very

214

devotional—famed for its piety. Mr. Binney was to preach the reopening sermons on Friday: I am not certain that he was *engaged* to stay to preach on the following Sunday. The chapel-house stood by the chapel. The manners and customs of that time were different from what they are now; many ministers came from a distance. a glass of ale and a pipe were not supposed to be immoral, nor to indicate any want of spirituality of mind; but when Mr. Binney arrived, and was introduced among the brethren into a room full of smoke, he seemed to take a distaste to the whole business; he blurted out a surly word or two, and vanished from the scene. My friend tells me how he followed him, and the great man did not improve upon acquaintance; some dark mood was upon him; a dark hour, and how subject he was to those dark hours all his life, those who knew him best, best knew. My friend, quite an old man now, was not much more than a young man then, and he was quite distressed by the awkward sort of irritable man who had made his advent for the occasion; my friend had his own trouble and care upon him, the service had to be held, but his wife was very near her time of trouble—her confinement—and he

thought, "there is not much comfort to be got out of this man, anyhow;" but soon the chapel was crowded, and the sermon or sermons preached. "I don't know anything about it," says my friend; "I dare say it was very wonderful and fine, the people said so; I did not hear; I was full of care and trouble; I only knew I did not like the man;" and then the congregation broke up, and the last glass of ale was drunk, and the last pipe smoked, and the village was all hushed

215

in the stillness of the old time when villages could be still. Mr. Binney had gone away with his host; and then *it* came—in the darkness the trouble came—"at midnight a cry was heard." The reader knows the rest, and before the morning my friend was a widower. It is curious how the ludicrous and the tragic hang together in life. He tells me how, while he felt the awful crush of the desolation, so human and so common, which had come upon him, the thought of that tiresome, irritable man—the great preacher of yesterday—added to his distress; and there were the services to-morrow (Sunday), and things had to be arranged in the house, and things had to be arranged in the chapel; and what was to be done? And he had hardly time to think before the "very irritable. surly man," himself appeared; "and," says my friend, "I am an old man now, but I have never known a brother's love like that—so tender, so gentle, so affectionate—and he put his arms round me, and he wept with me, and he would do everything for me, and he took the whole charge of the next day upon himself, and *he,*" continues the narrator, "preached her funeral sermon." Something of the spirit of that old dark hour came over him, I think, as once, near midnight, he told me that story; and I said to myself, what I write here—Yes, *that* is Thomas Binney!

A lady told me about her son. She and her husband were members of the Weigh House; they had a son—I

should think, an extraordinary lad. He was very young; he was dying; he had been a great student—at any rate, a devourer of books. He was a good lad—a Christian; but in dying he was haunted by a singular distress: dying, he should be *immortal,* but he should *read no more—no more*

216

books; and it really was quite a distress to him as he was passing. Mr. Binney was in the habit of going to see him; so, on the next visit, the lady told him of this singular sorrow of her boy; and he went into the room, and as usual sat down by the bedside, and, holding the lad's hand, he said, "And, my dear boy, they tell me that you are only sorry to die because you will be able to read no more books;"—do not those who know Mr. Binney see how his face would lighten all over with his own divine smile while he said it?—"but you know you are going amongst the *souls of books:* amongst the souls of the men who thought the books. You will not need clumsy paper and type; you will be reading the very essence of things." So he talked with him—met him on his own ground. His mother told me that Mr. Binney really broke the great charm of her boy's sorrow; he did not fight with it, but he answered it, and the poor boy went home in peace. Do not doubt that he said *other* things also, but he said *that* thing.

I believe everybody who approached Mr. Binney became impressed with the assurance of his reality and manliness; he was sometimes very rough and rugged, as the mood or temper might be upon him, but he was always manly, straightforward. I do not know that he always said everything he thought, but he never said what he did not think; this was illustrated at the commencement of the volume in his noble disdain of subscription to Articles beneath certain equivocating casuistries, by which some have attempted to evade their stress. It is not too much to say, and I desire to say it with great

217

respect, that there must be thousands of ministers in the Church of England who do not believe what they have subscribed; there is no discourtesy in saying this. The apologies for the *doctrine of reserve* have been so numerous, there may be, and we do not doubt they are, in many instances, believers in Christ and faithful ministers of His Gospel; but there are things in the ecclesiastical organisation and even doctrine they do not believe, and yet they subscribe. What should have prevented Thomas Binney —what should prevent James Martineau—from ministering in the Church of England? Both of them are nearer in their teachings to its standards of Christian. doctrine than some who minister at its altars. What has hindered, but a faithful, conscientious integrity? Fancy a volume like that of the "Essays and Reviews," emanating from clergymen who had subscribed! and then think of Mr. Jowett's elaborate apology for disingenuousness and casuistry in cases of conscience; to a simple mind the morality seems dreadful, as when he says:—

"So, again, in daily life, cases often occur in which we must do as other men do, and act upon a general understanding, even though unable to reconcile a particular practice to the letter of truthfulness, or even to our individual conscience." [This would be a fine apology for forgery as well as subscription.] "It is hard in such cases to lay down a definite rule; but in general we should be suspicious of any conscientious scruples in which other good men do not share." [An argument for being Romanists in Rome and slaveholders in Havannah.] "We shall do right to make a large allowance for the perplexities and entanglements of human things; we shall

218

observe that persons of strong mind and will brush away our scruples; we shall consider that not he who has most,

but he who has fewest scruples, approaches most nearly the true Christian," &c., &c.★

All this is horrible! horrible! Thus they come to subscribe, and this is what subscription brings them to.

How can they subscribe? The good Dr. Temple, who has subscribed all no doubt without a scruple, virtually disavows faith in all to which he has put his name, when he tells us "that had revelation been delayed till now, assuredly it would have been hard for us to recognise *His* divinity, for the faculty of faith has turned inwards, and cannot now accept any outer manifestations of the truth of God." Again: "The Bible, by its form, is hindered from exercising a despotism over the human spirit; if it could do that, it would become an outlaw."† That a man should have been able to subscribe and to say these things is dreadful; truly he must have become expert in casuistry; but it was most affecting to see Mr. Maurice hugging his chains; and alas, it seems as if, while describing with such exactness the beauty of the links and the rivets, revealing the consciousness of his bondage, it was shocking to us to hear his free spirit uttering such words as the following:—"I do not believe that we should dare to tell you that you have all a heavenly Father; that you may verily and indeed call yourselves God's children, if we had not the Prayer Book to direct us!"‡ So that it can no

★ Jowett on St. Paul's Epistles.—"Casuistry," p. 397.
† "Oxford Essays and Reviews."
‡ "The Faith of the Liturgy, and the Doctrine of the Thirty-nine Articles." Two Sermons, by the Rev. F. D. Maurice, M.A.

longer be said "the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." To square his conscience and his creed, and thus to apologise for his subscription, Mr. Maurice must have found a broader gospel than Christ published, or Paul preached, or the New Testament contains. How can they subscribe?

When, in a Turkish mosque, one with a very harsh voice was reading the Koran in a loud tone, a good and holy Mollah went to him, and said—"What is your monthly stipend?" And he answered, "Nothing." Then said he, "Why give thyself so much trouble?" And he said, "I am reading for the sake of God." The good and holy Mollah replied, "For the sake of God do not read; for, if you enunciate the Koran after this manner, thou wilt cast a shade over the glory of orthodoxy." And truly, if such men as those to whom we have referred have subscribed for the glory of God, for the glory of God they had better have remained honest and, free.

This was ever present to the mind of Mr. Binney. He maintained the mission of Congregationalism to the middle-classes of the country—the mind accustomed to thought, and incapable of mendacious condescension to the subtleties and sophisms of apologetic time-serving. Thoroughly aware of the defects in the Congregational system, as it works at present, perhaps his "Church Life in Australia" was intended to point to a method by which the entire independence of the churches may be retained. while aggression may be rendered more usefully active, and Conservatism more complete. Perhaps, also, there are some passages in his writings which indicate that Mr.

220

Binney, like Dr. Watts,* would not have been entirely hostile to an establishment; even, perhaps, that he regarded an Establishment in this country as necessary to repel the insolence of the Romish hierarchy; but far, far different must such an establishment be to that of the present. In utter despair of the utility of any political activity—perhaps in doubt or distrust of the right of the religious man to appeal to that agency—he continued then a religious Nonconformist; a believer in the work of Congregationalism—no reason why it should be hampered in

its forms, its architecture, its melody, or its Liturgy. Its great work, however, is to uphold religious honesty, to maintain the integrity of conviction, to rouse and to minister to thought, to hallow the most elevated affections; while maintaining the individuality of the individual, to be not less earnest in centralising and confederating the churches of this communion. Such, on the whole, have been the ecclesiological teachings of Mr. Binney.

It was his passionate love of freedom of opinion and private judgment which led him to dread the incursions of the Papacy in our country, and its dangerous hierarchical pretensions. At the present moment it may be interesting to read the following hearty utterance on

ULTRAMONTANISM.

"It may be eager to argue against national establishments and the Royal supremacy. The demonstration may be complete of the impropriety of secular legislation in

* See Dr. Watts on "A New Essay on Civil Power in Things Sacred."

221

religion, and in favour of unrestricted religious liberty; that the law should know no man in his religious character; that all religious bodies should be treated by the State equally and alike, and every Church have a clear stage and no favour. *So far as Popery is concerned,* I am beginning to be suspicious of carrying this theory practically out; not, indeed, because the theory is itself erroneous, but because Popery is not a thing to which it can be applied. Popery is not simply and purely a religion; it is a great and mighty ecclesiastical confederacy, that desires and *aims* at political pre-eminence; it is a terrible, compact, almost *physical* unity, animated by a spirit of intense hatred to real liberty, civil or religious. It requires to be held in check *by law,* not because its tenets are not true, but because its heart is not to be trusted; not because its creed

is a corruption of the faith, but because its tendencies are inimical to freedom; not because it 'ignores' this or that Church, but because it is a power dangerous to the State. It will join the Dissenter in its theoretical reasoning when it is low; will applaud him for liberality in striving to gain for its own 'emancipation' when it wishes to rise; will shout at times for 'religious liberty' and the 'voluntary principle;' will smile and bow, and take everything it can, and look humble, honest, and demure, as long as is necessary to gain its ends; but when once gained, and any opportunity for a *spring* forward or upward opens, it will take either, with both force and ferocity, and care not if it crush, in its headlong career, the simple souls that served it in its need! Churchmen may find that after all Popery is really worse than Dissent, and Dissenters may find that an ecclesiastical establishment, though an evil, may, with

222

a Protestant Church, be a less evil than stark Popery without an establishment."

That this verdict of Thomas Binney is not too strongly expressed may be demonstrated from innumerable passages from the pages of living Romanists, who distinctly avow that such is their deliberate intention. When Archbishop Manning—soon, we suppose, to be Cardinal Manning—writes, speaks, and pleads for the separation of Church and State, as he does. are any Dissenters foolish enough to suppose that his ultimate idea is the same as theirs, and that they are not aiding him to an ultimate idea beyond their own?

It was this spirit of mental and moral independence—this resolute desire, at any rate, to be truthful; and if not always to be polite, at least always to be *real*—which led Mr. Binney to look with free impartiality upon the defects of the communion to which he himself belonged. I have already said, he was not proud that he was a Dissenter—no sensible man can be that; he might naturally feel a

sense of pride that he could be honest. Beyond any doubt, what the Establishment confers upon her sons is, in a word, *status*. Had Frederick Robertson or Frederick Maurice left the Establishment they would not have been lost in the crowd—I hope that would be impossible for such men—but there would have been left scarce a shred of that large and mighty influence they have possessed. Were Dr. Vaughan, or Bishop Temple, or Canon Liddon to leave their Church behind them, and become the ministers of simple Congregational churches, they would, no doubt, carry their reputation for scholarship, and many of

223

their previous relationships, with them; but they neither of them possess the influence or the popularity which Baptist Noel possessed; and we know that in a few months that was all gone—all gone on that great and extended scale on which it had been exercised and known before. Who is oblivious to all this? As surely as Congregational Independency represents the Church of the wealthy, well-to-do, respectable middle-classes of the country, so the Establishment represents the Church of the aristocracy-and the country knows it—and that the benignity shed through the recognitive benedictions of the simplest, humblest curate of our land outweighs the suffrages of the mightiest Congregational bishop amongst us. These things are so. Nor probably would the instant separation of Church and State alter the fact—he who takes up the profession of Dissenter, or Dissenting minister, should feel that he is condemned to disabilities, that his own order probably will help to remind him that he has not the status of any of the clergymen who minister in his neighbourhood. Everybody knows this very well, and Mr. Binney knew it very well. It is this, which, while, upon one hand, it compels subscription, does, on the other hand, draw out into the aspects of heroism the conduct of men who find, perhaps, few things in Church-of-

Englandism to which they could not conform, but resolutely determine, for the sake of these few things, to listen, as Mr. Binney listened, to the scruples of conscience, even should they seem to be fastidious, and "decline to subscribe and refuse to take orders."

At the same time many things in the system of Con-

224

gregationalism impressed him unfavourably, as we may gather from the following paragraph:—

THE VIRTUE AND VICE OF INDEPENDENCY.

"In the speculative delineations of this system, there is something, to a free and generous mind, extremely fascinating. It supposes the existence of a virtuous brotherhood, confederated for the sublimest purpose, and acknowledging an almost universal equality of rights and privileges. By its impartiality, it manifests its respect for man; by its rejection of human power in spirituals, it testifies its reverence for God; by its professions of liberty, it captivates the independent; and by its constant contemplation of moral improvement, its repugnance to meaningless and pompous appendages, it secures the suffrage of the decidedly devout. Its philosophic simplicity, its profound respect for reason and Scripture, its appeal to the understanding rather than the passions, its contempt for the service of superstition, and the policy of priestcraft—all invest it with transcendent properties, and afford its advocates a source of copious declamation. Hence, in listening to one of her descriptions of the Church, you seem not only to have lost that fearful and bloody thing, distinguished by this title in the records of past periods, but to have found something that almost realises the fictions of the golden age—something under whose gentle influence, and within whose sacred enclosure, a number of human beings, intelligently alive to the claims of reason and religion, unite in benevolent and voluntary compact; where accidental distinctions are

225

suspended by the fraternal character of each; and where worldly passions are expelled from *regenerated* man—this is not painting. Independency contemplates the converted, and only such, as the proper subjects of spiritual legislation. It has no idea of a Church, and very properly so; but as a voluntary society of holy men, it enforces nothing on the conscience by arbitrary enactments or secular sanctions. It puts the laws of the Sovereign into the hands of all, and, treating them as possessors of an intelligent nature, invites their personal and unfettered investigation of His will; solicits the conscientious, and only conscientious, adoption of its precepts; listens on certain occasions, with equal regard to the suggestions of each; and breathes in everything the spirit of impartial affection. In theory, it looks beautiful as heaven, where all is purity, and love, and order; but, in actual operation, it certainly does present, at times, a most repulsive appearance, surrounded, as it seems, by an atmosphere not *quite* so pellucid as that which invests the world of light. Now it so happens that many know it only by knowing the animosity of its adherents, and thus they have no conception whatever of its primitive peacefulness; and then, when they are invited to observe its speculative perfection, connecting what they hear of its eruptions with what they perceive of its beauty, they imagine that it resembles one of the deceptions of nature—a mountain, inviting and attractive to the eye, but concealing in the recesses of its bosom the slumbering thunder of the volcano."

And we might almost suppose that he had experienced

226

in his early days the afflictions implied in the following paragraph:—

A TROUBLESOME DEACON.

"'The best of men are but men at the best;' systems the most perfect may excite feelings and prompt conduct much to be deplored, in those frail beings, who hardly know how to appreciate their perfection; hence, many of the evils we lament, and many inconsistencies almost too palpable to be believed; a society of *equal* brethren, subject to the capriciousness and tyranny of *one man;* a fraternity of *Christian* brethren divided into petty factions by the feuds and jealousies of opposite pillars; an *independent* expounder of God's Word, subject to the insult of captious criticism; and a holy, devoted minister, tortured under the fangs of that worst of all possible personifications of Heresy and Antichrist—a haughty, unfeeling, dominant deacon!"

Now that the revered patriarch, like "a shock of corn fully ripe," has descended to his grave, buried, as Dr. Raleigh beautifully said of him in his funeral sermon, with the burial of a king, it may be interesting and instructive to recur to the abuse and infamy with which he was loaded for his supposed vehemence of action against the Church of England. The *Eclectic Review* for November, 1837, reviewing John Search's "What and Who Says It?" aggregates the morsels of abuse in the following paragraph:—

THE AUTHOR OF DISSENT NO SCHISM.

"Some of our readers will perhaps be am used to see a collection of some of these flowers of rhetoric. Most of

227

them are exotics, or at least are not to be met with every day in this country. Indeed, they are so uncongenial to our soil that the greater part perished as soon as they

were planted. But by those who are curious about such matters, they may be found preserved in the '*horlus siccus*'-like pages of the *British Magazine, Christian Observer, Christian Remembrancer,* 'Thoughts,' &c., by Dr. Burton, Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, 'Reformation in the Church, Revolution in Disguise,' *Oxford Herald, Standard,* and *Record* newspapers, 'Circular Letter to the Bench of Bishops.' Some few, indeed, have been with much pains kept alive, and flower afresh every month, but they are sickly and drooping, and it is to be feared will not last long. *Aliases* of the Rev. Thomas Binney: 'One Binney,' 'Binney,' 'Master Binney,' 'T. Binney,' 'The Dissenting Orator,' 'The Weigh House Orator,' 'The Writer of Biographies and Addresses,' 'The Thing,' 'The Fly,' 'The Mouse,' 'The Wolf,' 'The Tiger,' 'The Person,' 'The Pope,' 'The Mouthpiece of an Evil Spirit,' 'A Spirit in Bondage to the Devil.' One writer says:—'It is, indeed, a signal proof of the *tolerance* which the Church (?) has secured in this country that Mr. Binney is not at this moment sitting in the stocks.' Descriptions of Mr. Binney's character and dispositions:—'It is my firm conviction that the expressions used by the person Binney were spoken under the "influence of Satan," and that the speaker was but the *mouth-piece* of "an evil spirit." I feel therefore bound to renounce all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and with the spirits that are in bondage to the devil.' 'The Weigh House corrosive sublimate.' 'The narrow-minded,

228

uncharitable, and impious Mr. Binney.' 'The poisonous doctrine of such men as Binney.' 'The folly and ignorance'—'The bitterness and the blasphemy of the Weigh House orator.' 'There are many who agree with Mr. Binney in their hearts, but who will not venture on the

shame of so revolting an avowal.' 'The contempt and disgust cast upon Binney by any heart capable of a moral feeling.' 'There are Dissenters who shrink from the contact of such a man as Mr. Binney—a very humble degree of right feeling is requisite for *that*.' 'Mr. Binney's *charge:*—The document which, of any that I have seen, bears the most resemblance to it in tone and violence, is the Bull of Pope Paul III., putting Henry VIII. under an anathema. I doubt not that Pope Paul was as sincere in his opinion as Pope Binney, and the one seems as well instructed as the other (notwithstanding the difference of the times in which they were born) in the duties of a Christian pastor. The ancient Pope—the modern Pope—the spirit of the two persecutors is the same; and it is the spirit of the *first* persecutor—the DEVIL.' The charitable Dr. Burton says:—'Mr. Binney, their intolerant descendant (a part of his address appears to have been spoken at Billingsgate), Mr. Binney, whose heart is untouched with the charity of the Gospel, and whose conversion is not to be effected by human means!'"

It would be very interesting, if it were possible, to trace the history of some of the minds over which Mr. Binney exercised an influence. There are those disposed to depreciate an order of power and influence, not ranging beneath their own conceptions; but good is many sided,

---

229

and we ought to be disposed to believe that something may result to the Church and to the world from activities in which we cannot engage; it is very probable that, to some orders of Christian mind and intelligence, many of our preacher's discourses would seem wanting in what they would regard as Gospel statement; and how bitter and uncharitable some minds can be, while professing to gasp after Gospel truth, surely we all very well know. Such minds are usually impatient of what searches thought,

and sounds depths which sink beneath the shallower streams of feeling. Whether Mr. Binney was right in his method I shall not discuss here; but it is true that he seldom attempted to touch the conscience until he had passed through the avenues of the understanding; but then he did usually come into a close, and, I think, generally a very successful conflict with *it*.

It must have been about the year 1834, I think, that a very remarkable man in his day, fell beneath Mr. Binney's influence. William Hone's "Every Day Book" still adorns every complete and respectable library; but the man himself had a celebrity and a notoriety of altogether another order from that implied by those charming volumes. The life of William Hone ought to be written. I am astonished that the friend of Charles Lamb, and one of a coterie of literary celebrities of the last generation, has been so coolly permitted to pass out of sight and memory. Many years before the period to which I refer, he had excited the bitter wrath of the Government of his day by a succession of satires, for which there was abundant cause, in what must be spoken of as the wicked Administration of that period—the period of the Regency, the last years of the

230

reign of George III. William Hone satirised and ridiculed the members of the Government after a fashion which, although it would be tolerated now, was most dangerous then. Hone was a Deist. The crimes of the Government seemed to him to be the reflection very much of Christianity. He had travestied some portions of the Liturgy. A bill was filed against him by the Attorney-General in the Court of King's Bench; his trial lasted three days, and the whole strength of the Government, and its legal representatives, was brought down upon him to crush him. The trial is one of the most famous in the history of English law; the first day's trial was conducted by Mr. Justice Abbott, but 'the

second and third days the Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough himself came down. His is a name infamous in the legal cruelty and injustice of the time. Hone defended himself, and was more than a match for the brow-beating and bullying of the Lord Chief Justice. The excitement at the trial and its interests were amazing. It was one of those great efforts put forth at that day to crush the liberty of the press. Hone came off victor each day, to the immense annoyance of the Government and of the Lord Chief Justice; he was acquitted on the great counts, and then the indignation of the country was aroused by Lord Ellenborough proceeding to try him on the *third* scarcely obnoxious count. He was acquitted by two special juries on all. The country raised a subscription of £3,000 for William Hone—a larger sum then than it seems now. This kindly, genial man, by a long course of persecution, was hardened from a humourist into a bitter satirist. His mind had not been made more conformable to Christi-

231

anity by the spirit of the State persecutions. It is pretty certain that he hated Christianity. It may be believed that the very name was offensive to him. That was, perhaps, the very kind of nature to feel the power of such a mode of presenting truth as that employed by Thomas Binney. I have a recollection of seeing William Hone once at the office of the *Patriot*—a most kind, genial, thoughtful old man, I remember, with a line of hardness in his thought, great faith in England, of whose future he spoke with enthusiasm, and great faith in and admiration for a young man whom he knew, but of whom I had scarcely heard or read anything then, named Thomas Carlyle. I believe I am correct in saying Mr. Binney baptized him. He became a member of the Weigh House, and the sturdy old Nestor of Infidelity renounced his unbelief, and received the truth as a little child. He pro-

fessed his faith in Christ in a couple of very sweet verses:—

"The proudest heart that ever beat
Hath been subdued in me;
The wildest will that ever rose
To scorn Thy cause or aid Thy foes,
Is crushed, my God, in me.

"Thy will, and not my will, be done;
My heart is wholly Thine.
Confessing Thee, the Almighty Word,
My Saviour, Christ, my God, my Lord,
Thy cross shall be my sign."

It was at the funeral of Mr. Hone, which was conducted by Mr. Binney, that the circumstances transpired, whatever they were, which have formed the subject of some remarks in the second volume of Forster's "Life of Charles

232

Dickens." I need not refer to them now, and here; but this slight estimate of Thomas Binney would be incomplete if I did not mention his spiritual usefulness to so eminent a man as William Hone.

Also, in connection with this instance, I may remark how slight an influence mere technical theology in the pulpit would be likely to have over such a character. I have implied how much, before Mr. Binney's day, this mere technical statement entered into pulpit performances. Every body of truth has a skeleton inside of it, but it is a dreary business when the flesh is stripped from the bones, and the skeleton is presented to a listening multitude. Truth in Mr. Binney's preaching was articulated not like a skeleton for a lecture-room, but like a living, walking, human frame. It was the articulation of *Life,*

not of *Science*. He very early seemed to feel that he had a mission to set forth truth in a living, natural way. A writer of a very interesting paper in the *English Independent*★ gives one of Mr. Binney's happy answers, which shows, in spite of his propensity to analysis, how synthetic and concrete his mind was, and how much more under the influence of a great truth felt, than arguments nicely refined. The writer says:—

"He was ready to take a service in a quiet way, and in a very humble place as he felt himself able. The last time the present writer heard him was in Yorkshire. It was on

★ *English Independent,* March, 1874. Art.: "Reminiscences of Mr. Binney," by a Ministerial Correspondent. The *English Independent* has done most honour to Mr. Binney in this way, and the several numbers at the period of his death contain many papers which those interested in his memory will do well to preserve.

an occasion of considerable interest, and many came far and near to hear him. He preached on 'The Lord's Death;' and after having depicted the facts of it very graphically, he gave the Scripture teaching concerning its meaning, very simply and impressively. In a conversation respecting the sermon, afterwards, the writer ventured to suggest that if he could publish his discourse, setting against the Scripture meaning which he had deduced the various theories of the atonement, it would serve a most useful purpose in these times. His reply was that he was past doing anything of that kind; he could only just draw out the Scripture statements and leave them. As to the atonement, he observed that he was like the man who was required to. explain what God is—'*I know if I am not asked.*'"

Hence, also, in an early period of life, he expressed himself as follows with reference to

TECHNICAL THEOLOGY.

"The mass of mankind seldom attempt to investigate comprehensive terms—to ascertain the number, or distinguish the elements, which combine to constitute a complex idea. Many words and phrases, consecrated by custom to stand as the representatives of a certain congeries of conceptions, are often heard, and often uttered, without intelligibly standing for anything; without any definite image being either conveyed to one mind, or conceived by the other. Many general terms of great magnitude and meaning, adopted from Scripture, and habitually heard from the lip of theology, are frequently used, there is reason to fear, with this culpable inatten-

234

tion to their positive import. They look like algebraic characters, which a person, ignorant of the mystic process, observes in a variety of combinations, without understanding them, and to which may be arbitrarily attached any supposable number, two, five, ten, or ten thousand, at the pleasure of the employer. We cannot but suspect that the term '*Sanctification*' is often to be found in a predicament like this; to the great body of hearers it conveys either no idea at all, or else it excites a vague indefinite feeling, about something awful and immaculate, of which they never catch a consistent conception; of which they can give you no account; which they suppose is not to be expressed by any other word; and which, whatever it be, certainly *must* be something very mysterious. I appeal to any man who is in the habit of asking himself, 'What do I really mean by this word, which I have been taught to utter?' and who endeavours at times to ascertain how others also hear and employ it; I appeal to such, whether the preceding remarks do not accurately describe the state of mind and feeling with which thousands may be supposed to use that term to which they refer. If to that term we ourselves are disposed to attach

some definite idea—determined, in fact, not to employ it without knowing why; not to take it on the tongue without having an actual and corresponding conception in the mind—it is presumed by the writer, that the explanatory phrase which he employed above will afford that conception; a phrase equally comprehensive. and at least as intelligible; 'all possible virtue, internal and active'; rectitude and benevolence—eternal rectitude, all-embracing benevolence—purity of thought and feeling, sensibility of con-

---

235

science, repugnance to every appearance of evil, justice, temperance, chastity, candour, acquiescence in the Divine will, meekness, humility, brotherly kindness, unbending integrity, unimpeachable honour—'*This is the will of God —Sanctification.*' These, and such as these, are the impulses and the offspring of that Holy Spirit imparted to the Church; intended by his copious effusions to fertilise the wilderness of man's moral nature, to adorn it with the foliage, and replenish it with the fruits of universal righteousness. '*This is the will of God.*' How remarkable and emphatic the phrase! On what a pre. eminence it places the subject in the order of the Divine ideas! The soul of every other, the centre to which all tend, the aim and scope of His infinite plan; as if all else was subordinate to this; as if all His intentions and all events-all the advances of His government, all the breathings of His benevolence, all the energy of His power, all the resources of His wisdom, all the emanations of His grace, all the suggestions of His Spirit—were but the servants of this great object, the means to accelerate and accomplish this unparalleled purpose of the Supreme Will! For this end 'all Scripture has been given;' for this end 'is it profitable for doctrine, that. the man of God may be perfect, fully furnished unto all good works.' The majesty of man's character is the morality of His character—morality properly understood, in its only legitimately vir-

tuous acceptation; morality as flowing from evangelical principles; *practise,* as the child and representative of *faith*. Morals are beyond religion; they are that for which all religion provides; on which the life of the devout mind is ever intent, and without which all professions,

---

236

either of faith or feeling, are nothing better than the babblings of idiocy, the dreamings of self-delusion, or the pretences of positive imposture."

It has been said already that he innovated upon many stereotyped ideas in theology which had become fixed in the general mind, but which those who received them had been at no trouble to think or to follow out. Hence he presents

THE FALLACY OF OLD IDEAS.

"Hence you will see the fallacy of some of the old orthodox illustrations upon this subject. Our fathers were very wise and very good men; but they did not know everything, or understand everything. And, I think, they misunderstood some things; I think in some things they narrowed and darkened truth 'by words without knowledge.' A favourite illustration of theirs, very frequently used, was that of the payment of a price, a simple pecuniary transaction. I do not think that illustrates the atonement at all; to say that one man owes a debt, and another goes and pays the debt, pays it in full, gives the money; that, in that way, we are clear. No; that is not the doctrine of the atonement. In that case, the amount having been paid, the actual, whole, entire, literal sum having been given to the creditor, the man that owed the debt is free, whatever be the state of his mind. He may hate the creditor, he may speak against the creditor, he may curse and swear, and have the most malignant feeling against him, but he is free;

there is no claim on him for the debt; the money is paid. I say that a pecuniary transaction will not do as an illus-

237

tration; that this is not the way with the atonement. I say, that our pardon, our peace, our hope, does not follow in the way of inevitable consequence; or else it would come to us, whatever be the state of our minds. We might be just like the man I have described. No; it is a moral benefit, and there must be a moral feeling. It is something very different from that mere huckstering, pecuniary sort of transaction. In the same way I do not at all hold with another of our fathers' illustrations about this matter, in which they used to put it thus: that the actual sins of those that were to be saved were taken and put on Christ, and that He literally, and in fact, endured the punishment of those sins—really endured—precisely that punishment, and then that the righteousness of Christ is literally, and in fact, taken and put upon these men; so that there is a literal transfer of sin, a literal bearing of punishment, an actual sustaining the curse threatened by the law, and a real and personal clothing the sinner, and putting on him the righteousness of Jesus Christ. I do not believe a word of that. It destroys the Gospel-completely destroys the whole Gospel; there is no Gospel in it. There is nothing but the most hard, determined law there; nothing else. There is no good news. See what it comes to. It comes to this: since Jesus Christ suffered the literal and actual punishment of sin, that those who are saved must have suffered—so much more suffering, if so many more had to be saved; so much less, if so many fewer. It involves the absurdity, that He could suffer the actual punishment at all; whereas the great punishment coming to sinners in hell is remorse, horrible remorse, and actual injury to the moral nature. That is the great

238

curse of sin; and Jesus Christ could not suffer it at all. And then it comes to this; that there is no grace in it, although this is peculiarly said to be 'the doctrine of grace.' In a case of violation of law, there may be punishment; but the judge can always exact only one of two things—he can exact either obedience of the law, or punishment if there is disobedience; he cannot have both. But, according to this system, the regal, sovereign Dispenser of law must get both; He gets all the punishment for disobedience in the sufferings of Christ, and yet He gets obedience in the righteousness of Christ. There is no Gospel there, no grace; there is law twice over. I do not think these illustrations, that were very frequent with our fathers, are much used now. Even though people may adopt the phraseology, their hearts are better than their language; their notions are better. The fact is, you must come to this; that in order to get the benefit of Christ's death, there must be a certain state of mind—the exercise of repentence, faith, and so forth."

It is singular what an influence a vulgar, coarse, and altogether unreasonable so-called Calvinism has exercised over many minds. The disciples of William Huntington have pleaded the names of Luther and Calvin as authorities for doctrines they were altogether unable to comprehend from a human—not to say a philosophical—point of view. The following is Mr. Binney's tart and strong description of a ghastly form of so-called religious feeling rather than faith which is ever re-appearing amongst us:—

ANTINOMIANISM.

"To attempt a portrait of Antinomianism would be

239

absurd; it has no features; it is a mere map of hideous, shapeless, memberless deformity. An abortion. A monster without sense, or soul, or symmetry. An animated wen. A blind but virulent excrescence, composed of the worst humours of corrupt impostors, that usurps the name of the Confessor of Geneva. Like the fearful appearance that excited the alarm of Eliphaz, you may hear its voice, and startle at its proximity; but it has no form, no image, of which you can catch a constant conception. In fact it resembles this *beautiful* Babel of figures which we have just thrown out, regardless equally of their delicacy and connection. That we may remember something, however, of this demoniacal disturber, we will try to seize a few of its characteristics as its passes before us, embody them by a dark dash or two, and have done. This thing—for it were profane to employ a personification requiring either of the pronouns by which we represent the majesty of man or the attractions of woman—this *thing,* if it be cherished, is the crime; if it enter, will prove the curse of a church. Whenever it appears the angel of peace departs. Fostered by perversions of Scripture, and indulgent to human depravity, it begins by libelling God, and ends in corrupting man. Without intellect it cannot be convinced; without feeling, it cannot be mortified; with nothing to learn, instruction is unnecessary; with nothing to do, exhortations are absurd; with malignant selfishness, it delights in diminishing the number of the redeemed; and without the capacity of benevolent desire, it surveys the wreck of the reprobate with savage satisfaction. It has nothing to hope, for all is attained; it has nothing to fear, for sin is harmless; eternally elected, anxiety is guilt;

240

eternally sanctified, contamination is impossible; it first abuses an eternal truth, and then subsists by an eternal lie."

It is little to say his religious teaching from the beginning of his ministry to its close was of a most eminently practical order; it, no doubt, appealed to a very high caste and class of character, but it demanded *life, character,* as the illustration of *creed.* Those who imagine that because he thought deeply, and felt profoundly, and carried these manifestations with him into the pulpit, that, therefore. he did not press home obligation to duty, are marvellously mistaken. I do not believe there was a more practical preacher; take such an illustration as the following:—

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT.

"I should say walking in the Spirit implies that the mind is being opened so that it shall see spiritual things; for in order to walk in the Spirit we must be able to look through the material to the spiritual, and walk not by sight but by faith, and walk, therefore, in relation to the Spirit. I suppose that the ox which grazes in the meadow knows that the grass is green, and the sky blue; and can look upon any beautiful or magnificent prospect which lies before it; but does the ox ever think of its grandeur? All the colours and variety of the scene before it, we suppose, it can behold; but to the mind of the ox it is a picture, a phenomenon, nothing more. All the natural beauty of the scene is lying before that eye; but it would, I suppose, be an absurdity to say that to the eye of the ox the world is beautiful. What knoweth it of beauty?

241

What understandeth it of beauty? To the ox it certainly is not beautiful; it is not Divine, because it hath no per-

ception of the Divine and the spiritual, which underlieth all matter, and is that which is really the substance of all phenomena. Now, there are men very much like the ox; they will look upon objects, but see nothing but the bare material—the spiritual they do not see. They have no proper perception of that which underlieth all things. They don't see the spiritual in man; they don't see the spirituality there is in great principles; they don't look through the material universe, and put aside the vail of matter in order that they may look into the spiritual. What I mean to say is this—that the Christian man who hath spiritual life, if he walks in the Spirit, will be as familiar with the spiritual as other men are with the natural. This is one of his great characteristics. The man who does not walk in the Spirit just looks at the outside of things, that which they can know through the medium of their senses—that which they can touch and taste; but the spiritual man, who walks in the Spirit, while he can also recognise objects by his senses, he can also penetrate beneath all that is outward; he perceiveth what they all mean, and graspeth the spiritual which underlieth them all. When he looketh up to the sky the heavens part, as it were, and he can stand and gaze up into heaven as the first martyr did. While walking through the streets of a great city, as well as at any other time, he can lift up his eyes to heaven, and can see God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of the throne. Then when he looks upon the crowd, his spiritual sense reveals to him the world of agony that is not seen by the natural eye. The

15

242

man who walks in the Spirit sees everything in a spiritual light. He looks at men, at human affairs, at everything that is done, and doing, and is to do, in a spiritual light; he looks at the things which are not seen, which are spiri-

tual and eternal; and the exhortation here addressed to Christians is, that they should regulate their lives by the spiritual; all that they do should have relation to this. The man who is really living and walking in the Spirit, without any enthusiasm, any derangement in all his daily business and actions, sees spiritual things just as another man sees wealth, riches, houses, and lands. The natural eye looketh no further—it cannot see the spiritual; but the spiritual eye looketh quite beyond the mere outward, at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but things which are not seen are eternal.'"

He frequently had singular *rencontres*. His name became very well known by persons who hated him most heartily, associating his presence with every uncomfortable, low, democratic appearance, and who were singularly surprised to find the majestic urbanity, the dignified knowledge of the world, and entirely gentlemanly presence he carried with him. I think he was going down the Thames when he fell in with a clergyman. They conversed together most pleasantly. In the course of conversation it transpired that Mr. Binney was a Dissenter; but the clergyman professed himself not at all shocked at that, *although* his acquaintance was evidently a man of good taste, sense, and culture! "but now," continued he, "there is that Binney! *that Binney!*" and he proceeded to deliver a

---

243

lecture, which, it may be conceived, was very amusing to his Dissenting friend. But when they had to part, it was the clergyman who proposed that they should exchange cards, expressing a hope that they might, perhaps, exchange a call; and then, to his amazement, he found that his companion on the voyage had been "*that Binney!*" I have every reason to believe that this is quite a true story. I believe they parted good and admiring friends.

And, also, the following. It is well known that Mr. Binney's appearance was decidedly clerical. He looked like a Dean. Indeed, the accomplished and most brilliant authoress of the "Master of Marton" has conferred a canonry upon him.* Mr. Binney is the Canon Burney of the following beautiful scene;—

"It felt like the morning of the world as we drove along through the warm, sun-filled air, and looked out on the fair, bountiful land, with its rich, full life, its golden corn-fields, and rosy-laden orchards. No maiden spring, sweet but coy; here was the matron year, like some young, gay mother, with her children crowding round her, happy, and giving joy out of her own abundance to others.

"'Jean, this is glorious! I said my godmother, and I looked in the Canon's eyes, and saw that he was rejoicing in it too. He was murmuring something to himself. 'Part of an old poem,' he said, when I asked him what it was. 'One of the oldest the world has, and yet it might be just the voice of the present hour.'

* Indeed, this sweet story-writer has introduced Mr. Binney, as Canon Burney, not only into the "Master of Marton," but into the "Diary of a Novelist," where he and his wife—as the good "god-mother"—figure very charmingly and loveably.

244

"And then when he saw that I wondered what he meant he began to repeat aloud, in his grave, deep voice—

"'Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice;
Thou visitest the earth and waterest it;
Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water,
Thou preparest them corn when Thou hast so provided for it;

Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly;
Thou settlest the furrows thereof;
Thou makest it soft with showers;
Thou blessest the springing thereof;
Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness, and Thy paths drop fatness;
They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side.
The pastures are clothed with flocks;
The valleys also are covered over with corn;
They shout for joy; they also sing.'

'What life there is in that! "They shout for joy; they also sing." What rejoicingness! How you feel that the man wrote or sang it out of doors, with Nature streaming into him, and all his soul rushing out towards God.'

"It was so like the Canon, his own thoughts telling themselves to us through the speech of the shepherd King. I have thought sometimes, if David and the old Canon had been grey-haired men together, instead of living so many ages apart, they would have found themselves in one another, and often taken sweet counsel together. That little psalm never seemed so true and beautiful to me as when I listened to it then, with all Nature chanting the same psalm of praise around us."

He met with a clergyman on one especial occasion, who mistook him for a dignitary. Mistook him? Did he not look like a bishop—all save the silk stockings

---

245

and the apron? Ah! But then I don't think he would have looked like a bishop in the silk stockings and apron. Well, it transpired in the course of the conversation *who* he was, and the cleric was astounded; he looked up, surprised; he looked down, surprised. "Ah!" said Mr. Binney, "I see what you are looking after—the

hoof and the tail!" Sometimes his relations with the clerics were of a very different character. I believe the following story may be relied upon. I have it from a thirty-two years member of the Weigh House. When Mr. Binney's "Best of Both Worlds" was published, it fell in the way of—I do not know whom—a nobleman or gentleman who just then had a living at his disposal. The book was evidently the production of a minister. He looked in the "Clergy List." He found a "*Binney*" there; he wrote instructions to his solicitor to present the living to *Mr. Binney*. Well and good; and, all in good time, the Incumbent presented himself before his patron, surely very naturally, to thank him. "Ah!" said the donor, "I am very glad to have an opportunity of seeing you, sir. It was a little acknowledgment of your inestimable book, 'Is it Possible to Make the Best of Both Worlds?'" Aghast, our clerical friend had to confess that the book was the production of a *Dissenting* minister! However, I suppose he was safely ensconced in his living.

Force, quiet force, was an attribute of Mr. Binney's character. This is, indeed, what we mean by *weight,* men who carry *weight*. Oh! it is a magical quality. What is *it?* Is it the grey matter in the brain? I do not know. *Cromwell* had it; *Charles* was a king, but he had it not;

246

Cuvier had it; I do not think *Owen* possesses it; *Thackeray* had it; *Dickens* had not. I do not know what I am writing; it is a magical quality, this *carrying weight*. *Chalmers* had it; *Edward Irving* had not. Edward Irving was a greater man than Thomas Chalmers'; but he did not carry "the weight." This is a wonderful quality, an occult quality. Oh! my reader, it is an *absurd* quantity. There is no accounting for it, only this—its possessor can do anything. Thomas Binney had it. It was amusing to know how he got into St. Paul's on the great Thanksgiving Day

for the restoration of the Prince of Wales. He had a ticket, of course, but, miscalculating his forces, he got lost in a mob. A nobleman's carriage came by. He held up his ticket, stopped the coachman. "My lord, your lordship perceives that I have a ticket for St. Paul's; but I shall never get through this crowd. You are alone in your carriage. I throw myself on your kindness and courtesy." The door was opened in an instant, and in good time he was in St. Paul's. It was a natural action, the strong man vindicating his place; but even in St. Paul's, his black velvet cap upon his head, looking a peer, if any man ever looked a peer, somehow, instead of getting amongst the Dissenting deputies, he got amongst the dukes, marquises, and earls! and if they had put him into the pulpit the remark would not have been made, which a friend of mine heard between two earls as they were going out, "What was the use of putting up *Canterbury* to talk to this crowd? They should have got *Spurgeon* to preach!" I am quite certain that Charles Spurgeon would have been equal to the occasion. Thomas Binney would not have sunk beneath either it or himself.

247

But, in a word, great force of manner always implies great heartiness and fulness of character; hence come strong, overflowing words—words which come over you like summer rain, or wrap you round like summer light: clear, strong, tender, full of humanity, full of strength—other men say sharper things, seem to possess the power, perhaps, of greater generalisations of truths, and so on. Yes; but it is all the difference that there is between the lucidity of science and the heartiness of a human nature; it is the power which takes men captive; it is the power which makes greater leaders, generals; strong, heroic hearts, before which men bow down, and to which men look up; it is the power which rings out in strong, animating words; it is the power in a character of which we

often say it has not this, nor that, nor the other—no, but it has the overflowing stream of humanity in it. We may pass a criticism upon it, but we never question our obedience to it; we follow it, and it is one of the most delightful things to look up, and feel there is a nature to which we can be gladly loyal, and to which little foibles and faults are to us spots in the sun, mysteries which do not interfere with magnificence. Hence, take some of Thomas Binney's ringing, hearty words. I can only take such as I am able to find and select; but how human and beautiful some of them are, like some we have selected before, tender, humorous, sublime—*all human*.

WHY DO INFANTS DIE?

"Hence it is that infants die; they die through the working of a most benevolent secondary law, brought in to break the rigour of the first! And they die *for the*

248

benefit of the race. Their lives are taken, for the sake of securing the happiness of the world. I had almost said-and I *may* say it as speaking *in a figure*—that a babe in its coffin may be supposed to look, to its weeping parents, like a little 'dead Christ.' It has died vicariously, to secure a temporal advantage for the world, even as Christ died vicariously to secure for it a spiritual redemption. The one dies, that we may not know *when* we shall die; the other died that we *might* know that 'our Redeemer liveth.' By the one fact we are enabled to endure life; by the other we are taught to die in hope, and to look forward to the resurrection of the dead. Let a halo of glory, then, seem to encircle that fair brow, the brow of that little babe, lying cold and dead there, on the lap of its mother! Poor mother! thy sorrow is great! Weep away; let the hot tears gush out; it is not the time to speak to thee now. But very soon thou wilt come to understand, how, all thy life, thou hast been reaping advantages *that came to thee by the death of the infants of*

others; and thou wilt learn to acquiesce in what is really the result of one of the most benevolent of God's arrangements. The death of thy child, *as a human being,* is from sin; but his death *as a child* is, because he is one of the chosen of the race, whose lot and mission are not to live to *do* and to *enjoy,* but simply to die,—but to die for the benefit of the whole species, the world over."

A FINE EYE FOR DEFECTS.

"What a fine faculty some people have for detecting and dilating upon the weaknesses of their brethren—or what they deem weaknesses, from not having the power,

---

249

perhaps, to understand or appreciate the character to which they attach! How utterly blind you will find many persons to all that is good and great in the mind or conduct of a given individual, but most admirably acute in observing the little shades and spots by which such excellence is occasionally obscured! The moral taste in these cases seems to be completely perverted; instead of deriving delight from the perception of moral beauty. it turns away from it, as if its presence were incompatible with pleasure, and finds its most exquisite enjoyment to consist in the contemplation of deformity or defect."

How tender, true, and natural the following:—

FRIENDSHIP CAN WAIT.

"Again, another duty to be cultivated by the friend of God is *a perfect confidence in His friendship.* Though circumstances may be trying, though (if we may speak after the manner of men) the countenance of the friend may not be to them as at other times, friendship in the heart of the friend of God will be a generous and a confiding thing; it will not take advantage of every little circumstance, in Providence, of darkness, and obscurity, and pain, and trial, to think hardly of that Divine affection to

which it has fled, and upon which it reposes. Friendship can wait. Real, generous, true friendship can wait. Tell me about the man whom I know, the man whose principles and whose affections I have tried—tell me of any circumstances about him that appear mysterious, that seem to indicate strange vacillation about his principles, and feelings, and habits; tell me all that; still I can wait

---

250

till I have opportunity of investigation, and I feel confident that I know how I shall find the explanation satisfactory and full. Now just transfer this feeling to the Divine government and the Divine conduct. It is a duty that we owe to God, if we truly are His friends, to do this, to remember that, while the friend sustains to us not merely the relation of a friend, but sustains also the other relation of a governor and ruler, one, therefore, who is to be obeyed—one, therefore, who has a right to exercise chastisement and discipline—it becomes us to submit to the wisdom, and the love, and the true friendship that are presiding over those circumstances that appear dark and mysterious."

And the following bears very much the same lesson as the last:—

THY WILL BE DONE.

"The harmony and happiness of the intelligent universe depend on an identity of will between it and Deity. The moral disorder among us may be resolved into the absence of this—the opposition, or want of coincidence, between man's will and that of God. When in any case this coincidence is complete when a created mind loses, as it were, its individuality, and possesses no will but His—cherishes no desire, and obeys no impulse, but such as harmonise with the 'good pleasure' of the 'Father of Spirits'—then has that being attained created perfection: no clashing of interests, no opposition of pursuits,

obstructs the complacency of Deity in it, or destroys the repose of it in Deity."

I think it was the same fulness of character which led

251

him to perceive the glory of the truth, on which he so heartily dilated, as in the following:—

THE GRANDEUR OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

"Oh! brethren, there may be magnificence in the sun; there may be glory in the heavens when its everlasting lamps are lighted up; there may be beauty in the landscape; there may be power in the ocean; grandeur and magnificence may distinguish these works of God; but they do not know it; they are unconscious of what they are. The sun knows nothing of all the goodness which he effectuates; he is unconscious of the light he pours, and the warmth he communicates, and the vegetation he attends; he acts, but he acts unconsciously; he cannot be a co-worker with God. He may be grand and beautiful, but he does not know, God, he can never resemble Him, he has no moral pleasure, and no moral character. But it is the distinction of man, because he possesses the reasonable soul to which I have referred, to be conscious of what he does, to offer to God voluntary obedience, which is virtue, to be a co-worker, as it were, with God, and to sympathise with His mind, to imitate and resemble Him, and to partake of His own beatitudes, and of His own character. By what man has done, if we had time or if it were proper in a service like this to bring it before you extensively, we should show you the distinction and the glory of man. In consequence of this soul he possesses, what has he done? nay, what has he not done? He has conquered every other animal, though greater than himself in bulk, in strength, in swiftness. He has tamed them, and made them his servants, and they have become obedient. He has weighed and

252

measured the earth. He hath numbered the stars, he hath classed them, he hath calculated their difference. He hath traversed the ocean, he hath penetrated into the earth; he hath separated and defined the very elements of nature. He hath made the wind, and the steam, and the fire, all his servants; and he sits at the top of this lower world regulating them all. He hath conquered his own species by power, by force, by wisdom; he sways them by his eloquence, by the power, the force of his mind. He hath covered this world with cities and palaces. He hath produced in your libraries all the manifestations of his intellect and genius; and he has directed men's minds in their investigations and discoveries. Man hath done all this, and why? Because it is his distinction and glory to possess the spirit which hath been breathed into him by the inspiration of his Father."

Again:—

KNOWLEDGE THE GLORY OF THE SOUL.

"The little child has a soul as much as Newton; the distinction between that infant and Newton is not that the one hath a soul and the other hath not; it is that the one hath been enlarged and expanded by knowledge; that its capacities, when it was like that child, then folded up, have been unfolded by the light of truth falling upon it, by its being taught to understand its own powers and capacities, by directing them with all its strength. If an infant were to grow and increase in stature, but if the mind were never to come into contact with knowledge, it would be an infant still, it would remain an infant though it had a soul. It is knowledge that is required to direct, to invigorate, and to purify; and it is that which makes

253
all the difference between an infant and a Newton, including, of course, and admitting that there may be, and must be, many great original differences in the capacities and powers of the mind. But take another illustration—take a nation of savages, a nation of barbarians, who know nothing of the comforts of civilisation, and who manifest nothing of the power to which I have referred under the former observations. Now I believe that, among many a nation of barbarians, there have been minds with as elevated genius as your Milton—with as high capacities as Newton. What! do you suppose God confines to this spot, to this land of ours, to Europe, or to any civilised nation, minds that are distinguished by genius, by capacity, and by original powers? No! I doubt not that among many of the barbarous and uncivilised climes of our world, there have been minds that have really possessed original greatness; ay, perhaps more astonishing than any that have appeared amongst us, and yet they have remained barbarians for all that. They perhaps struggled and buffeted with the cage in which they were confined, and the chains of ignorance and darkness by which they were bound; and perhaps they felt the struggling and the buffeting with all this, but could not emancipate themselves. There was the want of knowledge and of influence in all they did to come upon the mind, and to teach them how to direct the capacities of which perhaps they were strugglingly conscious."

And still in the same strain:—

A MAN AND AN ANGEL.

"What a difference there is, we may suppose, between

254
an angel and a man!—between a man and one of those beings that are great in strength and mighty in capacity!

Now, God does not expect from a man the elevated thought, the seraphic devotion, the untiring zeal, the burning devotedness, which He expects from an angel. But He does expect it all from the angel—all of it. What a difference between man and an insect I—a far greater difference than there is between the man and the angel. The man and the angel come both into one class and under one category; they are both spirits. Is an angel a spirit? so am I. Can he reason? so can I. Can! he doubt? so can I. Can he know God? so can I. Can he be like Him? so can I. Both the angel and the man are rational, intelligent, deathless creatures. There is a greater difference between the man and the insect; for it has not the rational nor the religious capacity, which is common to him with the angel. God does not expect of the insect reason—thought—religion; but He does expect it of man. '*What do ye*'—*what are ye*—'*more than others?*'"

As space draws near to its confines, I am reminded how possible it would be to compile another chapter of *Binneyana,* or *apothegmata.* That cannot be; but if, before I close, from the pages of forgotten sermons I select yet some few striking illustrations of hearty words, graphic pictures, and strong sentiments of truth, I believe I shall only be realising what I intended when I attempted to compile this volume, and what may especially illustrate this section of it—the aspects of the inner life of the man:—

255

"Who can pretend to throw his mind into that of the Apostle, or fully to imagine what would be his argument? But we can discover, in part, what it must have been from writings, for the Apostle was a maker of books. A great thing that; for a man to write a good, living book, that shall go on living and speaking after he is dead, is

the greatest thing a man can do in this world, I think. An apostle being a writer of books, we can go to his writings and ascertain what he thought, and how he thought, and how he reasoned, where we only have the subject suggested, and have not the argument."

DIFFICULTIES IN THE BIBLE.

"Men can and do find difficulties; there are a great many things which are obscure in the Divine works, and with respect to many, questions may be asked which the wisest will find it difficult, if not impossible, to answer. Thus, in the great book of creation, which God has spread before us, there are many things connected with the manifestations that He has given which are involved in obscurity and difficulty. And in Providence, the great tide of human affairs, the history of our globe as it rolls on from age to age, what things have been done upon the surface of this world of ours! What baseness has been elevated and dignified; what excellence has been trampled upon and debased! Oh! how much there is in the history of human life and of human affairs, God's great book of providence, which is mysterious and inexplicable to the finite mind! Though we hold that, in spite of all the difficulties, there is much that is bright and light, and beautiful to those who have eyes to see;

256

yet it must be confessed that there are a great many things in the history of the world and its inhabitants which it is exceedingly difficult to understand, when we consider that it is He, the holy God, who is at the head of affairs. So also with respect to the Bible. I have no notion of telling people perpetually that it is an exceedingly simple and easy book. It is a book which has great profundities and much darkness in it. It is a book which we believe, indeed, to have come from God, but of which we also acknowledge that it contains things which will task the highest faculties, and leave them tired rather

than satisfied by the search. There are many things in its types and predictions, in the manner in which truth is put before us, nay, in the very facts which constitute God's great message, which are calculated to dazzle and bewilder us; and although we receive the facts as facts, bowing to the authority which has placed them there, yet it is impossible for these minds of ours to enter into them, to scrutinise what lies at the basis, and to discover the rationale of the whole system; we are met continually by what compels us to pause, and feel that we must adore where we cannot comprehend."

THE WAY EVERLASTING.

"'Lead me in the way everlasting;' here is a prayer eminently fitted for pilgrims, and there is a correspondent promise expressed in the form of pious persuasion, 'Thou *will* show me the path of life.' Hundreds of paths are inviting us to enter, but only one is a 'path of life,' only one is a 'way everlasting.' All but this terminate here, and leave those who select them to the awful consequences

---

257

of a mistaken choice. The way of ambition will terminate; and the way of conquest will terminate; and the way of science will terminate; and the way of pleasure will terminate; *every* way of vice and iniquity will terminate; but there is a way everlasting; there is a way that will never terminate; it is apparently interrupted—it is only in appearance; the soul that steadily pursues it will pursue it for ever; the mind once engaged in pressing forward to a likeness with God, will occupy an eternity in the same pursuit, ever approximating but never approaching acquisitions eternally increased with a prospect eternally enlarged."

THE POWER OF THE PRINCIPLE OF LIFE.

"Now the death of a very aged person suggests to my mind, in the first place, the amazing power of the principle of life in man. It is so wonderful a thing to think that a

human body, with its nice and delicate organisation, should go on, for it does go on, sleeping and waking, toiling and working, without intercession and without rest, for ninety or a hundred years. What a thing it would be if any man constructed a piece of mechanism that should go on in that way! And yet here we see this delicate and wonderful piece of mechanism sustaining that constant, perpetual, uninterrupted action for all that time. But the individual man, though he is a wonderful complex machine considered in himself, is only one little wheel in a greater and a larger structure—that is, the whole species; and the species—such is the wonderful power of life—death cannot touch. Every individual wheel, previous to being broken up and laid aside, has the amazing power of

17

258

reproducing itself—nay, reproducing itself many times; and thus, though the individual departs, there are left his representatives, new, fresh, young, vigorous, to carry on the work and machinery of the world. The fact is, that however we may talk about death, the power of vitality is greater, even in man, and in the present world life is stronger than death. For if you take the whole species, in spite of all that death does, and all that man does to help him by drunkenness and vice and war, there is a tendency in the species to increase and multiply more and more; so that, as death begins with a generation, and goes on cutting and mowing it down, when he has thus gone round the world and comes back to where he started, there is a greater number alive than when he began. Such is the great and wonderful power in this principle of life, and thus it is that in a certain sense death is continually being conquered, even in his own world. A prophecy to me, a prediction and type, of what awaits him when the words of Scripture shall be fulfilled, that 'the last enemy'

shall be entirely 'destroyed,' and 'mortality swallowed up of life.'"

259

But his *faults!* Some will say, What were his *faults?* I do not know, nor care to know.

"Who art *thou* that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, GOD is able to make him stand!"

As to the inner life of *the man,* I believe few men of whom the world has heard would furnish a more pro. foundly interesting subject; it is true the theatre upon whose platform he acted out his part was very small. He greatly reminds me of the characterisation by "*Subsecivæ Brown*" of Dr. Henderson, a friend of his father, drawn in the delightful portrait he has given to us. Of Dr. Henderson he says:—"He was a remarkable man, and an exquisite preacher. He had the largest brain I ever saw or measured. His hat had to be made for him, and his head was great in the nobler regions; the anterior and upper were full; indeed, immense. If the base of his brain and his physical organisation, especially his circulating system, had been in proportion, he would have been a man of formidable power, but his defective throb

17–1

260

of the heart, and a certain lassitude of temperament, made this impossible; and his enormous organ of thought and feeling, being thus shut from the outlet of active energy, became intensely *meditative,* more this than even reflective. The consequence was, in all his thoughts an exquisiteness and finish, a crystalline lustre, purity, and concentration; but it was. the exquisiteness of a great nature. If the first edge. was fine, it was the sharp end

of a wedge, the broad end of which you never reached, but might infer. This gave *momentum* to everything he said. He was in the true sense what Chalmers used to call a 'man of *wecht*.'"

We are compelled to believe that the Infinite Providence which apportions our lot can make no mistakes, but that by an inevitable law, not less of nature than of grace, we are where the soul which is within us and all its powers best find their mould and their maturity. Else Thomas Binney's also is one of those natures in which the power seems so disproportioned; to the place—the workman to the work—the work done to the capacity of the man. He had an infinite restlessness, and found himself quite unable to continue in the merely arbitrarily defined grooves of a Nonconformist minister's work. I dare say some inferior things were attempted by him, as a refuge from mental labour, to him frightful in its suggestiveness; for myself, I did not care so much about his work, in which I saw him tossing about his fly-sheets against ecclesiastical sins, fixing his glasses and tubes from the old *Crow's Nest on St. Paul's,*⋆ or emulating a *Junius* beneath the pseudonym of *John Search*. I have

⋆ See the great Gorham case.

261

thought I had rather he had spent his hours and days in revolving those awful thoughts which charmed the solitude of Jonathan Edwards. I incline to think in such a case he might have built a more human scheme for us, possibly from the same theological foothold; for I think in Mr. Binney, logic in religion became, as it has so seldom become to any man, rather a wing for ascension than a chain for coercion and confinement. But I know that the house in which *he* lived was frightfully haunted—it was always so—and I know, too, that he unfortunately

was one more haunted by noises heard, than by shapes seen. He was—

"Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head,
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread."

Thomas Binney was not one of those men to whom metaphysical hypotheses are all the same as mathematical problems—matters which may be discussed without a throb of the pulse or an increased beat of the heart. The disposition to treat them as such has been the vice of even great Christian teachers in every age, as Isaac Taylor has well shown in a searching essay. Perhaps many with me have shared the wonder whether he would have been a more happy and useful man if he had armed his great natural strength from the scientific armoury of theological schools. There was a large amount of Whately in him. He was Whately transformed into a gentleman and a great preacher. His realising power instantly gave his

262

metaphysical conceptions shape, and thus they became a means of torment to him. What a difference there is between the discussion of the question of marriage as the conserver of society, builder of cities, essential element in political economy, and in the rise of states, and questions of emigration, and the thought of it in the heart of the young man or the young girl who, in handing themselves over to love, have also handed themselves over to sweet torments and agitating terrors. Such is the difference between metaphysics, studied as a set of abstractions and inexorable logical conditions, and metaphysics made concrete, and passionate, and real, by suggesting,

brooding, haunting mysteries, beneath the spell of which the man feels that he is the dweller on a threshold, lying at the door of some spectre-tenanted chamber, through whose chinks flashes come and go, and noises are heard which his sense cannot translate. This was exactly Thomas Binney's condition. Some people, on reading this, would say, "Ah! he ought not to have permitted himself to be troubled; he should have accepted the Gospel in its simplicity," and so on. My dear sir or madam—as the case may be—he did so; and his spoken words were full of luminous truths, gratefully acknowledging that all the light we possess, or can possess here, is in that Gospel of the grace of God. He very well knew *the words of Jesus, and what underlies them.* But you must understand that the faith which rests is one thing and the nature which feels is another; and the Apostle himself has told us that while the spirit is life within, because of grace. the body may feel the clog and corruption of nature. He had then a questful nature, perpetually making excursions,

263

everlastingly finding itself alone on some wide, wide sea. There are an abundance of persons who never take the voyage which the "Ancient Mariner" took—

"They walk together to the kirk,
In goodly company."

The solutions of life are quite easy and sufficient for them; and often, perhaps, with a mild and not very offensive Pharisaism, they suppose that all natures accepting Christ's Gospel are to know the tranquillity of their comparatively little minds. It is not necessary that every child of Adam shall cross the Atlantic, or be rocked on the Bay of Biscay; but if such persons suppose that these voyages are to have the peacefulness and stillness of a Robin Hood's Bay or a Milford Harbour, the mistake is

very great; and some are born with the inevitable necessities of the mariner in their souls; their thoughts are always outward bound; they are always "doing business in great waters;" they are always "seeing the wonders of God in the deep;" to these some stormy winds are always arising, beneath whose wild buffetings they stagger to and fro, and are at their wits' ends; their souls faint because of trouble; on mountain waves they are borne up to heaven, they are plunged down to hell. What do we not owe to these men? Luther was one of them; Calvin was not. Edward Irving was one of them; Thomas Chalmers was not. Dante was one of them; Milton was not. Cromwell was one of them; Bunyan was one of them. Happy is he who in such tremendous voyagings does not find his compass wrenched away from him by the storm, nor lose sight of the everlasting stars! Thomas Binney was one of

---

264

these men. I have already said the work on which we are able to put our finger and say *he did this,* was nothing in comparison with what the man was. I had not the honour of great intimacy with him; but I, through several years, talked with him sufficiently to hear enough in broken conversations, and words, to be aware of the curious seas over which he had travelled. Work disproportioned to a man! Why, of course; what have we of that mysterious myth, A. J. Scott, before whom Edward Irving and Thomas Carlyle bowed down, and of, whom we gather that no adequate minds approached him without being wrapped in such a consciousness of his amazing power and prescience? What little and inadequate things the few pieces of Thomas Erskine of, Linlathen are in comparison with what we are sure he was, by the might with which he impressed all who came within his sphere! I believe Thomas Binney's work, his human interest in even the little things which went on in society round about him, was a kind of salvation to him.

He was kept at the practical, although he sometimes rebelled against it very sorely, and grumbled that he was compelled to be, as he said "vicar, and curate, and city missionary, and a dozen other things, all at once." It was better for him that it was so. A great nature is often kept true and faithful, believing and loving, far more by homely household cares and prayers, public or private, by visits to the sick, and sympathy with the poor, than by the most ardent endeavours to round some mysterious cape, or cross some defying continent, to catch sight of the pleasant Pacific rolling its long peaceful waves on the other side.

265

Thus, then, he was one of whom we may with quiet assurance speak as a really great man. I sometimes though the owed, for his own happiness, too little of the building of his nature to other minds; he was self-formed, organic, perhaps almost impatient of large books or many books; he rapidly seized conclusions, and then he had so much delight, or, which is more probable, frequently so much torment in his own volitions, that, if you threw any idea into his soul, it became seminal, and he traced out its roots, and followed it out, stem and branch, until its proportions reached an immensity derived from the soil of its own nature; then, by the recollection of his own experience, and his own inward sufferings, called back again to some visible presentation and scene,—thought became passion, and his whole heart was alive with sensibility and feeling. I remember an instance of this kind, which affected me very much, and affects me still as I remember it. When editing the *Eclectic Review,* I had been desirous of writing some lengthy appreciation of that most radiant and gifted intelligence—so early called away from us—Alfred Vaughan. I thought Mr. Binney would help me to obtain some materials connected with Vaughan's life, perhaps not already published, and

he did so. While the paper was in proof, I took it over to him; he had been greatly interested in the piece; he was audibly reading the last paragraph; when he came to the reference to Luther. he fairly broke down, burst into tears, and glanced over the remainder, reading to himself, but unable to read aloud any longer, the quiet tears running down his cheeks all the while. The passage is interesting to me, as associated with him. I have under-

266

lined the words where his feelings mastered him, and with such a memory I believe I can do no better than close this attempt of reverence and love:—

"How enviable is such a rest as his, to whom all is now known and all realised! Luther arrived the eve of Palm Sunday at Erfurth. He descended to the convent of the Augustines, in which, some years before, he had taken the monastic habit. It was nightfall. A little wooden cross over the tomb of a brother whom he had known, and who had recently departed sweetly in the Lord, arrested his attention, and almost sent a trouble into his soul. Luther was no longer the poor wandering friar. His power equalled that of Charles V. All men had their eyes on him. That morning he had heard that the Emperor was about to resist, as he said in his Imperial rescript, though at the peril of his own blood, of his dignity, and the fortune of his empire; and Luther had sung his well-known psalm, 'A sure stronghold our God is still.' But that tomb of the lowly monk recalled him to himself. He pointed it to Dr. Jonas. '*See, there he rests,*' said he, '*and I* ——' He could not finish. After a while he returned to it, and sat down on the lowly grave. There he remained more than an hour, till he was reminded that the convent bell had tolled the hour of sleep. Well might that heart, in which the tempests were still gathering, in the world so full of storm and strife, weep at the image of that quiet grave. The

Papist chroniclers triumph over Luther by that still tomb in that calm Erfurth twilight. They may spare themselves. Such moments come often to even far feebler and less troubled men. Even to us, reader and writer, the hallowed

267

memory of the beautiful and accomplished author of the 'Hours with the Mystics'—to him, 'life is all before, and death behind'—how hallowing and quieting it is to think of what he is and where he is. The child of light, safe beyond; the dreamer, gloriously awake in that heaven. Imagination and affection realised, and hope and memory one."

268

CHAPTER XI.

IMMORTELLES.

IT is upwards of twenty years since the longest estimate which had then appeared of Mr. Binney was published in "The Lamps of the Temple." Some of the remarks bear so immediately upon his characteristics as a man, that, presuming them to be probably unknown to most readers, I venture to quote them here.

"More persons, probably, have heard of Thomas Binney than seen him. The King's Weigh House is the rendezvous of all the intelligence of Dissent visiting the metropolis, and the preacher of the King's Weigh House has obtained a fame among the preachers of his age unique and perfectly remarkable. Mr. Binney is comparatively seldom from home; he does not travel much to preach, certainly not so much as many men with but a tithe of his fame; yet he is, perhaps, the most honestly popular of any metropolitan preacher. Although he does not avail himself of clap-trap cries and 'No Popery' riots to attract people to his chapel, he has maintained a

most eminent position in the metropolis, and he is at this moment far more popular than ever. We do not remember that we ever did procure but once, in our innumerable visitings, a sitting at the King's Weigh House;

269

and every Sabbath morning and evening every avenue of a chapel by no means small is thronged with listeners; the aisles are crowded, forms being placed down the whole length of them; the children's gallery, vacated by the juveniles, is crowded too, and all attentive and profoundly silent, while the preacher shambles and shuffles through the most stately and glorious thoughts,—occasionally with gesticulation and mannerisms the most odd and *outré*. Audiences usually reflect the character of the preacher, and the preacher reflects his audience. There is an analogy very clearly traceable between the heads of preacher and people; the forehead of the one is the counterpart of the forehead of the other. This is preeminently the case with Mr. Binney and his people; his head literally rises like a castellated cliff, its proportions are magnificent—the head of a man, however, of whom you would say. 'He can never be happy—he can never be active.' Of this we may have an opportunity to say a word presently.

"The attendants upon Mr. Binney's ministry do not, that we know, appear to be more likely for unhappiness than other men in London, while they do indicate an unusual determination to activity; but this much may be said—as Mr. Binney presents one of the most remarkable heads among the preachers of the metropolis, so his pews show a finer set of heads, more square, intelligent, and nineteenth-centuryish, than any other pews perhaps in the kingdom. So it must always be. Did we not say just now that preacher and people are the transcript of each other? A pew elevated by intelligence and good sense and piety will indicate also a pulpit ennobled by the same

270

dignified attributes: thus also the measure of the intelligence of the pulpit is the measure of the intelligence of the pew.

"We know, then, of no preacher who so pre-eminently develops in his pulpit hortations the tendency of the thinkings and readings of the age. Very often he appears to stand to you midway between the preacher and the lecturer: there is frequently so much of the grotesque; the Gospel is presented very often so wholly in its intellectual *rationale;* the acquaintance with books and systems of the modern age is so obvious; there is so much sympathy with the aspirations of the young, their hopes, their intellectual and moral efforts; the allusions to the laws and relations of trade are so numerous; there is such a constant endeavour to maintain the nobility of the commercial character, that nobody can doubt that Mr. Binney is, perhaps, of all men in England, the man best fitted to fill the pulpit which, whatever other denominations may think of it, is beyond all question the most attractive and most important in its moral influence in the city of London.

"Strange preaching it is, too, and strange is the preacher; nor do we think his eccentricity declines and decreases with his years. The truth is, he can say and do anything: his power of thinking is considerably beyond his power of uttering; but his power of humour is quite equal to his power of thought; and that which he seems to us frequently too lazy to convey by words he conveys by a gesture, a look, a wave of the hand, a shrug of the shoulders. He frequently seems to say to the people, 'Is it not enough that I look out the thought at you,

271

must I put it into words?' You have the idea during the whole time of his discoursing to you that he is impro-

vising, that he is thinking while preaching, that ideas are struggling within him for utterance, and frequently he appears to be taken captive by his own ideas. Here is the peculiarity of the preacher's mind, his immense ideality compared with his language—language the eye does not reveal; a lambent humour, approaching satire, plays round the lids and corners of it, while a tendency to combativeness gives to his words a point and power and vehemence they could never acquire from the surge and swell of verbal eloquence.

"What preacher does he remind you most of? Of all English preachers does he resemble anyone so closely as South? He has more heart than South, more sympathy; he has not the venomous and satiric tooth of the renegade; he has more loftiness of conception; but the points of resemblance between them are manifold. South, from no especial motive that we can learn, passed from Puritanism to Episcopacy; and Binney, after the radical effervescences of youth, occupies the equivocal position of the head of the Conservative Dissenters. Both of them characterise their discourses largely by wit and humour, and do not disdain to rouse their audiences occasionally by something more perceptible than a smile. South constantly distilled his best thoughts, even in preaching, into epig-rams; and Binney flings, not unfrequently, the epigram out upon his congregation. Both of them also stand confessed as the masters of thought-thought original and striking, amplified by innumerable ideas and illustrations. We could very well

272

imagine Binney giving. utterance to such sentiments as the following—the old impotent silver-haired sinner described as 'the broken and decrepit sensualist creeping to the devil on all fours; a wretch so scorned, so despised, and so abandoned by all, that his very vices forsake him.' Of dunces occupying prominent situations,

South says, 'If owls will not be hooted at, let them keep close within the tree, and not perch upon the upper boughs.' Pride he defines to have been 'the devil's sin, and the devil's ruin, and has been ever since the devil's stratagem, who, like an expert wrestler, usually gives a man a lift before he gives him a throw.' Speaking of the human heart, he says, 'None knows how much villany lodges in this little retired room.' Now, as we could imagine Mr. Binney uttering any of these things, we could very well conceive South uttering the following: 'How the devil must chuckle at his success when he gets a fellow to think himself something wonderful, because he can dress in scarlet or blue, and have a sword by his side and a feather in his hat; and when he says to him (and the poor fool believing it)—"Your hands are far too delicate to be soiled by the counter and the shop;" and then whispers to himself, "Keep them for *blood,* human blood." Fifty to one, as Buxton says of Plaistow and the Pope—fifty to one *on the great unknown;* on Brown, Smith, and Jones, or any *one* of them, against Cæsar and Napoleon; Wood Street against Waterloo, the world over!' But the modern South does not print his wit, he utters it, and leaves it; and most of his published papers are quite free from that with which his ordinary pulpit services abound; added to which, there is a peculiar

---

273

mannerism in the preacher—humour, sometimes covert, sly, and glancing, and sometimes bold and open, which is not without his influence upon his popularity.

"But humour in the pulpit! We think we hear one of our antique friends exclaim, 'Bless me, how exceedingly incorrect—how notoriously improper and wrong—how wholly out of keeping with the character of the time and place! humour in the pulpit surely cannot be tolerated by any rightly discriminating congregation.' Ah! good friends, the writer is quite at issue with you; he thinks,

he ventures to think, directly in contradiction to the practice, and very plainly expressed convictions of the majority of living English preachers—that wit and humour, duly reined and guided as they will always be by a refined and truly pious mind, may be eminently serviceable in the pulpit as well as on the platform. They can utter a truth at a stroke or a word, and impress the results of other heavier labours by a single touch.

"Partly in self-defence, and partly in elucidation of our idea, we will remark briefly upon the sacrilegious thing—humour in the pulpit. And what is the first thought which strikes us? This—that geniality, and genial teaching, and genial thinking, all come beneath the classification of humour; and all homeliness of speech, and all figures fetched from the undignified concerns of domestic life, and blunt eloquence, and simple pathos, which touch immediately the fountain of tears—all these are the result of humour; for by humour we mean the oozing out of our human feelings; and they flow forth in various ways-sometimes illustrating the feelings, and things, and thoughts which lie within the domain of our home and

---

274

everyday life; and sometimes, as in Richter or Shake speare, making these homely feelings æsthetic. And thus, again, preaching of the loftiest kind may be classified beneath two orders; and we have, first, the style which mainly gratifies by its power. of rousing our loftiest sentiments. It is, if we may say so, Homeric. The speaker determines to look upon nothing that may seem to beg et a knowledge of the little or the know. He has framed his own conceptions of dignity. He makes his demand upon his auditors for inflamed feelings, for a daring of the imagination, for sympathy with words suggestive only of vast ideas. This is the style of Bossuet, of Hall, of Chalmers. There is another style of discourse. The preacher does not speak to you through a trumpet; he does not

demand extraordinary sympathy; he does not appeal to the daring and wondering freaks of the imagination; he contents himself with talking to the people; but such a man from the very ease of his own nature, will have obtained an immense store of thought; he will be easy and at home, from his confidence in his own treasures; he will have accustomed himself to look at every object in its most moral relations,-and every object, however apparently mean, will have moral relations, and symbols and significancies; and the power to perceive this, and to utter the meaning, is the source of all humour and the source of all practical power in the preacher. All of us have been astonished at the ease with which a man, who had never seen things in any new relationship, who had, perhaps, never beheld them at all in their real relationship; at the ease, we say, with which such a one could, by an amazing volubility of words, acquire great fame; and the ease again

275

with which men endowed with large powers of fancy and utterance could obtain a hold upon their audience. Yet we came to talk to them, and we found them all utterly destitute of any real powers of thought; their minds had never moved out of the ordinary tracks and tram-roads of thinking; in fact, they had never thought for themselves. Now you never met with a humourist, but he was a free thinker, in the best sense of that word; a man who had looked at things with his own eyes, and not through a pair of spectacles or a piece of smoked glass; a man to whom things had therefore sometimes presented themselves in a ludicrous light; and to what man, thinking at all, do not things present themselves in a ludicrous light occasionally-nay, constantly? The fact that the world is a very solemn world, and that the cup of life is a bitter sacrament, does not prevent our beholding its infinitely comic character. Laugh! ay, who can avoid it, to see the devil not only preaching, but believing that he is stronger, better, and

wiser than God? that evil is really, in the long run, a match for good in the universe? that the worst is best? To behold folly dancing through the world with coxcomb on head, and golden bells jingling, merely to proclaim his folly, and to see all men crying, 'All hail!' and erecting monuments and statues, and giving testimonials, and delivering orations, to prove that folly is wisdom, and that cap and bells are a crown of righteousness-all this is very solemn, but it is very ridiculous too. Now, who will enter into the heart of this, to see it, to feel it, and expose it? Who can make the ridiculous ridiculous? and show folly to be foolish? Who can lay bare the brazen face of an ancient error or a fallacy, but the man endowed with the power

18–2

276

of humour himself? Humour is the best dissecting knife for folly.

"But humour performs another office; it not only dissects error and folly, it presents wisdom in a more lucid form. We see truth most clearly when it is made the most truly human; few people are able to comprehend it when it is merely presented as a naked proposition, as an abstraction, or a generalisation. Here and there there may be one or another in your congregation able to follow you, and interested in your very clever and most searching logic; but how of ten, have we told you that you must not preach to one or two, but to all? The most abstract mind in your congregation is human; draw it forth from its abstraction, as every thought has to be clothed in words to be comprehended; as we can grasp no thought without words, cannot even think without putting what we think into words, so we do best service to truth when we develop its high humanity.

"We have often wished, while beneath the influence of thoughts like these, that there could be restored to our

modern pulpit a man like Latimer, the good, cheerful, old Bishop martyr. The homely words and illustrative anecdotes of that most plain and Saxon preacher must have been most legible to the minds listening to him in that day. We do not know any preacher who more truly represents the English heart than Latimer. How the old man pounces upon the thought of the text! A plain, common sense man, he does not entertain us with refining and elegant speculations; he instantly draws the meaning from the passage, and runs over his memory for some tale to point his moral with. Those tales, or rather anec-

277

dotes, are to us not merely illustrations of the Scripture discoursed upon, they are historic pictures: Sir Thomas More at Goodwin Sands; Latimer's examination, and the rustling behind the screen; the candle and the corpse; the benefice bought with apples;—all these, which will be in the recollection of every reader of those sermons, show to us how pertinent and how valuable may sometimes be the tale from our own domestic life, and to what important use it may be turned in the pulpit. The anecdotes of Latimer now stand midway between parable and history, and surely might rebuke the foolish prejudice which many entertain against the use of the anecdote in the pulpit. Latimer's was a quiet oversoul; he preached out of his fulness; and, therefore, the delivery of his discourses, as of all such discourses, must have abounded with pleasantry of characterisation, very delightful to see in imagination even now. We see clearly enough how the kind-hearted young King smiled at the happy allusion, and the bluff and sturdy yeoman shook his head and laughed again, with hi s 'Ay, ay, my masters.' The stately Somersets, and Suffolks, and Northumberlands were compelled to relax their dark, haughty statesmen's brows, and to admire the blunt honesty and plainness of the Kentish farmer's son. The Catholic priest looked on in dismay, and felt that he

was foiled; that here there was a display of weapons which he had not, and of which he did not know the use, although he could feel and tremble at their power. For what record have we of any Romanist preacher who ever indulged in humour, or descended to the art of teaching by smiles, and by genial, healthy, honest-heartedness? And herein, we think, there is not only an argument for

278

the inhumanity of Romanism, but a ground for suspicion that we approach to the Romanist coldness when we, in our popular discourse, attempt to cut ourselves away from popular sympathies.

"To what does all this tend, in the name of all that is prolix and long-winded? say some readers. To this—that what was quite right in Latimer, at St. Paul's Cross, is quite right in Thomas Binney, at the King's Weigh House. You shall not attend there very frequently without hearing, at some compact and bitter saying, or some sly and pat allusion, or some passing personal anecdote, a universal titter over the whole congregation. Just such a titter we heard a few weeks since, the last time we had an opportunity of listening to him, when he described a visit he had paid to an Irvingite chapel; and, after an account of the robes and ceremonies, he climaxed the picture by speaking of the angels as 'full-grown boys of five-foot four, playing at priests.' 'Just dust and Deity, dust and Deity, that's what we are,' said he, in another discourse heard by us, some little time since.

"A great photographer is Thomas Binney; he can hit you off a picture at a stroke, from that strong humour-some soul of his. We go not one whit too far in saying that his preaching is composed of some of the best traits of South and Latimer; he has the pertness, the short, swift, lightning-like power of cleaving down through the very heart of a character, possessed by the first—the power of calling things by their right names—the power

of transfixing folly at once by a single flight from the bow; but he possesses also, like the last, the power of painting, of dilating, and diffusing his colours over the

279

canvas; he can describe, he can narrate; he has, like the old Bishop, the key to the fountain of tears on his tongue; if he is full-minded, like South, he is full-hearted, like Latimer.

"And it is because he is so full-hearted that his sermons can neither be reported nor printed. If you have not heard him, you do not know him; for you cannot transfer to the page the expression, the look, the peculiar shrug; there is no translating these into words. And hence, frequently it may happen that sermons disappoint us; we are impatient that they should be printed, and when printed we read with avidity; but we are disappointed; we supposed that something had been left out; and so, indeed, much had been left out—the genuflection of the sentence. There are no adequate representations of Mr. Binney's oratorical powers; we notice striking and rememberable things, but when they were spoken the whole soul was on fire with them, the fingers spoke, the mannerism gave grace to the graceful, or force to the forcible sentence. Humour has been described as acted wit, and you cannot describe action. Mr. Binney's humour is subject to no law of elocution, is moulded upon no principle; the expression of the mind flies into the face or into the fingers immediately. The person who speaks in humour may be described as one who holds a perfect telegraph between his body and his mind; the communication is so complete that the material instantly obeys the spiritual; the outer becomes the interpreter of the inner.

"Lord Bacon has somewhere said that the opinions and sympathies of the young men of any present age always

280

represent those of the future. Truly, therefore, the most important work to which we can betake ourselves is the direction of the mind of the young. Our preacher feels this; and he appeals to the young. not in the tone of dogmatic superiority—he speaks with conscious dignity from his place as a teacher, but he speaks not by the old saws and cramped notions of unintelligent times or men; he supposes the youths around him to be familiar with the thoughts of the time; he supposes their hearts to be heaving with aspirations peculiar to their age; and he flings his whole soul into his speech to them. and aims to be their captain—their leader; to utter to them the inspiring words, to cheer them to the battle of life. We know no other preacher who so truly preaches to his auditors the reality that life *is* a battle, and who presents the warfare in so hearty and glorious a tone; he never whines sentimentally about the shots that fly over the field; he does not scent his hearers with rose-water philanthropies; he points to the opposing forces, or the ambushed foes—life's temptations and sorrows, and disappointments, and says, 'Up, and at them!'"

"Yet one more point, and an essential one. Mr. Binney is the most eccentric of preachers. Innumerable legends float about, descriptive of his manifold oddities. Perhaps few of them are to be wholly believed; perhaps every one of them has some foundation, when it is remembered that he is a man capable of saying anything, at any time, any how. It is said that Dr. Harris—then John Harris, of Epsom—once invited him to supply a gap in the anniversary services of his chapel, made by the illness of the expected preacher. 'But you know.

281

Brother Harris, a man can't go in this way. To-morrow, you say? I am quite unprepared, you know. No, no;

get somebody else.' 'Oh, for that matter, you know,' rejoined he of Epsom, 'any sermon from you will do. Preach that sermon *you* gave to them at ——.' 'Oh. very well, very well; then I'll come.' He went, preached, got on very well through two heads of discourse, then stopped, looked down over the pulpit, 'Brother Harris, what was thirdly?' And Brother Harris, having mentioned thirdly, the preacher was himself again."*

In a little volume like this, intended as a tablet over the tomb of our revered departed friend, it will be very natural to give a few pages to the variety of opinion expressed upon him. As his life was no ordinary life, so in death he could not, of course, be permitted to pass away unnoticed. I will venture to select a few passages from the more remarkable estimates, as representing the variety of impressions his life and work had created in different orders of minds, and in various sections of Church life. The *Times* I do not think it necessary to quote; the leader on the occasion of Mr. Binney's death was very lengthy-a column and a half—it had probably, for the most part, been written several years, and had been kept in the pigeon-hole waiting for his departure; it may be sum-

* It would seem an affectation now not to acknowledge that the "Lamps of the Temple," published first twenty-three years since, anonymously, was written by the Editor of the present volume. I know that Mr. Binney was pleased with the sketch of himself, and I had thought of adopting a practice justified by illustrious precedents, and including it, entire, in this volume. I have largely, I hope not unnaturally, quoted from it.

marily said that it was, perhaps, intended kindly, but written in such entire ignorance, and with such an utter lack of nerve and power, that it contains no quotable passage, and it is not necessary to refer to it further. It is only the eminence of the *Times* which renders it necessary, in such a catena of quotations, to refer to it at all.

And, speaking thus, it is scarcely less than amusing, even in such a connection, to know that about a month before Mr. Binney died, his death was announced in one of the leading Northern papers, accompanied by a lengthy outline of his life and estimate of his character; a dear friend of my own read it to him—of course, by his request. The dear old father knew that he was leaving us, but, like Lord Brougham, he had the opportunity of hearing or reading what men would say of him when he was gone.

Most of the authors of the following pieces are known to the Editor, but we shall leave the visor down, and merely quote the paper.

THE ENGLISH INDEPENDENT.

"The blow which has for some time been anticipated has at last fallen; the greatest of our preachers, the most honoured of our patriarchs, is no more. The name of Thomas Binney has long been familiar on men's lips. Few public teachers of the day, in any communion, were known more widely or more honourably, and it is not our Church only which is the poorer now that he has passed away. Of late years since he withdrew from the more active duties of the ministry, he has often been playfully styled our 'Archbishop;' and, in troth, he discharged, after the spiritual fashion in which alone we believe, some-

283

thing of the paternal function of a 'Father in God' among us, with all the advantages and few of the drawbacks which attach to that eminent office in churches which submit to diocesan episcopacy. His weight of years, of wisdom, of experience, won by long and hard service in the foremost ranks in the field, gave to him an influence of a very valuable kind among his younger brethren, and the churches whose cause he had so faithfully served during his long and honourable career. No man among us can wield even the appearance of authority. Dictation or authoritative prescription, neither our

ministers nor our churches for a moment allow, and yet there is probably no Church in Christendom in which years and experience, joined with high character, carry a larger influence, or have a fairer field for their benign ministry than among the Independents. The fact that nothing is claimed by those who stand forth as our most prominent men, and our natural leaders, lends to them a power whose springs are honour and love, which might be envied by any official head of the most highly organised and submissive church upon earth. When the only authority recognised is that of superior knowledge and moral and intellectual power, it wins, for the most part, a loving homage which authority by law established is not always so happy as to enjoy.

"Among our leading men of late years there is no one who has occupied so influential a position as Mr. Binney. In many respects he is the ablest man of those who come naturally to the front to play their part prominently in the theatre of the public life of the times, whom for some time past we have produced. He was a man to be proud

---

284

of in an honest way; he reflected honour on the body with which he associated himself, while he would have been the first to confess that the association honoured him, and that our Church principles helped to make him the man he was, both as a preacher and a writer, in the first of which capacities he was among the very foremost of his time.

"There was something very stirring to the young in the manly, vigorous, generous tone of Mr. Binney's teaching. There was a certain largeness about him, in intellect and spirit, in harmony with his massive frame, his great brain, his splendid brow, and his expressive gesture. As he stood up to plead with men in his Master's name, he was a man, every inch of him; and his manly vigour, his generous glow, seemed to penetrate his hearers at every

pore. All that was mean, base, tricky, selfish, he could lash with the thongs of a keen and generous scorn. Few young men could hear him without being sent back the manlier, the godlier, the more earnest and strenuous, to their work.

"He cared nothing for any effects which did not grow out of the hold of the truth on the conscience, the judgment, and the sympathies of his hearers. He was just at the opposite pole to the rhetorical or sensational preacher; and hence the chief value of his work. The power of his ministry lay in the intense conviction of his own mind on the subjects which he commended to his hearers, and which enabled him to drive them home to the inner conscience with a force which it was hard to withstand. And there was a second source of the remarkable power which, as a preacher, he wielded, in the thorough manliness and

---

285

largeness of his views, not exactly on theological points, for he was by no means a broad theologian, but on matters which had to do with moral principles, and the moral conduct of life. His own temperament and habit of thought fell naturally in with that general, moral awakening which stirred the heart, of England when this generation was young; when Carlyle, Maurice, and Ruskin began to prophesy, and all things about us began to be new. Mr. Binney, in his sphere and after his fashion, helped forward the movement; he probably did more than any other man among us, or any number of men, to stir the somewhat stagnant pool of our Evangelical denominational Christianity, and to establish healthy communication—health-receiving and health-giving—between the long-sundered secular and spiritual spheres of man's thought and activity; between the opposite camps, as our fathers conceived of it, of world and Church."

THE CHRISTIAN WORLD.

"We have not often met a man who was so able to treat questions on which he thought and felt strongly so dispassionately, and not only to appreciate the force of the arguments of an opponent, but very largely to enter into his feelings. No doubt this was partly the result of a long and careful discipline; but Mr. Binney had naturally a considerable judicial faculty, as was shown in his very discriminating discussion of the points in the 'great Gorham case,' and still later in an equally careful and candid criticism of the Ritual question in his 'Micah.' Of course this tendency had its counterbalancing disadvantages, and made him appear timid and vacillating to

286

those who did. not understand him, and necessarily prevented him from being a leader in any of the aggressive movements of Nonconformity. It is to be remembered, however, that he was already on the verge of old age before Nonconformity took the position it at present occupies, and it would not have been wonderful under any circumstances if he had not been able to fall in with the views of a different generation. But he was constitutionally indisposed, perhaps unfitted, for the kind of action which has been demanded of Nonconformists of late years. It is creditable both to him and the most ardent and advanced among his brethren, that though he sometimes hung back where they would have wished him to take his place in the van, and though he at times (as on the Education question) threw the weight of his influence into the scale against them, there was never a faltering of their affection to him even when there was the greatest disappointment with the course he thought it right to adopt. The fact is he had been for some time *facile princeps* in his own denomination, and all were ready to do him reverence, for all felt him to be a true, a noble, and a godly man.

"Remembering the singular moderation which Mr. Binney always displayed, his readiness to recognise the strong points that could be urged in favour of the Established Church or Episcopacy, and the absence of anything savouring of a partisan spirit in his advocacy of Dissenting principles, it is singular that he should at one time have been regarded by Churchmen as the very type of extreme Nonconformity. This was due principally to a sentence in relation to the Church of England, which, torn from its

287

context, and presented in the baldest possible form, was often quoted against him and against Dissenters in general by those who had not cared either to read the. original words or the extraordinary controversy to which they gave rise. At no period of his life, however, was Mr. Binney a violent man, and if those who entertained this view in relation to him had taken the trouble to read the extremely able pamphlets in which he vindicates his position, they must have been disabused of so false an impression, and have discovered that he was not only one of the keenest and ablest controversialists, but one of the most candid, charitable, and courteous also. Even where he hit hardest he never failed to remember what was due to an adversary. But though he was always ready to discuss any great question of the times, controversy was a very small part of the business of his life. We prefer rather to think of him as the original, thoughtful, and eloquent preacher, with a power that hardly fell short, if it fell short at all, of true genius; as the wise pastor and administrator, as a stimulating influence in the theological thought of the age, as the judicious innovator in forms of congregational worship; and, last but not least, as the considerate friend and helper of young men. In no department, perhaps, was he more useful than amongst this latter class. He never forgot that he had been a young man himself, and a young man who had had to battle. against the miscon-

structions of elders who were unable to recognise the nobility of his nature, or to respect the independence of his thinking. In one sense, he was a young man to the last. The freshness of youth seemed never entirely to wear off. He was always able to understand the difficulties

288

of young men, and to respect their modes of thinking. He sought to place himself on their level, and, remembering their temptations, to fortify them to resistance, and, above all, to make them feel that in him they had a true and sympathetic counsellor. There are numbers not only in this metropolis, but throughout the country, in positions of influence, who attribute all that they are to his teaching, and who will never forget their debt of gratitude. He rests from his labours, but his works do follow him; and not the least of his works are those noble and manly characters which he has done so much to train. He was a grand man, his very presence a tower of strength in those assemblies which he so long adorned, and where, alas! he will still longer be missed. There was a tenderness blended with his force, and a generous consideration for others which endeared him to those who were brought into close association with him. In fine—

> "'The elements
> So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, This was a man!'"

THE NONCONFORMIST.

"Happily the inner man was made to match the outer. Everything about him was large and catholic, and Providence seems to have given this eminent person to the Congregational Dissenters just when such an influence was needed to lift them out of the somewhat cramped respectabilities and formulas of the Georgian era. A man ought to be on the shady side of fifty properly to appreciate

the lifework of the great teacher who was carried to the grave last Monday, full of years and of honours, amidst a

289

spectacle at once so touching and so solemn. Nothing can exceed the delusion of the *Times* biographer that Mr. Binney was the 'adequate successor and representative of the school of Bogue, Burder, and Clayton.' Mr. Binney's accession to the pastorate of the Weigh House Church was distinctly the beginning of a new era in Independency. Without claiming for him learning, properly so-called, or the disciplined ability which comes only with thorough scholastic training, and certainly without undervaluing his venerable predecessors, it may be said with truth that the Weigh House then became the fountain of a wholly new intellectual life to the religious men of Independency. The age of silk and lavender, and of successful suppression of thought under decorous phrases, was coming to an end. Those direful propositions which the 'excellent persons of yesterday,' to use a *curiosa felicitas* of Jeremy Taylor, believed and repeated without a question, were about to be reconsidered with a strength and freshness of thought which no resistance on the part of professors of religious deportment, or of the respectable army of eighteenth-century officials, could possibly resist. It was inevitable that much of the ancient dispensation, handed down through six generations of Dissenters, should pass away; and no one has a better claim to the honour of introducing that wholesome reform than Mr. Binney.

"It may be added that the force which was brought to bear on his work was genuinely spiritual. Those who have heard Mr. Binney only during the last twenty-five years of his life can form but an imperfect notion of what he was in his early prime—of the intense and solemn

290

emotion which 'burned into the midst of heaven,' and held awe-struck the masses of young men and serious burghers who listened to his ministrations,—of the marvellous pictorial and graphic genius which turned Scripture stories into living history, made the dry bones of antiquity move again, and vanquished incredulity by the mere realisation of the miracles,—of the free and joyous intelligence which took the Bible on its own showing, without the pernicious addition of Church theories as to the modes of its production, and unfolded argument, parable, prophecy, and narrative, with a persistent zeal which carried all hearts along with the stream,—and last, not least, of the many-sided sympathy which drew after it not only the men who were seeking for something solid to believe in for life and death, but the women, who were to be won to nobler thought and higher purpose, by a tenderness and a poetry which derived its inspiration from the Eternal Spring. And this was long before the day when Maurice, or Stanley, or Vaughan, or Howson, or Kingsley, were established in authority, or looked upon as luminaries in the Church. The effect on numbers of the younger sort was electrical, and not a few able writers and preachers now flourishing would acknowledge that they owe some of the best life of their lives to the early teaching of Mr. Binney.

"It not seldom happens that large growths begin to decay soon, and this is sometimes strikingly seen when the growth is both physical and spiritual, and the life that has gone to form it has spent itself with over-intensity in its earlier days. Such, we believe, was the case with the remarkable man whose loss we deplore. The latter of

291

the two generations with whom he has lived has often silently wondered at the stories told of his early manhood,

and sometimes even complained of his indecision, his timidity, his excessive candour on all sides, his lack of nerve for fighting when a fight with a bishop or a novelist was necessary, or some foul-mouthed Dissenting fakeer or newspaper Shimei was to be extinguished; of the loose texture of his thinking, and even of his style, of the secularity of tone which spread itself just a little here and there over his later writings, and of the increasing dominance of peculiarities of address which took away something from the dignity and authority of his influence over the Church and the nation. There was little room for such criticisms at the time of the accession of Queen Victoria. Then, at all events, when the vitality was at its height, there was a voice at the King's Weigh House which went straight into the heart of the people, and even made the teeth of sundry bishops to chatter on their thrones, and then there was a hand which could strike with a will at social and ecclesiastical iniquities. And not a little of the general turn of thought which has rendered possible the many reforms subsequently effected by direct legislation is fairly traceable to the vigorous arguments of 'John Search' and the author of 'Dissent, not Schism.' But men who are enjoying the fruit of arduous toils and sacrifices do not always know who were their benefactors, and thoughtlessly complain of the decayed energy which is the penalty of early and extraordinary self-devotion.

★★★★★

"The true description and the just praise of this worthy representative of Nonconformity is that he brought to

19—2

292

bear on religious affairs an unusual force of honesty and impartiality, and an unusual power of sympathy. Mr. Binney presented to the Dissenters the example of a man who would be bound by none of their unscriptural con-

ventionalities or irrational traditions, and to the Church of England the image of one who was very unwillingly separated from that community, yet could deal the heaviest blows' at its unveracities. It has been too much the fashion of Independency, with genuine English thoroughness, to make more of its differences than of its agreements with the rest of Christendom, and to insist rather too strongly that all its 'independent' societies should be fashioned according to a single pattern. The leader who now sleeps in the truly-consecrated God's-acre at Abney Park certainly could not charge himself with an excessive passion for the inferior types of Congregationalism. He held very strong opinions on the pernicious quality of 'Dissent' when once it ceases to be essentially a spiritual power and hardens into a mere policy; the style to which its denominational press has sometimes descended, both in earlier and later times, provoked him to as much wrath as his nature allowed, and it may be said generally that his righteous soul was grieved with 'religious' journalists beyond other classes of ordinary sinners.

"It may be said that all English Christendom has done him honour in his death. The general comments of the press, the vast concourse of respectful mourners at the grave, the solemn procession of men of every opinion which followed his remains to their last resting place, testify to the value of a life spent in doing good to the world by lifting up its thoughts to the Divine. He was truly a

---

293

man who deserved it all, and he has left a name which will not tarnish with revolving years. The funeral ceremony was a fitting expression of his solid worth. Mr. Harrison's address was worthy of his theme. The Dean of Westminster well represented the national sympathy by his presence and his prayers. For the rest we could, perhaps, have dispensed with some of the speech with which Nonconformity is wont to break into the grand

silence of death; but all this may be forgiven when men's hearts were full of an affection that dropped so many genuine tears over the dead."

The previous citations are selected from papers representing the order of opinion of which Mr. Binney was a foremost apostle; other papers had to praise him, with their own reservations. This, too, was natural; but I have also been free to criticise some of these critics in the text of this little volume:—

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.

"Everywhere he was the same shrewd, rather hard-headed man, armed with a homely, pithy diction ready to throw new light on old texts, prone to find English meanings in Biblical precedents, passably yet not ostentatiously orthodox, and able to command the respect of the most irreverent worldling. His clear head would have fitted him to shine in the House of Commons quite as much as in the pulpit; and if he had been caught early enough he would certainly have become a Minister of State. *We hope that his admirers will not be displeased if*

294

we add that, despite his contempt for Episcopacy, he would have made a capital bishop. And, in truth, he was a bishop, although no apostolically-ordained prelate had ever subjected him to the imposition of hands. He was one of those bishops who are consecrated in every Church by their own ability, whose diocese lies in the hearts of their followers, and who wear no mitre save the esteem of their fellow-men.

"Although far broader than the Dissenters of the old style, who might have suspected his free and easy speech to be the sign of an unsound faith, Mr. Binney was nevertheless a Nonconformist to the core. He did not like the State Church of England, her doctrines, her episcopacy, her subserviency to the Government of the day, or her

fashion of going through a form of tremendous sanctity in order to seal any choice of a bishop that may be made by the Prime Minister; and he said so with the utmost plainness. No man was prouder of the clergy who left the Church rather than conform to her usages and sign her formularies. No man was more hostile to the idea that the Christian ministers are a priesthood, or that they should claim any homage beyond that inspired by their personal virtues. No man was more eager to maintain that Dissent was not schism, and that the Nonconformists of England had as much right to be called Churchmen as the members of the Church of England herself. He was a valiant soldier of the faith as it was taught by Baxter, Bunyan, and Howe. Like the fathers of Nonconformity, he would not playa silent part, but lifted up his testimony both by pen and tongue. If his pen lacked the finer graces of rhetoric, it was racy and forcible. Mr. Binney

---

295

had the knack of writing pamphlets, and he made much use of that dying form of literature. No doubt he drew his taste and his aptitude for pamphleteering from study of those Nonconformist fathers who believed in the evangelical use of hard-hitting, and whose resounding blows rang, through the theological war of the past. In the time of Cromwell he would have dealt out hard measure to the followers of Laud. In the time of Charles II. he would have sturdily attacked the sycophantic prelates who displayed the fervour of their Christianity by licking the dust of the Court, by praising the protector of Nell Gwynne, and by persecuting Dissenters. He was, in fact, a man of war from his youth. But he had fallen in such degenerate times of toleration that he found no higher themes for his keen polemical skill than the Gorham case, the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill, and the ornamental side of Ritualism. Thus, he was like a man who, after studying strategy under Moltke,

should never be required to lead his troops against anything more formidable than an election mob. It is true that the controversies which perplex our times are more searching and important than the strifes which taxed the energies of Milton and Owen. But the battle is no longer waged within the four corners of the sects. It has rolled into the world, and the combatants are not the clergy alone, but also men of science, speculative thinkers, and the whole race of eager students. Mr. Binney was too able to waste his time in the useless threshing of straw that had been a hundred times threshed already. and his practical instincts led him to the living questions of the day; but he did not go far enough afield for the

---

296

subjects of profoundest moment. He never allowed us to forget that he. was a Nonconformist, and we daresay that is the title of which he was proudest. So be it; for it is indeed an honourable distinction. The world, however, seeks another kind of distinction in its greatest teachers, and the fact that he was so emphatic a sectarian cut him off from most of his countrymen as a thinking influence."

THE SPECTATOR.

"The death of the great Dissenting Bishop, as he had sometimes been called, the weightiest and most popular of the old-school Independents, on Tuesday last, certainly marks an era in the history of orthodox Dissent. Mr. Binney, as, with the natural simplicity and shrewdness which marked his character, he always preferred to be called,—and certainly there was nothing academic about him,—represented a school of thought and feeling in the body to which he belonged that has since broken up into two distinct streams of tendency. The chief characteristics of the Old school may be said to have been strong common-sense in matters of this world, and a tenacious belief in the literal inspiration of. the Bible as one solid block of

revelation, without reference either to the gradual development of human capacity for accepting Divine truth within it, or the external developments which accompanied its diffusion over the earth, in relation to the world beyond. As Mr. Binney grew old, he found his successors taking up materially different views of these things. Some of them accepted a much wider view of the meaning of inspiration than that of the old school, and accepted willingly

297

the results of the newer criticism which has discriminated so freely between the authority of the different books of the Bible and the different aims and degrees of moral force of their authors. As a result of that wider view of Hebrew inspiration and Hebrew literature, the theology of some of the Independent teachers,—like the late Mr. Lynch and Mr. Baldwin Brown, for example, probably the most liberal amongst them,—has been very much modified, the view of eternal rewards and punishments by which Mr. Binney and his contemporaries held so. strongly has been greatly relaxed, and the Independent theology thus brought much more into sympathy with that of the Broad Church. On the other hand, Mr. Binney saw in his later years another school springing up which fell back on the old canons of faith, and as a consequence, on the strictest and narrowest view of Church discipline; and he found that school allying itself very closely with the most jealous of the political Dissenters, and even sometimes holding that it is sheer profanation to entrust religious teaching to any hands except those of persons who have 'experienced conversion.' The appearance of such schools of thought in his own denomination. must have more or less perplexed Mr. Binney, who never learnt to distrust the firmness of the theological ground on which he early took up his stand on the one side, nor to appreciate intensely the contrast between the aims of the religious life and the aims of the decently worldly life, on the other. His were the qualities

of a strong, limited, sagacious, earnest, not specially refined, and by no means mystic, religious nature. He looked at doubts as definite things, to be got rid of by a certain process of argumentation, not as elements of haze which

298

touch the edges of almost every question, and enter, in streams of paralysing influence, into almost all the departments of moral life.

"Mr. Binney was, in short, a very useful, vigorous, sincere, and clear-sighted teacher of a somewhat common place orthodoxy and ethics. He had this great merit—that he managed somehow to inspire contempt for all weakness of character and half-and-half compromises between inconsistent practices. His sense was too vigorous, for instance, to admit of the puritanical nonsense which thinks that singing is pious, but that singing should be untrained, and therefore, of course, bad singing. He was one of the first to introduce good music into the services of the Weigh House Chapel; and though his feeling for the fine arts was but another form of the same hardy sense which made him incline, perhaps, rather more to the 'douce' burghers of the Book of Proverbs and their wives clothed in silk and purple, than to the agonies and travails of religious conflict, it was keen and sound so far as it went. Sometimes, indeed, it is a bewilderment to think how nature could have managed to produce in the same era characters so perplexingly wide apart as, for instance, Victor Hugo and the Rev. Thomas Binney—men who would hardly be less able to understand each other's merits, if they had been born in different ages and in worlds separated by millions of miles. But we may safely say that the Rev. Thomas Binney was a safe model and a sound teacher—if not of the highest kind—for thousands of men, and the kind of men who make our English State so solid and trustworthy as it is; and certainly that praise at least cannot be awarded to the great

299

French contemporary who was suggested to us, by the law of contrast, as we noted the outlines of Mr. Binney's steady, useful, sagacious, manly, and earnest career."

The following is amusing. Should this little volume fall in the way of *Mr. Guardian,* we will respectfully remind him that he has never read—probably has never had in his hands—the work to which he refers, "Is it Possible to make the Best of Both Worlds?" The volume is an earnest plea for spiritual religion, and is characterised by *great spiritual power.* But we have dwelt sufficiently on this already.

THE GUARDIAN.

"Dr. Binney, whose death was briefly noticed in our impression of last Wednesday, was a patriarch among Nonconformists, and almost a bishop among the Independents. But it was with him as with consecrated bishops; a younger generation bowed respectfully to him, and at the same time disclaimed any intention of accepting his guidance. There was nothing to offend him in this, for his principles led him to assert the autocracy of each separate congregation, and if Weigh House Chapel did not give him by itself a sufficiently wide sphere of influence, he could use both the platform and the pen. He had a massive, earnest, business-like mind, which kept itself free from speculative difficulties, but did not shrink from practical ventures. He gave a welcome to anthems and chanting in the congregation when most Dissenters were afraid of them, and had no fear of being shaken in his convictions by wandering occasionally, for

300

purposes of observation and worship, a good way beyond the limits of his own denomination. He could say harsh

things, one of the most famous of which we do not choose to repeat; but the character of his mind was shrewdness rather than harshness. He was a really religious man; but if he had been a merchant or a lawyer he would not have mistaken his vocation. No one who can entertain the question and answer it as Dr. Binney did, whether it is possible to make the best of both worlds, can have a large measure of high spiritual power."

Still more amusing is the following, characterised by a latent insolence. The community which covers the empire, far and near, with ministers and churches, which takes in the larger portion of our Australian colony, and then encompasses the United States, can smile very quietly at being referred to as *the narrow borders of a sect*:—

THE CHURCH TIMES.

"The obituary of the week includes that of Dr. Binney, the well-known minister of Weigh House Chapel. This gentleman began life as a Nonconformist in the worst sense of the term; and for a long time he made himself notorious by an assertion that the Church of England destroyed more souls than she saved; but as he grew older he learned more wisdom, and exchanged the bitterness of his youth for milder and more amiable modes of looking at things. The result has been that he died full of years, and respected far beyond the narrow borders of his sect."

301

Among other papers in the *English Independent* appeared the following from my own pen—I think sufficiently distinct from other papers to permit me to give it insertion here; and it will thus not inappropriately close the remarks of the editor upon the revered subject of the present volume:—

"Since the death of Dr. Watts, Congregational Nonconformity has experienced no loss from the ranks of its influential leaders like that deplored last Monday by the immense crowds of its. representative men, in the building devoted to the requiem service over the remains, or the long line of the almost unprecedented procession, and the vast concourse thronging round the obsequies at the grave.

"A stranger or foreigner suddenly alighting on that scene might have supposed that some mighty senator was being borne to his rest, that some order from Government must have dictated the magnificent ovation of sorrow, and secured the solemn decency and order which pervaded the mighty assembly, rather than a free expression of feeling from the admirers and lovers of the minister of a denomination for a long time utterly despised, disowned, and prohibited by the law of the land, and even now regarded with disfavour by a very large party in the nation.

"Not since devout men carried the beloved and beautiful Dr. Waugh to his burial in Bunhill Fields, in 1827, has such a procession followed a Dissenting minister to his grave. In many particulars the funeral of Monday

302

last resembled that, as in many particulars the two men resembled each other; in nothing more than in that deep sentiment of personal affection they were able to awaken and sustain, utterly obliterating the memory of all faults and differences in a hearty human love. To this I greatly attribute the demonstration on Monday last, and to this cause I attribute it that I may write—as was written of the death of Dr. Waugh—'Seldom has a death created so general and strong a sensation. He was known extensively, and wherever he was known he was loved. The religious of all parties mourned for him as if they had lost a father.'

"There was about Thomas Binney the charm of an affluent and indescribable power; the power lingered although the life had departed, and the dead hand was impotent to paralyse the pressure of the living fingers. This was pre-eminently the cause of the great scene on Monday: This sentiment covered the large coffin with the wreaths of white camellias—and I noticed they were scarcely placed on the coffin when for two or three moments a strong flash of sunlight streamed over them; it was not long, but it was like a celestial hand of love accepting the affectionate tokens. The eyes of very old men were wet as they strained to look their last on the coffin slowly borne along, while over mind and heart flowed feelings and tender memories of the closed eyes it contained, once and often seen in all their plenitude of splendour and humour; lips so majestic and modulated to every movement of the eloquence which inflames, instructs, or subdues, and a hand than which, as none

303

could be more effective in striking home points and periods of the eloquence of the tongue, so-and oh! how much better it is to say it—none could give a more hearty and faithful grasp—the grasp not only of friendship, but sympathy for the sorrowful and unsuccessful. Love was the mightiest mourner on Monday last in Abney Park Cemetery, and

"'Love is a present for a mighty king.'

But perhaps I somewhat wished that the trappings and state of death, the worn-out, threadbare black velvet on the horses, of the innumerable mourning coaches, the nodding plumage of the hearse, and the undertaker's men,

"'In the mighty procession
Marching mutes, mourning best, since they mourn by profession,'

had been less conspicuous. To all funeral scenes these incongruities seem inevitable. I wish we could have carried him,

"'Our master, famous, calm, and dead,'

if not on our shoulders, then after a good old fashion, still followed in some places, with our hands.

"The two greatest names linked together in the memories of Abney Park now are those of Dr. Watts and Thomas Binney. Some men are both into the world to exercise the spell of an unaccountable influence. Abney Park Cemetery has become, since Bunhill Fields closed, the *Campus Martius* of Nonconformity; the avenues of the cemetery are lined with tombs and stones bearing the

304

names of men who, large in learning and in many-coloured usefulness, became the centres of much admiration while they lived, and were followed by great numbers to their different graves when they departed; men to whose largeness of attainments, keenness of tact, orderly culture, or adroit rapidity of action, Thomas Binney could and would have no pretensions; but there was something about *him* that seemed in an ineffable manner to transcend them all, and by its spell drew together the most opposite persons and parties.

"Thomas Binney had a massive character: his nervous and large frame did not aid his strong and somewhat rugged will. I saw him in his coffin the day after his death. I was never more impressed by the majesty of his face, although it was like a magnificent shrine from whence the light had departed. It was like a grand mask or cast.* A day or two before I was looking at the mask of Cromwell in Dr. Williams's Library, and I was greatly struck by an amazing resemblance, and a resemblance in the indications of power. He had that occult and indescrib-

able something which attracts men to a man, and binds them by indefinable sympathies. Surely nothing could be more suggestive than the union together in the last act of respect of such exceedingly unlike individuals as

* It is interesting now to compare this impression by the side of that of Mr. Dix, quoted in a previous portion of this volume, referring to the massiveness of Mr. Binney's brain. However irreverent the idea may seem, I wish it had been possible that we could have obtained some knowledge of its weight as compared with Cuvier's, Napoleon's, Cromwell's, Thackeray's, &c., &c. It would have been at least interesting.

305

the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Dean of Westminster. The good, most noble, large-hearted, but, it must be conceded, narrow-minded Earl, with the courtly, scholarly, and eloquent, but most broad-minded Dean-broad, some think, even to latitudinarianism—and the latter taking part in the service at the sectarian grave—surely, whatever Ritualists and Romanists, Low Church or Broad Church may say in the hardness and audacity of their exclusiveness, it was a fine and fitting close to the career of the man who, nearly forty years ago, woke the bench of bishops from its slumbers, and inspired indignant denunciations from bishops, and archdeacons, and prebendaries, not to mention the fluttering cackle of crowds of small rectors and little curates, by his splendid oration and assertion, that 'Dissent was no Schism.' The breezes which bore away the last words echoed over the coffin in the benediction of the Dean seemed to me to transmit the sentiment of the dead bishop of Nonconformity, 'Dissent no Schism,' to other times and churches; it was a bill, drawn in faith by the dead Dissenter, taken up, accepted, and honoured by the living Churchman.

"What is this wonderful power we denominate influence? Of all the crowd who followed the hearse and thronged around the grave, it is not probable that one will

have such a funeral; yet Thomas Binney was, in point of worldly means, among the poorest of those who thus honour his memory; no titles decorated him; from *his own country* he had not even the poor recognition and distinction of a literary degree. Considering the honest manner in which he won his way to public regard—

20

306

for he was no charlatan, no master of clap-trap, no stump orator, no cheap John of the pulpit—his only vice was a most amiable and not very obtrusive self-consciousness; considering the absence in him of all of these essential elements of success, it is wonderful that he lived so long and so deeply in men's affections!

"Nor must we forget that there was a prestige in the Weigh House. It had been the Nonconformist Cathedral of Wealth, and of the middle-classes, many of them the merchant princes of the City; and Thomas Binney was supposed very worthily to represent those imperial Tribunes of the Chambers of Commerce. There was a large detachment from this regiment of the Life Guards of England at Stamford-hill on Monday, and it is well if wealth dm appreciate a goodness and a greatness beyond its own minds. He was the minister to the great peerage of the comfortable side of life, but he was faithful in his house,; and as we looked at some on Monday among the followers, we somewhat regretted that they were not more faithful to his ministrations. Of all the crowd few ever saw such a funeral; not one of those who witnessed, we may be sure, will have such a one. It will not be possible to any of the present or of the next generation of Nonconformists. This man's words were battle cries. The Church of England, it may be believed, owes, in a singular degree, her present usefulness, activity, and

eminence, to that keen, sharp thrust of nervous speech uttered by him when laying the stone of the new Weigh House Chapel—that she probably 'destroyed more, souls than she saved.' The epigram was as true

307

of the times in which it was spoken as it would be false now.

"But such a funeral seals a life. As I looked over the congregation I saw before me men who manifestly thought they could have performed the service better, and wondered that they had not been called upon to take some part in it. I saw other men, upon whose complacent faces I seemed to read some such expression as might have passed over the face of the living Emperor when he was a spectator to his own mock funeral—a sort of anticipation to their own obsequies. But that Monday was memorable; the occasion manifested more than personal affection; there was more than the seal of homage upon a long life of usefulness; it was not less than acclamation over one who had successfully fought on the field for principles which may now be considered as conceded—the representative man of past conflicts as of present love.

"'Yet this in him was the peculiar grace;
Hearken our chorus.
That before living he heard how to live,
No end to learning.
Earn the means first; God surely will contrive
Use for our learning.
Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes;
Live now or never."
He said, What's Time? leave Now for dogs and apes,
Man has for ever.
Lofty designs must close in like effects,
Loftily lying;

Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.'

Once more, let us transpose the old Latin orator's elegy,

308

into a hymn—'*Vale! Vale! NON æternum vale.*' Farewell! Farewell! but NOT an eternal farewell."

Thus, then, we take our affectionate and reverent leave, but only to all that is mortal of

THOMAS BINNEY.

W. SPEAIGHT & SONS, Printers, Fetter Lane, London.