

COMMUNICATIONS.

For the Colonial Churchman.

RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW.

The Life and Times of WILLIAM LAUD, D. D. and Archbishop of Canterbury. By John P. Lawson, M. A. published in 1829.

There is something in the nature and tendency of public measures at the present time, both in Church and State, which forcibly reminds the attentive observer of passing events, of those dark and troublous periods, when the violence of party spirit and the mistaken zeal of well-meaning individuals sapped the foundation of our glorious constitution, broke asunder the ties of social order, and brought their unfortunate monarch to the scaffold. At present the spirit of prey is abroad in the land. The fell clamour of the multitude has been raised not only against constitutional privileges and distinctions, but against property and rights of the most sacred character. The uproar spread, threatened confusion, and destruction to the well being of society; was sounded throughout every corner of the British Empire, and reechoed, apparently with malignant exultation, by the responsible ministers of the crown, who proposed to allay the tumult by concessions which threatened to dismember the kingdom, and to abridge the acknowledged privileges and rights of a large body of subjects. The Church of Ireland has already been sacrificed to gratify the desire of the many-headed monster; and apparently has produced no other effect in its immolation than to whet the appetite and excite the craving of the voracious beast for more. The Church of England is threatened in its turn; and if the providence of God does not interfere to avert the deadly blow which is aimed at its very foundation, there is no saying how soon it may cease to be a national institution, the palladium of British liberty, and the bulwark of the Reformation. The enmity of its opponents is of the most determined character; and nothing short of its total overthrow would seem to gratify their wishes or allay their clamour.

In such emergencies it is natural to look back to those times when the events that are now threatening and casting their shadows before, did actually come to pass: when the beautiful fabric of the English constitution was deprived of its harmony and proportions, shattered to its very foundation by the contentions of faction, and finally overthrown with a tremendous crash,—overwhelming in its vast ruins the pious, the wise, and the good. We shall find, in the history of the period which immediately preceded the protectorate of Cromwell, the working and results of those political causes which operate and press so powerfully on the nation in our own day. We shall in the first instance see the commons house of parliament rendered subservient to the omnipotent will of the populace; next its unconstitutional assumption of powers and privileges which belonged solely to the other branches of the legislature; again its rejection of the royal ordinances, and consequent trespass on the royal prerogative: and finally, its condemnation of church dignitaries to the block, and confiscation of all ecclesiastical property. These were the first steps of the mad career of revolution: and hence followed all the horrors and heart-rendings, and desolation, which the civil war spread throughout every corner of the land.

This is not merely a lesson of passing interest that may be slighted at will. It is written with characters of blood in the annals of English history, and no plea can be offered by the patriot for overlooking its admonitions, or shutting his eyes against its wholesome warning. And that minister or responsible adviser of the crown, who has at heart the greatness and prosperity of his country, will spare no pains—count no trouble too great an endeavour to save the victim from a similar catastrophe, and to pre-

serve the true balance of party power which our present constitution so happily sanctions, and which seems absolutely necessary to the well-being of society. Let us therefore refer to a few peculiarities, which distinguish those turbulent times, as they may be exhibited in the life and actions of Archbishop Laud, who was a principal adviser of the means and measures by which the constitutional party endeavoured to stem the torrent of enthusiasm and radicalism, that was fast overwhelming the nation.

It has often been observed that nothing is more variable, nor in fact of less value than public opinion, as it respects both men and things of the passing day. It is frequently excited by clamour, and it is almost always influenced by passion. It is therefore never a sure test of truth, nor a certain criterion of virtue or of vice. Many had stood in the highest rank of public estimation, whose merits were of little value; and many have been loaded with contemporary and posthumous reproach, who deserved a very different treatment, if the love of truth, and the practice of virtue, were, as they ought to be, the only criterion of judgment. Few men have suffered greater injustice in this respect, both from his contemporaries and from posterity, than Archbishop Laud. He lived in violent times, and he became the victim of their violence. His enemies were bent upon his destruction, because he opposed himself, as his conscience dictated and the duty of his station required, to the manoeuvres of Papists, Independents, and Socinians. The clamours and the prejudices by which he was brought to the scaffold have been continued to our own time; and he who was the victim of violence and intolerance, is considered without controversy, as essentially violent and intolerant, and as having thereby irritated the evil spirit and increased the mischiefs of the disastrous period in which he lived: insomuch that it is currently said and very generally believed, “that it has been made a rule, ever since the time of Archbishop Laud, to promote none but men of known moderation, to the see of Canterbury.” This is little less than a libel on a man whom every true son of the Church of England is bound to hold in veneration, both as a man, a christian, and a minister; and were the rule and its reference to Laud true, it would be singularly disgraceful to the government of England. The rule to promote none but a man of known moderation to the see of Canterbury, is quite right, such moderation being consistent and christian; but to fix indelibly, and by the authority of government, the stigma of violence and intolerance on the character of Laud, who was himself the victim, not the minister of violence, is essentially unjust, as rendering the government hereditarily subservient to the passions and prejudices of men, who are equally and systematically opposed to the constitution in church and state.

To relieve this luminary of the English Church from the load of obloquy to which he has so long been subjected, it is not necessary to contend that he was tolerant in the modern acceptation of that appellation. No man nor party was tolerant to this extent in that age. Laud was at least as tolerant as his contemporaries; nor is it rashly to be concluded that the man—whether sovereign or subject, who falls the victim of popular fury, whether suddenly or with the semblance and under the tedious forms of law—is therefore of necessity a tyrant or guilty of death. The direct contrary may almost universally be concluded.—Louis XVI. was one of the best and most benevolent of all his race, and would have never mounted a scaffold if, like the notorious John Wilkes, he had been really the character which his murderers maintained. The same or something very similar may be said of Charles I. in spite of the disgraceful calumnies that have been uttered against him both in his own age and in this.

CRITO.

To be continued.

For the Colonial Churchman.

THE FAITHFUL PASTOR AND HIS HUMBLE FLOCK.

“With aspect mild and elevated eye,
Behold him seated on a mount serene,
Above the joys of sense and passion's storm;
All the black cares and tumults of this life,
(Like harmless thunders breaking at his feet,)
Excite his pity, not impair his peace.”

Dr. Young.

No. 2.

MESSRS. EDITORS,

Soon after his interview with his predecessor, the zealous young Oberlin, (unaffected by the “sweet lure of popular applause,”) removed from Strasbourg to the remote and scattered villages of the Ban de la Roche. He found there a neat church and near it a Pasteur's House, among rocky dells and rugged pine-topped mountains.

Although the regions to which Oberlin, (moved by a stern sense of duty and sincere devotion to his ministry,) had exiled himself, lay not among the far distant realms of India, in which Schwartz, and Middleton, and Heber proclaimed the Gospel, nor among the inhospitable and repulsive districts of China in which Morison and others resigned their years to God and his cause, yet intense zeal, ardent love for souls, untiring self-denial, must have been united with skilful management, previous to the accomplishment of the happy changes which followed in the steps of Oberlin. Determining to “spend and be spent” among a scattered flock without a Shepherd, we see him willingly abandon quiet studies which he loved, and parents and friends who deeply appreciated his noble character, and resign to others the proffered chaplaincy, and the more easy missions of cultivated France.

“Surely not in vain,

His bosom glowed with that celestial fire,
Which scorns life's luxuries; which smiles at pain,
And wings the spirit with sublime desires.”

He found himself in a country destitute of roads and bridges, by which the intercourse of business or society could be maintained with more civilized districts. Devastating wars of former periods, and a scattered population, retarded improvement, so much so that when the traveller sought a bridge across streams of upwards of twenty feet wide, he found the inefficient substitute of a few stepping-stones. The husbandmen without agricultural implements, and even the thin population obtained but imperfect support from the scanty produce of the neglected soil.—These evils seemed not to require aggravation; yet to them must be added the burden of feudal service to their territorial lords.

The new pastor at once perceived, and keenly felt, these disadvantages; but he was among those wise men who instruct their people, and the fruits of whose understanding fail not. Besides, (and there lay his strength,) he already had learnt that there is One who would help his servants in their every need.—Some of the people had been enlightened by M. Stouber, and they silently acquiesced in the changes and improvements suggested to them; but the majority, in all the dull lethargy of ignorance, saw no need of alteration, and harshly opposed him: and their attempts at rude personal violence were frustrated but by the blessing of Providence on his firmness and meek forbearance. Soon, however, even his enemies became at peace with him, and their hearts turned towards him whom they had persecuted and reviled. Let others, when opposed in the path of duty, take comfort and continue steadfast. “Did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in His fear, and was forsaken.” Eccles. 2 10.

And who was it the while that guided and encouraged Oberlin by his advice? In the midst of the engagements and pursuits of the city, the good Stouber forgot not the humble pastor of the Ban, nor the flock among whom he had himself laboured in the Lord. His letters are so energetic and instructive, that I cannot but offer the following extracts from one of the first of them, for although they were previously designed for the voluntary exile of the mountains, yet we also may be led by them to admire and imitate the humble