

Literature.

The Life of the Right Rev. Daniel Wilson, D.D. By the Rev. Josiah Bateman, M.A. 2 vols. (London. John Murray. Reprinted by Gould and Lincoln.)

Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India, was the son of a Spitalfield's silk manufacturer. In early youth he was not only utterly without religion, but incurably indolent. The first awakening of the activity which afterwards formed so prominent an element in his character, was when his tutor said to him, "Daniel, you are not worth flogging, or I would flog you." After leaving school, he was bound apprentice to his uncle, William Wilson, who was of the same business as his father. He had but to follow in the track already marked out, says Mr. Bateman, "and store of wealth lay at his feet." He was not destined, however, to sink into obscurity as a mere successful merchant. A revolution in his inner life changed the whole course of his circumstances. He describes the first years of his apprenticeship as a time of scepticism, depravity, and even profligacy. But the atmosphere of religion was around him; his mother had been a friend of Whitfield; he "sat under" the famous preachers of the day, Cecil and Romaine, and "when he came to himself," (which event is very minutely described,) his whole nature underwent a change. He wrote to Mr. Eyre, his former tutor, to Mr. Newton (the friend of Cooper), and to his mother, every letter being full to the brim of self-abasement and Calvinism. At length to use his own words "the burden falls off, as did Christian's." The question then arose, what was to be his future faith in life? Commerce had no longer any charms for him, and his whole inclination tended towards the ministry. But his father had fixed him in business and expected him to remain in it, and his religious advisers, Newton, Rowland Hill and Cecil, failed to detect any peculiar fitness for the desired vocation. Ultimately, however, in 1798, when he was just twenty years old, his father's consent was gained: he was placed under the care of the Rev. Josiah Pratt, Mr. Cecil's curate, and six months diligent study enabled him to enter St. Edmund's Hall, Oxford. His college course was marked by very praiseworthy diligence, and was crowned with singular success. In 1801, he gained the university prize for an English essay, and it is remarkable that as he finished the public reading of it before the University, Reginald Heber stepped into the rostrum to recite his prize poem of "Palestine." Soon afterwards he was ordained to one of Mr. Cecil's curacies: he married his cousin Ann, daughter of the uncle to whom he had been apprenticed: and then returned to Oxford for a time as tutor at St. Edmund's Hall. In 1811 he came to London, and preached at St. John's Chapel, Bedford-row, a building first made famous by the celebrated Dr. Sacheverel. Here his preachings attracted great public attention; and of his sermons, his biographer tells us, that, though long "that was deemed no grievance;" and that so much care was bestowed upon their composition that an examination of six or seven of them, chosen promiscuously, shows long quotations from fifty-nine different authorities, ranging from Chrysostom, Cyprian, and Vitringa, to Butler and Hooker. How prolific he was in sermons may be gathered from the biographer's information, that before he went to St. John's Chapel he had preached six hundred and forty sermons, and that whilst he was there he preached one thousand one hundred and eighty-seven. To which is added a calculation that, during the whole of his career, he preached no less than five thousand eight hundred and six times. His audience at St. John's Chapel was a very influential one: among it were Charles Grant, President of the Board of Control, Zachary Macaulay and his son, the future historian, William Wilberforce and his son, the future Bishop of Oxford, Lord Calthorpe, and Bishop Ryder; and to use the words of his biographer, "He was

through life a man set for the defence of the Gospel. Mr. Simeon used to say that the Congregation were at his feet. All felt his power." This ministration lasted until 1824, when his uncle and father-in-law presented him to the living of Islington—then a rural suburb which had "slept" for many years under the care of a Dr. Strahan. Its new rector speedily effected a transformation, and his marvellous activity made an impress upon the parish which it has not lost to this day. In 1832 the news of Bishop Turner's death arrived. Thereupon Wilson wrote to his friend Mr. Grant, the President of the Board of Control, urging "the appointment of a man of thorough and decided piety, of good talents, of amiable temper, and of some station in the Church." The see was offered to Dr. Dealtry, to Chancellor Haikes, and to Archdeacon Hoare, and was by them rejected; whereupon Wilson, fearing "lest it should fall into inferior hands," offered himself for the place. It was a bold course to take; but no doubt he felt in his own mind that he was the very man whom he had described. He was accepted; and in less than three months was on his way to Calcutta. On his arrival, he began at once to show manifestations of the vigorous activity of his character. There was a long arrear of work to be performed, which had accumulated since the death of his predecessor—confirmations, ordinations, consecrations, and the like—but the great source of trouble appears to have been the chaplains. His biographer supplies us with abundant evidence of the manner of his dealings with them, in the admonitions "To a careless Chaplain," "To an Offending Chaplain," "To a Young Chaplain," "To a Missionary, on Temper," "To a Chaplain engaged in Contention," and "To a Newly-Arrived Chaplain." He writes thus, for example, to an Indian Chaplain in 1852:

"Rev. Sir.—Knowing that your own mind privately is fixed, and has been for years, I did not choose to enter into communication with you except in an official manner.

"I have only now to state, that you are hereby required to abstain from all the customs and habits to which the Venerable Archdeacon, knowing my mind, objected so properly.

"You are not to turn your back on the people when reciting the creeds. You are to preach in your black gown, and not in your surplice. You have an organ and singers, who chant the *Te Deum*, &c. and sing a Psalm or Hymn between the Litany and the Communion Service, you will direct them to sing a Psalm or Hymn between the Communion Service and the Sermon also. You are not to use the prayer for the Church militant, except when the blessed communion is administered. You are not to call the Communion table an 'Altar.'

"The practice of this Diocese is not to be broken in upon by an individual clergyman, or his private opinion."

Of his more laudable exertions we can say but little here: his visitations, his sermons, and lastly the rearing of the Calcutta Cathedral cannot be condensed into the brief space at our disposal. His last sermon was preached on a day of humiliation for the Cawnpore massacre in 1857. He died January 2, 1858.

Such is a sketch of Bishop Wilson's life: it was the life of a man of business whose activity employed itself, not in mercantile calculations but in the duties of an Episcopate; it was the life also of a man of piety, however wrong-headed and obstinate, which cast the shadow of its influence wherever it went. There are many points of greatness and many of weakness. He was what has sometimes been called 'a great little man.' His greatness lay in his zeal, his littleness in his utter want of toleration of any ideas but his own. He retained the theology of his early years, and saw in the writings of Cecil, Newton, Scott, and Milner the only allowable exposition of faith or practice. The enquiry as to what the Church taught or commanded, seems never to have forced itself on his mind; assuming that Calvinism was Christianity, he merely looked upon his position in the Church as affording him the means of propagating it.

No wonder, therefore, that his tedious son-in-law and biographer has gathered together in these unwieldy volumes every available relic of so distinguished a champion and confessor.