

The Church.

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 1843.

[WHOLE NUMBER, CCXCV.]

VOLUME VI.—No. 35.]

NOTICE OF ATTEMPTS MADE, CHIEFLY BY THE REV. JOHN RICHARDSON, RECTOR OF BELTUBET, TO CONVERT THE POPISH NATIVES OF IRELAND TO THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

(From the Church of England Magazine.)

No class of our fellow-subjects have a stronger claim upon our affectionate interest than the Irish population. The generosity of their national character, along with the fact of their lengthened subjection (that is, of the greater proportion of them) to the papacy, must make everything connected with the religious history of their land an engaging theme of enquiry. It is on this account that a notice is now presented of one whose exertions for the religious advancement of the people in question entitled him to high praise.

In his "History of the Attempts to convert the Popish natives of Ireland to the Established Religion," by the Rev. John Richardson, published in 1712, he speaks of certain efforts being made, and having reached to some degree of efficiency, towards the important end described in the title of his work. In the year 1689 many families from the western isles of Scotland, who understood only the Irish language, settled at Carrickfergus. These families desired to find an opportunity for the public worship of God; but, being ignorant of the English language, they soon quitted the service of the church whose principles they adhered to for that of the Romish communion, simply because, as they replied, "it was better to be of that religion than of none at all." Whether the reason they alleged for attending the Romish service were a sufficient one or not, it is certain that the state of things which drew forth the expression of it called for a remedy. It was pressing necessary that the officers of religion should be performed in a language which they understood; or the consequence would be that the Highlanders, who removed in considerable numbers into the county of Antrim, would either be papists, or protestant dissenters, or without religion altogether. A petition was accordingly presented to the bishop of Down and Connor, of which diocese the aforementioned county forms a part, that a minister might be appointed to officiate in the Irish tongue. This request was complied with: a minister was sent to them named Duncan MacArthur, who succeeded, at his death, by Archibald MacCallum; who were successful, not only in reclaiming such of the Highlanders as had passed to the Romish Church, but also in turning many of the natives of Ireland to the pure principles upheld in the established church. The clergyman above named were succeeded by three or four others, who gathered around them considerable congregations. "By these means," says Mr. Richardson in his work above alluded to, "many Highlanders and popish natives are added to our Church; whereas in other places, where such care is not taken of them, the natives do not only continue in popery, but many of the Highlanders are drawn off to separate meetings, or to the Romish superstition and idolatry."

Exertions similar to those which have just been touched upon, and which took place in the days of William III. and Mary, were made also in the subsequent reign of Queen Anne; but they were the private or individual efforts of the diocesan, who were led to take an interest in the wants of the people; nothing public or official was as yet attempted. Two exemplary men however supplied, as far as they could, the demand for ministerial service: the one was the Rev. Nicholas Brown, who in 1702 applied himself to the conversion of the Irish, and persevered in it with success; for he had the advantages of a thorough knowledge of the Irish tongue, and of a capacity for conveying ideas upon religious subjects in a way that was peculiarly suited to the structure of the minds of the native Irish. The plan he pursued is described by bishop Mant in the following interesting and instructive manner:—"By great kindness and humanity, and by works of charity among the poor, he gained their hearts and affections; and thus he took advantage of the great delight which he observed in them at hearing divine service in their own tongue; and he accordingly sought them in their own dwellings, appointed with them public meetings, attended at the places where they usually assembled to hear mass, taking care to be present when mass was just ended, and before the congregation was dispersed; and thus seized every opportunity of instructing them, administering to them the ordinances of religion; reading to them chapters of the Old and New Testaments in Irish, and reading the prayers of the church out of an Irish book of common prayer. The people assembled in great numbers to hear him whenever they received notice of his intention, joined devoutly in his prayers, and heard his instructions with thankfulness and satisfaction. On one occasion in particular, the popish priest being much troubled to see his congregation joining in the service of the (protestant) church with great attention and devotion, told him aloud, 'that our church had stolen those prayers from the church of Rome;' to which a grave old native answered that, 'if it was so, they had stolen the best, as thieves generally do.' The result was that many of those whose parents and relations, and themselves also, had previously gone to mass, were brought and adhered to the communion of the church, notwithstanding the menaces and denunciations of the popish priests; and that he impressed the generality of his popish neighbours with a favourable opinion of the religion he professed and taught—many of them declaring that they were always kept in the dark by their priests, but that this man showed them the light, and said nothing but what was good and what they understood." For six years did this minister of religion pursue his work with zeal and assiduity, until he was incapacitated by illness. During his last sickness, he expressed to a friend his anxiety for the conversion of the Irish from the darkness of popery; and his confident expectation of success in a few years, should the convocation take the subject into consideration, and prevail on the parliament to encourage the building of churches, and to plant preachers and teachers, using the Irish tongue, in every diocese in the kingdom. At the death of Mr. Brown, which took place about the year 1708, his successor was found in the Rev. Walter Atkins, treasurer of the cathedral church of Clonfert, and vicar of Middleton, in that diocese; a man who laboured strenuously in the good work wherein the clergyman that preceded him had been so exemplary. He had some little acquaintance with the Irish language before he was appointed to the pastoral charge of Middleton; but he afterwards strove to make himself a fuller proficient in it, and soon was enabled to perform the offices of religion for the natives in their own tongue; the earl of Inchiquin supplying him with an Irish book of common prayer, and the bishop of Clonfert, Dr. Crow, favouring his enterprise. He buried their dead according to the liturgy of the church, to the great satisfaction of the living, who joined in the responses, and shewed earnestness of attention throughout the service; and, on one occasion of a burial in the cathedral churchyard, an attendant was heard to say that "if they could have that service always, they would no more go to mass."

Let not this be thought unimportant. As other services of our church have been made useful to the souls of careless persons, so, particularly, has the burial-service. Instances are on record of some who have been, for the first time, seriously impressed with what they have heard at a funeral; and thus, the prayer, "We beseech thee to raise us from the death of sin into the life of righteousness," has been blessed with an almost instantaneous answer.

Passing onward from this period, we come down to the time when Mr. Richardson, under the patronage of the archbishop of Dublin, exerted himself for the obtaining permission that Irish bibles should be printed; as also for the liturgy, the "Exposition of the Church Catechism," and other treatises, in Irish. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge directed that three thousand copies should be printed of his "Short History of the Attempt to convert the Popish natives of Ireland;" this was done with a view to the removal of any prejudices that might exist on the subject of the instruction of the Irish, and to lead the minds of the Christian community in England, especially, to favour the project of building charity schools for the gratuitous instruction of Irish children in the English language. Subscriptions were opened at the house of the society in Bartlett's-buildings, and the result was the printing of an edition of six thousand copies of the book of common prayer; as many of the church catechism, the Irish alphabet, and elements of the Irish language for the use of the charity schools; and six thousand copies of Lewis's "Exposition of the Church Catechism," which Mr. Richardson had translated. These several books were printed in English and Irish, in parallel columns; and circulated both in Ireland, and in the Highlands of Scotland.

It may not be out of place to insert here a letter of archbishop King to Dr. Swift, in 1711, written to the latter during Mr. Richardson's visit to London; "We shall, I believe (writes the archbishop), have some considerations of methods to convert the natives, but I do not find it is desired by all that they should be converted; there is a party among us that have little sense of religion, and heartily hate the church: they would have the natives made protestants, but such as themselves; are dead afraid they should come into the church, because, say they, this would strengthen the church too much: others would have them come in, but can't approve of the methods proposed, which are to preach to them in their own language, and have the service in Irish, as our own canons require; so that between them I am afraid that little will be done."

The lower house of convocation, in 1711, proposed certain measures on the subject of the conversion of the Irish; but these failed to meet with that response in the upper house by which alone they could be rendered effectual. Want of time may have been a part of the cause, but the want of a hearty affection to the undertaking was probably the main reason that it did not succeed. To the same cause is to be attributed the failure of a "proposal" subsequently made by Mr. Richardson "for converting the popish natives of Ireland." There were wanting alike those who should bring it forward, and those who should heartily have espoused it among the ruling authorities. A letter of archbishop King, written in November, 1711, to Mr. Annesley will make it evident that Mr. Richardson never could, with the feelings entertained towards him, carry the object he had at heart into effect. This letter shews that the exertions of any single man were deemed insufficient to the end proposed. The archbishop thus writes: "As to that part of your letter which relates to my opinion concerning Mr. Richardson's project about the Irish tongue, for converting the natives of Ireland, I confess to you, if I could have helped it, it should not have been Mr. Richardson's or any private man's. But I desire you to distinguish between the matter itself, and as it is undertaken by him. . . . I may put you in mind that when a thing is proper and fit to be done, and that whose duty it is to do it neglect or refuse to concern themselves, others that are zealous and not so wary will generally intermeddle with it. The case was so in the reformation: and God sometimes blesses such endeavours. But there are always, when the case is thus, great irregularities and imperfections in the performance, and the work often miscarries; and the evils become worse than they were, and more desperate. If the bishops of Ireland had heartily and unanimously come into this work, and the government had given it countenance, certain methods might, in my opinion, have been taken, that with due encouragement from the parliament, would have had great effect towards the conversion of the natives, and making them good protestants, and sincere in the English interest. But what success it may have in the hands of a private man, without such evident encouragement, may, under the manifest disapprobation of most of those who are able to give it life, I believe it not difficult to guess."

A few remarks suggest themselves on this letter.—And first, with respect to the unwillingness of the high civil authorities to aid Mr. Richardson in his noble enterprise. When they who ought to move in any scheme of public utility, especially connected with man's highest interest—when such decline to exert themselves; we may not censure, but applaud, the individuals who come forward to encounter the whole weight of an undertaking which others refuse to touch with one of their fingers. It is not that an individual in this case miscalculates the vastness of the enterprise, or forms an overweening estimate of his own powers, but that his "spirit is stirred within him when (as in Mr. Richardson's case) he beholds the millions 'wholly given to idolatry.'" He feels the necessity of something being done, and he thinks that if he cannot achieve all, he may yet do something; if he cannot be allowed the privilege both of laying the foundation and of raising the top-stone, he may at least accomplish the former of these two: he may have the satisfaction of reflecting that, if another be destined to water, to him it was given to plant. Far less would we do away with the reproach which it conveyed to our own supineness, when those whose means are wholly inferior to our own are found displaying an energy to which we ourselves are strangers.

The archbishop alludes to the interference of the unwary, when others decline to move; and adds, "The case was so in the reformation, and God sometimes blesses such endeavours." It is to be inferred that he included the reformation among the occasions so blessed. That there were individual agents in that great work, if not in England, yet in some parts of Britain, whose judgment was less sound, and their hands more unsparring than was to be wished, I do not deny; but that the work itself was eminently blessed of God, I cannot doubt. The principal actors in our English reformation were discreet as well as holy men; and, if we should ever witness the deterioration of which archbishop King speaks, we shall find reasons to refer it, not to that which they did, but to some other cause, of which our own times are the authors.

Nothing was eventually accomplished towards Mr. Richardson's project for the conversion of the popish natives of Ireland; a failure for which archbishop King thus accounted to himself (in an unpublished letter of the date of July 21, 1724): "It is plain to me by the methods taken since the reformation, and which are yet pursued by the civil and ecclesiastical powers, that there never was, nor is, any design that all should be protestants." This is a remarkable sentiment, throwing light upon other subsequent periods, as well as that in which it was put forth.—Nor must it be passed over without observing, that, whatever be or be not the design of human authorities with respect to the carrying out of any plans for the illumination of a portion of this or any other people; whatever be the arrangements framed upon the prudent maxims of man's policy, it is the will and the command of God, that his truth should be introduced every where; and no schemes of a temporizing nature must be admitted to retard the fulfillment of this his will. The eye of God sees the aggregate of such presumptuous opposers of his purpose, and separates all such masses into their component members, with each of whom he will accurately reckon.

The recompense of his labours does not seem to have been sought, it certainly was not obtained in the preferences of that church of which he was a zealous minister. His benevolence was the occasion to Mr. Richardson of much disappointment and loss: for, as archbishop Boulter stated in a letter to the duke of Dorset, in 1730—"He met with great opposition, not to say oppression, instead of either thanks or assistance; and suffered the loss of several hundred pounds, expending in printing the common prayer-book in Irish, and other necessary charges he was at in that undertaking." This prelate, out of consideration of these losses, as well as from his esteem of Mr. Richardson's character, expressed his desire to "contribute somewhat towards making him a little easy in his circumstances, and to procure him, by the duke's favour, some dignity in the church. This application procured for him the appointment to the deanery of Duach, or Kilmacduagh, for which (since it was but a small emolument) he solicited, as an exchange, the deanery of Kilmore; but his application, though supported by archbishop Boulter, did not prevail with the lord-lieutenant. He had in the interval been recommended for a chaplaincy to a regiment; but neither did he attain this appointment. It was left to him, at an advanced age, to derive his main earthly consolation from the consciousness that he had not lived in vain as a Christian minister, and a clergyman of the church. He had striven to promote true religion, and to extend the usefulness of that national institution whose honour it is to be an instrument in that sacred cause. E.

ST. ATHANASIUS

(From The London Christian Remembrancer.)

"Serpentis autia ponitur in exemplum," says St. Jerome, in his Commentary on Matt. x. 16, "quia tota corpore occidit caput, et illud, in quo vita est, protegit: ita et nos, toto periculo corporis, caput nostrum, qui Christus est, custodiamus."—"The serpent is set before us as an example of the subtlety which we ought to imitate, because he conceals his head with his whole body, and so protects that part wherein is life: and so should we, with whatever hazard to the body, guard our head, which is Christ." A comment this that which many persons may be disposed to laugh, as a strange application of a doubtful fact in the habits of the serpent; and which others may hesitate to admit as the real explanation of this particular text, which, perhaps, has no prominent reference to that special exercise of Christian prudence, the commendation of which is extracted from it by St. Jerome: but whatever some may think of that Father's exposition of this text in particular, it does at least inculcate a duty again and again commanded in other parts of the Sacred Scriptures, and indicate a self-devoted, manly, uncompromising habit of thought and feeling, which cannot be absent from the highest development of Christian character, and which characterised St. Jerome himself, and the age in which he lived; calling not for the smile of the superficial self-complacency of a shallow, or at least less devoted age, but for admiration and deep confidence.

But St. Jerome will not escape with the blame of childish exposition only. The very doctrine, which he thus deduces from the words of our blessed Lord, will excite a feeling of distaste and suspicion, in an age of indifference to positive dogmatic theology, when it is remembered that he, and others like-minded with him, mean by guarding Christ. It is impossible to enter at all into the spirit of their works without perceiving that they meant something more by such expressions than the cultivation of certain frames of mind in the individual Christian—which is the meaning such words would have in the lips of many fashionable theologians of the present day.—Holding the head was, with them, maintaining the faith, guarding the doctrines of Christianity, confending for the faith once delivered to the saints; and not only (although it certainly included the latter also) feeling and acting upon true doctrines, as axioms of practical religion, and sources of inward strength and comfort. With them the truth was sacred, not as felt by them only, but as, in itself, the voice of God; not in its application alone, but in itself; not as occasional (or economical) and accidental, but as necessary and eternal. They could not understand a careless reception of the truth, or a temper that ranked those who contended for the faith once delivered to the saints with needless disturbers of the peace of the Church. They could not understand the concession so often made in the present day to heretics—that their holy life sufficiently atones for their error; not separate, for so many purposes as we now separate, between a man's faith and his moral character.—Eternal truth did not seem to them at all more within the province of man's dispensing power than eternal justice, or any one of the ten commandments. They knew no more to acquit the blasphemer of the divinity of Christ, than to exculpate the murderer or the adulterer. And all this, because they looked on faith as something without and above themselves; something emanating from God, and therefore binding upon man; something fixed and definite—their own, yet not their own; their own to live upon, through a kind of sacramental efficacy, not their own to desert or to betray.

This is the secret of the grand struggle against the errors of Arius, with those arising out of them, whether directly or by consequence, in which the whole of Christendom was engaged in the fourth century, when the rule of St. Jerome. That at every peril of the body we should guard the truth, was so nobly exemplified by a band of confessors, scarcely less honoured than the martyrs who had before shed their blood in the controversy with heathenism. In this contest, St. Athanasius himself, whose polemical works are now given to the public, took a prominent part; and his works are by far the fullest and best authorities for the character and course of the controversy, while his life fully exemplifies the results, on himself and others, of an uncompromising adherence to the truth, on the principles above stated. Upon every other principle, not only was Athanasius a fanatic, but Catholic Christendom was gone mad. All contended strenuously, many suffered, some actually died, for the truth; and that when the questions in debate were so subtle that, though a simple Christian faith was then, as ever, sufficient to discern them practically, and to hold them without wavering; yet the nicest definitions were required for their logical disentanglement. A simple, dove-like simplicity might arm the true Christian sufficiently, but all the acuteness of the serpent was necessary to refute the heretic.—A single passage will show how cunningly the im-

purgers of the truth shifted their ground, and how well they earned the name of chameleons:

"When the Bishops said that the Word must be described as the true power and image of the Father, like to the Father in all things, and unvarying, and as unalterable, and as always, and as in Him without division (for never was the Word not, but He was always, existing everlastingly with the Father, as the radiance of light); the party of Eusebius endured indeed, as not daring to contradict, being put to shame by the arguments which were urged against them; but withal they were caught whispering to each other, and winking with their eyes, that 'like,' and 'always,' and 'power,' and 'in Him,' were, as before, common to us and the Jews, and that it was no difficulty to agree to them. As to 'like,' they said that it is written of us, 'Man is the image and glory of God;' 'always'—that it is written, 'For we which live are always;' 'in Him'—'In Him we live, and move, and have our being;' 'unalterable,' that it is written, 'Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ;' as to 'power,'—that the caterpillar and the locust are called 'power,' and 'great power,' and that it is often said of the people, for instance, 'All the power of the Lord came out of the land of Egypt;' and others are heavenly powers; for Scripture says, 'The Lord of power is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.' Indeed, Asterius, by title the Sophist, had said the like in writing, having taken it from them; and before him Arius having taken it also, from such copy of the same as is ascribed to us, which we acquire from virtue, on the ground of observance of the commandments."—Pp. 34, 35.

It must not be thought, however, that these doctrines were unimportant, just because they were difficult to define, so as to elude the sophistries of the heretic; or because a single word, perhaps, became the symbol of orthodoxy. Those who really care not for truth sneer at the Arian controversy as a quarrel about a letter, just because the orthodox confessed that the Son was *homoionous*, of the same substance, while the heretics admitted him only to be *homoionous*, of a like substance, with the Father; but herein is concerned the very essential godhead of our blessed Lord. If the Arian was right, the Catholic worshipped an idol; and that with a direct ascription of Divine praise. Well might the worshipper of Christ contend, where the truth was so essential as this to the very object of his worship!

Through what personal sufferings, and by what sacrifice, such truths were to be maintained, the most rapid summary of the eventful life of St. Athanasius will be sufficient to show. At the Council of Nice he was actively engaged, though as yet but a deacon, in the defence of the truth; and though too obscure in station to invite the immediate attacks of the Arians, he yet sowed the seeds of an ever-growing reputation in the Church, and of malice from the opponents of the faith, of which he was to reap an abundant harvest. Accordingly, he was no sooner advanced to the chair of Alexandria, than the Arians laboured to make his name odious at court; and though he more than once fully satisfied the emperor, yet malice still pursued him, and at length not without effect. He was formally arraigned before a council assembled at Tyre, of the most scandalous offences, of which it is almost absurd to believe that any Christian bishop could have been guilty, so much did malice overstep the bounds of common sense, as well as of justice, in his accusation.

Violence, oppression, the perpetrations of the least indignities on a woman vowed to virginity, and even murder itself, were laid to his charge; but the malice of his enemies in every case turned to their own shame. Besides these acts of gross immorality, he was accused of magic, and of sacrilege, and of procuring himself to be ordained bishop by unlawful means. Lest the number of charges and their heinousness should leave a suspicion that there must have been something flagrant in his demeanour, it may be well to note the kind of confutation which they received. Athanasius had been accused of murdering one Arsenius, and of cutting off his hand, and preserving it for magical purposes. Arsenius was brought before the council alive, with both hands, and confessed himself an accomplice in the plot. Again, he was accused of violent intrusion into the church of a church, and of desecrating the altar, and breaking the chalice; when, on inquiry, it turned out that there was no church at all in the place, and the pretended priest who witnessed against him was proved to be bribed by the Arian party. Still the popular indignation excited in the city of Tyre against the firm supporter of catholic truth, by the members of this righteous council, was so great, that the civil magistrates were sometimes obliged to rescue him from violence; and at length he withdrew, leaving his impartial judges to pronounce him guilty, and to depose him from his bishopric. His real offence being a firm adherence to catholic truth, he was indeed as guilty as his best friends could desire.

Athanasius made his appeal in person to the justice of the emperor; but when he had obtained permission to summon his late accusers to substantiate their charges against him, he was met with an accusation even more strange, if possible, than all the rest; viz. that he had threatened to stop the fleet that yearly sailed from Alexandria to Constantinople with corn! It is generally supposed that Constantine rather desired peace and the safety of the persecuted prelate, than justice on the person of a convicted traitor, when he banished Athanasius, on this monstrous charge, to Trier, in the Belgian Gaul.

In his banishment, Athanasius was treated with far more respect and kindness than in his own province; and after a residence of little more than eighteen months within the jurisdiction of the younger Constantine, by whom he had been affectionately received, he was sent back to his diocese.

Constantine was dead, and Constantius had succeeded to the purple. The Arian faction had early obtained the ear of the new emperor. Accordingly, the return of Athanasius was not to the peace and honour of a Christian bishop, but to the slanders and factions of an excited and hostile court. As is always the case when subjects that ought to be reverently handled have been discussed for victory, and not for among women and artificers; the mysteries of the faith corners of the streets became schools of theological disputation. It is not to be wondered at, that in such a state of things the worse came to be thought the better reason, and that true faith retired within the ranks of a chosen few, who could believe and be holy in silence. We have not time to pursue the enemies of St. Athanasius through the artifices by which they again procured his condemnation at a council held at Antioch. His see was filled with one Gregory of Cappadocia, and Athanasius himself retired to Rome, where he was honourably entertained by Julius, the bishop of that city; and, a second time a fugitive from the faith, was a second time received by strangers with the honours refused him at home.

Again Athanasius was restored, being fully acquitted by the council of Sardica; and again he fell into disgrace with the court, for refusing the use of a church in his city to the Arian party, and for celebrating divine worship in a church not yet dedicated, without the leave of the emperor; the one [viz. the latter] surely a venial offence, and the other [viz. the former] an imperative duty. At length popular violence again broke out against him, and being abetted, instead of repressed, by the governor of the province, a sudden scene of violence and bloodshed ensued. On the night of the

24th February, 356, when Athanasius and a large number of his flock were engaged in church, in the solemn offices of devotion, Tyrianus, the governor, with 5,000 soldiers, and a rabble of Arians, broke into the church, and began to slaughter the appalled worshippers. The scene was characteristic as well of the holy principles of the true Christians, as of the violence of religious faction. Without rising from his seat, Athanasius commanded the deacon to give out the 136th Psalm; and in the midst of the slaughter was heard the solemn ascription of praise to God, "His mercy endureth ever!" a noble exemplification of the words of the psalmist in another place, "Why boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do mischief; whereas the goodness of God continueth yet daily?" The object of the tumult was to destroy or secure Athanasius himself, but he escaped, as it were by miracle; for, refusing to desert his flock, or leave his church while any were in danger, he dismissed the people, bidding them escape as they could; and, when all the rest were gone, he was at last rather forced away, than persuaded to go, with the crowd of monks and clergy as they left the choir. The Arian mob found themselves in possession of a church profaned with blood and the bodies of the dead, but their intended victim was out of their reach, and soon retired to the wilderness.

Julian succeeding Constantine, recalled the banished bishops; and Athanasius among the rest returned, but he was again banished shortly before the death of Julian, his crime being, as before, his earnest adherence to the true faith; but the pretence of his enemies, in their advice to the Emperor, being the success with which he preached Christianity to the Gentile population of his city.

Under Jovian, Athanasius had peace, but Valens threw all the weight of the imperial authority into the Arian scale. Athanasius was again banished, but at the earnest supplications of his people, he was restored to them again, and he died at last, full of years and peace (A. D. 371) in quiet possession of his see.

The object of this most important sketch has been, not to detail the steps of the controversy in which St. Athanasius bore so honourable a part, but to show the extent to which the Christians of that age were sometimes called upon to sacrifice every thing of their own, life itself even, that they might hold the truth; the truth, not as opposed to professed heathenism only, but as opposed to error, the most subtle and refined, in those who still called themselves Christians.

But it is really true that it was for the catholic faith that Athanasius thus suffered? And is it possible that any man, whoever they might be, and in times of whatever license or darkness, would be found to pursue with a hatred so rancorous, and to accuse with such effrontery of falsehood, a person who had offended them only by maintaining what they held to be false? Was there not a truth at all in their varied charges? or was there not at any rate a semblance of excuse in some strange irregularities or imprudencies of the patriarch, so often accused, condemned, and hunted from his episcopal throne? We are constrained to say, that there is no trace of any foundation for their malice, but his unwavering orthodoxy; and no foundation at all for any of these charges. Their conduct, and indeed the whole polemical history of the Arians, is a mystery; malignity so much beyond the usual malignity of men does it seem to have engendered; and in darkness so much more palpable than any ordinary observation of reason does it seem to have shrouded men's minds.

Is it then void of instruction for after ages, on account of its remoteness from all ordinary occurrences? No, truly; for the difference is rather in degree than in kind; and every controversy which has deeply moved the Church has furnished examples similar, though less intense in their character. It was the development of the grand principles of heresy on the one hand, and on the other, of championship for the faith. It was the mystery of iniquity, in one of its manifestations, met by the sternness of uncompromising fidelity in proportionate vigour of exercise. In the two persecutions the mystery of iniquity was manifested in the form of a destroying demon; and it was met by the power of endurance given from on high in proportionate and most wonderful measure; and then that conflict was past. Other forms the mystery of iniquity has taken, and will take;—luxury, license of opinion, open infidelity, dissolution of civil and religious bonds, and it may be, many more; and in every such manifestation the mystery of iniquity is met by the grace of God working in those holy men of heart who are the salt of the Church, as the Church is the salt of the earth, and directing them with a power and energy proportioned to the need; and always the truth has prevailed, because greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world.

Thus much have we thought it right to say, to point out the great interest of the materials of a history of an era, which may be called the age of controversy. The lessons that those times will convey to our own, if only we will learn them, are very numerous and important; but one only we shall just now touch upon.

There is, as we began by observing, something perfectly alien from the steady confidence in the truth exemplified in the Arian controversy, and in all others at the same period, in the liberalism, the indecision, the reluctance to speak dogmatically, of the present generation of Churchmen; and the issue of controversies then with the comparatively indecisive victories which truth seems to achieve now, may teach us that we are in some respect inferior to our fathers, and perhaps suggest a question whether it is not in that very respect. When did they ever shrink from a high and uncompromising assertion of doctrinal truth? When did they retreat from the consequences of absolute and dogmatic assertion of what the Church taught? When did they hesitate to declare in plain terms that the heretics were wrong; not, indeed, avoiding proof, but proving it as with authority, and as from higher sources than would admit it to be doubted, even antecedently to proof? When did they ever take low grounds of argument, as if they were afraid of being driven from their post by the weakness of their own cause, or the skill of the enemy? Where is there even the slightest appearance of their meeting the opponent of catholic truth with a sense of equality? They began with confidence, and did not work themselves up to it, while they contended with gainsayers. They themselves stood on an unassailable rock, and cast down their weighty words from a commanding eminence. They were first confident themselves, and then knowing that their confidence was not misplaced, they laboured rather to convict and reprove others, than simply to persuade them. To suffer they were strong, whether in reputation, or in person, or in prosperity; but they knew not how to yield one iota of truth. And all this was bound up in them with the conviction that this was to hold the head. The doctrine was Christ; the cause was the cause of Christ; they contended as members of Christ; they suffered with Christ; Christ was in them to give them strength for the battle, and to assert the victory as his own. This was their feeling; and thus the very act of controversy was converted into an act of faith;—as much so as the repetition of the creed, when it had been already sanctioned by the decrees of a council.

But all this does not suit the temper of the present day. We argue for ascertained truth, as if we were only supporting an opinion: we maintain the doctrines

of the Church, as if it were at least possible that dissenters might be right: we even leave our high vantage ground, and affect a fellowship with them, in terms which are intended to avow our respect for them, though in error, but would seem almost to intimate a little love for them because in error: they are "our dear dissenting brethren;" or they are "fellow-labourers in Christ;" or they are, "our evangelical friends;" or they are "the pious Christians of all sects and parties." We meet them as dissenters in (so called) religious meetings, of which the very object is to preach Christ, as Missionary and Bible Societies; and so, instead of guarding the Head, we actually betray Him to the mistakes, if not the malice, of those who deny Him, or have forsaken Him. Who can wonder that, when we seem so very little in earnest, the issue too often is as if we contended for that about which it is not worth the while to be in earnest?

LENT.

(From the Rev. W. Stanton's "Dictionary of the Church.")

The Holy Seasons appointed by the Church will generally be found to date their rise from some circumstance in the life of our Lord, some event in Scripture history, or a desire to keep in remembrance the virtues and piety of the Saints who adorned the early Church. But the origin of the season of Lent is not so obvious, though it is usually supposed that Lent is observed in commemoration of our SAVIOUR'S temptation and fasting of forty days in the wilderness. It is most probable that if a Christian Lent originated from a regard to those words of the REDEMPTOR, "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and they shall fast in those days." We learn from the history of the Church, that the primitive Christians considered that in this passage Christ had alluded to the institution of a particular season of fasting and prayer in His future Church. Accordingly, they in the first instance, began this solemn period on the afternoon of the day on which they commemorated the Crucifixion, and continued it until the morning of that of the Resurrection. The whole interval would thus be only about forty hours. "But by degrees this institution suffered a considerable change, different however at different times and places. From the forty hours, or the two days originally observed, it was extended to other additional days, but with great variety in their number, according to the judgment of the various Churches. Some fasted three days in the week before Easter, some four, and others six. A little after, some extended the fast to three weeks, and others to six; and other Churches appointed certain portions of seven weeks in succession. The result of all this was the eventual fixing the time at forty days, commencing on the Wednesday in the seventh week before Easter, and excluding the intermediate Sundays." It is not, however, to be supposed that the Church remained long in uncertainty on this point, for it appears that the Lent of forty days can be traced to a period very near that of the Apostles. That its term of forty days was settled at a very early period, is evident from the writings of the Bishops of those times, who refer us, in vindication of it, to the example of Moses, Elias, and our Lord, all of whom fasted forty days. From all this, then, we arrive at the conclusion, that though fasting is frequently alluded to in the Scriptures as a Christian duty, yet the *set times* for it are to be referred solely to the authority of the Church. It may here be remarked, that the name we apply to this season, is derived from the time of the year when it occurs. The term *Lent*, in the Saxon language, signifies *Spring*; and, as we use it, indicates merely the Spring fast, preparatory to the rising of Christ from the grave.

The Lenten fast does not embrace all the days included between Ash-Wednesday and Easter; for the Sundays are so many days above the number of forty. They are excluded, because the Lord's day is always held as a festival, and never as a fast.—These six Sundays are, therefore, called Sundays in Lent, not Sundays of Lent. They are in the midst of it, but do not form part of it. On them we still continue, without interruption, to celebrate our SAVIOUR'S resurrection.

The principal days of Lent are the first day,—Passion Week,—and particularly the Thursday and Friday in that week. The first day of Lent was formerly called the Head of the Fast, and also by the name which the Church retains,—Ash-Wednesday. In the Church of England there is a solemn service appointed for Ash-Wednesday, under the title of a "Communion, or denouncing of God's anger and judgments against sinners." This was designed to occupy, as far as could be, the place of the ancient penitential discipline, as is sufficiently declared in the beginning of the office in the English Prayer Book. The last week of Lent, called Passion Week, has always been considered as its most solemn season. It is called the Great Week, from the important transactions which were then commemorated; and Holy Week, from the increase of devotional exercises among which we celebrate the institution of the Lord's Supper. The Epistle for the day has been selected by the Church with a view to this fact. On the following day we commemorate the sufferings and particularly the death of our SAVIOUR CHRIST. And, from the mighty and blessed effects of these, in the redemption of man, the day is appropriately called Good Friday. As this day has been kept holy by the Church from the earliest times, so has it also been made a time of the strictest devotion and humiliation.

From these brief remarks, (for many of which we are indebted to Bishop Mant, and Wheatley,) will be seen the authority, the antiquity, and the purport of the season of Lent. It was no invention of a corrupt Church in the dark ages, when the greater part of the world was burdened with a ponderous load of ceremonies; but it was in full vigour when Christianity was in her prime,—when she could boast of a high degree of purity, zeal, and holiness. We do not need to be informed, that in the Romish and other Churches, Lent has suffered some abuse. We know the fact, and acknowledge it; but if it were on this account rejected, we should proceed on a mere sophism, and with equal reason might reject the *holy Communion*, because in another Church it is held in connection with the dogma of transubstantiation. If we are to cast aside every thing in religion which has been abused, it is a question whether any thing would be left but simple Atheism; for not a doctrine or observance can be mentioned, which has not, in some age of the Church, been coupled with extravagance and fanaticism, and has suffered long and patiently, till some bold spirit came forward to strip away the delusion, and restore the truth in its ancient beauty. It is the aim of the Church, to follow as far as she can, the consecrated usages of primitive antiquity. She would ascertain the doctrines and forms of the generations of Christians who lived next after the Apostles; and having found these, she embraces, preserves, and teaches them, even though they may have been surrounded for awhile, in other Churches, with corruption. The Church is not so unwise as to throw away the jewel, because dust has accumulated on its surface, but rather removes with care whatever is superfluous, and restores it to its original lustre. If there is any superstition in Lent, let it be proved, and it will soon be purged away; but the objector should bear in mind, in this as well as in other matters, that the greatest superstition is that which, in its own self-adoration, becomes really superstitious in assailing imaginary superstition.

* Select Treatises of St. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, in Controversy with the Arians; translated, with Notes and Indices: being parts of Vol. VIII. of A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, anterior to the Division of the East and West. Translated by Members of the English Church. Oxford: J. H. Parker. London: Rivingtons. 8vo. pp. 280.

† At the Nicene Council, a philosopher, who had come prepared to maintain the doctrine of Arius, was convinced, not by the reasonings, but by the strenuous, unvarying assurance of confession of a simple and obscure Christian. Such incidents are valuable, not as isolated facts, but as types of a genus.

* Such as is indicated, in the present day, by the cry for the right of private judgment.