

GENERAL LITERATURE.

ELIOT, THE APOSTLE OF THE INDIANS.

(From a Review of *Carme's Lives of Eminent Missionaries, in the Wesleyan Magazine.*)

[CONCLUDED.]

He first opened his Mission amongst them in 1616; but it was not until 1651 that they built their first town, and were organized into a regular society.

Highly interesting as Eliot's history is, his character is still more attractive. By the good providence of his God, he was blessed with a wife who was in every respect after his own heart. He had been engaged to her before he left England; and she followed him, the year after, to America, where they were united.—Both the character of Eliot's mind, and the nature of his public engagements, unfitted him for the management of his family concerns; but Mrs. Eliot was eminently qualified to conduct the affairs of her household, and free his mind from domestic cares. No man felt more of the power of melting charity: the poor and the destitute were the objects of his constant solicitude. At the same time it is no matter of surprise that a man so abstracted from the world should sometimes forget that prudence ought to guide even the hand of benevolence. Mr. Carne observes—

"There was another and a silver cord, by which he drew the affections of his people to him—charity, as pure and lasting as ever was exercised by any man. 'How often,' says his biographer and friend, 'with what ardour, what arguments, he became a beggar to others, for them that were in sorrow! The poor of his people, and they were many—for disasters often came on the colony—seldom failed to repair to his home with tales of their distress. A hinderance, however, like the interpreter's in the Pilgrim's Progress, stood between them and success, and this was Mrs. Eliot, who would look keenly and coolly on the petitioners, and sift the tares from the wheat; and even then deal out the dole with a prudent hand, while she suffered little ingress to her husband's study.

That there was some cause for her prudent interference, may be inferred from what follows:—

"It was a joy to the poor when they spied him coming across the fields, or through the forests, to their lonely homes; for they knew that his charity had little prudence in it. Dr. Dwight says, that one day the parish treasurer having paid him his salary, put it into a handkerchief, and tied it into as many hard knots as he could make, to prevent him from giving it away before he reached his own house. On his way he called on a poor family, and told them he had brought them some relief. He then began to untie the knots; but finding it a work of great difficulty, gave the handkerchief to the mistress of the house, saying, 'Here, my friend, take it; I believe heaven intended it all for you.' Such a man had need of an excellent manager at home.

"The wife of his youth,' says Mather, 'lived with him till she became the staff of his age; and she left him not until about three or four years before his departure to those heavenly regions where they now together see light. She was a woman very eminent, both for holiness and usefulness. God made her a blessing, not only to her family, but her neighbourhood; and when at last she died, I heard and saw her aged husband, who else very rarely wept, yet now with tears over the coffin, before the good people, a vast confluence of which were come to her funeral, say, 'Here lies my dear, faithful, pious, prudent, praying wife! I shall go to her, and she shall not return to me.'"

They had six children, five sons and a daughter; but two only survived their venerable parents. They all gave such evidence of piety as enabled him to say, "I have had six children; and I bless God for his free grace, they are all either with Christ, or in Christ; and my mind is now at rest concerning them." And when asked how he could

bear the loss of them, he replied, "My desire was, that they should serve God on earth; but if God will chose to have them rather serve him in heaven, I have nothing to object against it; his will be done."

His ministry was peculiarly adapted to the character and circumstances of those he had to address. He knew how to employ the imagery that was familiar to the Indian mind, to illustrate and impress the great truths which he had to inculcate.

"To a man of strong imagination," says Mr. Carne, "these sermons in the wilderness borrowed wings of light and glory from the scenery around. If Wesley's discourses were observed to possess more vigor and beauty when he stood on the rugged shores of Cornwall, with wild rocks and the wilder waves on every side, much more did Eliot's, when he spoke in the eternal forests of America, or on the shore of her mighty rivers. No man could tell of the things of immortality in such scenes, with the wave, the boundless plain, and the awful gloom of the forest, like that of the shadow of death, the dark, solemn, and listening circle of warriors around, without feeling his fancy kindle, and his heart burn within him. How then felt Eliot? who wept night and day that he might bring the Indians to God."

If such were his feelings when breaking up the fallow ground, and sowing the seed, what must have been his emotions of gratitude and joy when he witnessed the fruit; when the wilderness became a fruitful field, and blossomed as the rose! He at once forgot all trials and labour. It was as "the joy of harvest, and the joy of the Lord was his strength." It is true, he had to mourn over some who "went back, and walked no more with him;" but in the greater number he found the abiding seals of his ministry; and the last end of some of these greatly strengthened his hands. The Chief Wanhon was one of these. He was the first fruit of Eliot's ministry; and was the first Indian that welcomed him to his roof, and opened the way for his future success. To this Chief his attachment was strong to the last.

"But the time was come when this first friend and convert was to be taken from him. Wanhon had several times attempted, by public discourses and confessions, to be of use to his countrymen. These efforts were by no means deficient in force or eloquence. In his dying hour the spirit of the Indian Chief broke in triumph above his pains and weakness. It was the hour that a stranger would have yearned to see; for his friends and warriors were standing around him; and Eliot was there. 'I desire you all, my friends and my children,' such were his words, 'do not greatly weep or mourn for me in this world; my body is broken to pieces by sickness and agony; yet I desire to remember thy name, my God, till I die. I will say with him of old, O that my words were now written, that they were printed in a book, that they were graven with an iron pen in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see him. This is thy love, O my God!' In so saying he died."

When Eliot was in the eighty-second year of his age, but still free from disease, or much infirmity, his people consented, at his request, to provide a minister in his stead. A graduate of Harvard College was chosen.

"The good old man," says his friend, "with unspeakable satisfaction gave the garment of his ministry to his successor; he said he could no longer serve them as he fain would do; that they should draw a curtain of mercy over all his failures."

This was not insincere language in his mouth, though old age is the strong hour of vanity: when the passions are dead, when the flowers of life are all gathered, the past career rises in all its pride, and memory treasures up all that we have suffered and won. "I am drawing home," he writes to the Honourable Robert Boyle; the shadows are

lengthening around me; I beseech you to suppress the title of 'Indian Evangelist.' Give not any glory to me for what is done, give it to God who hath strengthened me."

At this advanced period of life—

"He persisted in going forth, as far as he was able, to visit his loved settlements; for such was the excellence of his constitution, that his frame was not yet bowed, and his eye was still bright. Earth had nothing so welcome to him as to mingle yet awhile with his Indians; sit in their assemblies and listen, when he could speak to them no longer.

"The Indians saw, as they expressed it, that their father was going home. His mind was vigorous to the last. How elevated, how enviable, and above all human joy, were the feelings of that mind, in these last visits to the wilderness; when he entered the dwelling that had received him fifty years before, or sat beneath the tree in whose shadow he had first told of the things of life; or rested on the shore, or the boundless plain, once the dominion of darkness and death; but now light and glory had come there!"

Eliot was not like many who in their old age are least sensible of the decay of their abilities; but for a considerable time before his departure, he could scarcely be prevailed upon to engage in any public service, saying, "It would be a wrong to the souls of the people for me to do anything among them when they are supplied so much to their advantage."—The last time he preached was on a public fast; when he gave a distinct and useful exposition of the eighty-third psalm, and concluded with an apology, begging his hearers to pardon the poorness, meanness, and brokenness (as he called it) of his meditations: "but, added he, 'my dear brother here will, by and by, mend all.'"

The closing scene now drew nigh; he thought himself past service: with an air peculiar to himself he would sometimes say—

"I wonder for what the Lord Jesus lets me live. He knows that now I can do nothing for him.' And yet, adds his friend, he could not forbear essaying to do something for his Lord; and conceiving that the English could not be benefited by any gifts which he now fancied himself to have only the ruins of, yet who could tell but the negroes might? He had long lamented that the English used their negroes but as their horses or oxen; and that so little care was taken about their souls. He looked upon it as a prodigy, that any, wearing the name of Christian, should confine the souls of their miserable slaves to a destroying ignorance, merely for fear of losing the benefit of their vassalage. He therefore invited the English, within two or three miles of him, to send their negroes once a week, that he might instruct them in the things of God.

"At length his Lord, for whom he had been long wishing, and saying, 'Lord, come, I have been a great while ready for thy coming,' came and fetched him away into his joy."

A fever, with which he was attacked, compelled him to lay aside his employment, and he lay in the extremity of his suffering. On one who had known little pain till the age of eighty-six, his bodily agony fell heavily; but he said that death was no more to him than sleep to a weary man. "The evening clouds are passing away," he said; "the Lord Jesus, whom I have served, like Polycarp, for eighty years, forsakes me not. O come in glory! I have long waited for that coming. Let no dark cloud rest on the work of the Indians. Let it live when I am dead." Ere his voice failed forever, the last words it uttered were, "Welcome joy!" What thoughtful mind can forbear the wish, "Let me" thus "die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" We will only add, that his highly esteemed friend and correspondent, the celebrated Baxter, when near his end, wrote thus—"I am now dying, I hope, as Eliot did. I lay reading his Life in bed, and it revived me. There was no