

PHILIP SCHAFF.\*

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This handsome volume records the life of a man whose story is well worth recording. He was not a genius as he used emphatically to say of himself, but he was better—a wise and good man with conspicuous talents and great learning who had a clear vision of the kind of service he could render to his day and generation, and who labored intelligently and most assiduously to complete what he saw to be his life work. Born in Switzerland, educated in Germany, beginning his career as a *private docent* in Berlin, he came to America in 1843 to be professor in the theological seminary of the German Reformed Church at Mercersburg, he entered at once with zest into the life of his adopted country and became very soon a thorough going American. "In Wurtemberg" he says "it looks like autumn; here all is fresh and in the bud" and all this in spite of such considerations as that the Mercersburg seminary was in a small and out-of-the-way place with no prospect of growth before it, that the institution was crippled by financial and other difficulties, and that a trial for heresy followed upon the delivery of his inaugural address. After twenty years in Mercersburg he removed to New York where after an interregnum of several years he became a professor in Union Theological seminary and there he continued, occupying in succession several chairs, till his death in October, 1893.

One thinks of Dr. Schaff first and chiefly perhaps as an ecclesiastic, not in the narrow sense of a man who was a valuable member of mission boards and committees for he never took much share in such work and indeed held his church relations somewhat lightly—changing from the German Reformed Church to the Presbyterian when he moved to New York and contemplating a return where Union Seminary was involved in difficulties on Dr. Briggs' account. It was in a wide sense that he was an ecclesiastic: he gave himself to the consideration of the problems of oecumenical Christianity. He was one of the founders of the Evangelical Alliance and was sent to Europe three times as a commissioner in its interests: the success of its conference in New York in 1873 was mainly due to his planning of the programme. He took a considerable share in the organization of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches in 1875, was chairman of the programme committee for the Philadelphia meeting in 1877 and took part, in most of the other meetings. He was chairman of the American committee which assisted in producing the Revised version of the Bible, and he read a paper on "The Reunion of Christendom" at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. In addition to this aspect of his work he had an extraordinarily wide range of clerical friendships both in Europe and America and he was never more in his element than when doing what he could to promote a better understanding personally or theologically between English speaking and Continental theologians.

Theologically, as might have been expected from the temper of his mind, he occupied a mediating position. Firm and position in his convictions on the essential doctrines of an evangelical faith and delighting to preach a simple gospel which found its centre in a crucified and risen Christ. He yet allowed himself considerable latitude with respect to the more philosophical aspects of Christian truth. "Calvinism" he says in 1893 "is after all only one type of theology and church life and only one-half the gospel. It limits God's love to the elect and limits the number of the elect to a minority of the human family. It does not comprehend in its fulness the fundamental truth of the gospels, that God is love, and so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son for the salvation of the world. American theology is moving towards Christ as the centre which sheds light on all other articles of faith. Christ's centric theology is more human than Calvinism and more divine than Arminianism, and more Christian than either and furnishes a basis for the concord of the discords of creeds. If Christians are ever to be united, they must be united in Christ, their living Head and the source of their spiritual life." This is of course a rash and superficial statement and even a tyro in theology can pick holes in it, but it is very characteristic of a large class of Dr. Schaff's statements. A curious commentary on his mediating position in theology is fur-

nished by the facts that this man who during his first year in America was tried for heresy, charged with Puseyite and Romanizing tendencies came in his later years with scarcely any change in his own position to be looked upon as a sort of typical broad churchman.

Dr. Schaff was a prolific author. The list of his books occupies eight of the large pages in this volume. Among the more important are:—*The Person of Christ*, (1865), *The Creeds of Christendom*, (1877), *A Companion to the Greek Testament and the English Version*, (1883), and *Christ and Christianity*, (1885). Most of these works have passed through several editions and some have been translated into several languages. But the largest and most laborious of his works is his *History of The Christian Church* in twelve volumes of which the first was published in 1851 and the last volume bringing the narrative down to the close of the Swiss Reformation in 1892. It is a work of great erudition and betrays everywhere its German ancestry and especially the influence of Neander: yet it is the work of an independent investigator who does not hesitate after examining the evidence to draw conclusions of his own. He links his narrative closely to the general course of the history of the world and is at his best when setting forth the life and work of some great reformer or church leader. He delights in showing how the opinions and aspirations of a period are crystallized in some saint or hero whom he described with affectionate detail, but to whose foibles he is never quite blind. Schaff is certainly a historian rather than a philosopher or a dogmatic theologian and it is upon his histories that his reputation will rest.

Personally he was a most kindly and attractive man and he had an enviable reputation for having helped many a young teacher of theology to a place where his abilities could have fitting exercise. With so wide a knowledge of men and things and with so genial a disposition it was to be expected that he would tell a good story and that he amply redeemed such a promise, anyone who has spent an evening with him can testify. This volume quite fails to do him justice in that matter; the stories, except in the autobiographical section, are few and several of them are offensive to good taste. Indeed the work of the editor, although he is Dr. Schaff's son and has some experience in literary work had not been done in such a way as to command high admiration. The style savors altogether too much of the loose methods of the modern newspaper and the proof reading is bad. Here are some slips which should be corrected when another edition appears. Lucerne is spelt indifferently Lucerne (referring to the Waldensian valley) page 59, and Luzern (The German spelling) page 263; Obau is given as Obau (page 322); draught to be in accordance with modern usage should be written draft (page 363); dictation should be diction (page 405); the Established Church of Scotland and the Kirk are spoken of as if they were separate organizations (page 424 note). The engraving which forms the frontispiece of the volume is certainly not made from the best extant photograph of Dr. Schaff either as regards expression or artistic arrangement. But these are minor blemishes on what is, after all, because of its subject, a charming book. We smile at the good man's self-complacency, we admire his industry and energy, we learn much from the pleasant little details he gives of the appearance and language of his contemporaries and we are altogether the better for having associated to the extent of five hundred pages with so kindly and lovable a spirit. As one of his friends in the book says: "It makes one's heart warm to think of him."

## SHADOWS OF LIFE.

What He does we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. I remember on a glorious day of all but cloudless sunshine, passing in view of a well-known line of bare and majestic downs, then basking in the full beams of noon. But on one face of the hill rested a mass of deep and gloomy shadow. On searching for its cause, I at length discovered one little speck of cloud, bright as light, floating in the clear blue above. This it was which cast on the hillside that ample track of gloom. And what I saw was an image of Christian sorrow. Dark and cheerless often as it is, and unaccountably as it passes over our earthly path, in heaven its tokens shall be found; and it shall be known to have been but a shadow of this brightness whose name is Love,—*Alford*.

\*THE LIFE OF PHILIP SCHAFF, in part autobiographical. By David S. Schaff, D.D., Professor of Church History in Lane Theological Seminary. With Portraits. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. 1897. \$3.00.