

(For Dominion Presbyterian.)
Biographies in Brief 1, Richard Baxter.

By Nicol Moffatt.

What a smooth sounding and true English name this is! Against it history has no grudge and our own era is in no mood to erase it from the roll of those who lived not in vain. Some have called him the "chief of English Protestant Schoolmen;" others have assigned him a place along with Augustine among the church fathers; and his work has been summed up in the brief sentence "his practical writings were never mended, his controversial ones seldom confuted."

Most of us became first acquainted with him as we read the "Saints Everlasting Rest," that little ageless book, found in many a pioneer's library and country Sabbath School. This friendship has been renewed from time to time as we happened upon an aged Christian or invalid, improving the few remaining hours in close attention to the same book. Baxter is generally found helping where few remain sufficient for the task.

England in his day was having her Puritan Revolution, as France had her Republican one a century and a half later. Both had an array of very able and courageous men. He was born the year Pym and Elliot began their illustrious Parliamentary careers and belonged to the Midland counties where the storm had its centre. It was his genius, however, to reconcile the extremes of church and state, but as it was a time ill-fitted for calm deliberation, he carried almost alone a cool head and clear mind amid the tempest.

As a child his education was neglected, but when his mind awoke he applied himself with brilliant results to his studies. By the time he was twenty-six he had won a reputation as a preacher of the Established Church and was appointed to Kidderminster, a city noted for its coarse manners and low morals. For nineteen years his name is connected with this place and his influence for good, similar to that of McCheyne with Dundee, and Rutherford with Anworth.

As a soldier of Christ he took a brave part in the troubles of the Revolution. He valued his connection with any denomination or party, much less than an effort to harmonize the factions and remove the evils. Hence he rejected the Episcopacy in its English form and became, nominally, a Presbyterian, ever holding, however, that the form of church government should be "subservient to the true purposes of religion." He also opposed the extreme views of Cromwell and the Ironsides, and spent many a weary day trying with the force of reason to win them over to moderation. But his policy never was to get "peace at any price." Because he feared to wound his conscience, he paid many a fine, lay for months in prison and narrowly escaped flogging at the "cart's tail" through London—a sentence in the heart of the infamous Judge Jeffreys.

We are glad a few sketches of his appearance remain to impress his life upon us. Much labor at his desk, disease and hardship well prepare us to expect a thin stooping figure. One would judge that a very piercing eye would belong to one so skilled in handling men, but the marvellous elasticity of his body is above belief, when we consider his one hundred and sixty-eight separate literary works, the all day uneven controversies and the long years of trouble. Yet these were his traits of character and appearance.

But there were two explanations. In all his trials he was comforted and supported by a singularly devoted and gifted wife; and the calm assurance of his life in Christ, made him count all else but loss. His mind ever grasped the great principles and his soul fed only upon the strong food, hence in religion and personality he was a strong and great man.

At the age of 76 he passed away. The storm already had cleared from the sky. As

he lived so he died. All parties attended his funeral to do him honor. In 1875 also, when his monument was unveiled in Kidderminster, bishops and ministers united to pay to his memory a fitting tribute.

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Moral Wrecks.

By Rev. Joseph Hamilton.

Many of us were lately spending our vacation by the sea. It will be noticed in many cases how the shore is literally strewn with shells. Some of these shells are beautiful and complete, while others are broken; but in any case they are only the relics and mementoes of former lives. And so the shores of time are strewn with the shells of human life and character—the wrecks of what might have been. How sad it is thus to moralize on wasted talent and opportunity; but how much sadder for us, if those who come after us have, in their turn, to moralize over our wasted influence, cast up like these piles of rubbish on the shores of the world.

The saddest tears are those that never fall,
 But are held smarting in the aching eyes.
 The truest prayers can find no words at all,
 But flutter wearily to God in sighs.
 —Fall Mall Magazine.

The Deep of Better Work.

We are fishers of men. Our business is angling for souls, casting nets for the lost. We are not only to save the godless out of the world but to save the world with all the men in it and by whatever means we may employ. Let us not be content with what Talmage calls setting our nets in calm seas close to some chapel in the hope that the fish will be wise enough to wander into them. Let us rather launch out into the deep and work till nets break and our boats all but sink with the wealth of the draught to which the Master will then direct us. Every one of our churches needs to heed the command to go up higher. We want wider work and better. There is nothing a consecrated church may not do for soul saving and strengthening, for society-bettering and civic righteousness, and for all Calvary meant "or Jesus commanded." As churches as well as individuals we need to leave shallow fishing to the children, remembering that Jesus is by the shore to enter every empty boat and that we may do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Oh, stirring words of living power,
 Ye speak to every heart;
 Ye bid all selfishness away!
 And slothful ease depart.
 Where'er there is a soul to cheer,
 Where'er the mourners weep,
 There bear the healing calm of love,
 Launch out into the deep."
 —Cumberland Presbyterian.

Leaning on God.

True prayer is leaning on God. But it is not mere leaning; it implies also the spirit of active effort and co-operation. It is true that we are not in actively of body while upon our knees before God. But in true prayer we are cherishing the spirit of activity, so that from our knees we shall go into action.

There are times when we are so worn out, physically, that we cannot exert ourselves in the form of activity even of mind. At such times all that we can do is to cast our burden on the Lord. Nothing else, as it were, is in our power. But when rest has come, and the system is refreshed, then along with the resting on God should be the counselling with God what next we shall do for him.

Spiritual Life of the Church.

We are asked by the Rev. D. D. McLeod, convener of the Assembly's Committee on "Church Life and Work," to give publicity to the following circular just issued by him:

The sub-committee of the Committee on Church Life and Work, appointed by the General Assembly, "to carry out the last recommendations of the report of the Committee"—and "whose duty it will be to take such action as they may deem desirable to stimulate, direct, and secure unanimity in such efforts" as may be made throughout the year by the ministers and office-bearers of our church to promote the spiritual life of the Church (see minutes General Assembly, p. 55), respectfully submit and suggest:

1. That in each Presbytery the carrying out of the recommendation adopted by the General Assembly above referred to, be committed to the Committee on Church Life and Work in the Presbytery, or to the Committee which may be appointed in connection with the Century Fund.

2. Your Committee is aware that pastors and office-bearers are in sympathy with the Assembly's recommendation and consider that it might be carried out with good effect throughout the church in the following manner:—

(a) By the preaching of one or more discourses "recognizing the supreme importance of an advance in spiritual life," making such use of the historical situation of the church as may minister to that end.

The record of what God has enabled the church to accomplish is not so well-known to our people as it should be. Only a church earnestly alive can enter hopefully on the opportunities which the opening of the new century presents.

(b) By devoting a number of the evenings of prayer meeting—to addresses and prayers—with the object of awakening the spiritual life of the church and requesting that prayer be made for the same object in the homes of the people.

(c) That during this time a systematic effort be made to reach by visit or otherwise non-church going families in the district.

(d) By these, the ordinary means of grace directed specially to the end in view, with such additional means as may be available, your Committee hopes that the object of the General Assembly may at least in some means be attained.

When a man dies in his armor, says John Watson, "right knightly," it does not matter so much whether he has won or lost, as that he did his part bravely. Everyone that sees him dare and die departs from the lists less a coward and more a man.

The Psalmist was much given to meditation. He says, "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." "I will meditate in thy precepts." "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word." "My meditation of him shall be sweet." "O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day." In this busy age, when our minds are so much occupied with the affairs of the world, we would do well to give at least the wakeful hours of the night to this profitable exercise.

I am comforted by the fact that there is but a step between me and that narrow stream on the further shore of which one's faith perceives the land which is the perfection of beauty and the abiding place of angels that never sinned and of sinning men redeemed by the blood of God's Son.—Daniel Wise, D.D.