

No. 31.—HON. AND RIGHT REV. BISHOP STRACHAN.

Among several remarkable men who have, full of years and honours, passed from us during the last decade, none had distinguished himself more than the Honourable and Right Reverend John Strachan, D.D., LL.D., late Bishop of Toronto:—a man remarkable for energy, courage, concentration of purpose, tact, and perseverance in whatever he undertook—a man remarkable for his success in life, for the faithfulness and ability with which he fulfilled the duties of every office to which he was successively called, whether as Parish School Master in Scotland, Grammar School Master in Canada, Parish Clergyman, Member of an Executive and Legislative Council, President of a College, or Bishop of the largest Diocese in British North America—a man as thoroughly Canadian as any native of the country, remarkable for the genial qualities of private friendship, for acute discernment, disinterested and sound judgment as a Counsellor, for self-sacrifice, devotion and tenderness as a visitor of the sick and afflicted—a man without brilliancy of talents or attractions of oratory, but on all occasions occupying the first position in the spontaneous homage of those around him, by his strong sense, his vigorous understanding, his downright honesty, his resolute firmness, his unflagging industry—a man unrelaxing in his labours and unfailing in his faculties during a ministry of sixty-four years and down to the ninetieth year of his age—a man who had long outlived the jealousy of distinctions and the enmity of parties, and who ceased 'at once to work and live,' amid the respect and regrets of all classes of the population.

A few particulars of the life of such a man cannot fail to be acceptable and interesting to our readers. These we have taken from two sources—notice of his decease by the press; and a sketch of his career, embodied in a sermon preached in St. George's Church, Toronto, on the 10th inst., by the Ven. Archdeacon Fuller. From the Ven. Archdeacon Fuller's sermon we are permitted to make the following extracts, chiefly relating to the late Bishop's career as a Teacher:—

Dr. Strachan was born in 1778, of poor but respectable parents, in the city of Aberdeen, in North Britain. Having availed himself of the advantages afforded him by the University of King's College in his native town, to obtain the beginning of a classical and mathematical education (which he improved, as circumstances required, in after years), and taken his Master's degree, he removed to the University of St. Andrews, where he formed the friendship of some of those who afterwards became eminent men in his native land. It would seem that his father died when he was still young, and that the support of his mother and two sisters compelled him, at an early age, to turn his talents to practical account. To this necessity may, possibly, be attributed much of his success in future life, as has been the case with many other men, on whom the support of mothers and sisters have been thrown, when young.* At the early age of eighteen he became a candidate for the Mastership of the endowed school of Kettle in Fifeshire; and, though he had 49 competitors (as he told me himself), he was declared the successful candidate. But, though declared to be the best scholar of all the candidates, yet, when the Trustees (old ministers and elders of the Kirk of Scotland) beheld the youthful aspirant to the office of teacher, they demurred, and said that he was hardly fit to manage a school of 127 boys, many of them older than himself. However, the Trustees, finding themselves obliged to give him, at least, a trial, he entered, at that early age, upon the duties of Schoolmaster, and (as he told me himself) had no difficulty in maintaining the best of discipline in the school—so early in life were his wonderful powers of controlling people developed.

It seems that he was promised employment in the University of Glasgow, in the department of Moral Philosophy, where he would have been entirely at home, and where, doubtless, he would have greatly distinguished himself. He consequently gave up his school; but the promised employment he did not obtain, for his friend and patron was obliged to resign his chair through ill-health, and thus he was once more thrown upon the world, without employment and without means.

* In his case was clearly fulfilled the promise: "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

At this juncture, an offer to take charge of a proposed University in Upper Canada—which had been made to his friend, Mr. Chalmers (afterwards the celebrated Dr. Chalmers) and others, and declined by them,—was made to him and accepted. Mr. Strachan left his native country, for Canada, in the month of August, 1799; but so poor a sailer was the humble vessel in which he embarked, and so little was known of the navigation of the Atlantic at that period, that he did not reach his destination, Kingston, till the thirty-first day of December—the last day of the last century; and, even when he did arrive, after his long and tedious voyage, instead of finding the chair in the University ready for him, as he expected, he found that the Lieut.-Governor of the Province, Gen. Simcoe, had left the country, without making any provision for his proposed University. He therefore found himself in a strange land, without relation, friend, or employment; and he has left it upon record, that he would gladly have retraced his steps to Scotland, but he had not the means to do so. He was soon afterwards engaged, however, as a tutor in the family of the Hon. Richard Cartwright, one of the gentlemen who, at the Lieut.-Governor's suggestion, had induced Mr. Strachan to come out to Upper Canada to establish a University. Mr. Cartwright had four sons to educate, and he was glad to allow Mr. Strachan to take in others. Thus did the late Bishop begin in this humble way the great work of education, which he carried on for more than a quarter of a century in Upper Canada, and which conferred on this country such unspeakable blessings.

At Kingston, Mr. Strachan found in the person of the clergyman of the town, the Rev. John Stuart, a gentleman well calculated to be of service to a man of his mind and character.

At Dr. Stuart's suggestion, and under his guidance, he prepared himself for orders, and was in May, 1803,† ordained deacon, and placed in charge of the small village of Cornwall. Here he was induced to resume his school, at the solicitation of the parents of those boys who had been in his school at Kingston, and of others, both in Lower and Upper Canada, who were desirous of placing their sons under a Master so practical, wise and successful, as he had proved himself to be. Thus he commenced the school at Cornwall, which afterwards became so celebrated, and at which were educated the first men that Canada has produced, and of whom she may well be proud—such men as the late Sir J. B. Robinson, Judge Maclean, Sir J. B. Macaulay, Sir Allan MacNab, Judge Jones, Mr. Stanton, the Bethunes, Sir James Stuart, and his brother Andrew Stuart, besides many others who have reflected credit on our country.

At Cornwall, the late Bishop spent nine years of his eventful life. Here (as he told me on one occasion) he laboured sixteen hours every day. He said that, "having the charge of the parish of Cornwall, he had to visit a good deal among his parishioners, besides having to prepare sermons for Sunday." He himself remarked, "I had also to study every night quite as hard as the boys; for I was not much in advance of the highest class in school. These duties demanded sixteen hours every day,—and yet these nine years were the happiest years of my life."

Having on one occasion attracted the attention of that noble soldier and able Lieut.-Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Isaac Brock, he was induced by him to resign the mission of Cornwall and the school there, and, as Archdeacon, to take charge of York: then the seat of Government for Upper Canada, on the resignation of the late Archdeacon Stuart (the son of his former friend and sound counsellor—just deceased). On his way up the St. Lawrence, in a small vessel, which contained his family and all his worldly goods, the courage of the late Bishop was put to the test. A vessel hove in sight, which the Captain supposed to be an American armed schooner; and it being during the war with the United States, he became alarmed and came down to Dr. Strachan into the little cabin and consulted with him about surrendering his craft to the enemy. The Dr. inquired of him if he had any means of defence; and, ascertaining that he had a four-pounder on board and a few muskets, he insisted on the Captain defending his vessel; but to no purpose, as he was entirely overcome by fear. The Dr., finding that he could

† Dr. Stuart was an exceedingly clever man, full of ready wit, great tact, and uncommon wisdom. He had seen a good deal of the hard realities of life; for, having been a missionary to the Iroquois Indians, on the Mohawk river, in the Province of New York, at the time of the breaking out of the Revolutionary war, and being warmly attached to the British Crown, he had accompanied his Indians in many of their conflicts with the Rebels; and finally, when the rebellion had become a Revolution, he accompanied his Indians and some of his white neighbours, then known as United Empire Loyalists, to Upper Canada; and whilst his faithful Indians settled on the Mohawk reservation, on the Bay of Quinte (not far from Kingston), he and his white friends settled at what is now the city of Kingston, then called by the French Cataraqui.