

are some excellent cuts, especially one of the burial of General Braddock. "The German Struggle for Liberty" is continued, and Napoleon is perturbed. It is pleasant while reading the account just now to anticipate the revenge that that grand old war-horse, Blucher, will have presently. There is also a capital thing in chinaware called "The Boss of Ling Foo"; the illustrations are fine. Beside, we have Mr. Black's story, a capital written sketch, "Where Fancy was Bred" and the "Joan of Arc," making quite an imposing volume.

#### OUR RELATIONS WITH DISSENTERS.

BY CANON HAMMOND.

A recent correspondent in the *Times*, in which I am charged with reproducing the "most objectionable features of Gace's Catechism," confirms the belief, which I have long cherished, that it is for the interest of religion in the Church of England that those Churchmen who, like myself, cannot join with Dissenters in acts of worship in their meeting houses, should state plainly *why* they cannot; why they must needs stand apart from the religious assemblies of their fellow-Christians. It is our bounden duty to state our reasons, if for no other cause, for this—that our attitude is constantly misunderstood, and that this misunderstanding breeds much resentment and ill-will: it is a fruitful source of that bitterness which, unhappily, so often exists between Church and Dissent. For Dissenters, with rare exceptions, cannot understand why Church people, for the most part, stand severely aloof from them. To them it seems to be monstrous that those who believe in the same God, and, as they often say, are "making for the same place," cannot or will not join with them. It wounds them deeply, because it looks like a reflection either on their piety or their intelligence, and, therefore, it is not to be wondered at that they resent it extremely and use sufficiently strong language about it. If they were bad men or meeting for an unworthy purpose, they say they could understand it, but as it is, it staggers them, and they set it all down to pride of place, or bigotry and intolerance, and many of them think, and some of them say, that it all proceeds from the exclusiveness and arrogance which are bred by what they call a "State Church." And it only confirms them in their suspicions that there are some Churchmen who have no scruples whatever about making common cause with them; who will subscribe to their funds, give sites for their sanctuaries, attend their meetings, and recognize their ministers. I am not now speaking of the smiling candidate for parliamentary honours: his motives are sufficiently obvious, and Dissenters are often shrewd enough to see through them; but I am thinking of men like Dean Freeman and the Bishop of Worcester, who have nothing whatever to gain—except in the shape of a cheap popularity—by making the advances which they do make. These be wise and honourable men, and their action makes a deep impression on Dissenters, who naturally ask why, if one Churchman can do this, others cannot, and who see in the very sympathy and help which they receive from such Churchmen—and that help has gone far towards building many meeting houses—convincing proof that all the rest, who will have nothing to say to them, are actuated by no considerations of principle or conscience, but are under the influence of envy and of superciliousness, if of nothing worse. It may, therefore, I think, be useful—it may at any rate help Dissenters to think and speak more kindly of Churchmen, and it may also show some Churchmen what they owe to Dissenters—and to Christ—if I set down here some of the reasons which compel us, most sorrowfully and unwillingly, to make this stand; some of those beliefs which lead us, rightly or wrongly, to the conclusion that, for us, it would be distinctly wrong, it would be sinful, to go to their meeting houses or to join forces with their people. But before I do this, I should like to remark that, whatever pain our attitude causes to our brethren, the pain and the surprise are not all on their side. It does not seem to occur to Non-conformists, though one would have supposed that it was obvious enough, that if they are wounded by our refusing to go to their meeting houses, we must be no less afflicted and humiliated by their declining to worship at church. And the more so, as this separation, this resort to different sanctuaries is, as I shall show presently, not of our own making. If we and they do not join in worship, it is not because we have withdrawn from them, but because they or their forefathers withdrew from us. If anybody, therefore, is entitled to complain, it is we, not they. All that we do is to say that we cannot follow those who said they could not stay with us. All that Dissenters can accuse us of is that we take up a position identical with that which they have taken up already and held for centuries: that we say there are religious reasons which prevent our joining with them, just as they said there

were conscientious reasons which forbade their remaining with us. For if we ask them, even now, why they left us or why they cannot rejoin us, they reply at once that they have conscientious scruples which make it impossible, or that their religious convictions will not allow of it. But if they were actuated by these high motives in separating, then why must we be governed by base motives in remaining separate? What is sauce for the goose is surely sauce for the gander. It never occurs to some of them that Churchmen may have consciences as well as they: that we may have just as pure and just as powerful reasons for shunning their assemblies as they had, or believed they had, for deserting ours. Why should it be principle in their case, and mere prejudice and bigotry in our case—unless, indeed, we Churchmen have a double dose of original sin? I think it well, therefore, to point out to our Dissenting critics in *limine* that, if we do decline to go to their meeting houses, we are only taking a leaf out of their book, only following their example in refusing to go to church or to continue in its fellowship; and that really they ought to be the very last persons in the world to blame us for doing what they constantly pride themselves on having done. But, even if Dissenters ought not to be pained by our attitude, the fact remains that they are. And, therefore, it becomes our duty to render them, most patiently and most affectionately, our reasons, which is what I now proceed to do. Or, rather, I will in the first place say what are *not* our reasons. It seems to me quite as necessary to do this as to do the other, because it is in our *supposed* reasons that the offence mainly lies. I say, then, that it is not—1. *Because Dissenting people are nothing to us.* How could they be? Are they not men and brethren? Are they not, many of them, Christian men? It may mean very little to them that they have been christened, but it means a great deal to us, just because of our belief about baptism. It means that all Dissenting people who have been duly baptized are in a sense Churchmen; they are "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven." How then could we scorn them? Especially when we remember how many of them love our Sacred Lord in sincerity, and, according to their lights, are doing the will of our Father in heaven. Nor is it 2. *Because they are less religious or less devout than Church people.* Please observe that I do not pronounce any opinion as to the comparative piety of Churchmen and Dissenters. I know Church and meeting houses pretty well, and I think I know something of the dangers or defects of each, but I do not know where the more personal piety is to be found. No, I make no comparisons—though they have been made on both sides. What I say is that our standing aloof from them is no reflection on their piety, for if they were ten times as good as they are, and if Churchmen were ten times as bad as they sometimes are, we should maintain our *non possumus*. And as little is it 3. *Because their ministers are less able or less learned than the clergy.* Again, I repeat, I make no comparisons, though, of course, I have my own opinions. But I say that neither learning nor ability has anything to do with our attitude. Dissenters do take up this ground; we do not. I have often heard it alleged as a conclusive reason for leaving the Church that the clergyman was such a feeble creature—not half as smart as the Dissenting minister. But that is not our reason for shunning the meeting house. If all the ministers were as eloquent as—well, let us say Dr. Parker in his loftiest flights—or as able as Dr. Dale, or as saintly as Dr. Payson, we should be just as far from meeting-going. Our refusal to go is, therefore, no reflection on the ministers. Nor is our reason 4. *Because the ministers do not preach the Gospel.* To tell the truth, we are sometimes afraid that they do not—just as Mr. Spurgeon was. What with the Higher Criticism and the "Downgrade Movement," and the revelation before the London School Board, we cannot but have our fears. But it is not because of those fears that we stand off. We know that it is made a reason for not attending church that the "pure gospel" is never heard there. If it were always heard at the meeting house and heard in its integrity, we should be just as far from showing our faces there. Nor is it, again, 5. *Because the ministers have not been episcopally ordained.* I see the learned Bishop of Worcester persists in making it a matter of episcopacy. But though we do believe in episcopal regimen—and small blame to us, Mr. Price Hughes has admitted that for fifteen centuries no other rule was known in the Church—it is not because the Dissenting ministers are destitute of such orders that we are prevented from recognizing them, for many of them have absolutely no orders at all: Why, Dr. Perowne once reminded us that they have often been appointed with no other formality than that of a tea meeting. Many of them scoff at the very idea of orders—the Non-conformist does. Some of them have preferred—Mr. Horton of Hampstead has—to be set apart by the shaking of hands rather than by the laying on of hands. But none of these things move us. If they had all been Episcopally

ordained, as some ministers of the so-called "Free Church of England" have, we should still decline to give them one farthing or to go near the place. And it is not, lastly—6. *Because we think that Dissenters have done no good.* For we cannot help seeing, and we readily allow, that many of the denominations have done much good. We do not say that it is good unmixed with evil—perhaps no good ever is—but good it is. They have changed some lives; they have transfigured some homes; they have elevated some neighbourhoods. There are few religious bodies, however grotesque their views, but have some such trophies to show. But none of these things reconcile us to the meeting house. Partly because, whatever good Dissenters have accomplished, they have accomplished not *qua* Dissenters, but as Christians. It is Christianity, not Non-conformity, that changes the heart and life. Partly, because we cannot help seeing that whatever good they have done might have been done just the same without a secession. Partly, because such success proves nothing. Good work is often done—it is "one of the mysteries of God's Kingdom"—by men who are altogether in wrong. Judas Iscariot cast out devils, yet he was himself a "devil." No, we do not ignore and we do not depreciate the good done by the meeting house, but we say that that success of theirs proves nothing whatever. And now, it may be said to me, "These are strange confessions. You allow that baptized Dissenters are your brethren in Christ. You admit that they may be every whit as religious as Church people; that their ministers may be as able as the clergy; that these ministers have for the most part preached the Gospel, and that their preaching has done good; then what more do you want? How can it be wrong for you to join in acts of worship with good men, and Christian men, who have done a good work?" The answer is: We cannot, we dare not, go to their meeting house just because it is against God's will that that meeting house exists. The members may be good, the ministers good, the doctrine sound, the service reasonable, but the place itself exists in defiance of God's design. We could not go or give to it, because we should thereby countenance and support a state of things which (as we believe) Almighty God abhors. I do not now say that these views are right—that remains to be proved—but I do say that these are the views and convictions which compel us to act as we do. And I now proceed to set forth the considerations which have led us to this conclusion. But, first, I must ask you to consider how, as a matter of fact, these meeting houses, one and all, came into existence. They all began in the same way; they all owe their existence to a split—to a separation. I do not suppose this will be disputed; it can only be disputed in the teeth of obvious facts, and in disregard of English history. For once, and probably not so long ago (most of the meeting houses have been built within the present century) there were no meeting houses in our parishes. Once there was nothing but the Church. What public worship of God there was, what ministry of the Word and Sacraments of Christ, was at Church. How, then, has the meeting house come into being? By making a division amongst the Church members; by separating some professed Christians from the Church, and collecting them into a new communion. Even if all the Dissenting members were persons who had seldom, if ever, attended church, or persons who had been neglected or repelled by the clergy, still that meeting house owes its existence to a division amongst Christians. For how can there be in any parish, or city, or country, two separate altars, two pulpits, two denominations, and yet no division. If there is no division, how is it that they do not pray together? On the contrary, so long as this state of things lasts, both Church and meeting house are monuments of division. Monuments of division with this difference—that the separation was on the part of the meeting house from the Church, not on the part of the Church from the meeting house. Why, the very stones and structure of the building show which existed first; which was the original and which the seceding community. So does the very name "Dissenters," as still more does the name of "Separatists," which they bore at first. "Separatism," said Dr. Mackennal at the Grindelwald Conference, "is really none other than the old word for what we now call 'Congregationalism.'" And he well added that "Separatism has become the most formative and constructive Church doctrine in England of to-day," for I cannot discover any denomination that has been "formed" or "constructed" in any other way. (To be continued.)

The Bishop of Chichester opened the new St. Mark's and Kemp Town Church Schools, Brighton. The Rev. Prebendary Hannah offered the Diocesan a cordial welcome to the town. The bishop, in reply, said he did not wish to decry Board schools, but they did not wish to give up their Church schools, because they did not believe in a colourless, invertebrate, undenominational religion that would satisfy nobody.