

For Dominion Presbyterian.

"Biographies in Brief."

BY NICOL MOFFATT.

III. THOMAS CRANMER.

Few men are so favorably remembered after a life of varied services, or were so fortunate in choosing farewell words, as the subject of this sketch. Since Cranmer let the Prayer Book of the Church of England out of his hands as its author or compiler, its constant use and power prove that it has well filled the place for which it was designed. The aged Primate of England standing amid the flames at the stake crying out "that unworthy hand" is a spectacle too luminous for the popular eye, to notice other and different scenes in the same life. Like the Christian's righteousness, however, which is imputed, so is Cranmer's sainthood. Beneath the white robe there are very many of the filthy rags to be found.

An oak tree is well furnished with strong roots grasping the earth. Cranmer only lacked one or two of these strong supports to be an oak. But he lived at a time of very treacherous storms, when all the signs failed. Henry VIII was the disturbing cause, and the strongest fell before his breath. Not like Daniel, did these counsellors read the writing to their modern King Belshazzar, but compromised with his madness. They all paid at length very dearly for their folly.

The Archbishop was born in a rural part of Nottinghamshire, where his father belonged to one of the oldest families of England. He was the second son and seemed to inherit the outstanding features in both his parents' characters. We are told that he owed his good horsemanship to his father, who instructed him in hunting and hawking, and that it was his mother who sent him up to the University at Cambridge. Verily he was an Esau and Jacob combined, whether or not the way he got his hunting and ambition had anything to do with it. For Esau-like, at the age of twenty-two, he sold his chances of University preferment by the marriage to a woman, related to a well-known innkeeper; in later years when this had long ceased to be an obstacle to his promotion through the early death of his wife, he again baffled his friends by a German marriage, at the very time of his appointment to the Primacy. Henry, however, had willed the election, celibacy or not, and his will was not to be opposed; and saddest of all, by his humiliating recantations in the very glare of the stake, he sold his right to a martyr's crown, for a mere mess of Romish deception.

It is hard from the standpoint of our own age to treat Cranmer fairly. We naturally associate him with Luther and think they were fellow Reformers, but their ideas of Protestantism at the first scarcely touched any closer than the things of the mineral kingdom do those of the vegetable. Luther approached his work through the cloister and penances; Cranmer came to his along the politico-ecclesiastical pathway of the Bishops and Archbishops. Luther therefore had not only the letter, but the Spirit of New Learning, while the latter had scarcely begun to illuminate Cranmer. The Reformation he demanded was still the Papacy, but without the Pope; the ecclesiastical

temple with which he was connected had not been cleansed of its trafficking Bishops. Cranmer's soul was not aflame with indignation at the sins of his time, hence, there is little similarity between these two great Reformation names.

Who can say, however, what the result would have been had Luther and Henry VIII been harnessed together in Germany instead of the pair whose deeds in England we do well to leave behind the screen? A serpent beguiles its prey, and it is only fair to say, that Henry VIII drew his victim after him, unwilling though he was at every step.

When Cranmer left the deck under Henry and dealt with Edward and Mary, like every other sailor he still swayed as in the storm. His moral nature had suffered paralysis under the despot and there is little hardihood to be seen in his subsequent life. The man who could take the oath of allegiance to the Pope as head of the Church, and at the same time recognize Henry as such, who could declare the marriage of Anne Boleyn, which he himself sanctioned, to be null and void, and moreover repeat a similar outrage in the case of Anne of Cleves, was the man who could violate his oath to Henry regarding the succession, to accept the device of Edward regarding Lady Jane Grey, and also in the very flicker of the lighted faggot write sixfold a recantation from which his fortunate repudiation has scarcely been able to redeem his name.

But there was another side in his life. There was the Jacob as well as Esau. When he had a chance it was the former he tried to live. In his early career he made the study of the scriptures very exacting upon all candidates for orders. When the English type of the Reformation split and Gardiner led one half Rome-ward, Cranmer led the other towards that of Germany. His heart went towards the Lutherans, showing that their conferences began to bear fruit, and alone in the flames, going to meet his God, it was against Rome he testified and towards the Reformation he made his attitude clear. Ranke sums up his character as follows:—"He was one of those natures which must have the support of the supreme authority in order to carry out their own opinions to their consequences; they do not shine by reason of any moral greatness, but they are well adapted to save a cause in difficult circumstances for a more favorable time."

Literary Notes.

The Copp Clark Company Limited, Toronto, have now in press and will issue in the course of a few days "Some practical Studies in the History and Biography of the Old Testament," by Mr. George Hague, for many years General Manager of the Merchants' Bank of Canada. This important book is the expression of the life-long study and experience of Mr. Hague, who, from his wide business experience and knowledge of men and things, has been enabled to throw new light upon the History and Biography of the Old Testament in a way most valuable to every student of the Bible, and particularly to Bible Class Teachers. Clergymen are supposed, popularly, to have a monopoly of Biblical interpretation; it is therefore a happy sign when a layman of large experience comes forward as an expositor.

Table Talk for January contains its usual number of seasonable suggestions as regard Menus. Paper

number 3 on "Raised Biscuit or Light Rolls" will be welcomed by those who read the other articles. "Table Manners" is a suggestive article and "Over the Threshold" will give many a hint to the bride. Table Talk is the friend of house keepers all over the continent. - Table Talk Publishing Co., Philadelphia.

The Nineteenth Century for December 1899 is what we may call a lively number, as nearly all the articles deal with questions that are just now attracting a great deal of attention. "South African Problems and Lessons" are handled by Sidney Low and Sir Sidney Shippard, K.C.M.G., while Mrs. J. R. Green discusses "English and Dutch in the past." An instructive review of "The Position of the Negro in America" is given by a Negro, Mr. D. E. Tolias. Major-general Maurice undertakes to explain for the benefit of the uninitiated the "Terms used in Modern Gannery." When we notice "The War-cloud in the Farthest East" by Holt S. Hollett we feel that war has claimed a big share of one of our ablest reviewers though literature and science are not quite overlooked—Leonard Scott Publication Co., New York.

Appleton's Popular Science Monthly takes us into a calmer sphere though even here we have an article on "The Applications of Explosives." The greater number of contributions are, however, of a scientific or a semi-scientific character, one by Sir Robert Ball on the "Advance of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century" being of special interest. Reviews of this kind are now in order, as we have reached the last year of another century and when given by a competent person they are of great service. This magazine is well printed and splendidly illustrated. We do not note any falling off except in the price, which is reduced from \$5.00 to \$3.00 per annum and from 50 to 25 cents the single number. This should certainly lead to a large increase in the circulation.—Appleton's Popular Science Monthly, New York.

We have to note two new volumes in the Famous Scots Series: the one on George Buchanan was undertaken by Dr. Robert Wallace, but he did not live to complete it, and Mr. J. Campbell Smith has furnished a conclusion to it: this is a book that every student of history and lover of literature ought to read. Dr. Wallace was, by his training and career, specially suited to the work of writing a sketch of Buchanan. The sketch is written in bright journalistic style and there is a certain appropriateness about this as the great classic scholar was also in a sense, the great journalist of his day. We will not venture to quote from Wallace; his contribution should be read straight through. We cannot speak so highly of Mr. Smith's work, though it cannot be said to be feeble. The following specimen will show the style in which he treats history; it suggests to our minds the idea that he could have arranged the ages and the great workers much better. "Benton and Knox were both powerful in their age and characteristic of it, but they would have found no conspicuous function in an age that was not in the course of emerging from the mire of savagery, with all its tendencies to violence and vice. Both were alike uncompromising enemies of individual freedom, and equally bent upon the suppression of conscientious opinions that did not concur with their own. Both were patriots and of signal service to Scotland, but the evil they did so nearly counterbalances all the good they did (which might, and would in time have been done, by less unscrupulous, ungente instruments), that it might have been well had Scotland been liberated by Providence from the piteous burden of both of them." Fortunately there is sufficient about Knox from the pen of Dr. Wallace in this volume to counteract this sledge-hammer style of criticism.

The other volume in the same series is a clever impartial biography of the poet, Thomas Campbell, by Mr. J. Cuthbert Hadden. It is, of course, of less interest than the life of the great George Buchanan, but it has an interest of its own and is a careful conscientious piece of work.—Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, Edinburgh.