

sympathy between them and the general reader. It is also true that the books to be noticed touch Theology only incidentally and are not to be taken as a complete exposition of the views of their authors. But this, instead of lessening, may rather increase their value for our present purpose. When a man treats a subject formally he may be influenced by traditions or by conventional methods of treatment, but when he mentions it incidentally he is more likely to give his real convictions so far as he goes, and is more likely to show what he considers really important.

Take first the Drumtochty Idylls of "Ian Maclaren," himself as well as his characters products of that land where we have been proud to believe the Reformation was most fully worked out, where truth was most earnestly sought, and sound doctrine most earnestly inculcated. Here if anywhere we might expect to find a clear grasp of truth to be held, and its importance insisted upon. But the facts are very different. The holding of strong doctrinal truth is looked upon as not only unnecessary but even as undesirable. The two characters who hold the strongest doctrinal ideas are Lachlan Campbell and "Rabbi" Saunderson. In Lachlan we have such a man at his worst. "Strong on the Decrees," strong and stern in his views of Original Sin and kindred doctrines, he is lamentably deficient in many of the fruits of the Spirit. In this man, the holder of strong doctrine, is held up to general contempt; and it is not until his whole life has been changed and his doctrinal ideas left behind, that he becomes a man at all worthy of admiration or even of respect.

"Rabbi" Saunderson, although holding equally strong opinions intellectually, is yet of such a kind and loving disposition that his heart leads him to conclusions, which in strictness his creed could never admit. In him we have the man of strong doctrine seen at his best; but it is good, not because of his doctrinal beliefs, but because in practice he disregards them; not because of his doctrines but in spite of them. The beautiful inconsistency with which he excuses manifest short-comings strongly suggests the absurdity of holding such opinions.

These may be taken as typical instances of his treatment of doctrine. Throughout all this series the impression given is that attention to doctrinal ideas is a hindrance rather than a help to the attainment of a noble Christian character.