

THE LATE BISHOP STRACHAN OF TORONTO. X

ON All Saints' Day, November 1, 1867, died at his see, the Hon. and Right. Rev. John Strachan, D.D. LL.D., first Lord Bishop of Toronto. The Canadian correspondent of the *Churchman* gives a sketch of the biography of the lamented prelate, from which we subjoin some paragraphs:—

“The venerable prelate was in his 90th year, and died from the decay of nature rather than from acute disease, though it was only within a very short period, a week or two, that any serious fears were entertained that his singularly vigorous constitution was about to give way. He retained his faculties to the last, and received the Holy Communion, at his own vigorous request, on Thursday evening. Bishop Strachan was educated at Aberdeen, and, after taking his degree, removed to the vicinity of St. Andrews, where he formed friendship with Dr. Chalmers and other celebrated Scotchmen, with whom he kept up a correspondence until their deaths. One of his first engagements was the Parochial School of Kettle, in the county of Fife, which he took for the sake of supporting his mother and sisters. While there, one of his pupils was the afterwards celebrated painter, Sir David Wilkie; and it is an interesting fact, and one gratefully acknowledged by Sir David in after life, that it was to the future Bishop's appreciation of his promising talent, and his consequent persuasion of his uncle to send him to the celebrated Raeburn, that the painter owed his future prosperous career.

“In 1799, Mr. Strachan came to Canada, at the invitation of the then Governor-General, to take the superintendence of a proposed University; but on arriving here he found the Governor gone, the University for the present abandoned, and no provision made for him. Consequently, as he often stated, he would have returned back to Scotland, had he possessed the means of doing so. As it was, he took pupils, and became eminently successful, numbering amongst his pupils many of those who were afterwards amongst the chief men of the province; prominent amongst whom was, perhaps, his after dearest friend through life, the late Sir John Robinson, Bart., Chief Justice of the province.

“It is understood, that though brought up himself as a Presbyterian, the Bishop's mother was an Episcopalian, and not only had him baptized by a Scotch Episcopalian clergyman, but gave him such a bias in favour of the Church, that it is not surprising that in a few years after his arrival in Canada he should have taken holy Orders, being ordained Deacon by the first Bishop Mountain on the 2d of May, 1803, and Priest on the 3d of June in the following year. He became Rector of Cornwall, in the eastern part of Upper Canada, and Master of its Grammar School, where he remained about nine years, being made Rector of York (now Toronto) in 1812. By this time his influence in the province had become so considerable that he was made an Executive Councillor by Royal Warrant in 1818. From this period he may be said to have been, for many years, the ruling mind in whatever concerned the province in either Church or State. In 1825 Dr. Strachan was constituted Archdeacon of York, in

which office the management of the Church in the Upper Province was almost entirely in his hands, owing to the vast size of the then Diocese of Quebec, and the great distance of the Episcopal residence, which was, of course, in Quebec. In 1839 the Upper Province was ecclesiastically separated from that of Quebec, and erected into a new Diocese under the name of 'Toronto,' of which Dr. Strachan was appointed by Royal Patent (of course without a Diocesan election) the first Bishop, and went to England for consecration, at the hands of Archbishop Howley.

"When Dr. Strachan became the Bishop of Upper Canada, there were, I believe, within its entire bounds less than fifty clergy, while before he died it had been divided into three dioceses, comprising three Bishops besides himself, and upwards of 180 clergymen.

"For a large portion of the late prelate's career, especially before his consecration, his history was that of the province; his clear intellect and decision of purpose carried all before it, at a time when educated men, and men of any large experience, were necessarily scarce in this young province. With the Bishop, the interests of the Church of God were wisely supposed to be necessarily those of the State also."

We continue our account in the words of a correspondent of the *John Bull*:—

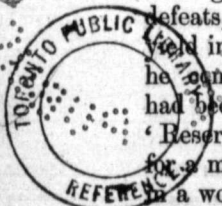
"His name, as regards his political life, will always be chiefly connected with the well known Clergy Reserve question—that bitter struggle between the Church and Dissent, which, thanks to the cowardly and ignorant policy of the Government at home, ended in the spoliation of the Church's fair heritage, and the sacrilegious transfer of the endowments to the municipalities of the province. This robbery of God, in taking away what was intended for the maintenance of His worship, and employing it for entirely secular purposes, has turned out, as many predicted, a curse, and not a blessing; the proceeds have been frittered away on nobody can tell what, and have ever been a bone of contention or an apple of discord among all the municipal bodies into whose hands the management of them has come. The Bishop's indomitable energy and perseverance, the steady and unflinching maintenance of the Church's rights, his commanding will and thorough honesty and singleness of purpose, all through this sad contest, while they provoked the bitter opposition, even won the respect and admiration, of his enemies. He fought without yielding; without wavering, to the end, and nothing could ever cause him to let go one iota of principle. No fears, no threats, no ill-success, no defeats, no worldly policy, or hope of advantage, would ever induce him to yield in the slightest degree, or withdraw to the smallest extent from what he conscientiously held to be his rights. Hence, when a compromise had been made, and the Church might have retained some portion of the 'Reserves,' with the loss of the rest, he would give no consent, nor tolerate for a moment any such concession. The Church has undoubtedly suffered by a worldly point of view through his steady refusal to give way to expediency both on this and subsequent occasions; yet none can fail to admire his strong faith and conscientious adherence to principle.

"Another subject with which the Bishop's name will ever be indissolubly connected in the history of this province, is that of University educa-

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tion upon a religious basis; the object for which he left his native land when a young man he never lost sight of, but followed it up to the very end. To give an account of all his troubles and contests, his unwearied labours, and the measure of success which crowned his efforts, would require a volume rather than the columns of a newspaper. It must suffice, then, to state the part he took in a few words.

“In the year 1827, thanks chiefly to the Bishop, a Royal charter was granted for the establishment and endowment of King’s College, Toronto, ‘for the purpose of educating the youth of Upper Canada in the principles of the Christian religion, and for their instruction in the various branches of science and literature which are taught in the Universities in Great Britain and Ireland.’ The charter was modified to some extent in 1831, to meet the views of Dissenters, but still it was provided that there should be a Professor of Divinity of the Church of England, and that the chapel services and religious teaching should be entirely in accordance with the principles of the Church, though the attendance of Dissenting students should not be made compulsory at either the services or theological lectures. These modifications, however, did not long satisfy the Church’s enemies, but, encouraged by their former success, they again assailed King’s College, after it had been in prosperous operation for more than six years, and no ostensible ground of complaint had been in any way given. For a long time the battle raged; the Church, headed by the Bishop, defending her rights with dauntless energy. At last Dissent, backed by a Radical Government, prevailed, and in January, 1850, the destruction of King’s College as a Christian institution was accomplished, and the University of Toronto, in which religious instruction is expressly excluded, was set up in its place. Though thus defeated in his object, though the great work of his life was thus ruthlessly destroyed, the now aged Bishop would not yet give up. He at once set to work with unimpaired energy to found an entirely Church University, over which the State should have no control.

“In the seventy-third year of his age, at a time when most men are content to withdraw from the active business of life, and resign their cares to the new generation, he set out for England to lay the history of his wrongs at the foot of the Throne, and solicit from English Churchmen and British lovers of honesty and justice assistance towards the foundation of a new institution. He returned with contributions to the amount of upwards of 10,000*l.* while in the meantime, 20,000*l.* more were subscribed in Canada, in money, stocks, and land. In 1851 the corner stone of the Church University of Trinity College was laid, and on the 15th of January, 1852, the Bishop had the happiness of presiding at the inauguration of the College, and the commencement of the regular course of instruction. From that day to this, Trinity College has gone on and prospered, in spite of straitened means, and the competition of her wealthy and secular rival, the University of Toronto. Already she has nearly 200 graduates enrolled upon her books, as well as a goodly number of undergraduates; while the great majority of the younger clergy of this diocese, and many of those in Huron and Ontario, have received their education within her walls. She has indeed become, as her founder intended, ‘a seminary of sound learning, and religious education.’

“ Dr. Strachan at the time of his death was the oldest prelate of the Anglican Communion, with the single exception of the Bishop of Exeter.

“ Having now given an account of some of the chief events of his life, let me sum up in a few words the most striking points in his character. In person he was short, and by no means stout; with strongly marked features, and a determined, commanding expression. He possessed a most vigorous constitution, capable of enduring any degree of fatigue; and, during his long life, he rarely, if ever, suffered from any illness. He was very abstemious in his diet, and never, even when travelling, tasted any food between breakfast and a late dinner. While firm, resolute, determined, and energetic in performing everything that he undertook, and severe in rebuking impropriety or remissness in duty, he yet was always merry and cheerful in society. For every one he had a pleasant smile and a ready joke; his quaint sayings, and playful repartees, are household words throughout the province; every one in fact has some story to relate of the ‘old Bishop’s’ doings and sayings, from which a volume of *Strachaniana* might readily be compiled. In religious principles he was a thorough Churchman of the old school, ‘High’ in his views, but with no leaning towards or sympathy with Ritualism. Though holding strong Anglican views, he was ever most tolerant of those who differed from him, never refusing to promote a deserving ‘Low’ Churchman to offices of dignity or responsibility in the diocese. He was much beloved by all who had any intercourse with him, and highly respected by all, of every class, and every shade of religious or political opinion.”