

THE BIBLICAL RECORDER.

T. MEREDITH, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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TERMS.

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From the Boston Atlas.

A PULPIT PORTRAIT—ROBERT HALL.

In the foremost rank of modern pulpit orators was Robert Hall, and he was scarcely less eccentric as a man than remarkable as a preacher—His works, which have been reprinted in America, will ever remain an enduring monument of his piety, his genius, and his learning. To give some account of the man himself is my present object.

Long before I ever saw this truly great man, I had heard his name frequently mentioned in my father's family, and I early learned to associate with it all that was great and extraordinary. My mother would tell me how she had often seen him, when a student in the Baptist Theological Seminary at Bristol, pacing the streets with only one stocking on, or occasionally with two on one foot. And from all quarters I gleaned such information respecting him as made me long to behold the man of whom such stories were related.

It must be now nearly twenty years since I first saw him. He was at that time pastor of a church at Leicester, and he visited Bristol, where I then resided, on the occasion of a missionary anniversary: one of the sermons connected with which he had engaged to preach, much, I heard, against his own inclination, for he had an unconquerable dislike to making his appearance on such public occasions.

My father happening to hold the office of deacon in the church where Mr. Hall was to officiate, went with him, on the evening in question, to the place of worship, and accompanied him, before the service commenced into the vestry. The building, although it wanted yet an hour to the time fixed for commencing the service, was densely thronged in every part, and perhaps a more intellectual assemblage had never been gathered together. So popular was the great orator at this time, that it was no uncommon thing for the professors at Oxford and Cambridge, to leave their respective Universities on Saturday evenings—post to Leicester, some hundred and fifty miles or so, hear two sermons from Hall, and return to their homes after the evening services—thus sacrificing two nights' rest, for the sake of indulging in what was considered to be one of the highest intellectual treats.

On entering the vestry I found a large number of ministers and other gentlemen assembled, and waiting the arrival of Mr. Hall—the scarcely less celebrated John Foster among them.

After we had waited for about a quarter of an hour, Mr. Hall made his appearance. He was rather below the average height, stout, and inclining to corpulency. His chest was very broad and spacious—the face large and its features massive. His eyes were large, dark, and full, and his forehead high and broad. The head, which was bald, except at the back, and over the temples, had an indelible grandeur about it. The worst part of his face was the mouth, which was very large, and the under lip somewhat protruded; the chin was large and projecting. This gave an appearance of heaviness to his general aspect.

I was at once struck with the expression of almost torture which was evident in Mr. Hall's countenance. He seemed to be constantly endeavoring to conceal bodily suffering—and it was so, for he was in reality a martyr to one of the most painful diseases which can affect humanity—calculus in the kidneys.

After he had divested himself of his great coat, he had a pipe and some tobacco brought him, and having puffed away for a little time, he pulled off his dress coat, lay down on his back on the hearth rug, and was soon enveloped in a cloud of smoke. This, I learned, was his usual habit before entering the pulpit. The agony he endured compelled him to spend a great portion of his time in a recumbent position, and it was only by the use of tobacco and opium, in large quantities, that he could ever obtain comparative ease. His custom was to smoke prodigiously until the very moment arrived when it was required of him to commence his sermon. He would then rise, leave his pipe at the door of the pulpit, in readiness for him to resume it the moment after he had concluded his discourse.

I left him on his hearth-rug, and reached a seat in the church, whence I was fortunate enough to have a full view of the pulpit. The edifice was literally full, almost to suffocation. The great, the gifted, and even the noble were there, all waiting with eager intensity for the commencement of the service. The aisles had all been carpeted, an unusual thing, it is necessary to state, in those days, in order that no scuffing of feet should disturb the preacher, who was nervously alive to the

slightest noise, and whose voice was so low, and at times tremulous, that unless perfect stillness was kept, it was a matter of difficulty to hear him.

It is needless to say that Hall's pulpit talents must have been very great, to attract such men as those I have just mentioned. Even ministers of the church from which he dissented, were often to be found among his hearers; and more than once have I seen members of the bench of Bishops, who, having thrown aside their mitres, croziers, and lawn sleeves, submitted to be "hall fellow well met" with the members of a humbler community, for the sake of hearing the Cicero of the day.

The services preliminary to the sermon had been nearly gone through, and the last verse of a hymn was sung, when Mr. Hall ascended slowly, and, I thought wearily, the pulpit stairs. No one, looking at his unwieldy and rather ungraceful figure, would have prepossessed in his favour, and, as he sat down on the pulpit, and looked languidly round in the congregation, I experienced, I knew not why, a feeling of disappointment.

He arose and read his text, "The Father of Lights." At first his voice was scarcely audible, and there appeared some slight hesitation; but this soon wore off, and as he warmed with his subject he poured forth such a continuous stream of eloquence that it seemed as if it flowed from some inexhaustible source. His tones were, although low, beautifully modulated; but owing to some affection of the throat, his speech was, at short intervals, interrupted by a short spasmodic cough. During the delivery of his brilliant paragraphs the most breathless silence reigned throughout the vast assemblage; but his momentary cessation was the signal for general relaxation from an attention so intense that it became almost painful. It was curious to observe how every neck was stretched out, so that not a word which fell from those eloquent lips should be lost. And the suspended breathings of those around me evinced how intently all were hanging on his charmed words.

Mr. Hall's fluency was wonderful, and his command of language unsurpassed. I will not mar the beauty of his discourse by attempting to describe it; but, as I followed him, while, by his vivid imagination, he conveyed his hearers through the starry skies, and reasoned, from those lights of the universe, what the Father of Lights must be, I became lost in wonder and admiration. But the crowning glory of his sermon was his allusion to the heavenly world, whose beatific glories he expatiated on, with almost the eloquence of an angel. He seemed like one inspired; and, as he guided us by living streams, and led us over the celestial fields, he seemed to be himself subject, and his face beamed as if it reflected Heaven's own light. And this was the man who, but an hour before, had lain down on the ground, in the excess of his agony; and who, from his earliest years, had constantly endured the most excruciating torture which man can be called upon to bear! I have myself heard him say that he had never known one waking hour free from extreme pain.

Mr. Hall used very little action in the pulpit. His favorite—or, rather, his usual attitude—was to stand and lean his chest against the cushion, his left arm lying on the Bible, and his right hand slightly raised with the palm toward the audience. His tones were almost uniformly low, and he rarely raised them. Ideas seemed so to accumulate, while he was preaching, that they flowed forth without effort on his part. Never did he hesitate—and so pure were his oral compositions, that the most elaborate efforts of the pen would rather have injured than improved their structure.

At that time, William Thorp, another distinguished preacher, flourished in Bristol; but his claims to eminence rested chiefly on his possessing a prodigious memory. In speaking of Mr. Thorp and Mr. Hall, I once heard Coleridge, who was intimate with both, remark: "Hall's mind is a fountain, which is everlastingly flowing;—Thorp's is a reservoir, which can never be exhausted."

Mr. Hall, like most other men of genius, was somewhat eccentric—and possessed powers of sarcasm, which, in some instances, he exerted with tremendous force. Few men could say severer things—and I will mention an instance.

He had one day attended a Church, where a young minister preached on some public occasion. It so happened that the preacher met Mr. Hall afterward, at dinner, at the house of a mutual friend. The young man was very anxious to hear Mr. Hall's opinion of his discourse—and very pertinaciously plied the great man with questions respecting it. Hall endured the annoyance, for some time, with great patience. He did not wish to hurt the young man's feelings—but he could not, conscientiously, laud his sermon. At length, worried beyond endurance, he said:—

"Well, sir, there was one fine passage—and I liked it much, sir—much."

The young divine rubbed his hands, in high glee, and pressed Mr. Hall to name it.

"Why, sir," replied Hall, "the passage I alluded to, was your passage from the pulpit to the vestry."

Mr. Hall finally left Leicester, and became pastor of the Broadmead Church, in Bristol—so that I often had opportunities of hearing him, and of meeting him at the houses of mutual friends. At that time, there was quite a galaxy of ministerial talent in my native city. Hall, Liefchild, Foster, Thorp, Roberts and others, all laboured there—and many were the evenings I spent in such society. Occasionally, Mr. Hall gave the reins to a sportive fancy—and nothing could be more delightful than

some of his sallies. In repartee I never knew any one so brilliant. Of course, his pipe was always provided—and drawing rooms, which had previously been guiltless of tobacco odor, were gladly subjected to the nuisance, in Mr. Hall's case.

His absence of mind was remarkable. One evening I was at a large tea party, of which Mr. Hall was one. During the progress of the meal tea spoons began to grow scarce. No one knew where they went to, and a mystery seemed to be brewing with the congo. Mr. Hall was an inveterate tea drinker, and attention was directed toward him by his asking, with every fresh cup, for a teaspoon. "Where can they have gone to?" murmured the lady; but no solution to the mystery was found. Hall kept on for a long time, talking, sipping, and asking for more. At length he came to a finish, and the tea things were removed—but where were the spoons? In about an hour afterwards Mr. Hall left; and on the sofa where he sat were discovered the missing articles. Of course a general laugh followed the clearing up of the mystery. On Mr. Hall's returning to the room, he was informed of his unconscious petty larceny, but he disclaimed all knowledge of the affair.

During Mr. Hall's residence in Bristol, the album-mania raged to a terrible extent, and it was scarcely probable that one so popular as he was should escape its consequences—nor did he. One instance of an attack upon him fell under my own notice—and as it was very characteristic of the man, I shall relate it.

A young lady acquaintance of mine, who resided in the country, was extremely anxious that Mr. Hall should contribute something to her album, and she begged me to forward it to the great man, with her request backed by mine. I did not much like the matter, but was so circumstanced that I could not well refuse. So I packed up the precious book, whose pages were graced with the effusions of small poetsasters and amatory selections; and despatched it to Mr. Hall's house. There it remained for some time, and when, at last, it was returned, Mr. Hall had written in it. At the bottom of a page he had scrawled, in his almost illegible hand—

"It is my humble opinion that albums are very foolish things."

My fair friend was sadly annoyed—but for my own part, I should have much preferred so characteristic an autograph of the eloquent man, to the most complimentary lines which could have been penned.

His marriage was a singular one. One day, while alighting at a friend's door, for the purpose of dining with him, he was joked on his bachelorhood. He said nothing, but while at table, was girl who came in to replenish the fire. After dinner, he went into the garden, sent for the young woman, and asked her to marry him. In her astonishment she ran away and said she believed Mr. Hall had gone mad again, (he had been once deranged.) Her master, like herself, was surprised, and on speaking with Mr. Hall on the subject, the latter declared his intention of marrying the girl, who, he said, had taken his fancy, by the manner in which she put the coals on. They were married, and lived happily together. His widow survives him.

Mr. Hall's popularity increased, but his residence in Bristol was destined to be short. About the year 1829, I think, for I have no opportunity of referring to the exact date, his malady so increased that his life was deemed to be in a very precarious state. He was compelled to take large quantities of opium, in order to endure the pain of his body—but his mind was as bright as ever. His medical attendant told me that he was suddenly called to him one evening. He found him in his chair, with his foot spasmodically grasping the edge of a bath—he looked calmly in his face for a moment—said, "This is death," and then laying his head on his shoulder, died without a groan.

A post-mortem examination was made of the body and eight or nine calculi were extracted from the kidneys. They were of various sizes, some of them as large as a pen; and from the sides of them, many sharp points, the eighth of an inch in length, projected. These were literally "thorns in the flesh." During his whole life he could only procure partial alleviation of pain by lying on his back and smoking. So addicted was he to this latter habit, that I have seen him light his pipe, after preaching, at the pulpit lamps.

His death cast a gloom over the community far and wide. For a few days his friends were allowed to look upon his mortal remains. I went, and never was I more impressed with the grandeur of the man than when he lay in his coffin. On the wall, just over the body, hung Brannwhite's print of him in the pulpit. There was the pictured preacher, and beneath it the clay tabernacle of him of whom Southey said: "He had the eloquence of a Cicero—the learning of a Parr, and the piety of a Whitfield."

Mr. Hall's works have been re-published in this country, and are ranked among the most eloquent productions of the age. His magnificent discourse on modern infidelity has gone through numberless editions; and his sermon on the death of the Princess Charlotte created such a sensation, that it was to be found in the hands of rich and poor. The reverend author received an autograph letter from His Majesty King George the Fourth, the father of the Princess, in which the monarch expressed the deep feelings of his heart with respect to his beloved daughter, and his thanks to him who had so touchingly commemorated the sad event of her death.

During a portion of his life Mr. Hall was deranged—excessive study having induced disease

of the brain. To the disgrace of the times, be it said, he was subjected, in the asylum where he was placed, to coercion. This he well remembered, and would often allude to it. I once heard him, in a large party, expatiate eloquently on the necessity of a melioration of the condition of those who were bereft of reason; for, said he, touchingly, while he exhibited some scars on his head, the result of a blow from a keeper, "these are the wounds which I received in the house of my friends." Happily he recovered, but his friends were ever afterward apprehensive of a recurrence of the malady.

AT HOME! SWEET HOME!

From 'Songs in the Night'—a beautiful volume of sacred poetry, recently published by Mr. Perkins, of Boston.

Where burns the fireside brightest,
Cheering the social treat;
Where beats the fond heart lightest,
Its humble hopes possessed;
Where is the hour of sadness
With meek-eyed patience borne;
Worth more than those of gladness,
Which mirth's gay cheeks adorn;
Pleasure is marked with fleetness
To those who ever roam,
While grief itself has sweetness
At home—sweet home!

There blend the ties that strengthen
Our hearts in hours of grief—
The silver links that lengthen
Joy's visits when most brief;
There, eyes in all their splendor,
Are vocal to the heart,
And glances bright and tender,
Fresh eloquence impart;
Then dost thou sigh for pleasure?
O do not widely roam,
But seek that hidden treasure
At home—sweet home!

Does pure religion charm thee,
Far more than aught below?
Wouldst thou that she should arm thee
Against the hour of woe?
Her dwelling is not only
In temples built for prayer,
For home itself is lonely,
Unless her smiles be there;
Wherever we may wander,
'Tis all in vain we roam,
If worshipless her altar
At home—sweet home!

INTERESTING PROPOSITION.

It is stated in the European Magazines, that at a Conference of 160 Literary and Theological Professors and Clergymen, lately held at St. Gall in Switzerland, Dr. D'Aubigne, author of the "History of the Reformation," submitted the following proposition.

"That this Conference regard it as highly desirable, that all evangelical Christians, who hold the mystery of godliness, 'the Lord our righteousness,' should unite in a common Confession of their faith, and thereby manifest in contrast with the apparent unity of the Roman Catholic Church, their true and spiritual unity; and that for the attainment of this end a Committee be appointed to correspond with some of the pastoral Conferences recently established in Germany, and with the churches of France, Great Britain, Holland and America; and further that the said Committee be enjoined to prepare a draft of an evangelical confession of the nineteenth century, which shall contain the fundamental truths of the Word of God, embraced at present in all confessions of the Protestant faith; and present these in a form adapted to the times in which we live."

The proposal was received with general approbation by the Conference; who accordingly placed the subject in the hands of an appropriate Committee.

A proposition so timely, so manifestly accordant with the spirit of the Gospel, and emanating from a source so very high in the confidence of the Christian community, cannot fail to receive a glad response from multitudes of hearts throughout Christendom. It presents to those who have deplored the waste of intellectual and moral power, and the slow progress of pure religion in the world, new, and most encouraging indications.—And we can hardly conceive that any true and intelligent disciple of the Divine Master, who so fervently prayed that all his people might be one, can be so jealous, fearful or sectarian in spirit, as not to be gratified with such a proposition. It must contribute very much to kindness of feeling, simply to ascertain in how many important truths the different evangelical denominations are entirely agreed.

When the zeal and energies of Christians shall all be harmoniously employed in efforts to bless mankind, a moral change may be expected far more wonderful than has already been produced by modern improvements in the arts and sciences. These have contributed greatly to the advancement and happiness of mankind, by facilitating intellectual, social, and commercial intercourse; and those, to a great extent, are the results of peace among nations.

When public sentiment became in a measure correct on the subject of war—a subject which had given full employment to gigantic minds, and absorbed the resources of nations for ages—it was feared by some that the energies of man might become palsied for want of proper stimulus to action. But the genius of invention awoke; and

in a little time mountains were seen to melt before it, and valleys to be exalted;—new impulse was given to motion, and a new era of improvement dawned on the world;—not because the age excelled in genius, but simply because its efforts were directed to new and really useful and important objects.

So when war shall cease in the Church, when the talents and learning, which, to the reproach of Christianity and to the grief of angels, have been employed in building sectarian walls, and guarding sectarian interests, and demolishing such pillars of acknowledged excellence in the Church, as did not fully echo the sound of the party "Shibboleth,"—when these shall be enlisted in harmonious efforts to strengthen, uphold and extend the kingdom of Christ—then will begin to be realized what is told in Prophecy, and far more than prophets have sung, or philosophers dreamed of—the golden age of mankind.

This is a consummation to be desired by all parties. And perhaps no publications and no movements since the days of Luther, have given greater encouragement to hope, that the time is at hand for the general union of philanthropists, in efforts to stay the progress of error and give free course to the Gospel, than those which have had their origin in the enlarged and benevolent views of D'AUBIGNE. A. D.

ROMANISM IN THE WEST.

The annexed remarks from the editorial columns of the Boston Pilot, are sufficiently indicative of the spirit with which the adherents of the papal see have entered upon their work in the great West. Although we are not so fatuous as to believe that all is lost because the Jesuit missionaries have declared that our country shall be theirs, yet we tremble when we think with how much apathy their vigorous and determined movements are regarded. Let Protestants awake to their duty, and our country, with God's blessing, will yet be safe.

"Catholics should control and sway the destinies of the far West. Catholic enterprise first measured its immense lakes, opened paths in the eternal forests, traced its mighty rivers from their mountain nurseries to the ocean. * * * * * The West was a Conquest of catholic spirit, the Jesuit spirit—if you will—evidenced by the patience, the enthusiasm, and the toil of such men as Marquette, La Salle, and Hennepin. * * * * * "The church has a right to claim the immense valley of the Mississippi of which the Jesuit missionaries were the first explorers, the lands that bank the Ohio and the Illinois, and those adjoining the great lakes."

The fact that these men do not attempt to prove their intentions in America should convince us at least that they are in earnest.

A distinguished Christian writer, after reviewing the operations of the Jesuits in France at the present time, thus concludes his address to American Protestants.

"What is their aim, then, in political? To diminish the power of kings by means of the people, and the power of the people by means of the kings; to create divisions which will open the way for their rule, and to establish wherever they can, their ideal theocracy. Their great teacher, Belarmine, taught that the State should be subjected to the church, as the body is to the mind. Be it monarchy or republic, no matter, provided the pope, or rather those who labor in the name of the pope, the Jesuits, are the real rulers of nations.

"They have returned to France, as I wrote you last year, with unheard of arrogance. I know not how they get it, but they always have their hands full of money. They build magnificent houses for themselves and their disciples. They publish books and journals in abundance. They attack unceasingly the most honorable men. The bishops write circulars and even newspaper articles, under the dictation of these reverend fathers. There are also Jesuitesses, called the Ladies of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of mild, artful, insinuating manners, who try to gain the wives, to secure the husbands, and the mothers, to secure the children.

"I stop here, though I have much still to say on this subject. Servants of Christ distrust the Jesuits! Freemen, distrust the Jesuits! Fathers and mothers, distrust the Jesuits! Forget not that Romanism is now subversive to the influence and control of Jesuitism! We know it in France, and public opinion is awake."

Witness & Advocate.

THE SCOTCH IN LONDON.

It is estimated that there are one hundred thousand native Scotchmen in London. Only four Scotch congregations have been in existence there, till recently; and a Scotchman who cannot attend a church of his own denomination will attend no church at all—hence not one in ten of the Scotch residents in the city is found in any place of worship; and the usual consequences of such negligence of divine institutions, are lamentably apparent in the ignorance and heathenism that abound among them. Six new congregations have been resolved upon by the "London Presbyterian church extension society" formed a few months ago, and six new places of worship are in various stages of progress. The effort, though yet in its infancy promises a large reward to the faith that has commenced it, and some of the six newly resolved upon congregations are already growing rapidly. The beneficent spirit which thus provides for the "household of faith," though it be our own, is eminently scriptural, and every where to be commended.