

JOHN M'LEOD CAMPBELL.*

[SECOND NOTICE.]

WE have in our first notice of this Memoir aimed mainly at a general view of the common characteristics of a small knot of teachers whose influence has been as similar as their characters were diverse. In attempting an estimate of a single member of this group, we undertake a task of greater difficulty.

However, the critic of these volumes may at once point out the quality most characteristic of him whom they portray. "Dr. Campbell," says a critic (II., 337), "was one of the most just of men," and there are very few pages here which do not supply evidence for that verdict. How rarely could it be passed, by an impartial judge, on the hero of a religious biography! The most rare of virtues will not indeed seem very much more common in one region than in another, but we fear that no atmosphere is quite so unfavourable to it as that of the religious world. All strong and vivid convictions, it must be confessed, tend to conceal from him who feels them those delicate shades of purpose and will in other minds on the appreciation of which justice depends. We are disqualified for seeing evil in those who share, and good in those who oppose, belief in truths which we feel important and unquestionable. No one would have had more of this kind of excuse for injustice than the subject of this memoir, few have ever surmounted the temptation so entirely. These records of his life stand almost alone as a religious biography in which we can hardly discover one uncandid, presumptuous, or hasty judgment.† Yet it was not from want of being placed in those circumstances in which men are tempted to be harsh and presumptuous. Dr. Campbell was at the very opening of his career as a preacher turned out of the Church of Scotland for preaching doctrines which its authorities declared to be unsound. And the ministry which so penetrated the hearts of his hearers, that on one occasion a shoemaker insisted on serving him unpaid, was pursued under the shadow of heresy. Something has been lately said in these pages concerning the natural tendency of the victims of persecution to exaggerate its importance and mistake its dangers, and it would be well for them to consider the warning. Perhaps those who wish to be just to persecuted men may more profitably remember what we believe to be quite as true, that nothing to which the word "persecution" can by any possibility be applied, is without its sting. From without, the distinction and its advantages may seem to make up the whole result, as far as it is worth a sensible man's notice. From within, it all looks very different. The curiously disproportionate sense of importance, as it seems, which almost everybody has probably observed at one time or other in the indignation or mortification of even the humblest person at some stigma upon himself, is not the expression of the unreasonable egotism of this or that individual; it marks rather the failure of human sympathy to enter into the keenness of wounded feeling, when that which is known as truth within the soul is received as error without. In the case of Dr. Campbell, we believe this trial took its mildest form. There is no attempt in the book to make him out a martyr. "The years which followed his deposition," we are told, "were those of his greatest activity as a preacher;" and his character was not one to expose him to any bitter feeling under censure,—it was entirely free from any morbid element, and it was somewhat self-sufficing. The shafts of ecclesiastical condemnation were repelled by the armour of a profound belief in his Gospel, and a certain belief in himself. But we may rely upon it that there are joints even in that armour through which many a wound may be received that is quite unsuspected by those who watch the arrows fly. And however natural would be an anticipation of the opposite result, experience forces on us the conviction that for all but a very few these arrows seem not only to wound, but to poison the spiritual nature. It was one who had the excuse which has made the gentlest men exaggerated and bitter, of whom we can say that he was from first to last unwaveringly just.

We will take one instance of this clearness and largeness of moral view, in which, among those with whom we naturally compare him, he stands almost alone,—his letter on first reading Bishop Colenso's work on the Pentateuch. We have no intention of disguising our own view of this much-abused book. Though we think many of its particular criticisms, and even principles of criticism, narrow and mistaken, the book seems to us to have made an impartial historical study of the Old Testament for the first time possible to the mere English reader, and if this claim

seems exaggerated, we believe it is because the success of the work in this direction has been so complete that the need for it has been forgotten. But in considering Dr. Campbell's view of it, we must remember that he regarded it from the point of view of a pious Scotchman brought up in the strictest reverence for the Bible. There were certainly none among Bishop Colenso's bitterest assailants who would have recoiled from his conclusions with more entire protest of their whole being than the man who wrote of it as follows:—"I am quite unable to see how a man should feel called at so terrible a risk to disturb men's historical faith, unless he saw some element of eternal truth to be involved. But indeed, I expect when he has gone through the task which he has set himself, and we know all his thoughts, that it will appear that these matter-of-fact errors, as he conceives them to be, have infused some evil element into our thoughts of God." (He means, of course, that this must be Bishop Colenso's view.) "If it be so, this has not been to him a question of discretion or wise reticence, but something far more serious, involving not arithmetical or physical difficulties merely—though these he puts forward first—but what he feels to be moral and spiritual difficulties." How many men who believed what Dr. Campbell did believe about the Bible could have written that in 1862? In his anxiety to be just to a person who was doing, according to his own view, the gravest harm to the cause he had most at heart, he arrests his judgment till he "knew all the thoughts" of the person whom the religious world in England and Scotland was then so eagerly and clamorously judging, and prepares himself to recognise a moral vindication for one whose work was, in his view, an assault on what he felt most precious. We cannot recall a passage from the whole history of controversy which strikes us as so perfect an exhibition of candour.

While in the personal character of the object of this memoir the most eminent quality was that which is so seldom united with a keen sense of the invisible world, this sense of the invisible was with him absolutely and unremittingly overpowering. The common view of religion, as a particular theory about the origin of things and the ultimate issue of things,—this intermediate phase remaining much the same under all theories,—is made impossible to those who confront a spirit like his. To him the most unquestionable realities of this present life were not the laws of physical science and all their attendant certainties. He dwelt among certainties which, covering the surface of thought as absolutely as any truth of physical science, penetrate into that world of moral experience which, in supplying knowledge with what may be called its third dimension, makes it something so different as almost to need another name. In learning that the world goes round the sun, the mind takes in at once all that the words convey. The truth is not one that can be known more decidedly at one time than at another. But the truths implied and illustrated in this memoir are believed with conviction varying with the moral experience of the person who believes them. They have, no doubt, an aspect for the intellect, they may be made subject for propositions and inferences, they may be brought under logical formulæ, just as anything else may. But they have another aspect, as expressions of actual experience, as descriptions of the scenery in which some spirits permanently abide, as records of those laws the contact with which makes up the most real, the most unquestionable part of their history. These are laws not in the sense in which law is the creation of Parliament, but in the sense in which it is the principle of Nature. They are manifested alike in the orbit of history and the sphere of the individual human spirit, and may be known with a knowledge which, while it is less adequate than the knowledge of physical law, is far more penetrating. They lack, no doubt, the kind of certainty which belongs to physical knowledge; for the conviction which cannot be transferred to another mind apart from some moral influence is different, as a feeling within the mind, from the conviction which can be thus transferred. The realities which we must know, if we know them at all, as something surrounding us on every side, something deeper and higher than any words which aim at describing it, can be communicated only by bringing other minds into our own spiritual position, and unveiling to them the spiritual scenery which from another point of view they rightly pronounce invisible. And as the difference between the effort of transferring some small object from hand to hand, and performing a long and arduous journey, is only a feeble type of the difference between the effort of intellectual demonstration and such a representation as may bring the heart and conscience within reach of spiritual realities, so we must not wonder that the certitude of science is a matter tested by this easy commerce, and the conviction of faith something that by its side seems incommunicable. This conviction

* *Memorials of John M'Leod Campbell: being Selections from his Correspondence*, Edited by his Son. 2 vols. London: Macmillan and Co.

† If we could efface the two concluding lines of I., 66, we should make the exclusion absolute.

relates to that which so far strains the capacities of language and of logic, that in uttering our dim conceptions we must often approach the edge of contradiction, and be fearless as to the hidden juncture of truths each of which lays hold of us in its separate strength, and between which we can see something like opposition. And in this fearlessness the man who dwells among invisible realities will often seem to the man who dwells among phenomena, to neglect the tests of truth.

Will he have much to say to such a one? We have admitted that none of the men whom this memoir recalls had anything to say to those who are asking the question which torments so many minds in our day,—Have we any grounds of conviction except those we reach through the senses? To unite the actual and immediate discernment of the spiritual Cosmos in which such spirits dwell with any such capacity of entering into the point of view of those who deny its existence, that those mere faint shadows and adumbrations which it casts upon the world of the visible may be pointed out, is not impossible. One teacher who has this power is still among us. But no endowment of genius, we believe, is quite so rare. The power to lay hold directly on that which *is*, must almost always, we should imagine, be attended by incapacity to represent the object of this direct apprehension to those who can conceive of it only as that which *may be*. We should all feel that absolute faith in the perfect integrity of any one, for instance, was a positive disqualification for tracing out such signs of this integrity as could be established in the face of hostile prepossessions. Dr. Campbell could never have confronted the great problem of our day as the dividing line between two worlds of thought, or felt its solution the preliminary to intellectual coherence and spiritual repose. He mixed too much, in his latter years, in the world of thought not to know, in a certain sense, that it was so. He knew it as we know that war is going on now in the East, as something which interested him, but which was a long way off. The gradation of certainty, according to the belief characteristic of our own day, begins just where his deepest certainty left off. He would have said that all that he himself heard and saw was less certain, in the deepest sense of the word, than things with which he came in contact neither through the ear nor the eye; that whereas the senses formed the avenue to a world subject to perpetual change, and conceivably to destruction, there are capacities of discernment within us, the objects of which are felt to be unchangeable with the same certainty with which they are perceived to exist. To the intellectual man of our day these appear as the mere capacities for dreaming, and between two people who differ as to the ultimate test of certainty, there is not much to be said, though we must add that what little is to be said is important. But no one, in his generation, who was without the rare power to enter on this ground came so near a true estimate of the issue involved as Dr. Campbell. To impose a check on the critical power, and leave the intellect in a merely receptive condition, is supposed to be easy only because the aim being rare, the consciousness of failure is rare also. It was the effort of Dr. Campbell with reference to every form of thought with which he came into contact. The thoughts which, to his estimate, were fullest of error were a claim on him for this patient, disinterested examination, "seeing how many-sided truth is, how a strong hold on truth in one region has caused, by reason of our narrowness, inability to see it in another." (II., 257.) How seldom has any one been aware of that limitation who knew also that "he that would have sight added to hearing would not be introduced into so new and strange a region as we would feel brought into, if there was a corresponding addition of knowledge of the spiritual to our knowledge of the physical." (II., 284.) The two sentences taken together contain, if not the answer to the problems he was contemplating afar off, at least a complete moral equipment for dealing with them.

We must not close this notice without some attempt at a nearer appreciation of his view of that world within which he found his home. His most striking characteristic, we have said, was justice. He was tender and constant in all the relations of life, his warm friendships were the link between family attachments of peculiar closeness and a general kindness which seems to have shown no hiatus; but doubtless there are a great many men as loving and kindly as he, and we do not believe there are many equally just. The world, said Dr. Johnson, had proved more kind and less just than he expected it to be; and that, we believe, is a general experience. Now, it must sometimes occur to those who feel the distinction here implied,—Is this quality, which I may miss in the most generous of human beings, really different from love in anything besides those intellectual limitations which prevent love, in fallible human hearts, from flowing forth in due

gradation of response towards the varieties of claim presented to it? If it is not, there can be no absolute distinction between justice and love, and in the absolute being the two must be one. If this be so, the whole of our relation to God is typified in the relation of a child to its parent; and this is the view which the religious world of our day is most inclined to take. It was not Dr. Campbell's view. While appreciating as much as any man this filial element in the human attitude towards God, he believed himself to discern another which might least inadequately be expressed in the ideal of a Judge. No man could have more entered into the sacredness of the family bond than he; how tender a son and a father he was these volumes bear evidence in every page, but he shrank from calling these family bonds, sacred as they are, the *only* types of that relation which must take in the whole of man's being. Perhaps he would have said that there is no right relation in which man may stand to man which has not its root in his relation to God. While he regarded our life in this world as education, he could not feel that the *whole* account of it had been given when this much had been said, or rather the education seemed to him incomplete, if it did not contain a hint of something beyond itself. The human race, no doubt, was here in its schoolroom, but the lessons it had to learn of its relation to God were not exhausted by the knowledge of this fact; there remained a more mysterious set of laws, which concerned man not only as the creature of God, but the rebel against Him. To Dr. Campbell's mind, sin was no mere falling-short, no mere missing the mark,—it was not something which might be removed by the mere pouring in of more light and more motive-power. It was a great objective reality, transcending the distinction of our separate individualities, and throwing its shadow on the race. So far as man was truly human, he was called upon to enter into a renunciation of and protest against something which put its hold on every man, and he who was most intensely and typically human carried out this renunciation and protest to a length which the intellect can inadequately take account of,—which every son of man is called upon to take share in to a certain degree, but which he only could carry out who, although he was wholly and perfectly man, *because* he was wholly and perfectly man was also more than man. In the life and death of Christ, we were called upon to discern, not only the type of that which is highest in humanity not only the exhibition of that which God desires to see in every one, but also in a form more mysterious than the mere understanding could confront,—his protest against sin.

The reader will not, we trust, confuse the attempt to describe convictions on such subjects as these with an attempt to pronounce upon their truth. Yet the critic who has ventured upon this ground cannot quit it without expressing his belief that if the description appears to possess mere biographical interest, if it suggests a mere revival of bygone superstitions, a mere return to the delusions of the past, the fault is either in the feebleness of the representation, or in the narrowness of a judgment which fails to discern the springs of all that is greatest in the thoughts and beliefs of the ages that lie behind us.

THE KHEDIVÉ'S EGYPT.*

AMID the bewildering mass of books and pamphlets which are published at present, dealing from all points of view and in every variety of tone with the ramifications of the Eastern Question, a compact work, in which the actual condition of Egypt is set forth with unprejudiced plainness, and an account of its ruler and the chief personages who surround him is given, is of value. Mr. de Leon does not address himself to the public with any pretension of giving them a picturesque book about Egypt, or of telling them new things, except in so far as he describes the characters and the reigns of the past and present rulers of the country; but he professes to give a photographic picture of the changes wrought in the old "House of Bondage" by Mehemet Ali and his successors; and its true condition, social, political, and economical, when the second dawn of a new civilisation seems breaking over that portion of the East which hailed the first, long ere Greece or Rome had emerged from the "double darkness of Night, and of Night's daughter, Ignorance." There is a touch of pomposity about this exordium, which, happily, extends no farther; the book is pleasantly and simply written, but the author might have dispensed with his opening chapters;—concerning "Eastward Ho! from Southampton to Port Said," there is nothing to be said that is not mere inevitable reiteration. His

* *The Khedive's Egypt; or, the Old House of Bondage under New Masters.* By Edwin de Leon, ex-Agent and Consul-General in Egypt. London: Sampson Low and Co.