

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

and died very poor. But he had spent on good works for the Church £72,000, having come into some family property late in life, and some portion of his money was given to good men who had "been deprived under the Act" of 1662. There are two portraits of him in Lambeth Palace, representing him as tall and thin, with a high colour and a small, dark moustache, the whole aspect severe, almost repellent, marking stern self-reliance.

W. BENHAM.

(To be continued.)



ART. II.—A WELSH CLERGYMAN'S REMINISCENCES.

I HAVE been spared to see and help to celebrate two Jubilees of the Queen's reign. Had Her Gracious Majesty reigned as long as I have lived, and the interval between the two Jubilees been taken as a precedent, we should have had three such commemorations. The two we have kept were naturally calculated to invoke the siren Memory; it is not strange, therefore, that at each commemoration I intended to recall and put on record, were it only for my own satisfaction and the satisfaction of those immediately around me, some of the more notable events that transpired during the period of which the Jubilee formed a climax, offering as each did a vantage-ground for a compendious review. But both commemorations passed by and left my purpose still unaccomplished. But now, again, when standing so much further away from the actual scenes, and so much nearer to the frontier line of oblivion and eternal silence, but with greater leisure and facilities for the undertaking, the intention revives, and I venture here on the task of recounting a few of my reminiscences.

My first reference shall be to the agitation which convulsed the country at the time of the Reform debate. This had invaded the seclusion of my humble and remote native place. The House of Lords had rejected the first Parliamentary Reform Bill, and Earl Grey's Ministry had appealed to the constituencies. The scene on the day of the Election with us made such an impression on me that it still vividly recurs to my memory. My mother had pinned an orange rosette on my breast, and I was taken down to the adjoining townlet, where, amidst a large and excited crowd, and the discordant cries of the rival parties, I could point to my rosette with the pride of an eager partisan. Orange was the colour of the Tories, and blue of the Whigs. The term "Conservative" was then unknown, being subsequently coined and used as the substitute for that of Tory by Sir Robert Peel, whilst the

word "Radical," although bandied about in the English manufacturing districts, was equally unfamiliar to us. Having been accustomed to orange as the symbol of the Tory party from my earliest years, I was surprised to read later on in one of Bulwer Lytton's novels that true blue was the orthodox tint, but when I went to live in Monmouthshire I found that party colours varied in different counties, blue being there also the Tory and red the Radical colour. It was also observed at the Election that the more enterprising, and probably the more intelligent, portion of the community was on the side of reform, whilst the poll was overborne and triumphantly carried by the stanchness of the tenants to their landlords, who were almost to a man anti-reformers. The wealthy and large-acred men lived in great comfort and wielded immense social and political power, and would naturally look askance on any revolutionary changes. And yet by opposing reform they shook society to its very foundation. The restricted and capricious distribution of the franchise was glaringly unjust, and could no longer be maintained without a civil war. This was averted by the wise and timely submission of the House of Peers to the will of the nation.

Whilst the last-mentioned day was marked by considerable tumult and variance, the next memorable day in connection with any public event displayed a perfect unanimity of feeling and produced one common outburst of joy and festivity. I can look back on the first Sunday when *Gwilym y Pedwerydd* (William IV.) ceased to be prayed for, and Queen Victoria succeeded as the appointed subject for public devotions. And it seems but the other day when, a wee toddling thing, securely held in my father's strong and loving hand, I witnessed the illuminations which celebrated her accession to the throne. Our little townlet was illuminated, at the particular request of the mayor, by each occupier of a house placing a lighted candle in every pane in the windows. And the reader may rest assured that this simple contrivance made a wonderfully brave and effective show.

I was still very young when the country was again in the throes of a violent commotion. This was occasioned by the menacing attitude of the Chartists, and their daring attack on Newport, Monmouthshire. Chartism, no doubt, was the reflux wave of the turbulent era of Reform, and owed its growth and wide prevalence partly to the irritation arising from the Reform measure not having gone far enough to please men of extreme views, and partly to the disappointment of those who had hoped that, unsatisfactory as it was in some of its details, it would yet effectually curb the power of the privileged families, and abridge the area of public corruption.

But though some substantial grievances remained in the late legislative enactment, and the desire to remove them met with the sympathy of the intelligent part of the community, yet when the Chartists proceeded to acts of violence, they were sternly and speedily put down. On the fourth day of November, 1839, some thousands of resolute and well-armed men marched down from the Welsh hills to Newport, but they were easily dispersed by a handful of soldiers. I well remember the Sunday when it was understood that the Chartists would be on their way to the town, and their purpose formed a covert topic of conversation in our circle. In those days Merthyr and Dowlais and the surrounding coal and iron district were the refuge of the unsettled and lawless classes. Several of this character, whom I personally knew, and who had been implicated in riotous proceedings in our June Fair, had left our neighbourhood and gone to seek employment at what was familiarly known as "the Works" (*y Gweithfeydd*), and through them an intimation had found its way to our place that the Chartist rising would commence on that particular Sunday evening. The night proved exceptionally wet and stormy, and it was hoped among us that the contemplated rising would not take place. But in a day or two we were informed that it had been actually made, but proved abortive. One noticeable result of this deplorable display of the ignorance and heedless temerity of the lower Welsh classes was the famous Government Commission which was soon after issued for investigating the social and moral condition of the Principality. The Commissioners' Report contained some erroneous inferences, and employed a plainness and vigour of language which a wider acquaintance with the country would doubtless have modified; but emanating in an unexpected form, and from strangers, and acting on a sensitive and impulsive people, it gave great offence. The Blue Books (*y Llypangleision*) became the target for the invectives of patriots who loved their country not wisely, but too well. Notwithstanding the clamour raised against them, they exposed some serious defects in the habits of our people, and in the relations between the employed and their employers, and were not unfruitful of beneficent results. They led to better and more considerate treatment of the mining population, and to the sanitary and educational measures that have been subsequently taken for the amelioration of the toiling masses.

Having now reached the period when I left my native home, and never resided there again except for brief intervals, I here pause for the purpose of letting the mind dwell for a moment on the place and its inhabitants. The place was

situated on the wild but romantic coast of Pembrokeshire, on which, as is well known, are still found two different nationalities, and two spoken languages. In our district we prided ourselves on the fact that Welsh was our mother tongue, and that the purity of race and language remained uncontaminated and unbroken among us—I might indeed add another and a more valid, though less paraded, subject of commendation, the kindly, unsophisticated manners and pure morals of an ideal olden time which prevailed there. For, with very few exceptions, the residents were unquestionably sober, honest, industrious, thrifty, hospitable, manly in bearing, independent in spirit and sincerely religious. It must be confessed that the circle in which we moved was in some important respects restricted, and life in some of its aspects uninviting and monotonous. The defective side was the intellectual; probably it was also weak and poor in recreative resources. We knew but of one newspaper, the *Carmarthen Journal*, which was a weekly one; and though the population of the parish was upwards of fourteen hundred, it was taken in only by the Rector and the leading innkeeper. A few dozen books would be reckoned a considerable library in any home, and the fifteen miles between us and the county town a formidable distance to traverse. There were old inhabitants, I am sure, in the place who had never travelled so far as that in their lives. In the light and with the experience of modern facilities for locomotion, and the ceaseless activity to which we have been accustomed since, it is hard to conceive how such a slow and colourless mode of living could have been at all borne. But we were a contented and unrepining set of folks nevertheless; and I am not certain but that the staple, the main material of life, plain and simple as it was, did not contain as great an apportionment of innocent happiness as falls to the lot of the present restless, anxious, competitive, and over-sensitive generation. And yet we who lived in those early years of Her Majesty's reign, when at the extremities of the body politic the pulse beat but slowly and intermittently—we, too, were not destitute of sources of animated interest, which stirred the otherwise stagnant current. One of these would be the prevailing taste for literary essays, chiefly in a poetical form, to which the Welsh language, no less by its strenuous and strident accents than by its true native melody, seemed to lend itself with great facility. The productiveness in this field, and the high pitch of excellence attained, were surprising, especially considering the humble condition of the writers. I know of no parallel case anywhere except perhaps in the Lowlands of Scotland, and in the time of Burns and his peasant compeers. But

what gave its prevailing tone to life, and proved its mainspring in motive and action, was more or less connected with religion. An eloquent preacher never failed to draw a large and eager audience, and supply ample means for quickening and stimulating the mind, and forming a standard of public excellence, and holding up an object of ambition for young men of conduct and talent, as well as for affording opportunities for discussion and the interchange of opinion among us.

Having now mentioned some intellectual inconveniences under which we laboured in those far-off days, and by comparison indicated the beneficial changes that have occurred since, let me refer to other disadvantages, and to our obligations to science in their removal. I do not refer to the application of steam-power to new spheres of labour, to electricity, photography, or the telephone, nor to the later discovery—the Röntgen rays. These receive due recognition, and are confessed to have rendered the present reign illustrious for all time. But I would speak of some less conspicuous gifts of science to the service of man. These perhaps lie in an humbler domain, and secure a slenderer meed of admiration, but they, too, are indeed invaluable. The invention of the lucifer match must be reckoned as one of these. In my youth I often expended a good deal of time and temper in trying to light my morning fire in my study with a flint and steel bar, which was in the form of a horse-shoe. How easily now is this part of domestic economy performed by means of the phosphorated match! Who can estimate the amount of suffering alleviated by chloroform? And what an amount of pleasure and healthy recreation has been conferred on both sexes by the bicycle! And even by the steel pen, such as I now hold in my hand, and which has succeeded the goose-quill of my early days, how much irksome labour has been spared us, and the task of writing made comparatively easy! In another direction, is it not simply a marvel, as well as a blessing of the first importance, the advancement made in general knowledge by means of the penny postage, the reduction in the price of the best literature, and the universality of the daily newspaper! These have not only informed and moulded public opinion, and immeasurably added to the public stock of intellectual enjoyment, but have also knit together the different parts of the United Kingdom in a way that was never done before, and are not unlikely to be the means of bringing all nations into sympathy and friendly relations with each other, and thus hastening the coming of the predicted Divine kingdom of peace and goodwill among men.

The disturbances which happened at that time in Cardigan-

shire and Carmarthenshire may, as well as the Chartist riots of which we have spoken, be also ascribed to the successful Reform period, when the common people began to feel their strength, and learnt the lesson that no means for redressing grievances and removing oppressive burdens were so prompt and efficacious as self-help. These disturbances were known as the work of "Rebecca and her daughters." It was currently reported at the time, and no more satisfactory explanation has been given since, that this odd appellation derived its origin from Gen. xxiv. 60: "And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister; be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the *gate* of those which hate them."

The rioters were young men of the agricultural class. These would disguise themselves in female attire, and in the long autumn and winter nights would assemble in large numbers, and set themselves to destroy all the toll-gates in the vicinity. Their proceedings at first undoubtedly enlisted the sympathy of their countrymen. However fair in theory, in practice the old system of toll-gates, unreasonably numerous as they were, and many of them placed in invidious positions, were extremely vexatious and oppressive. But unfortunately the gatherings for their removal proceeded to acts of personal violence and wanton destruction of private property. The soldiery was summoned, and the supremacy of the law vindicated in the punishment of the ringleaders. I happened to reside then close to a public road which led to several gates, and used to listen in my bed at night to the tramping of bands of stalwart men, whose steady and regulated tread was singularly impressive, but who otherwise passed by in deep silence to the scenes of their nefarious doings. Remembering the general tranquillity and peaceful disposition of the great majority of the inhabitants of those parts, who were really more amused than alarmed by the "daughters of Rebecca," I find it strange that such a grave and philosophic seignior as Bishop Thirlwall, in his palace at Abergwili, should have written in that autumn to a correspondent: "There is here, on the one side, perfect impunity from the law, on the other no protection from outrage. In fact, nobody who has anything to lose considers either his property or his life as secure."¹ This wild and unwarranted language of so able and great a man is surely an exemplification of the poet's satire when he speaks of "fears of the brave and follies of the wise." It may be added that ultimately and by a gradual and peaceful process the turnpikes were everywhere abolished.

¹ Bishop Thirlwall's "Letters," p. 188.

I do not know of any existing at the present moment in South Wales.

The next incident I shall mention as forming an era in our annals was the conflict between Protection and Free Trade. In the result it revolutionized our commercial policy; and in the course of the debate in Parliament produced protagonists of transcendent powers, one of whom displayed unsuspected resources as an oratorical athlete, and in the course of the fray emerged from comparative obscurity to become the leader of an old historic party, and one of the most shining examples of success in the political sphere by dint of sheer ability.

The agitation into which the country was thrown was unparalleled. All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the country was filled with bitterness and strife. So many and intricate were the interests at stake, and so rancorous the feelings evoked, that the evangelical prediction seemed to be literally fulfilled: "Brother betrayed brother, and children rose up against their parents."¹ The manufacturing influence was undeniably strong and rapidly growing stronger, and threatening to become at no distant date predominant; whilst the landed interest, with its long prescription of power, its natural dislike of change, and all the hatred of the outgoing occupier for the destined supplanter, resolutely faced its antagonist, and disdained to yield without a long and severe struggle. The Free Traders got their majority in the constituencies and won the position; and the position then captured must no doubt be taken as irrevocable, at all events so far as any at present can forecast the future.

As in the physical world there are certain days in early spring, with their mild sunshine, bursting buds, and balmy breezes, which seem to tell that the winter is past and the summer at hand, so in the case of a nation—it may be of the human race at large—there are certain halcyon seasons which form a striking contrast to the trouble and turbulence of the past, and promise the speedy advent of general peace and unbroken progress. And though the glad and ardent period of youth may in my case have unconsciously coloured the scene, something of the kind seems to have prevailed in the British Isles between the inception of the Free Trade measure and the Crimean campaign. There was at that time a lull in the jarring elements, a buoyancy and a stir of life in the air,

¹ In this election Lord Lincoln stood for Newark in defiance of his father's wishes and political views; and a Somerset led the revolt in Monmouthshire against the long uncontested influence of the House of Beaufort.

and a lofty hopefulness in every breast. The increase of material wealth proceeded at an unexampled pace; the mastery gained over natural forces and the discovery of new motive powers whetted the desire and fed the hopes of the nation for yet greater commercial and scientific achievements. Intellectual activity was no less general and fruitful. Macaulay wrote his History; Dickens, Thackeray, and Charlotte Brontë their most famous novels; Tennyson and Browning their choicest poems; Carlyle established his fame; Darwin was known to be carrying on his researches; the Pre-Raphaelites were giving assurance of their coming triumph in the realm of Art, and the periodical press showed at its best. Nor was this unprecedented advance checked by the startling series of Revolutionary movements on the Continent. These served rather as a foil to our own insular security and progress, to which the Great Exhibition seemed to set its seal and consecration. The spirit of the nation never rose higher than then, nor did the future ever look brighter. And yet at that moment we were on the eve of an outbreak of a succession of wars which were never exceeded in the costliness of armaments, the wholesale destruction of human life, or, as their immediate results, in the intensity and wide prevalence of rancorous and vindictive feelings among the different nations of Europe. And at present we perceive no sign that this eruption of warlike spirit and the era of mutual slaughter is abating and coming to a close, unless the Czar's recent action in favour of a return to counsels of peace be taken as such.

I may insert here the record of a day spent in Pembrokeshire in the year 1859. I venture to do so inasmuch as I happened to mark the rising, and felt the full force, of the storm which caused the loss of the *Royal Charter*. I was then on my return from a brief holiday, and engaged to go and visit the Rector of Laureny. I left my Welsh home for this purpose early in the morning of October 25 in the above year. When the day dawned the weather was perfectly calm, without the slightest portent of any coming change. Before long the sky darkened, and beneath its sullen, leaden look the sea seemed to gloom and become increasingly uneasy. The clouds lay in low thick lines, the sun struggling against the accumulating obstruction, but only succeeding in casting a lurid gleam here and there on the troubled waters. Early in the afternoon the storm broke, and by the time the Ferry at Nayland, opposite the Pembroke Dock, was reached, it was at the utmost risk that any boat could venture to cross. At Pembroke Dock a vehicle was secured, and the journey to Laureny commenced, but so great was the fury of the tempest that we were forced to return. At the hotel where

we put up we were all disturbed at midnight by the officers of the regiment quartered in the vicinity rushing in for shelter, with the information that their tents and all their soldiers' huts were blown down and clean swept away. It was indeed a night to be remembered for the unparalleled fury of the elements and the waste of life and property on sea and land. We heard next day that the *Royal Charter*, a steamship on her way from Port Phillip to Liverpool, with over 500 sailors and passengers on board, and gold nuggets worth a million in specie, was thrown that night on the iron-bound coast of Anglesea and totally wrecked. After a long and prosperous voyage, and when fondly expecting to reach the "desired haven" in a few hours, all on board were drowned, fast by their native shore, with the exception of one man.

We will close these desultory remarks by summing up the most obvious results of our brief retrospect as they relate to Wales. These results unavoidably connect themselves, as might be expected in a world where mutability is the chief element in the counting of time and impressing the memory and replenishing its stores, with various changes arising from growth or decay. The changes may be discerned in many spheres and in countless forms, but they can be conveniently defined as material, social and religious. The physical aspect of the country, as may be safely assumed, has but slightly changed during the last sixty years, and yet it has not remained uniformly the same. We are happily not subject to volcanic disturbances, wide inundations, the gradual accumulation of shifting sand, or accretion of coral, or the wild tornadoes, which in other parts of the world transform the landscape, remove old landmarks, and create new and unexpected scenes. We have with us still the same gray, rounded hills, the green retired valleys, the silvery streams, the purple moorlands, the winding bays, and the sandy beach, all breathing peace and comfort such as our forefathers knew and ourselves have loved for more than half a century. But in the meantime commons have been everywhere enclosed and turned into pasture or ploughland, forests stripped by the woodman's unsparing axe, many a fair spot scarped by the miner's pick, deformed by immense cinder tips, and made to look otherwise than it was by deep embankments, new roads and numerous bridges, necessitated by the endless branches of railways among us. And while some old country towns have remained stagnant, and many rural parishes been partly denuded of inhabitants, towns like Cardiff, Swansea, Llanelly and Pontypridd have come to the front, and in spacious and stately streets and sumptuous edifices are not a whit behind the large and wealthy towns of England; and places also like the Rhondda and Ogmere

valleys, which were formerly the haunts of a few shepherds, dwelling in rude huts, are now lined with rows after rows of decent cottages, and teeming with myriads of busy and intelligent men. And so great is the demand for Welsh coal, and the corresponding effort to supply it, as well as the creation of new facilities for every department of trade, that we see at present no limit to the marvellous advance we have lived to witness.

The wide range and deep significance of this national prosperity may be perhaps best gauged by the improvement which has taken place in the condition of the labouring classes. Whilst their wages have been doubled, their habitations better fitted for rational beings to live in, their food in the main become much cheaper, and equal in quality to the food of the higher classes of the previous generations, the objectionable practices of which they complained as only calculated to enrich the employer at their own expense, such as the truck system, have been abolished, and praiseworthy efforts made everywhere to apply the best skill in the promotion of sanitary measures, while in their habits they have become more provident and self-controlled, and less addicted to low and gross sports and pursuits. Perhaps the vice which clings the longest, and may be still considered the prevailing blemish, is drunkenness. But even this, under the persistent efforts of temperance advocates, the elevating and counteracting influence of education and the operation of the Sunday Closing Act (though it must be added, in a parenthesis, this last cause is still a debatable point) seems to give way, and before long sobriety may characterize the lower as it has for so many years characterized the higher orders of society.

No subject directly bearing on the welfare of a nation has made such rapid progress among us as that of education. Though the initial start was taken many years before, the advanced stage in which we at present find it was but recently reached. In the first quarter of the century the deplorable destitution of the means of public instruction led to the establishment of the National Society and the British School Institution. But laudable as were their efforts, these could only act on a few isolated spots, and those the most favourable specimens of their class, and from local influences the easiest to be cultivated. With regard to the community at large, the partial and desultory attempts of the two Societies only showed the more palpably the dark surrounding wastes which still remained untilled and untouched. Mr. John Foster and others of a kindred spirit did yeoman service by directing attention to popular ignorance, and Lord Brougham and other patriotic men appealed repeatedly to Parliament to close with the

evil and set itself to its removal. A small grant of a few thousand pounds was made for this purpose, in the reign of William IV. That small Parliamentary grant has gradually risen to many millions of pounds in the year, and the whole United Kingdom has been supplied with the means of a sound elementary education. But what more particularly concerns us here is our own position with regard to higher education. Whilst every other part of the kingdom was very sufficiently supplied with institutions for its promotion, Wales was left destitute and neglected. But on a widespread revival of a spirit of patriotism among us, fostered and guided by leading Welshmen who possessed their countrymen's confidence, we have been lately provided, besides St. David's College at Lampeter, with three other colleges—those of Aberystwith, Bangor and Cardiff—which have been since formed into one degree-conferring university. And in addition, and as a crowning boon, we have been supplied with a system of intermediate schools, which should serve for the more talented and aspiring pupils as stepping-stones to a course of collegiate training.

The next subject to notice, and it shall be the last, is religion. This must be acknowledged to be one of great significance, were it merely regarded as the high-water mark of advancing civilization; but it is, moreover, the only guarantee of the security of our present proud position, and the inspirer of any hope we may cherish of future progress. To attempt an estimate of our condition in any essential respect and leave this out of our calculation would be like the attempt to find out and comprehend our geographical situation without a knowledge of the bearings of the cardinal points of the compass. All would be vague and bewildering unless we knew how we relatively stood to the east and west, the north and the south. But all-important as is the subject of religion, our reference to it here must be necessarily brief. This is of less moment when it is considered that our experience in the Principality is almost precisely analogous to that in England. What affects the one affects the other, and the same survey could be applied to both. This holds good with regard to the two great movements which are popularly known as the Evangelical and Oxford Movements. In the object aimed at, the infusion of fresh life and a new access of enthusiasm in the ecclesiastical sphere, both have been remarkably successful. Although the one is already sixty years old and the other one hundred and sixty, whatever occasional appearances of languor may show themselves, neither of the two movements has spent itself or lost the ardour of its first love, and the fruits of such an unflagging zeal are perceptible everywhere around us. But it must be admitted that the Oxford or Tractarian Move-

ment has not succeeded in obtaining anything like the same hold on the middle and lower classes as the Evangelical.

With regard to Nonconformists, they have also during the whole period covered by the two Jubilees been conspicuously active; and at the present moment, so far as visible results are concerned, do not stand so much behind Churchmen as some would have us believe. Misdeeming the signs of the times, and misled by their own enthusiastic spirit, the conveners of ecclesiastical coteries may be pardoned for speaking of the wonderful progress of the Church, and anticipating the extinction of the surrounding sects. They seem to imagine that the walls of Jericho will fall at a blast, and the promised land be reached by leaps and bounds. To all who have witnessed the strides made by the Church of late years in order to regain the ground lost through the remissness of former generations, her progress indeed is too patent to be questioned. But there is such a thing as a false confidence and erroneous assumptions, and we would do well to discount the triumphant anticipations of a sanguine and overweening temper. In some rural parishes and populous centres, in seasons of agricultural and commercial depression of trade, and consequent dislocation of labour, the Dissenting system has been unable to stand the stress and successfully cope with the situation, otherwise the evidence adduced of the rapid and general decline of Nonconformity cannot be accepted as satisfactory. Its adherents are still a force to be counted as being in actual possession of a most extensive patrimonial domain, and doing their utmost to retain and enlarge it. If their hold on the higher classes has always been slight, and the general diffusion of advanced knowledge threatens still further to weaken it, it must be admitted that they have lost little, if any, of their old power for attracting and influencing the common people. Whatever deductions we might make at another time, and in a more critical mood—and assuredly candour in its least censorious temper could not fail to advert to some serious shortcomings—we would here gratefully record the conviction that their power has been hitherto most beneficially used for the moral and religious welfare of our common country.

JOHN MORGAN.

Llanilid.

