

The Clifford Centenary.

JOHN CLIFFORD was born at Sawley, Derby, on the 16th October, 1836. Anticipatory centennial celebrations were held in the Midlands in the summer, and the official celebrations will take place at Westbourne Park Church in the centenary week. All who care for the story of Baptist history cherish a deep regard for the Doctor's memory, for not only was he one of the best informed students of our history, but *he is himself* a vital part of it. In the first number of the *Baptist Quarterly* after his death (Vol. II., 1) a brief tribute was printed, and to a recent issue (Vol. VI., 304) Mr. W. S. Stroud, one of his deacons, contributed an extended estimate. A centenary article is therefore hardly called for, but two notes of more than passing interest are printed below.

I.

On Wednesday, 26th June, 1867, the Rev. John Clifford, LL.B., then aged thirty, preached before the Annual Association of the General Baptist Churches at Northgate Chapel, Louth. His subject was "The Person and Plan of Christ," and writing of it a contemporary said, "The sermon, though long and elaborate so as to require great heed-taking on the part of the most appreciative hearers, was listened to with unflinching interest, and with almost unalloyed delight. The range of thought was so wide, the points discussed were so vital, and at the same time have been so much controverted by the enemies of the truth, the tone in which these disputed topics were treated was so vigorous and serious, the diction and style were so ornate and elevated, and the manner of delivery was so eloquent and impressive, that the hearing of the discourse was a feast of no common kind. We regretted that it was not preached in a more central place and to a larger auditory; and we wished that it could have been heard by those sapient people who say that pulpit power is on the wane amongst us, and who croakingly put the prohibited question, 'What is the cause that the former days were better than these?' The sermon is to be printed, we hope in the form of a little book, and it will doubtless read well; but those optics had need be very cunning which have to equal the service of both eyes and ears!"

The present writer wishes that he had discovered this vivid pen picture of the Doctor's early preaching power before his

death in 1923. He imagines that the Doctor's eyes would have sparkled at the remembrance of his "ornate and elevated diction and style." "Pulpit power on the wane" in 1867! The phrase might have been written yesterday; but the glory of the "former days" has been a platform heroic for over two thousand years.

II.

51, Porchester Road, W.
Jan. 20, '79.

My dear friends,

Your letter of Xmas morning gave me very great pleasure indeed. I rejoice in it, as another expression of your real regard for the *work* we are seeking to do for Christ and men, and of the deep and unselfish interest you take in the progress of His blessed Kingdom. Words will not express my warm appreciation of your love and devoted co-operation.

I need not say that I am glad to have the prospect of an addition to my stipend. You know that since the New Chapel was opened I have been a loser in every way save in the increase of my privilege of work, but I have felt sure that you would take care of me, and as soon as you could add to my income, but I scarcely expected it yet, and therefore am very glad to think that you see your way clear to take such a step now.

Praying for the choicest blessing of God upon our work, a work He has given us, and therefore will bless,

I am, Your affectionate friend and fellow-worker,

JOHN CLIFFORD.

To the Deacons of

Praed Street and Westbourne Park Church.

This happy letter is self-explanatory. It may serve the double purpose of suggesting a suitable course of action to deacons and of furnishing a precedent to ministers faced with the opportunity of writing a similar letter.

S. J. P.