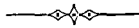


Here, then, we pause. If it be indeed true—as all revelation teaches, and as reason itself requires—that the course of this world is ordered by the Providence of God, it follows that the glory of our empire and its Sovereign have been part of the Divine purpose for the fulfilment of His Will. If we will discern what He would have us to do, and can second His purpose with heart and soul and strength, happy are we, and may go on and celebrate our Queen's Jubilee with all rejoicing. But if not—if we are blinded by prosperity, or rendered indolent by security—let us be sure that His purpose shall be accomplished without our aid, while we, as an instrument which has proved untrustworthy in His hands, shall either be passed through the tempering fires and waters of suffering, or, perchance, be thrown altogether aside as others have been before us.

GILBERT VENABLES.



ART. V.—JAMES FRASER, SECOND BISHOP OF
MANCHESTER.

James Fraser, Second Bishop of Manchester. A Memoir by THOS. HUGHES, Q.C. Macmillan and Co.

FEW men valued public applause less than Bishop Fraser, yet few men have obtained so large a measure of it. It was not unmixed with unfriendly criticism; but he seldom condescended to notice either the censure or the praise. His influence in Lancashire was a marvel to strangers. Mr. Thomas Hughes's biography will partly explain it. His wonderful activity and capacity for public duties, combined with his anxiety to help in every good work, involved him in engagements the fulfilment of which seemed incredible. His sympathy with his struggling clergy, his genial and cheery manner, bringing an atmosphere of brightness wherever he went, caused him to be so much sought after that the old Ignatian proverb, "Nothing without the Bishop," received a new rendering in his diocese. Nothing could be done well unless the Bishop did it, or helped to do it.

If life is to be measured by the work done, few have attained to the years of Bishop Fraser. If work is to be valued by its influence for good, we believe few Bishops in these latter times will have a brighter record on high.

Mr. Hughes has given us a charming biography of his friend, and an able vindication of his episcopate. Our only wish is that he had told us more. The work contains some trifling mistakes, likely to occur where the writer was not personally acquainted with the localities and circumstances. Bishop Lee

did not reside at so great—indeed, not half so great—a distance from the cathedral as Mr. Hughes supposes; and his successor bore willing testimony to the efficiency of his administration of the diocese. Moreover, the good Bishop would never have committed to print the hasty expression (see page 90) about the successful candidate for South Devon.

The Bishop's opinions of men and measures were freely expressed to his friends; but they were not intended in this form for the world at large. His political faith underwent considerable change during his episcopate. Starting as "a Radical Bishop," he was carried forward by the advancing tide of Lancashire Conservatism; and in his later years he was much more in sympathy with the majority of Lancashire Churchmen than when he first came among them. We strongly doubt whether his faith in Mr. Gladstone would have stood the test of that statesman's more recent developments.

We will not mar by anticipation the pleasure which our readers will find in the perusal of the "Memoir" itself. The main facts of Bishop Fraser's life are well-known, and many of us have heard them from his own lips. His father's death left him an orphan at an early age; but his mother, though in greatly reduced circumstances, managed to bestow on him and his brothers the best education which she could procure for them. All that he became he owed, and felt that he owed, to her; and he often spoke of her as an example to other mothers to deny themselves for the sake of their children. She had her reward not only in the success in life of her family, but in their deep and abundant gratitude. The Bishop's devotion to her was beautiful. It was indeed such a tribute as few mothers ever have received.

In college, as at school, young Fraser's success was marked. He speedily attained the highest honours and rewards. Many of his friends anticipated for him a distinguished following up of this career amid the learned labours of the University, and were surprised when he accepted a small parish and became a country parson. But he loved the country and its mute inhabitants: the cattle, the horses, and the dogs, as well as the people young and old. His ardour for improvement for a time found scope in finishing a new church, in building schools, in putting everything in order. With the society of his mother and aunt, who came to live with him, he was very happy. After twelve years of quiet work in this Wiltshire parish, he removed to Upton Nervet in Berkshire, which for the next ten years became his home. There he found more congenial neighbours; and having improved his house and settled to his work, he became so much attached to the place that he had no wish to leave it. Nor was this a transient feeling, for there, in the

beloved churchyard, his bones repose with those of his mother and his aunt in the grave which he prepared for them.

It was during his residence at Upton Nervet that the Education Question became a subject of pressing political interest. And Mr. Fraser, who had exerted himself so efficiently in his own parish schools, was selected as a Commissioner to report on Education in the United States and Canada. For this work he was specially adapted; and Mr. Hughes knows well how to appreciate such services. His report, also, on the employment of women and children in agriculture gave him an enlarged acquaintance with the wants of our working classes, and brought him still more under the notice of public men; so that, on the death of Bishop Lee, he was offered the vacant see of Manchester by the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone.

It has often been remarked that a special Providence seems to preside over the selection of our Bishops. Of all the numerous appointments made by Mr. Gladstone, none was more happy than that of Manchester. Bishop Fraser was the very man for the position; and Manchester was the position above all others to develop the man. The place, too, was prepared for him. Bishop Lee had organized the diocese admirably. But, better than mere external organization, an extensive spiritual work had been carried on by Hugh Stowell and other faithful pastors in the Church in his day. When Hugh Stowell went to Manchester, the Church was at its lowest ebb. Before he passed away, the Church in a great measure had recovered its hold upon the masses. If to any one man could be attributed the revival of Church life and activity in Manchester, to Hugh Stowell would belong that honour. He was a born leader of men. Wise in council, irresistible on the platform, deeply spiritual in his exposition of Holy Scripture, his very appearance in the pulpit, where his face habitually beamed with happiness, "allured to brighter worlds, and led the way." His influence with the young, and especially with young men, was incalculable. Before his time infidelity and radicalism had been rife in Manchester; but evangelistic work soon began to tell, and after a time, so great was the change that in a period of fifteen months 90,000 copies of the Scriptures, many of which were bought by themselves, were circulated among the working classes. That was the turning-point of the spiritual life of Manchester. Ever since, in day and Sunday schools, in the mission-rooms, and in the churches, a good work has been carried on; and hence the wonderful success of Bishop Fraser was made possible. Hugh Stowell and his fellow-labourers sowed the seed; Bishop Fraser reaped the increase.

How the Bishop threw himself into this work, the "Memoir" abundantly testifies. Descending from the old traditional ideal

of a prelate ruling in princely fashion, performing at select seasons the necessary functions of his office, and at other times keeping himself aloof from the great body of his clergy, Bishop Fraser became the helper and the friend of every hard-worked curate and incumbent in his diocese. He answered all their letters with his own hand. He wished to be regarded by them not merely as a father in God, but as a brother in Christ. In the earlier days of his episcopate, he often said, "Don't make a fuss about me; remember that only the other day I was a parish priest like one of yourselves." The people, too, were anxious to see their new Bishop, and were much surprised to find him going about everywhere, and in a manner so unusual and unexpected, striding along the street with a blue bag in hand, or riding with them in an omnibus; and when, moreover, they read in almost every paper his speeches, or sermons, or addresses, and heard continually of some touching instance of his courageous bearing or his wide-reaching sympathy, they became very proud of him. They felt that they had got a "gradely Bishop" of their own; and they overlooked his radicalism for his manliness and his unwearied labours in the Master's service.

Of Bishop Fraser's work in the diocese, Mr. Hughes gives an interesting account. Consecrated in the old Collegiate Church, in the midst of his clergy and people, he found the diocese in good working order. Bishop Lee's failing health had for some time prevented him from appearing much in public; but he administered diocesan affairs with wisdom and impartiality. Some of the more ardent spirits, whom his firm hand had restrained from lawlessness, were not slow to take advantage of the greater liberty allowed by his successor. But Bishop Fraser soon found it necessary to lay down the lines within which he wished that all schools of Churchmen should work together. "Our Church," he said, "must show that in her wide and tolerant bosom every legitimate form of Protestant Christianity can find a home. We are a privileged class, secured as no other religious denominations are secured. But why? That we may do a great work for the whole nation" (see "Memoir," p. 181). This reveals the genuine spirit of the man. He was as far removed as possible from religious partizanship. When to a zealous vicar, whom he doubtless highly esteemed for his work's sake, he once said playfully, "A——, I do wish you were not so low and narrow," the vicar replied with equal frankness, "I wish, my lord, you were not so very broad." Broad he was in his sympathies; high in his devotion to the Church's interests and worship; and truly evangelical in his doctrine.

Nor was the breadth of his sympathies to be confined within the limits of the Established Church. Some of his friends were

shocked by his consenting to preside in a Wesleyan school-house at a presentation to a Wesleyan minister, whose ministry in Manchester had been active and successful. Less pleasing still was his taking the chair at the annual meeting of the Manchester City Mission, where, however, he defended his course in these words: "Since I consented to take the chair, I have had many representations that I should be in my wrong place as a Bishop, this being a 'sectarian institution.' If I believed that, I shouldn't be here. But this mission society seems to me, by what I have read of their publications and by the report, to be loyal to the principles we all profess. The feeling deepens in me every day that these principles of Christ's Gospel are few, simple, broad. Christians have been wrangling over their petty shibboleths, and have let the devil get an advantage over them, while they piled arms to discuss petty questions of theology, and, instead of presenting a serried front, turned their arms against each other, as the poor French are doing" ("Memoir," p. 188).

The principles thus announced were soon to be put to the test. On the Education Question the Bishop was at home, and was able to moderate the demands both of extreme Churchmen and of their Nonconformist opponents. The election of various School Boards proved the strength of Church feeling in Lancashire; and the friends of the Church, acting under the wise guidance of the Bishop, were able to secure a good Scriptural as well as secular education in the Board Schools. The strong common-sense brought to bear upon this subject, and the deeply religious, and at the same time liberal, sentiments of the Bishop are shown in a clear light by Mr. Hughes. The great bugbear, the religious difficulty, was dealt with in this way. "Practically," said the Bishop, "if you go about the world, and try to find a spot where the religious difficulty exists, it is so microscopic and of such tenuity, that I defy any man to put his finger on it, and say, 'Here it is in all its formidable dimensions'" ("Memoir," p. 184).

But other troubles soon appeared. Some of the clergy took occasion to introduce what they esteemed a higher ritual, and to teach so-called Catholic doctrines. It is, we think, worth observing that the complaints made against the services at St. John the Baptist's, Hulme, and against Canon Woodard's sermon in the cathedral, described by the churchwardens as "preaching the doctrine of the Mass," were not so easily set aside nor so unfruitful of results as Mr. Hughes imagines. The complainants may have been silenced, but they were not convinced; and their feelings of fear and dissatisfaction found expression in the annual vestries, and in the extinction of the project of a new cathedral, put forward by the Dean and Canon Woodard, and

warmly supported by the Bishop. That scheme at first seemed likely to succeed, and large sums were said to have been promised for it; but what we cannot avoid calling the injudiciousness of its advocates brought about its collapse.

The case of Miles Platting is better known, and need only be glanced at here. The Bishop's opinions on the points involved had frequently been given to the world. Preaching at St. James's (not the Parish) Church, Chorley, in November, 1878, he said that he had been reading some admirable remarks in an Evangelical review, in which were contrasted the thoughts which occupied men's minds in Puritan times with those of to-day. The five points of Calvinism were grand themes, which required a strong effort of mind to grasp them. "'But who,' said the Bishop, 'could get up an enthusiasm on the six points of Ritualism? How many in this congregation know even their names?' He would not say that these points involved any flagrant breach of Christian truth. . . . But to make these six points grounds for disturbing the peace of the Church . . . seemed to be the height of human folly" (see "Memoir," p. 241). "Men had no right to introduce things of their own private judgment. . . . Did the religion of Christ require these externals?" And then, after referring to "a grand function in a well-known church in the south of England," he asked, "What did it mean? He should say, Nothing but the pride of man raising itself up in the presence of God; and against it he thought every true member of the Church of England ought to protest with all the powers of his body and soul." The whole sermon, published at the time in the local papers, was a noble protest against the practices which were disturbing the peace of the Church, and hindering God's work in the diocese.

Mr. Hughes's allusions to the protest of Miles Platting parishioners are not very happy. The fact that it was written on coarse paper, and that a word was misspelt, seems to prove the source from which the document came, that it was from the people themselves, and not got up by persons outside. Had the Church Association originated the movement it would have been different. The results of that contest and of the subsequent suit are far-reaching and important. The Bishop vindicated not only the law of the Church but the authority of the Bishop. His refusal to institute a clergyman to a benefice who had been using illegal practices, and who would not pledge himself to abstain from them in future, was not only in accordance with common-sense, but with the ancient law of the Church implied in the office of a Bishop. Concerning the decision in this case the Bishop wrote to Canon Norris: "If the judgment has increased the Bishop's authority and made it real, it has also largely increased his responsibility."

Bishop Fraser's work has been tabulated in the Manchester Diocesan Calendar. We find that during the fifteen years of his episcopate he consecrated 105 new churches, providing 60,198 sittings, at a cost, exclusive of endowments and sites, of £725,629. In many cases there was a further outlay for towers, etc., after consecration. Besides these, 21 churches were rebuilt, providing 15,573 sittings, at a cost of £227,200; 117 new districts were formed, and supplied with clergymen. The number of the clergy in the diocese was increased from 670 to 838. Of this increase 114 were incumbents, and 71 curates; while there was a decrease in the number of clergymen connected with schools. During the same period 71,383 males and 116,809 females, in all 188,192 persons, were confirmed. It has been said that no Bishop since the Reformation has confirmed so many candidates in the same space of time. It is to be hoped that a selection from his admirable addresses to the confirmed will be given to the public in an easily accessible form. Such a memorial would be gladly welcomed, and most highly valued by those who have received confirmation at his hands.

It would be easy to enlarge on the efforts of the Bishop in connection with the temperance and other movements to improve the condition of the working classes; and on his work as an arbitrator to put an end to strikes, and to bring about a spirit of harmony between employers and employed. In Mr. Hughes these questions find an appreciative historian. But we must express our regret that one aspect of the Bishop's character, and that the most important of all, is so lightly touched. We mean the spiritual aspect: his humble walk with God, his living personal communion with his Saviour. It may be that the biographer shrank from these themes as from ground too holy to be trodden. But no view of the Bishop which does not take account of this can be regarded as complete.

The union of spirituality with manliness, and that in a degree as rare as it was beautiful, constituted the great charm of Bishop Fraser's life. He has left a bright example, teaching us what by God's grace an earnest man may do in these latter times. Long will he be remembered by those who had the privilege of knowing him, as genial, large-hearted, transparent, fearless, just, the most unconventional of Bishops, a most lovable chief pastor and friend.

F.

