

ART. III.—JOHN HANNAH.

John Hannah: a Clerical Study, by J. H. Overton, Canon of Lincoln, and Rector of Epworth. 1890; Rivingtons.

WE congratulate Canon Overton upon a remarkable achievement. He has given to the world a distinct and vivid portrait of a man who well deserved a fitting memorial. Canon Overton has received assistance from men of mark who knew Archdeacon Hannah well, and the paradox of his introduction, which states the reason why a memoir is in this case justified, is amply vindicated. Interest and instruction, as Canon Overton says, can be afforded from the lives of men who never rose to the highest places in the Church, as well as in the case of men who have been placed in positions they might naturally have shrunk from filling. Dr. Hannah would have been in his place as a Bishop, a Dean, or the master of a college. Fate had, however, other things in store for him; but wherever he was, there was the note of distinction, courage, and high-souled feeling. These are not common qualities, and it is well that there should be preserved in such a record as Canon Overton's a memorial of a man of whom the late Mark Pattison could say, with emphasis, that the mental stimulus he had received from Hannah and another distinguished Fellow of Lincoln, Dr. Kay, was the best part of his education. We already owe much to Canon Overton. His account of William Law has done much to revive a taste for the works of an author too little read, and too much forgotten. We hope that this brief but admirable sketch will send some readers to a study of Dr. Hannah's "Discourses on the Fall, and its Results," and the Bampton Lecture, which contains many important truths too much lost sight of by some recent writers, on the "Relation between the Divine and Human Elements in Holy Scripture."

John Hannah was born at Lincoln in 1818. He was the son of a very eminent Wesleyan minister, who considered himself in no ways hostile to the Church. The resolution to join the Church of England, taken in early life, made no difference in the cordial attachment of father and son. John was the only survivor of eight children. A fondness for poetry, and especially for early English poetry, early developed, may possibly have kept Hannah from the highest place in technical scholarship; but, on the other hand, it gave a real colouring to the rich culture which was his distinguishing characteristic in later years. Many years ago the writer of the present notice met on the Continent one who had known Hannah when he was the pupil of Mr. Lancelot Sharpe, and who declared that his schoolfellows would, with one voice, have pronounced him to be a proper

person to edit the *Quarterly Review*, even before he had become an Oxford undergraduate. Hannah was fortunate in being elected a scholar of Corpus. The traditions of the college were pure and high. The literary tastes, however, were never suppressed. His life on the whole was one of retirement. But to have gained the place he did, in a singularly brilliant "First-Class," is an evidence of real work, which must often have been pursued under difficulty. Whatever may have been the defects of his scholarship as a boy, there were no weak places visible when Hannah came to instruct others, and a high tribute to his keen acumen as a careful student of Plato was accorded to him by the late Charles Badham, certainly one of the best Greek scholars of his time. Oxford was at this time a place of great interest. Controversy was in the air, and the anxious father saw with apprehension certain tendencies which alarmed him; but the sound moderation and good sense which distinguished Hannah through life preserved him from the falsehood of extremes. The picture which Canon Buckle, of Wells, gives of Hannah's kindness as a friend, and his keen delight in literature, is a very pleasing one. A Fellowship at Lincoln was only held for a short time. Hannah married early the sister of his friend Canon Gregory; and shortly after his marriage he accepted the cure of a small village near Woodstock, where he gathered pupils round him, and threw himself into his new occupation with extraordinary energy. This mode of life was, however, soon abandoned; and he returned to Oxford and became, for many years, the leading "science and logic coach." It is impossible to say what Hannah did for his pupils. As one of them used to say: "We owe him our 'Firsts,' and we owe him ourselves." Long after he had left Oxford his "Notes upon the Ethics" were copied and recopied, and gave instruction to many who never saw even his face. Had he remained at Oxford he must, in a few years, have obtained a more dignified position than that of an ex-Fellow with a large body of attached pupils. But in the year 1847 the Rectorship of the Edinburgh Academy was vacant, and, though Dean Mansel, Canon Rawlinson, and Sir Francis Sandford were in the field, Hannah, who was not yet thirty, was wisely elected. He was a first-rate schoolmaster, and had a real pride in his work. The task of Rector was by no means an easy one, and it was sometimes difficult to steer amongst the shoals of Edinburgh society. Bishop Terrot, who had a most unfeigned admiration for Hannah's genius, used to say that a good fairy had been present at his birth and said, "Be a perfect Rector at the Edinburgh Academy." He had many distinguished men among his pupils. The old charm of Edinburgh society had not quite passed away, and cultivated lawyers found in Hannah a

congenial companion. Occasional sermons, preached in the chapels of the Scottish Episcopal Church, added greatly to his reputation, and no one was surprised that, after seven years of Edinburgh life, he should be urged to accept the wardenship of Glenalmond College. Here began a new phase in his remarkable career.

The college was in financial difficulty, but the new Warden showed remarkable power of management. The staff was loyal on the whole, and, though the first ten years were not altogether easy, difficulties were overcome, and skill and temper had their reward. During the last years of his stay at Glenalmond sorrows overtook him—in 1867 his venerable father passed away, and his only daughter died in 1870. His resignation of the wardenship had been sent in shortly before her death. A residence at Oxford had been thought of. The living of Middleton, vacant by the promotion of the present Bishop of Chichester, was declined, and at Lutterworth Dr. Hannah would have found retirement were it not for the offer of the important vicarage of Brighton, which came to him before he had actually been appointed to the place for ever associated with the memory of John Wiclif. It was no easy task, at the age of fifty-two, to bring order and method into the work of the vicarage of Brighton. At the time when the Bishop of Chichester offered Dr. Hannah the appointment, many thought that a mistake had been made. But events proved how sagacious and discriminating the patron's choice had been. Canon Overton's account of the way in which the new vicar conducted his vessel through a sea of difficulties is accurate and complete. The unwieldy parish was well divided, and the fairness and justice of the new vicar's decisions established for him a position such as few rectors or vicars have ever attained. Mr. Stapley, who knew the difficulties of the work, has contributed to the pages of the memoir a clear and distinct account of the comprehensive plans and careful method which were conspicuous during the years of Dr. Hannah's vicariate. His power of preaching developed in a way which took many of his old friends, who had thought the style somewhat academic, entirely by surprise. The Bishop of Chichester has given an admirable estimate of Hannah's preaching and power: "A man so devoted to his holy calling, so pious, so learned, with so vivid an intellect, could not fail to preach ably and acceptably. But he was eminently a teacher, with singular aptitude for imparting the knowledge which he possessed." It may, perhaps, be added that the extreme intellectual eagerness of Dr. Hannah, sometimes outrunning his power of expression, was the only drawback to his attaining the very first place among the preachers of his day. In the small volume of sermons published when he was Warden of Glenalmond, there are some

admirable discourses, which exhibit his characteristics as a preacher most remarkably. Students desirous of seeing how deep subjects, such as "Scripture Accommodation" and "Life Eternal," can be treated as addresses from the pulpit, could not do better than study the first and last sermon in this little volume, only, we fear, occasionally to be met with in second-hand booksellers' catalogues. There is something almost pathetic in the hard fate of many volumes of excellent sermons, unknown except to diligent students alive to real merit. The author of "Papers on Preaching," the late Mr. Davies, attempted a good work in reviving interest in the sermons of Bradley, Cooper and Wolfe, and, had he lived, he intended, we know, to ask permission from Archdeacon Hannah to reprint several of these sermons as models for his younger brethren in the ministry. The present Vicar of Brighton would, we believe, confer an obligation on many were he to select for publication some of his father's matured thoughts on the interpretation of Scripture.

We have no time to dwell on the many labours of the Vicar of Brighton. In the work of the archdeaconry, to which he was appointed by the Bishop, he took great delight. Wherever he went he raised the standard of restoration, and he had no false delicacy in declaring his opinion as to the pew system, and the neglect which he sometimes witnessed in remote places.

In November, 1887, after seventeen years' work as vicar, he resigned his cure. It was hoped that a few years of rest and leisure might be granted to him, but in a few months he passed away from his life of "undoubting faith and cheerful performance of his Master's work." Those who counted it one of the highest privileges of their lives to spend a few days in his company, and to feel invigorated from contact with his keen intellect, his acute judgment, and his extraordinary impartiality in dealing with theological questions, felt they were indeed poorer when they heard of his departure. Canon Overton has done well in printing, at the end of this volume, the last sermon preached at the parish church of Brighton. Dr. Hannah, as he wrote that sermon, may have had in his recollection a touching scene, of which he was himself a witness, when John Henry Newman preached for the last time in Littlemore Church, the famous sermon on the "Parting of Friends," which had for its text "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." One of the last compositions he penned was a contribution to the pages of *THE CHURCHMAN*, "Christianity without Christ," as full of point and vigour as any of his papers previously published.

We venture to think that a higher distinction than that of Vicar of Brighton and Archdeacon of Lewes ought to have been bestowed on one who was in every sense a real worthy of the English Church.

G. D. BOYLE.