

ART. VII.—"LIFE AND LETTERS OF BROOKE FOSS WESTCOTT, D.D."<sup>1</sup>

## I.

THESE volumes are a worthy record of a life of far-reaching influence and power. But they are more than this: they contain, in private letters written to intimate friends, a rich legacy of precious thoughts and judgments from one who had qualified himself to be regarded among his contemporaries as pre-eminently a Christian philosopher.

Many will remember the regrets uttered by scholars when it became known that Professor Westcott had accepted the Bishopric of Durham. There would be no more valuable commentaries upon the various books of the New Testament, and no more essays like that upon "Origen and the Beginnings of Christian Philosophy." But this "Life" convinces us that, if from one point of view his elevation to the episcopate was a loss, from another point of view it was a decided gain. It made the thinker into a speaker. So to speak, it *forced* him into the pulpit and on to the platform, and it compelled him to give his message, not only to the student in the lecture-room, but to the Church and to the nation. As we think over the contents of "Christian Aspects of Life," "Lessons from Work," and "Words of Faith and Hope," we cannot help wondering, had the same necessity—that which comes from filling a high position of public responsibility—been laid upon Dr. Hort, how much might have been given us which, alas! was—possibly through the very lack of this *necessity* of utterance—withheld.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature in Dr. Westcott's character was the combination of strenuousness and many-sidedness. The two qualities are rarely in such a degree found together as they existed in him. He was a first-rate scholar, theologian, and philosopher. He showed literary power of a very high order. His knowledge of mathematics and natural science was sufficient to make him a capable teacher in both subjects; besides, he was a cultivated musician, and an artist of whose capability the drawings scattered through these volumes are quite sufficient evidence. Yet in no one of these branches of knowledge was he the merely interested amateur; on the contrary, whatever subject he took up, he seemed in it to become a master. And where else shall we find an example of one who to the age of sixty-

<sup>1</sup> "Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott, D.D., D.C.L., sometime Bishop of Durham." By his son, Arthur Westcott. Two volumes. London: Macmillan and Co., 1903.

five had lived the life of the deep thinker, of shy and retiring habits, and who at that age becomes the able administrator, and develops the power of holding the attention of uncultured audiences on such subjects as the problems of trade-unionism, the rate of wages, co-operation, and other topics dear to the hearts of industrial democracy?

The many-sidedness of Bishop Westcott's life is beyond question; of the *strenuousness* of his life these two volumes form one long chain of evidence. If possible, his life was too strenuous. He seemed almost incapable of relaxation. A holiday was neither looked forward to nor enjoyed, except as an opportunity of doing work of a more permanent nature than could be done amid the daily discharge of the duties of his profession.

This quality of strenuousness was as evident in boyhood as in later life. In his school-days, under Lee at Birmingham, the hours which other boys spent in play "he devoted to voluntary classical work or to studying history and archæology." On his very occasional holidays he would walk from forty to fifty miles in the day, not for the sake of exercise, but "to study old castles and churches, or to search for plants and fossils." In the interesting account of Dr. Westcott's school-days (contributed by his brother-in-law), we read: "Earnestly and thoroughly, I may say intensely, he threw himself into every work. . . . I never knew him indulge in mere pastimes or loitering indolence of any kind. Unflagging in effort and thoughtful occupation, he even then had little time to play."

His life at Cambridge as an undergraduate was just as strenuous as it had been at school. He was accustomed to rise at 5 a.m., and, with short intervals for chapel and breakfast, to work until 2 p.m. From then until dinner, which was at 4 p.m., he walked. Chapel was again attended at 6 p.m., after which he usually read till midnight.

It is always interesting to trace the intellectual and spiritual growth of a great life, and especially during the "formative" years—say between eighteen and twenty-five—the period during which growth is generally most rapid, and when the particular "bent" or direction of life is usually taken or becomes fixed. For studying these years in Dr. Westcott's case there exist two series of documents of great interest and value, one being a long series of letters to his future wife—to whom he became engaged in his teens—the other being a diary which he kept while an undergraduate, and in which he used to note, not only events which occurred, but his own intimate thoughts, impressions, and judgments.

Still, we have to confess that, though the extracts from both

these sources are extremely full, the "curve" or "spiral" of Dr. Westcott's spiritual development is not easy to trace; and this is even more the case when we attempt to trace the development of his ecclesiastical ideas. Even at the cost of adding a few pages to the first volume, we think it might have been useful—at any rate, for the present generation—if the writer of the "Life" had given a brief sketch of the spiritual and ecclesiastical "atmospheres" of Cambridge—or of the want of these—during the early years of Westcott's residence there. This, we think, might have helped to explain the apparent absence of any influence upon him of any of the Cambridge clergymen and teachers, with, perhaps, the single exceptions of Harvey Goodwin (later Bishop of Carlisle) and, though in a less degree, of Professor J. J. Blunt.

Of the intensity of Westcott's own personal religion there are ample proofs—*e.g.*, the following extract from a letter to his father, written upon his election to the first University scholarship which he won: "If there is one thing in this examination I look on at all with pleasure, it is that I believe I did not go into a paper without first praying that I might consider it entirely in God's hands; that, however the result might be (not that I had any idea of getting the scholarship, but I hoped to do well), I might view it entirely as His will and the best that could happen" (vol. i., p. 39). But some of his judgments and opinions during this period, when compared with his views in later years, seem curious. To say that Westcott was ever "under the spell" of the Oxford Movement would probably be untrue, for of Hampden he writes: "I thought myself that he was grievously in error; but yesterday I read over the selections from his writings which his adversaries make, and in them I found systematically expressed the very strains of thought which I have been endeavouring to trace out for the last two or three years. If he be condemned, what will become of me? I believe he holds the truth" (p. 94). Yet, at the same time, to assert that the Oxford Movement had no influence upon him would, I think, be false. No book about this time is more frequently referred to by him than "The Christian Year," of which he writes: "I owe more to that book almost than any other." Again, within two pages (44, 45) occur the following extracts from his diary: (1) "Is there not that in the principles of the Evangelical School which must lead to the exaltation of the individual minister? and does not that help to prove their unsoundness? If preaching is the chief means of grace, it must emanate, not from the Church, but from the preacher; and besides placing him in a false position, it places him in a fearfully dangerous one." (2) "The question of Apostolical

Succession comes strikingly before me to-day. Never did the general truth of the doctrine appear so clear.”

But there was another factor in Westcott's development during these years which must not be forgotten, and which, we believe, left its influence—especially in his sympathy with those who were undergoing a like experience—upon the whole of his after-life. He passed through a period of doubt, but as to the exact nature of his difficulties neither his diary nor his letters belonging to the time are quite clear. In a summary of the year 1846 he writes: “I trust that my earnestness for higher objects has not grown colder. My faith still is wavering. I cannot determine how much we *must* believe; how much, in fact, is necessarily required of a member of the Church” (p. 46). Again, six months later, he writes: “I have never experienced more pleasure than in reading Butler again. I trust he has entirely dissipated my chief doubts. The few which still remain may be removed by greater earnestness and prayerfulness, I trust” (p. 51). And once more: “How many are the difficulties I experience no one can tell. At least, I trust I am teachable, and do sincerely desire to find the truth; but I cannot acquiesce in that which I *hope* is true without I am also *convinced*. . . . It is no unwillingness to believe makes me speak thus . . . but a sense of duty to inquire into the grounds of my faith” (p. 57). And yet again two years later he writes: “I suppose many feel as I do, and yet I dare look nowhere for sympathy. I cannot describe the feeling with which I regard the hundreds I see around me, who conform without an apparent struggle, who seem ever cheerful, ever faithful and believing. It is not joy and satisfaction, as it should be; it is not envy; but it is a kind of awe and doubt—a mixture of wonder and suspicion. May it soon be of hearty and sincere sympathy!” (p. 111).

The spirit which these confessions breathe is prophetic of the result of the struggle—that is, a sure and certain victory for faith, and that a faith which was not “accepted,” in the usual sense in which the word is employed, but a faith won and enjoyed as the issue of deep thought and patient study. How much does all this explain in his future teaching—*e.g.*, in “The Gospel of the Resurrection” and in “The Gospel of Life”!

After taking his degree, Westcott remained at Cambridge for three years, taking private pupils, among these being Lightfoot, Hort, and E. W. Benson. It was during these years that his first book—the Hulsean Prize Essay for 1850—was written. Originally published as “The Elements of the Gospel Harmony,” the volume was in the second and

subsequent editions much enlarged, and its title was changed into "An Introduction to the Study of the Gospels." Commenting on the early age at which this, now a standard theological work, was written, the writer of Bishop Westcott's obituary notice in the *Times* (July 29, 1901) remarked: "Men do not to-day stop to think what an extraordinary *tour de force* this book represents as coming from a young man of five-and-twenty. From the Fathers to the Germans, such as Sonntag and Hagenbach, Westcott had covered the whole field of theological literature, and he could bring to the discussion thoughts of almost Apostolic depth and insight."

In the year 1851 Westcott was ordained both deacon and priest by his old master, now Bishop of Manchester. "But," as his son writes, "he was never able to look back with any pleasure on the circumstances of his ordination. He was greatly disappointed at the lack of fatherly sympathy for which he had hoped, and grieved at the generally un-devotional character of the proceedings."

That Westcott's doubts had by this time ceased to trouble him, the following extract from a letter to his future wife seems to be proof: "It is never possible to be too secure or too clear in our views. There is a far closer connection between reason and faith than most persons are ready to acknowledge. To believe firmly we must know distinctly; many of the objects of our faith may be mysteries, but we must at least know they are such, and we must feel their immensity. This disconnection of knowledge and faith, so common in our age, is to be paralleled by the common excuse given for different men, 'that they act according to their conscience,' as if conscience was as definite a power as one of our senses, and not to be trained and enlightened according to the means vouchsafed to us; as if a man were not as much answerable for his conscience as for his actions" (p. 139).

At the end of 1851 Westcott left Cambridge. "He had fully determined," says his son, "to enter on other fields of educational work where a wife could help him," and so in January, 1852, he undertook temporary work at Harrow under Dr. Vaughan. But the temporary work became so far permanent that, as an assistant-master, he remained at Harrow until 1869. The same year that he went to Harrow he married Miss Whithard, to whom he had been so long engaged. His "views of life" at this time are contained in the following extract from a letter to her in reference to their future life and work together: "To live is not to be gay or idle or restless. Frivolity, inactivity, and aimlessness seem equally remote from the true idea of living. I should say that we live only so far as we cultivate all our faculties and

improve all our advantages for God's glory. The means of living then will be our own endowments, whether of talent or influence; the aim of living, the good of men; the motive of living, the love of God. . . . Every pleasure that rests on any other basis must be unsatisfactory; every pain that is supported by any other prop, overwhelming. We must, then, look forward. We must value our earthly blessings as pilgrims would a fair scene. We must take comfort and refreshment from them, and then press more vigorously onwards. But still more, 'no man liveth to himself.' We should remember the incalculable effects of the most trifling actions. The fate of thousands will depend on you and me. . . . We must remember that we are beacons 'set on an hill,' which, if they give an uncertain light, will bring ruin on countless multitudes of harbourless mariners. . . . Let us remember that we do not injure ourselves alone by neglecting a duty but many a being, who but for our carelessness might have shared in endless happiness, that by our zeal we awaken others from their indifference, and are allowed to minister to the good of thousands" (pp. 145, 146).

The eighteen years which Westcott spent at Harrow were a very important epoch in his life; perhaps not so much on account of the direct teaching work which he did there, as for the immense amount of work he accomplished in his "leisure" time. Of his success as a schoolmaster it would be difficult to speak with certainty, the truth probably being that, while his influence on the school as a whole was not great, his influence on a comparatively few thoughtful and studious boys, who came under his immediate care and instruction, was extremely powerful. When we consider the amount and the quality of the extra work he accomplished during these years, and that for this he never neglected, but, on the contrary, was "constantly discharging to the uttermost, his regular school duties," and was "during the long years of his Harrow life heart and soul a Harrow master," we can well understand, as his son tells us, that "his industry and his capacity for work were extraordinary." To this period belong many of his most important writings—*e.g.*, "The Canon of the New Testament" (1855), a large number of long articles in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible" (1860-1863), "The Bible in the Church" (1864), "The Gospel of the Resurrection" (1866), many of the essays in "The History of Religious Thought in the West" (1866-1867), and "The History of the English Bible" (1868).

Some of the testimonies to Westcott's work and influence during this period are very striking—*e.g.*, those from Mr. C. B. Heberden, Bishop Gore, and Sir Charles Dalrymple. And

among the letters belonging to the Harrow years, readers of the "Life" will find some very valuable thoughts, of which the following are examples :

1. "This fact [of the Resurrection as a miracle], unless I am mistaken, is the very centre of the Apostolic teaching, and I am particularly anxious to get it placed in that light. The discussion of other miracles seems to be subordinate to that, and I do not see any objections to which the 'lesser' miracles are liable which do not lie against it; while, conversely, the relation of the Resurrection to the whole economy of Christianity seems to me to furnish the true explanation of the meaning of the other miracles" (p. 280).

2. "You will imagine that I felt the defects of 'Ecce Homo' far more than its merits. I cannot think that any estimate of our Lord's work and person which starts from its ethical aspect can be other than fatally deceptive. This was not that which the Apostles preached, and not this could have conquered the world. I feel more strongly than I dare express that it is this so-called Christian morality as 'the sum of the Gospel' which makes Christianity so powerless now" (p. 289).

3. "How marvellous that it should be left for the Comtists to rediscover some of the simplest teachings of Christianity! scarcely less marvellous than that Mr. Mill should be so profoundly and sincerely ignorant of what Christianity is, and of the religious significance of Comtism. . . . I do feel that it ought to be impossible for men to misrepresent the fundamental ideas of Christianity, and yet they do on all sides without fear of contradiction or detection" (p. 291).

4. "More and more I am convinced that the work of the Church must be done at the Universities . . . it is too late to shape men afterwards, even if they could be reached. Everything forces me into the belief that the only possible organization of a spiritual power—the paramount want of the time—is there, and that there it is possible" (p. 292).

5. "I can imagine nothing more deplorable than for a State to become without a religion. I should strive, then, to the uttermost to retain a Christian body bound to administer, when called upon, every Christian rite to every subject" (p. 295).

In 1869 Dr. Magee, then Bishop-designate of Peterborough, invited Westcott to become his Examining Chaplain, and at the same time offered him a stall in the cathedral. "It was surely remarkable," writes his son, "that my father's first offer of any sort of ecclesiastical preferment should have come from one who was a stranger to him, and not a member of either of the great English Universities." This offer, though it meant

a very serious loss of income, and that at a time when he could, with his growing family, ill afford it, Westcott accepted, after four days' consideration. Two years later the Bishop offered him the Archdeaconry of Northampton, but this he declined, "because he was unwilling to accept an ecclesiastical as distinct from an educational office." In the same year (1870) he was appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge (his period of residence at Peterborough always began and ended in the course of the Long Vacation); five years later he was appointed an Honorary Chaplain to the Queen, and succeeded to a Chaplaincy in Ordinary in 1879.

In his work at Peterborough the many-sidedness of Westcott's nature and interests was very manifest. How various both his interests and his activities were is admirably described in the very interesting chapter entitled "A Minster Memory," contributed by Precentor Phillips, who writes: "The coming of Dr. Westcott was always welcomed as a source of fresh life by the cathedral staff. The precentor was stimulated in choosing music for the services. The organist knew that every improvement in rendering it would at once be noted. The lay-clerks and choristers felt certain of his lively interest in the singing; while each and all were assured that every effort would be appreciated, and every gift, great or small, gladly recognised by one who had always a keen eye for the merits of those around him. . . . But Dr. Westcott's efforts were by no means confined to improving and developing all that he found possible in the cathedral itself. He was ever ready and anxious to help forward every form of good work attempted in the city."

Dr. Westcott's own variety of interests, as seen in his work at Peterborough and elsewhere, was only the personal carrying out of a principle which he tried to impress upon the younger clergy. "The clergyman should cherish the widest sympathies, the most varied interests. . . . Our greatest privilege is not to suppress what belongs to sense, but to see all transfigured; not to regard time as a tedious parenthesis, but as the veil of eternity, half hiding, half revealing, what *is* for ever; not to divert the interest of men from what they have to do, but to invest every fragment of work with a potential divinity. . . . The meaning of the phrase 'spiritual power' has been unduly narrowed in these later times" (p. 360).

Dr. Westcott's connection with Peterborough, as is well known, came to an abrupt and painful end, though at the time the exact cause of his sudden resignation of his canony and chaplaincy was known only to a few. The facts in the "Life" are stated thus: "Dr. Westcott resigned his canony, at the request of Bishop Magee, on May 9, 1883. . . . This



most unhappy occurrence . . . was to my father himself a great surprise and shock. . . . The Bishop's contention was that my father neglected his duties as Examining Chaplain, and should, if he resigned that office, resign his canonry also” (p. 322).

Dr. Westcott's letter to the Bishop in answer to this charge, and of which it contains a complete refutation, is printed at length (pp. 322-324). The letter is much too long to give in its entirety, but, to show how completely Dr. Westcott met the Bishop's charge, the following sentences may be quoted: “I have given ungrudgingly from first to last, without the least variation, the best I have had to give. It is true that during fourteen years I have been absent from two examinations, when the Trinity Ember Week fell, as this year, in full-term time, and, in addition, from two—it may be three—days of ordination, for urgent personal reasons, which you kindly approved. On the other hand, I have, as a matter of course, and gladly, sacrificed every Christmas vacation, a time which is at my own disposal, so as to leave myself only one month in the year for rest and travel.”

Within a week of the resignation of his chaplaincy to the Bishop of Peterborough Dr. Westcott accepted a similar appointment from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a very few months later Mr. Gladstone gave him a stall in Westminster Abbey.

Readers of the “Life” will notice that chapters vi., vii., viii., and ix., entitled “Peterborough,” “A Minster Memory,” “Cambridge,” and “Westminster,” do not deal with successive periods of Dr. Westcott's life. He was, we must remember, Canon of Peterborough from 1869 to 1883, and of Westminster from 1884 to 1890, while he was Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge from 1870 to 1890; thus, the period of the professorship is almost exactly contemporaneous with those of the successive canonries.

Let us now briefly consider chapter viii. (“Cambridge”), which deals directly with Dr. Westcott's work and influence in that University. Some of us doubtless feel that as Divinity Professor Westcott may be longer and more widely remembered than even as Bishop of Durham. As Bishop his words, no doubt, reached directly a wider circle, but in Cambridge he was, if in a different way, influencing those who in a thousand various and widely-scattered spheres—in professorial chairs and University lectureships, in theological colleges and public schools, and from the pulpits of cathedral, town and country parishes—would become the channels through which his teaching and his influence would be brought to innumerable hearers.

The "spirit" in which Westcott approached his work as a Divinity Professor is indicated in the following sentences from a letter to Dr. Lightfoot: "Those who offer congratulations [on his appointment] . . . hardly feel what the work to come is. I feel to want sympathy and prayers, not congratulations" (p. 367). One of his ideals upon taking up the professorship was that the various teachers in divinity should work more in common, and in order to widen the scope of the theological faculty he tried to enlist the co-operation of Maurice, then Professor of Moral Philosophy, to whom he writes: "The thought has occurred to us that you may have selected for your subject some topic of Christian ethics. . . . Without some such application of theology to life our scheme will be very imperfect, and it will be an inestimable gain to the students preparing for Holy Orders if they can from the first be taught to feel that social morality is one side of the doctrine of the Church" (p. 369). Another of Dr. Westcott's objects was "to secure a real value for the University's divinity degrees," and "he was not afraid to disappoint entirely some who sought the D.D. degree." We must also remember that it was during the first half of his years as Professor that Dr. Westcott was engaged as a member of the New Testament Committee in the work of the Revised Version. Upon three questions which are still of current interest, we may note that Westcott was a strong supporter of the University Extension movement, that he was in favour of the retention of Greek as a compulsory subject, and also that he was strongly opposed to granting the University's degrees to women. The following are the more important works published by Dr. Westcott in the twenty years during which he held his professorship at Cambridge: "The Religious Office of the Universities" (1873), "The Paragraph Psalter" (1879), "The New Testament in the Original Greek" (with Dr. Hort), "The Revelation of the Risen Lord" (1881), "The Gospel according to St. John" (in the "Speaker's Commentary" (1882), "The Epistles of St. John" (1883), "The Historic Faith" (1883), "The Revelation of the Father" (1884), "Christus Consummator" (1886), "Social Aspects of Christianity" (1887), "The Epistle to the Hebrews" (1889).

In one<sup>1</sup> of the letters belonging to the Cambridge period occurs, I think, almost the earliest instance quoted of Dr. Westcott's strong dislike to ritualism. "The spirit of ritualism and the spirit of scientific materialism," he writes, "seem to me to be essentially identical. Both tend to hide from us that which is eternal, of which things of sense are the transitory

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<sup>1</sup> To Archdeacon Farrar, 1883.

symbols. If only we come back to life—to the life of the New Testament (or of the Bible)—to the Life, we shall have hope” (p. 441).

W. EDWARD CHADWICK.

(*To be continued.*)

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ART. VIII.—THE MONTH.

THE mischievous proposal of the Army Guild, on which we commented last month, to hold what would have justly been regarded as an approach, at all events, to a Requiem Mass in St. Paul's Cathedral, has happily been prevented. In consequence of the public protests which were made, including a remonstrance addressed to the Dean of St. Paul's by three Prebendaries of the Cathedral, the proposal was withdrawn by the Army Guild itself; and, with a good feeling which claims recognition, not only was the proposed service abandoned at St. Paul's, but no attempt was made to hold it elsewhere. It is a matter for thankfulness that a proposal which, if persisted in, must have occasioned much strife has thus been successfully resisted; and the widespread public feeling to which this success is due, illustrated by the remarkable support which the *Times* newspaper gave to the resistance, is of good omen for the future. It is but just that a recognition should be expressed of the help rendered by the Ladies' League in the matter. Had not that organization been in readiness to act in such an emergency, a sufficiently influential protest might not have been made in time; and the letter addressed to the press by the President of the League was a good example of the combined firmness and moderation which is to be desired in such a question.

We observe that Canon MacColl, in the *Pilot*, with characteristic incapacity for confining his argument to the real point at issue, has expressed his satisfaction that the profession of allegiance to primitive practice, which is put forward by the leading Churchmen and Churchwomen who opposed the service, has thus been shown to be baseless, since prayers for the dead were undoubtedly a practice of the Early Church. This general question, however, has nothing whatever to do with the present issue. That which was opposed was not the kind of supplications for the holy Dead which are to be found in early Liturgies, but the celebration of the Holy Communion with the avowed intention, on the part of the promoters of the service, to celebrate it as a sacrifice on behalf of the soldiers who had fallen in the war.