

W S GELDER

BRIEF SKETCH
OF THE
LIFE AND LABOURS
OF
John Nelson Darby

COMPILED FROM RELIABLE SOURCES

By W. G. TURNER.

W S GELDER

London :

THOMAS WESTON, 53 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

—
1901

~~Printed by~~

BRIEF SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE AND LABOURS

OF

JOHN NELSON DARBY

COMPILED FROM RELIABLE SOURCES

BY

W. G. TURNER.

W. S. GELDER. EVANGELIST

LONDON :

THOMAS WESTON, 53 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1901

JEAN L'ANGELO'S

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.	INTRODUCTORY.
CHAPTER II.	EARLY LIFE.
CHAPTER III.	HIS FRIENDS.
CHAPTER IV.	HIS CHARACTER & PRINCIPLES.
CHAPTER V.	REMINISCENCES.
CHAPTER VI.	HIS WRITTEN WORKS.

JOHN NELSON DARBY.

CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTORY.

THE year 1800 witnessed the birth of two remarkable men, the influence of whose powerful personalities is still with us. The one was E. B. Pusey and the other John Nelson Darby. Both were clergymen of the Established Church. If both lived a life of practical asceticism, they both yearned, though in a wholly different way, to realise a great ideal (the unity of the Church of God); and both have left indelible marks, either on the face of Christendom, or in the hearts of God's saints.

It is noteworthy too that both departed this life within a few short months of each other. Dr. Pusey will ever be remembered by the views and practices associated with his name. He found the Church of England in a state of nearly unparalleled apathy and supineness. The clergy were, with some honourable exceptions, worldly and careless, the laity correspondingly so too. The Lord's Supper was celebrated very occasionally, the so-called churches were ill-kept and badly attended, the poor were conspicuous by their absence, and religion had become the monopoly of the better Evangelicals.

Amongst the Dissenters there existed a cold exclusiveness which almost amounted to Pharisaism, and saw in political reform their hope. The whole church, wise and foolish virgins alike, under the lethargic influences of the flesh, the world and the devil, slumbered and slept. It must be added that the Reform Bill had a manifest and powerful effect; for the Anglo-catholics could not but see that their house was in danger. They therefore felt the necessity of resting their

claims against radical encroachment on apostolic succession, saving ordinances, and imposing forms, to which Dissent had no pretension and in fact repudiated.

But the Spirit of God, Who at creation had brooded over the vasty deep, again made His divine influence felt. Almost imperceptibly, yet nevertheless surely, the hearts of believers in various sections of the professing church were stirred to study the scriptures, and in so doing found a flood of light gradually pouring into their minds.

Some, alas! like Dr. Pusey, instead of being humbled by scriptural light, obscured it by forms and human imaginings, imported mainly from traditions in the writings of the early fathers, thereby sowing baneful seeds of error, which have since been so abundantly fruitful. These disgusted with the sloth and apathy of actual Christendom, did not so much search the scriptures, as insist on the need of an interpreter. They ignored (though unintentionally) the Divine Instructor, Whose special mission it is to reveal and explain the things of Christ. Substituting for the Holy Spirit the confusions of the so-called fathers, they rapidly strayed more and more to masses, pardons, purgatory, indulgences, confessionals, crucifixes, adoring the host, holywater stoups, extreme unction. As Chas. Kingsley observes (himself quite humanitarian and blind as to the true light), "all the appliances of religion to deliver a man out of the hands of a merciful God" were speedily requisitioned. Yet their main object of visible unity, based on the principles of catholic corruption *after* the apostles had departed, and on mediæval development, was but partially realised even in their own eyes.

The result, as it must be, was that thousands of earnest and some pious souls were enslaved within the bonds of legal tyranny more irksome, debasing, and insufferable than even that of Judaism. It was indeed a species of a Jewish Pagano-Christian amalgamation. Some leaders may have been sincere; but their mistaken sincerity only proves too well the subtlety and craft of the enemy, and the folly of leaning to one's own

understanding in the things of God. Dr. Pusey and his friends sought to establish a restoration of united Christendom, ignoring the palpable fact of its departure from God and His word and Spirit, and its ruin doctrinally, ecclesiastically and morally. There remains the duty of every member of Christ strenuously to keep the unity of the Spirit, already established by God, whatever the sad universal disorder which prevails. It is not therefore of Dr. Pusey that we wish to write (other pens have told and re-told the story of the great Tractarian's life); but rather of the ex-clergyman, known to many by the familiar initials of J.N.D., with a heart broken by the sense of the church's sin and ruin, yet the unflinching asserter of the rights of the Lord, and of the unfailing word and Spirit of God.

CHAPTER II.—EARLY LIFE.

JOHN NELSON DARBY was born at Westminster in his father's London house on November the 18th, 1800. He was the youngest son of John Darby of Leap Castle, King's County, Ireland, nephew of Admiral Sir Henry Darby who commanded the *Bellerophon* in the Battle of the Nile, and godson of England's naval hero. His mother was of the Vaughan family well known in Wales, whilst on his father's side he was of Norman extraction. The greatest misfortune that can befall a child happened to him in his mother's death. Unquestionably thought to have been a man of decided opinions and manners, he ever cherished in his heart the most tender memory of his mother. When about fifty years of age he writes of her as follows:—"I have long, I suppose, looked at the portrait of my mother, who watched over my tender years with that care which only a mother knows how to bestow. I can just form some imperfect thought of her looks, for I was early bereft of her; but her eye fixed upon me that tender love which had me for its heart's object—which could win when I could know little else—which had my confidence before I knew what confidence was—by which I learnt to love, because I felt I was loved, was the object of that love which had its joy in serving me—which I took for granted must be; for I had never known ought else. All that which I had learnt, but which was treasured in my heart and formed part of my nature, was linked with the features which hung before my gaze. It was my mother's picture."

His mother's early training and influence was undoubtedly a powerful factor in his varied career. After an uneventful boyhood spent at Westminster, in its famous school, young J.N.D. matriculated at Trinity College, Dublin, thus visiting the land and people with which his family had been closely identified from before the Reformation. Here he made rapid

strides, becoming Classical Gold Medallist on the shorter time of a Fellow Commoner for his degree in his nineteenth year. He first entered the legal profession; but being converted to God, he changed it for holy orders from conscientious motives. This was a great disappointment to many, to none more than to his brother-in-law, the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland (then Sergeant Pennefather) who hoped, not only for his rise to the highest honours in the profession, but that his penetrating and generalising genius would have done much to reduce the legal chaos to order. But "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will."

Speaking to an eminent friend years after of conversion before peace of conversion, Mr. Darby said that for seven years he practically lived in the 88th Psalm, his only ray of light being in the opening words, "O Lord God of my salvation." To very few is it given to be thus exercised in soul; but undoubtedly the depth of the Lord's dealing with him at the commencement wonderfully helped him in after years, when standing in the forefront of the battle. Soon after adopting the work of the ministry, he was appointed to the curacy of a large district in County Wicklow; and having now a congenial sphere of labour and free scope for his energies, he threw himself heartily into all its varied duties. He was earnest and diligent in his ministrations, strict in his personal walk and churchmanship, endeared to the poor by his devotedness, and exercised a generally beneficial influence over the whole locality, where in schools etc. he spent his patrimony.

Mr. Darby would no doubt have been contented to have lived and died unknown; but God was fashioning him for a sphere of greater usefulness, to be entered upon in His own good time. In the discharge of his duties he met with an accident, injuring his foot, and had to go to Dublin for care and treatment, and there made some friends. He was specially active in the Home Mission of that day, which was greatly blessed in the conversion of Roman Catholics (at one time five hundred in a week) all over Ireland. But the work was

brought practically to a standstill by a Pastoral letter of Archbishop Magee, requiring the converts to take an oath of allegiance to the King. The converts were just the persons who least needed such a guarantee of their loyalty; and on inquiring Romanists it had the most repellent effect; for it seemed to them a question between the Pope and the King, and not of Christ at all. Mr. Darby could not stand this. Qualms he had from the very day of his ordination, with increasingly serious doubts as to his position in the Established Church; but that brought him to decision. He would not disobey his diocesan; and he believed it a dishonour to Christ's ministry and church to create a religious police for currying favour with the Government. Thorough saint as he was he relinquished a position that was to him untenable because unscriptural, and deadly to the glory of Christ.

He had come to see that the opening of the door to receive the whole population of a country into the most solemn acts of worship and Christian fellowship is a latitudinarian error. He was therefore constrained first to "Cease to do evil," not doubting that the Lord would ere long teach him to "Learn to do well." A brother clergyman (the Rev. James Kelly, then of Stillohan in Ireland), on sending to him the question long afterwards, "Why did you leave the Church of England?" was answered by Mr. Darby in the following words: "I find no such thing as a national Church in scripture. Is the Church of England—was it ever—God's assembly in England? I say then, that her constitution is worldly, because she contemplates by her constitution—it is her boast—the population, not the saints. The man who would say that the Church of England is a gathering of saints must be a very odd man, or a very bold one. All the parishioners are bound to attend by her principles. It was not the details of the sacramental and priestly system which drove me from the Establishment, deadly as they are in their nature. It was that I was looking for the body of Christ (which was not there, but perhaps in all the parish not one converted person); and

collaterally, because I believed in a divinely appointed ministry. If Paul had come, he could not have preached (he had never been ordained); if a wicked ordained man, he had his title and must be recognised as a minister; the truest minister of Christ unordained could not. It was a system contrary to what I found in scripture."

Mr. Darby, young as he was then, had, what the majority of professing Christians to-day sadly lack, a back-bone in his Christian life; he had moral stamina, and a spiritual judgment which tested questions by Christ; consequently he was willing to turn his back on all things else at the bidding of his Lord. Popularity, honour, lucre, and ease, what were they to him? But some of the young curate's friends in the city had been similarly exercised in heart; and, feeling the absence of spiritual life and Christian fellowship in the Establishment as well as in the Denominations, they were really thirsting for something which could not be found existing. In this state of mind they agreed to study God's word together, and look to the Lord for light and direction as to their future path. There was the usual result in such cases, that the Lord so satisfied their longing souls, that they considered all things but as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. As a poet has beautifully expressed it:

"For ah! the Master is so fair,
His smile so sweet to banished men,
That they who meet it unaware
Can never rest on earth again."

When he was at this time asked by the Rev. Robert Daly, (afterwards a bishop), "Well, John, you have left us: what church have you joined?" "None whatever," said he; "I have nothing to do with the Dissenters, and am as yet my own church."

Being unable to find an expression of the Church of God either in the national Establishment or in any of the dissenting societies, which never contemplated the large yet holy nature of Christ's body on earth, and could only be entered by

pronouncing their peculiar "Shibboleth," these brothers in Christ determined at all cost to go outside the religious camp of the day, gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus alone, the original, abiding, and only true centre for His own. So it came to pass in the winter of 1827 or beginning of 1828 that J. N. Darby and three others met together in Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin, on the Lord's Day mornings to "break bread" according to the word (Acts xx. 7). Ephesians iv. 3, 4, with Matthew xviii. 20, appears to have been the emancipating charter upon which they based their action, though these texts were in unison with all else, and but a sample of what gives God's will about His church on the earth. Being now freed from the grave-clothes of human systems, they rejoiced in that liberty of worship and service which the Spirit of the Lord alone can make effectual in the soul. Intelligently to worship the Father in spirit and truth, and direct responsibility to serve the Lord, while awaiting His return, are the proper sphere of the believer's aspirations here on earth.

Hence we find the subject of our sketch going hither and thither all over Great Britain and Ireland, as indeed afterwards, France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and Italy, etc., carrying the living water to thirsty souls. In early days the meetings in Powerscourt Castle, as subsequently in various centres of England, drew great attention to the Lord's coming and prophecy, the dispensations of God, the word of God, the operations of the Spirit, with the calling and privileges of the Church. Sixty or seventy of the most devoted clergymen, besides some dissenting ministers, have enjoyed the truth together with the earlier brethren, until they got afraid whereunto this would grow. In the open air, in barns, court-houses, schoolrooms, halls or wherever one could be got to attend to God's word, this devoted servant, not of an earthly Establishment but of a crucified and glorified Lord, was to be found. It was of course his lot to be thoroughly misunderstood, considered mad, dubbed a mystic, with all the etceteras, which whole-hearted devotion to our blessed Lord necessarily

calls forth in the scene of His rejection. But J. N. Darby was not only meditative as few are, but had thoroughly grasped and woven into actual practice the pilgrim side of the Christian calling. His beautiful hymn,

"This world is a wilderness wide :
I have nothing to seek or to choose,
I've no thought in the waste to abide,
I've nought to regret, nor to lose,"

sufficiently indicates the trend of the author's mind, at the same time giving in the following lines the ground for his course of action :—

"'Tis the treasure I've found in His love,
That has made me a pilgrim below."

His decision was not the product of a morbid spirituality, neither was it the offspring of religious emotionalism, but rather the result of a clear apprehension of the object for which he had been apprehended of Christ Jesus. May we, each one of us, endeavour to cultivate the same spirit.

CHAPTER III.—HIS FRIENDS.

OF friends, in the usual sense of the term, he had few; of fellow-saints and fellow-labourers, many. He had severed some of earth's closest ties, and broken the links of many a happy comradeship for Christ's sake and the gospel's. Yet it were well-nigh impossible, but that his dominant personality and devotion to our blessed Lord should attract men like-minded with himself, as also indeed some of weaker mental calibre, who were temporarily fascinated by the savour of Christ and the primeval freshness of his teaching, but failed to renounce the world and reduce that teaching to a life of obedience. In this case the last class shall be first mentioned. Of this number I venture to select two, Mr. Francis Wm. Newman (brother of Cardinal Newman), and Mr. Benj. W. Newton. These were both intimates of Mr. Darby in rather early days, but alas! widely drifted from the early teaching.

F. Newman, who won an unusually high double First Class at Oxford, was resident tutor at Sergeant Pennefather's, and thus saw much of Mr. Darby there invalided. But ere long he lapsed into a form of Scepticism or Deism, at least as soon as Darby's personal influence was withdrawn; whilst Newton, who had been Fellow of Exeter College, sought to introduce a quasi-clericalism of irresponsible type, with congregational independency, and (yet worse) a Judaising system of doctrine, into the little gatherings of believers that were formed. At a later date appeared his peculiar heterodoxy which seemed the fruit of his prophetic speculation in making Christ have the experience of an unconverted Israelite, in order to sympathise with a future Jewish remnant in that state. It was in resisting the error of Irving that he fell into this modified and subtle Irvingism himself.

It seems only fair however that Professor F. Newman shall speak for himself (*Phases of Faith*, etc.); and his testimony

may be to some all the more valuable, considering the ground he occupied at the time of writing. The following is an extract from the above work; which, as a graphic description of the subject of our sketch, may fittingly be introduced here.

“After taking my degree, I became a Fellow of Balliol College; and the next year I accepted an invitation to Ireland, and there became private tutor for fifteen months in the house of one now deceased, whose name I would gladly mention for honour and affection—but I withhold my pen. While he paid me munificently for my services, he behaved towards me as a father, or indeed as an elder brother, and instantly made me feel as a member of his family. His great talents, high professional standing, nobleness of heart, and unfeigned piety, would have made him a most valuable counsellor to me; but he was too gentle, too unassuming, too modest; he looked to be taught by his juniors, and sat at the feet of one whom I proceed to describe. This was a young relative of his, a most remarkable man, who rapidly gained an immense sway over me. I shall henceforth call him ‘The Irish Clergyman.’ His bodily presence was indeed ‘weak.’ A fallen cheek, a bloodshot eye, crippled limbs resting on crutches, a seldom-shaved beard, a shabby suit of clothes, and a generally neglected person, drew at first pity, with wonder to see such a figure in a drawing-room. It was currently reported that a person in Limerick offered him a halfpenny, mistaking him for a beggar; and if not true, the story was yet well invented.

“This young man had taken high honours at Dublin University, and had studied for the Bar, where, under the auspices of his eminent kinsman, he had excellent prospects; but his conscience would not allow him to take a brief, lest he should be selling his talents to defeat justice. With keen logical powers, he had warm sympathy, solid judgment of character, thoughtful tenderness, and total self-abandonment. He before long took holy orders, and became an indefatigable curate in the mountains of Wicklow. Every evening he sallied forth to teach in the cabins, and, roving far and wide

over mountains and amid bogs, was seldom home before midnight. By such exertions his strength was undermined; and he so suffered in his limbs that, not lameness only, but yet more serious results were feared. He did not fast on purpose [he *did* fast often on purpose, for neither display nor influence], but his long walks through wild country and amongst indigent people inflicted on him much severe privation; moreover, as he ate whatever food offered itself (food unpalatable and often indigestible to him), his whole frame might have vied in emaciation with a monk of La Trappe.

“Such a phenomenon intensely excited the poor Romanists who looked on him as a genuine ‘saint’ of the ancient breed. The stamp of heaven seemed to them clear, in a frame so wasted by austerity, so superior to worldly pomp, and so partaking in all their indigence. That a dozen such men would have done more to convert all Ireland to Protestantism, than the whole apparatus of the Church Establishment, was ere long my conviction; though I was at first offended by his personal affectation of a careless exterior [never was a greater mistake: it was his unworldly principle and practice]; but I soon understood that in no other way could he gain equal access to the lowest orders, and that he was moved, not by asceticism nor by ostentation, but by a self-abandonment fruitful of consequences. He had practically given up all reading but the Bible, and no small part of his movement soon took the form of dissuasion from all other voluntary study. In fact, I had myself more and more concentrated my religious reading on this one Book; still I could not help feeling the value of a cultivated mind. Against this my new eccentric friend (having himself enjoyed no mean advantages of cultivation) directed his keenest attacks.

“I remember once saying to him, ‘To desire to be rich is absurd; but if I were a father of children, I should wish to be rich enough to secure them a good education.’ He replied, ‘If I had children, I would as soon see them break stones on the road as do anything else, if I could only secure to them

the gospel and the grace of God.' I was unable to say Amen ; but I admired his unflinching consistency. For now, as always, all he said was based on texts aptly quoted and logically enforced. He made me more and more ashamed of political economy and moral philosophy and all science, all of which ought to be counted dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. For the first time in my life, I saw a man earnestly turning into reality the principles which others professed with their lips only.

“Never before had I seen a man so resolved that no word of the New Testament should be a dead letter to him. I once said, ‘But do you really think that no part of the New Testament may have been temporary in its object? For instance what should we have lost if St. Paul had never written, ‘The cloke that I left at Troas bring with thee and the books but especially the parchments?’ He answered with the greatest promptitude, ‘I should have lost something ; for it was exactly that verse which alone saved me from selling my little library. No! every word, depend upon it, is from the Spirit and is for eternal service.’ In spite of the strong revulsion which I felt against some of the peculiarities of this remarkable man, I for the first time in my life found myself under the dominion of a superior. When I remember how even those bowed down before him who had been in the place of parents—accomplished and experienced minds—I cease to wonder in the retrospect that he riveted me in such a bondage.”

As even an apostle's prayer so yearningly expressed in Ephesians iii. could not keep that church from losing her first love, neither did the powerful influence for good of J. N. Darby prevent Newman, early devoted as he seemed, from gliding out into the dark mists of Agnosticism. But we must leave him to his God and pass on, only giving a brief notice of another remarkable man and Oxford Fellow, Mr. J. C. Philpot, who too was once resident tutor at the Pennefathers', and knew Mr. Darby when he emerged out of the depths after seven years of bitter exercise into perfect peace with God. As Mr.

Philpot belonged to the extreme school of Hyper-Calvinistic Baptists, he greatly appreciated Mr. Darby's trial of spirit, but not at all his subsequent happiness. Yet he testified in the *Earthen Vessel* of that day (or is this the title of a subsequent serial of his party?) that Darby was "generous to the wasting of his substance, and possessed of more than martyr courage," and much more that memory fails to recall from so far back.

Of Mr. B. W. Newton one may well repeat the suggestive words of C. H. Spurgeon, who, in commenting upon his writings, observed "that in matter and spirit Mr. Newton is far removed from the Darby school." Yes, Newton was as essentially earthly-minded, as Darby was a heavenly-minded man. Yet Mr. Newton was a man of grave manners and of considerable influence over a certain class, especially ladies and men who had little to do. One of the earlier labourers at Providence Chapel, Plymouth, he was observed by some, almost from the first to isolate himself from other brethren. He held Bible-readings, and would not allow other labouring brethren to be present, saying that "it was bad for the taught to hear the authority of the teacher called in question, as it shook confidence in him."

Mr. Darby says, "I sorrowed over this unhappy trait of isolation, and love of acting alone, and having followers for himself. I had no suspicion of any purpose of any kind, and bore with it as a failing, of which we all had some. I should not so have acted without my brethren. I should have rejoiced to have my views corrected by them when I needed it, and learn theirs; but there it was and there I left it." At a meeting in Clifton Mr. Newton, speaking of ministry and points connected with it, "told me," says Mr. Darby, "that his principles were changed." "I replied that mine were not; that I felt I had received them from the Lord's teaching, and with His grace should hold them fast to the end." In a review of these facts, one cannot help observing how nearly C.H.S. all unconsciously hit the mark.

There were two others very different from these. One was earlier even than J.N.D. in learning Christian liberty, ecclesiastical and ministerial, but only in the germ and much simplicity, Edward Cronin (afterwards the last Canterbury M.D.). By birth a Romanist, he early came under the rough and ready discipline of his bishop, who finding that he read his Bible, and a Protestant one, knocked down the lamb on the spot, and thus opened the door for escape. This was in Cork. Coming to Dublin as a medical student, he learnt from God that Christendom was anomalous and refused to join a sect. Allowed to take the Eucharist in the Lord's name, he was after a very little excluded because he declined to become "a member" like the rest. But God gave him to take the simply Christian stand soon after, of which more anon.

Mr. G. V. Wigram was a later associate and intimate friend of J.N.D. but not before 1831, when they met at the latter's visit to Oxford. He was never great as a writer or a speaker; but his moral power, his spirituality and devotedness, and his decision where Christ was concerned, and his love for His flock, gave him a very and justly high place. His chief works in print were, *The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance to the Old Testament*, and also a cognate one to the Greek New Testament.

The last but by no means the least of J.N.D.'s friends, whom we will notice, though he appeared at a considerably later date, was one singularly like-minded with himself, and taught of God in the same school. He has also been the subject of frequent suggestive comments from the able pen of C. H. Spurgeon in his *Commenting and Commentaries*, of the *College Series*. He alludes to him in the following terms:—First, as a leading writer of the exclusive Plymouth School; secondly, as an eminent Divine of the Brethren School who sometimes expounds ably, but with a twist towards the peculiar dogmas of his party. In the third instance he remarks, "We are sorry to see such a mind as Mr. Kelly's so narrowed to party bounds;" fourthly, "it is a pity that a

man of such excellence should allow a very superior mind to be so warped ;” and lastly, he speaks of him as a man “ who, born for the universe, has narrowed his mind by Darbyism.” It would be absurd to attempt the story of Darby’s life and make no mention of an intimate fellow-worker, who revised his Synopsis more than once, and edited his other writings, not only English but from the French, German, Dutch, and Italian in some thirty to forty stout crown octavo volumes. Yet as he is still in the body, and is most strenuously opposed to self-advertisement, we must refrain and content ourselves by saying what is patent to the casual observer, that in spite of the drifting theological tendencies of the age, he still stands where he stood at the first. His old friend has fallen asleep ; but he remains to welcome the coming of the Lord ; “ for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” That light at eventide may be his portion until mortality shall be swallowed up of life is the desire of all who know him.

Mr. Darby possessed to a wonderful degree the faculty of remembering the names and faces of those who had once come under his notice, frequently surprising people thereby. A staid brother, well known to many, recalls the thrill of boyish delight which glowed in his youthful breast thirty years ago, at being addressed familiarly by name by the great man, to whom he had previously scarce spoken. His patience with honest ignorance, his ready tact, his manliness of character, and hearty sympathy, endeared him to many, especially amongst the poorer classes. A poor man, who had been unable to make a livelihood in England but anticipated better things in America, was hindered from emigrating through lack of funds. This was mentioned to Mr. Darby, who after due enquiry presented the astonished man with a cheque for fifteen pounds to pay his expenses. Just then the man’s circumstances improved, and he decided to stay in England. On his returning the cheque, Mr. Darby said, “ So you are not going now ; never mind, if you should want it, come to me

again." This is but an example of that practical Christianity which was conspicuous in J.N.D. but should be characteristic of all who follow Him "who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

A brother who hails from the land o' cakes and heather, speaking of a reading-meeting at which Mr. Darby was present, said to the writer, "I have seen an awkward clumsy youth who could not express his difficulty, stammering out a question that seemed almost too big for him, when Mr. Darby helped him out with it, and gave the solution of the difficulty in simple terms incapable of misunderstanding." No wonder that they loved him. He had no need to assume the position of a "father in God" to any, for this he was in reality to many. Some who once ran well, and yet have since gone back to the husks of the far country, still cherish an affectionate memory of the better days, and of him with whom they were then associated in Christian fellowship. So a gentleman of high professional standing, who once loved the truth that Darby taught, still keeps the portrait of his old friend and teacher upon his study wall, although he has long since ceased to be found gathered with the remnant who fear the Lord and tremble at His word. To all such we would earnestly say, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."

CHAPTER IV.—HIS CHARACTER AND PRINCIPLES.

FROM the simplicity and severity of his manner of life, somewhat approaching that of an anchorite of olden days, some have averred that J.N.D. was ambitious of ecclesiastical renown and actuated by a desire for influence over mens' souls. There is that in unworldliness and piety that irresistibly attracts a certain class of people, and unscrupulous professional religionists have not failed to take advantage of this human infirmity for their personal aggrandizement. Mr. Darby on the contrary had nothing to gain but everything to lose by his line of conduct. He might reasonably have aspired to the woolsack or the mitre, but he esteemed the reproach of Christ a far greater treasure.

“ If he had been an ambitious man, anxious to build up a great and prosperous society, with a view to illustrate his own name, rather than the glory of Christ, he might have compromised with Mr. Newton; and thereby saved the society from the schism which followed. But if he had done so, he would have been justly contemptible in the eyes of the true Christian. If, after withdrawing from other denominations because they were untrue to Christ's name and word, he had sanctioned fellowship with him or his allies, in spite of the outrageous dishonour put upon the Lord Christ, he would have been among the most inconsistent of men, the most patent of hypocrites. But such was not the character of John N. Darby. On the contrary, finding it impossible to expel Mr. Newton, with his ‘ blasphemous heresy,’ from the society at Ebrington Street, Plymouth, he withdrew himself therefrom, and went on with his missionary labors for the blessing and salvation of souls. Dr. Reid complains, ‘ Not content with this (his own withdrawal), he called upon Brethren everywhere to withdraw from all fellowship with Mr. Newton.’ He did right. He was a saint, and not a hypocrite; he was a champion of Christ, and

not a coward. Many of those called 'Brethren,' of course, followed the example and call of Mr. Darby; for they were not all apostates. Hence, when the true Christ was cast out of the camp at Plymouth, the faithful remnant went forth to seek Him. They refused to worship with the assembly, or to hold communion with the unfaithful brethren, who had set up the false Christ of Mr. Newton. This was the head and front of Mr. Darby's offending. If his whole life has been of a piece with this (and we have no reason to doubt it has been), then may we safely pronounce him a saint of the highest and purest stamp. He faced heresy in the very society originally formed by himself, even when outwardly most prosperous and flourishing; and, in spite of the obloquy, scorn, and contempt of the brethren once most dear to him, he continued, even as he had begun, to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. The world may pour contempt on such a man; sectarians may dip their pens in wormwood and gall for his destruction; and the eulogists of hypocrites and liars may denounce him as a fiend incarnate; but, in our very heart of hearts, we honour and reverence him as a true soldier of the cross." *

Whilst it is comparatively easy to transcribe historical facts respecting J.N.D. and his friends, it is a far different matter to attempt to delineate his character, being so many-sided. Lion-like against all that assailed Christ's person and work, or undermined God's word, no man was more childlike, especially with the poor, whom he visited regularly day by day in the midst of sustained study and constant authorship; for in this respect Professor N's appraisal was defective. Dead to mere letters, he was most diligent not only in all that pertained to the inspired text and its interpretation, but to every question connected with it and with souls, bad as well as good, ancient, mediæval and modern, and abroad no less than at home. Thus he abhorred Kant's principles; yet it would have been hard to find an Englishman as familiar with all he wrote in an

* Extract from the *Southern Review*, 1877, a little softened (saint for "hero," etc.).

uninviting style. His simplicity was touching and edifying. An old Christian woman sought fellowship at Islington, and was visited in view of this. Her account was that several young gentlemen called to see her, whose learned talk she hardly understood. But a dear old man visited her, with whom she felt quite at home: "he was so plain." It was J.N.D. So far was he from the sternness imputed to him, that he was only too lenient when devotedness appeared to be among the young; as he also clung but too tenaciously to old sharers of the common faith in spite of their narrowness and party spirit, which he disliked.

He could turn the blind eye as adroitly as his godfather at Copenhagen; yet he was liable to listen to evil stories, told him by rash and self-seeking persons, whom he credited with honesty. This dangerous credulity naturally increased with age; so much so that, when one of these mischievous workers, under his withering rebuke, wrote "I am a poor fool," J.N.D. turned round at once and committed himself to as great a mistake as he ever made. There has only ever been One whose character was perfectly flawless and evenly balanced, and He was the Son of God. There is an immense gulf betwixt even the most eminent and devoted servant of Christ and the Master Himself. He that is from above is above all, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, God be thanked that we have Him as an object for faith, hope and love. "Let me give what lets out a little of his character, nearly in Mr. Darby's own words extracted from a pamphlet, printed and published in Glasgow, on "The Sabbath: is the Law dead or am I?" "I love the poor, and have no distrust of them, living by far the most of my time amongst them, and gladly. When first I began such a life, I as to nature felt a certain satisfaction in the intercourse of educated persons: it was natural. If I find a person spiritually minded and full of Christ, from habit as well as principle I had rather have him than the most elevated or the most educated. The rest is all alike to me. The latter are apt to spare and screen themselves

to get on in society; they want a fence round them. I would rather in general have a poor man's judgment of right and wrong than another's; only they are, from being thrown more together and the importance of character, apt to be a little hard on each other as to conduct, and jealous of favours conferred, but often very kind and considerate one towards another. After all, we [believers] are all one in Christ Jesus, and the word of God is to guide and lead us withal. Surely, while every Christian will readily give honour where honour is due, God loves and cares for the poor. What sympathy can one have with the sentiment that, because the spirit of radicalism is to be feared, we must suit God's authority, if it be such, to man's wishes?

“This is morally very low ground. If in Parliament the proposition was made to shut up the London parks on Sunday (that is the foot-gates, leaving the carriage-gates perhaps open for the sick), I should have moved as an amendment (did I meddle with such things) to shut the carriage-gates, and open the foot ones; the rich could go out every day, and if sick could drive elsewhere. That a poor man, the one day he has with his family, should be able to breathe, is a delight. I rejoice, to see the affections of a father cultivated in kindness to his children, and both happy together; and if the Lord's day gives him the opportunity, the Lord's day is a true blessing. The poor, everyone labouring during the week, should insist on the Sabbath [so-called]; it is essentially his own day. For the same reason, if my vote decided it (and happily for me I have none, and would not have or use one), not a train should run on Lord's day. As to excursions, they are a thorough curse to all engaged in them. I cannot help: I leave them there.

“But as to Sunday trains, I do not believe they are for sole reasons to meet cases of necessity and mercy, as men speak; they are to make money. If it be alleged that the requirements of society oblige it, what are requirements of society but haste to be rich, and an imperious claiming of the right

to have one's own way? One understands very well that, railroads monopolising the roads, there is a kind of supposed obligation to meet the case of those who could have travelled at any rate; but if obliged, they can hire something to go. No, it is facility and cheapness they want; it is money and will. They are as free to travel as they were before. I have nothing to do with these things, and never intend to have to do with them. The world goes its own way; and I am not of it. The allegations of Christians about it I have to answer: and I do not accept them, or the accomodating Christianity to what is termed progress. The Christian has to form his own ways, and not expect to mend the world. There is no moral gain in its progress. We have telegraph and railway, very convenient no doubt; but are children more obedient, men happier, servants more faithful and devoted, homes and families more cherished? Is there more trust and genial confidence among men, more honesty in business, more kindly feeling between master and man, employer and employed? Let everyone answer in his own heart. You have more facilities in money-making, but more anxiety and restlessness in making it; more luxury and show, but not more affection and peace."

The careful reader will be enabled from the foregoing to understand in a measure J.N.D's character, as well as his views on a few home truths. Despite immense learning, his humility was very striking; he never intruded his scholarship into his ministry. A quaint old divine once remarked, that "Christ still hung crucified under Hebrew, Greek, and Latin:" so learned and pedantic was the preaching of that day. This was not so in Mr. Darby's case, however; for how few ever heard an allusion to the Hebrew or the Greek in his addresses? So much so that expectant strangers wondered and said, "What! is this the great Mr. Darby?" A common instance of his greatness of character and humbleness of mind occurred at a reading-meeting, where a brother advanced a peculiar theory, professedly based upon a quotation from J.N.D's collected writings. After a pause of a moment Mr. Darby

with imperturbable gravity replied, "Then J.N.D's writings are entirely at fault, for it is obvious that the theory is quite unscriptural, and therefore unsound." Needless to say, the brother had misread and misquoted Mr. Darby; he had in fact read his own ideas into the book, which is not difficult.

His tender thoughtfulness and consideration for children was markedly displayed during one of his many visits to the United States. A poor brother whose children kept tame rabbits, was extremely anxious to entertain the great man to dinner. The long-wished-for opportunity arrived. Mr. Darby with his usual christian courtesy and tact declined an influential brother's invitation to dine, but proceeded to the poorer man's house. The household were all on the tip-toe of expectation and pleasurable excitement with the sole exception of one downcast little fellow, whose tame rabbit had been requisitioned as the principal dish for the honoured guest's refectation. Whilst the dinner was in process of serving, Mr. Darby, noticing the little lad's downcast demeanour, enquired the reason; and the little fellow (contrary to previous instructions) blurted out the whole truth, with the result that J.N.D. expressed his sympathy with him in a practical manner.

Declining to eat any of the little fellow's pet, as soon as the meal was over he took him to where there was a large tank of water, and producing some mechanical toy ducks from his pocket, the great man played with the little boy for an hour or so; thus conferring all the honour of his company upon a little child in the hope of partially consoling him for the loss of his pet. He, Who is the Lord and Master of us all, has told us that humility is the truest greatness.

CHAPTER V.—REMINISCENCES.

A FRIEND of Mr. Darby's, who was for many years on intimate terms with him, has kindly forwarded the following interesting account of a most interesting career. He says, "As you wish for some personal reminiscences of the late J.N.D., I go back to my first intercourse with him in the summer of 1845 at Plymouth. For though I had been for years in communion before this, it had not been my lot to see him for whom above all others I had conceived, because of his love and testimony to Christ, profound respect and warm affection. I was then living in the Channel Islands, in one of which I began to break bread with three sisters in Christ, before ever looking a 'brother' in the face. It was in J. B. Rowe's shop, Whimble Street, that we met; and very cordial and frank was his greeting. Painful disclosures had already been made of an effort to undermine from within, and to set up, under His name Who had taught us liberty of ministry and the unity of the Spirit, a state of things contrary to His word.

"Mr. Darby was then bringing out in numbers the perhaps most valuable critique he ever wrote, in exposure of Mr. B. W. Newton's *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*; wherein the main object was to oppose, slyly but with set purpose, every truth which was distinctive of the movement, and all-important in our convictions of God's truth and glory in Christ. Nor was the revolutionary effort confined to the retrograde party in Plymouth. Mr. Chas. Hargrove, an Irish ex-rector, Mr. J. Parnell (was he yet Lord Congleton?), with others, had committed themselves on various grounds to the reaction. Mr. Darby had replied to them all, with an earnest trenchant ability which earned the dislike and resentment of such as love compromise, rather than truth. Though grieved to the heart at

schism, which must if unjudged lead to what the apostle calls 'heresy' or sect, it was clear to me which cared for Christ, and which did not rise above self or their friends.

"To established and non-established, it was just what many leaders of Christendom were desiring; for like the chief priests of old, they doubted whereunto this would grow. As no mean one among them wrote, they began to breathe freely when the Newtonian rent came. But a little matter of a private kind will interest you and your readers, as it gave me (some twenty years or so his junior) a practical lesson. When dining with Mr. Darby, he by the way said, 'I should like to tell you how I live. To-day I have more than usual on your account. But it is my habit to have a small hot joint on Saturday, cold on Lord's day, cold on Monday, on Tuesday, on Wednesday, and on Thursday. On Friday I am not sorry to have a bit of chop or steak; then the round begins again.' I too, like Mr. Darby, had been ascetic as a young Christian, and had been reduced, by general indifference to outward life, so low that the physician prescribed as essential what had been discarded in self-denial. How uncommon to find a mind endowed with the rarest power of generalisation, able to come down like the apostle, and impress on a young disciple, eating, drinking, or whatever is done, to do all unto God's glory! At that time Mr. Darby had not a whit of asceticism, but liberty and his heart bent on pleasing the Lord as to necessary food. To me, however small it might seem to some, it was a hint of daily value, and through me to others; for many a saint, when 'cleansed from leprosy,' forgets or neglects, in Levitical phrase, to shave off all his hair, and to wash his clothes, though he may duly bathe. So natural is it, as one of that class said, to retain and give to the Lord his 'gentlemanship'—a gift abhorrent in His eyes; for it is worldly to the core.

"Mr. Harris, Mr. Newton, Mr. H. Soltan, and many more I of course saw, and found full of kindness, even then when party spirit was doing its deadly work. For in brighter days did not Edward Irving call it a 'swamp of love', when his own

mind was carried away by pretensions to miraculous power, and to a ritual beyond the Ritualists?

“But such is the power of spirituality and devotedness, that Mr. Darby was the only one there to whom I felt free to tell confidentially the sad tale of an ex-clergyman’s sin, and to join with me in prayer respecting it. As the evil had come to my knowledge unsought and far away, it devolved on me in faith and love to seek him out, and lay what none perhaps suspected upon his soul before God. As he had already withdrawn from communion, one could leave all else with Him. No doubt he is long departed, and as no one is alive to guess the one meant, I venture thus to speak.

“It was at a much earlier date (1831, I think) that F. W. Newman invited Mr. Darby to Oxford: a season memorable in a public way for his refutation of Dr. E. Burton’s denial of the doctrines of grace, beyond doubt held by the Reformers, and asserted not only by Bucer, P. Martyr, and Bishop Jewell, but in Articles IX.—XVIII. of the Church of England. With a smile he said to me, ‘That is the only pamphlet by which I ever made money.’ The same visit of his acted more privately (not on Mr. W. E. Gladstone, who saw and heard him then) but on G. V. Wigram, Sir L. C. L. Brenton, B. W. Newton, and W. Jarrett, as well as others too halting in faith to make a decided stand and endure the consequences. It was characteristic of those young men that, when once at a conversazione some one remarked, ‘May the Lord give me a living in a beautiful country,’ (and *he* had more than his desire in a Scotch Bishopric), Mr. Wigram immediately exclaimed, ‘May He give me to follow and serve Him at all cost!’ He too had his heart’s desire. Sir Chas. Brenton hardly quite appreciated J.N.D., if one may judge by his rather severe saying, ‘I never knew a man in whom the two Adams were so strong.’ Sir Charles was rather legal, and suffered from it; so much so that J.N.D. called a few, not long before the former died, for special prayer on his behalf, and not in vain.

“It was, if I err not, before 1830 that, filled with the sense

of the Christian's union with Christ, J.N.D. visited London, and laid it before one regarded as among the most mature of the Evangelical clergy. But his own indifference to worldly appearances seemed to render that precious but little understood truth a dead letter to this divine, who confounded it with the new birth, as ill-taught saints commonly do. His tone was pompous and self-complacent. He evidently regarded his visitor as a poor curate airing as a wonder what all knew. But the well-appointed carriage from Westminster, with coachman and footman, came to take Mr. Darby to his father's house, and happened to catch the clergyman's eye, when his manner changed to servility. This disgusted my friend, who could make allowance for ignorance, but was pained by a worldly spirit in a Christian, especially in a christian minister. He well enough knew that the clergyman was of humble extraction; but this was nothing in his eyes if there had been spiritual feeling. Nor did the clergyman grow in grace any more than truth, when he became a bishop, and a metropolitan one. There was a worm at the root of his theology; for he betrayed unsoundness as to divine inspiration, both before his elevation to the episcopal throne, and after it. Such men cannot be expected to have ears to hear.

"I was unable to attend the Conference at Liverpool in the forties, but was present at that which was held in London in 1845. Only on the afternoon of the third day did J.N.D. rise to speak, and this, after a well-known friend had alluded to his silence in singular terms. Mr. D. explained that he had not spoken because so many brothers had a great deal to say. It was a most impressive discourse; for after many, and not leaders only, had spoken with considerable power and unction, he gave a terse summary, which set their main points in the best position, and then brought in a flood of fresh light from scripture on the whole theme. During the same Conference a noble personage, who resented D's exposure of a foolish and injurious tract by himself, gave way to vehement spleen. But J.N.D. answered not a word. Another, who

was no less unreasonably offended, came into the hall while Mr. R. M. Beverley was telling us what had helped him to what he regarded as the chief truth he had long wanted. The old brother (very deaf) entered, and went as near the speaker as he could, and heard him read a page of his own book, affirming the very doctrine of the Spirit's presence and working, which he himself was abandoning, and for which Mr. Darby had censured him. This incident made no small impression on me of a living God's ways.

“Considerate and kind as J.N.D. was to F. W. Newman, before Newman's active mind rebelled against ‘the doctrine of Christ,’ he had no real sympathy with the character either of him or of his brother the Cardinal. Men, and not God, governed them both, though in a different way. The younger of the two had been much the most distinguished throughout his academic career. The elder became a master of style in English writing, but a mere slave of tradition. Mr. Darby cared supremely for Christ and the truth to the glory of God the Father. Both brothers began as Evangelicals; but they diverged, as time went on, and were quite estranged, till the one became a Papist, and the other an infidel; then they ‘renewed happy intercourse.’ Anything like this was sorrow and shame to Mr. Darby, who could not respect, even as a man, him who wrote and justified No. 90 of the Oxford Tracts; for from beginning to end it is a barefaced and jesuitical plea, to construe in a Romanist sense the Protestant Thirty-nine Articles. More shocking still that Pusey and Keble etc., should endorse its deceit. Also what could J.N.D. feel but grief and indignation at the blasphemer, who at length could compare J. Fletcher's as a life more perfect than that of Jesus the Son of God? It is my judgment, that if Professor H. Rogers, in his *Eclipse of Faith*, crushed *Phases of Faith* on its own ground, much more did Mr. Darby, on a Christian basis, in his *Irrationalism of Infidelity*; just as he also laid bare the dishonesty of J. H. Newman's *Apologia pro sua Vita*. Even their logic was anything but immaculate.

“Mr. Darby was deliberate and prayerful in weighing a scripture; but he wrote rapidly, as thoughts arose in his spirit, and often with scarcely a word changed. He delighted in a concatenated sentence, sometimes with parenthesis within parenthesis, to express the truth fully, and with guards against misconception. An early riser and indefatigable worker, he yet had not time to express his mind as briefly and clearly as he could wish. ‘You write to be read and understood,’ he once said playfully to me; ‘*I only think on paper.*’ This made his writings, to the uninitiated, anything but pleasant reading, and to a hasty glance almost unintelligible; so that many, even among highly educated believers, turned away, because of their inability to penetrate sentences so involved. No one could be more indifferent to literary fame; he judged it beneath Christ and therefore the Christian. He was but a miner, as he said; he left it to others to melt the ore, and circulate the coin, which many did in unsuspected quarters, sometimes men who had no good to say of him, if one may not think to conceal the source of what they borrowed. To himself Christ was the centre of all, and the continual object before him, even in controversy; nor is anything more striking, even in his hottest polemics, than his assertion of positive truth to edification. He was never content to expose an adversary, where not only his unfaltering logic, but instant and powerful grasp of the moral side, and above all of the bearing of Christ on the question, made him the most redoubtable of doctors. Yet the same man ever delighted in preaching the glad tidings to the poor, and only paid too much honour to those whom he considered evangelists more distinctively than himself. Indeed I remember one, who could scarcely be said to be more so than he was, happening (to his own discomposure) to preach in his presence at one of the Conferences in the past (Portsmouth); and for months after, this dear simple-minded servant of the Lord, kept telling brethren in private, and not there only, ‘Ah, I wish that I could appeal to the people as So-and-so does!’

“That he exercised large and deep influence could not but be; but he sought it not, and was plain-spoken to his nearest friends. To one whom he valued as a devoted man, he said, ‘Come, ——, not so much of the gentleman.’ Another, dear to him from an early day and an admirable pastor, a good teacher and preacher, had got married to a worldly-minded lady (his second wife), though an Evangelical of the Evangelicals. This brother (an ex-clergyman) grieved him by running down the simple few gathered to the Lord’s name in the village where he lived. The complainant was no longer the labourer he had once been among the poor, but was as a half-squire and half-parson drawing back to a long abandoned social intercourse with county folk. ‘Ah! ——,’ said Mr. Darby, ‘it is not the brethren but the wife.’ That this was true made it the less palatable; and the wife did not fail to make it a rupture never healed. Nor was it only such cases that gave him pain. A lady I knew, when he paid a visit to Guernsey, invited a company to meet him in private, but exclusively of those who were in a good position. Had it been an Anglican Christian, or one with the Denominations, he would have made allowance and expected nothing else; but he was vexed that one in fellowship should be so far from the word and will of the Lord as to fail in giving an opportunity to lowly saints, rich in faith, who would have enjoyed it exceedingly. When asked to give thanks, he begged me to do so, meaning it as a quiet sign that he was displeased.

“It was my privilege, being actively engaged, to hear him very seldom, and this at great meetings in which he ordinarily took a large part; but I remember once hearing him preach (on Romans v. 20, 21) to a small company of the very poor; and to a more powerful and earnest discourse I never listened, though in the plainest terms, exactly suited to his audience. The singing was execrable; and he did his best to lead them, for his voice was sweet, and his ear good; but the barbarous noise of others prevailed, with which he bore in a patience truly edifying, going on with his message quite unmoved.

“Yet was he anything but self-confident. Being asked once to preach in the open air, he begged the younger man to take it; for said he, ‘I shrink from that line of work, being afraid of sticking in the midst, from not knowing what to say.’ He ungrudgingly delighted in the bold preacher with a heart full of the love of souls. He overlooked many faults, where he credited anyone with devotedness (sometimes at their own valuation). An intense admirer of his used to say that in this respect and others too, ‘he was the most gullible man in England.’ This of course was extreme exaggeration; nevertheless it occurred often enough to embarrass his fellow-labourers. I remember once in Bath remonstrating with him, because of his apparently unbroken confidence in a brother who was behaving very ill to his own mother and sister, whom he drove out of the meeting as a veritable ‘Diotrephes,’ to gratify his mad and unbelieving father. Mr. Darby soliloquised as we walked along, ‘Strange thing, that my pets should turn out scamps.’ I fear that so it evidently was with this person; for not long after he furnished the most defamatory scandal ever written, printed and circulated, against his blindly generous benefactor.

“The upshot of this case is instructive. The railer, who of course vanished, not only from fellowship but to another land, had great kindness shown him by a Christian man there, an Irish gentleman. Having occasion afterwards to visit Ireland, he enquired if any of his friends knew of one, Mr. Darby. Oh, yes to be sure! everyone knows of Mr. Darby. ‘Well’ said he, ‘I received —— and his large family for a long time; during which he was habitually abusing Darby. But I found *him* out to be worthless; so I came to the conclusion that the object of his abuse must be a very good man.’ It smacks rather Hibernian; but it was a sound instinct, and true in fact.

{ “The same readiness to believe the best, even of untoward souls, showed itself not seldom when persons drew on his purse, or, what was of more moment, sought fellowship through his mediation. Not a few even now will recollect an ex-

cessively turbulent man, who espoused the cause of one who had to be put out of fellowship; and being himself no less guilty, he fell under the like sentence. This man never appeared till Mr. Darby returned to London from his long journeyings, but repaired to him forthwith on his arrival. Then followed the renewed appeal: 'How is it that —— is still outside?' Thereon a dead silence ensued, easily understood; for everyone would have gratified Mr. Darby, had it been possible. At last a brother (now deceased), noted for his downrightness, said, 'Mr. Darby, we know ——; but you do not.' Yet were some weak enough to call him a Pope who would have his way, and bore no contradiction.

"A similar case, only more disreputable, of one excommunicated for outrageous profanity, etc., occurred much later. Mr. Darby's heart somehow was touched, because he came to the meetings, and indeed forced himself to the front, and tried, while unrestored, to appropriate the Lord's Supper. Yet our beloved friend looked leniently on what was very painful to most. He was as far as possible from the ogre which so many fancied, but inflexible against those who assailed Christ. So he himself used to say, 'I ought never to touch matters of discipline; for I believe the first person, brother or sister, that tells me about things. It is quite out of my line.' So much was this felt, that I used to pray the Lord that only a true account might first reach his ear. But every considerate Christian must be aware that the faithful were as slow to spread evil tidings to gain a point, as the light and party-spirited were quick to plead for those they favour, and especially with one so influential as J.N.D. Also, when one of his position and character took up a cause in this one-sided way, as might and did happen, all can conceive how difficult it was for others to convince, or for himself to revise. Do any blame me for giving these amiable drawbacks? I humbly think that even in a brief sketch it is hardly truthful to omit what has been here touched with a loving hand, and what he himself would have frankly owned. It is not for me to say one

word of what is best left in the grave of Christ, where my own failures lie buried.

“No man more disliked cant, pretension, and every form of unreality. Thos. Carlyle loudly and bitterly talked his detestation of ‘shams,’ J.N.D. quietly lived it in doing the truth. He often took the liberty of an older Christian to speak frankly, among others to a brother whose love, as he thought, might bear it. But sometimes the wound however faithful only closed to break out another day. ‘What were you about, ——, hiding among your family connexions, and not once seeing the brethren around?’ On the other hand reliable testimony is not wanting of his ready love in so lowly a way as to carry him where few would follow, especially where known. In early days, among the few at Plymouth a barber brother fell sick; and as no one else thought of his need, J.N.D. is said to have gone in his absence and served as well as he could in the little shop.

“Thoughtful for others he was indifferent as to comforts for himself, though he did not mind buying costly books, if he believed them of value for his work. Then he was habitually a hard worker, from early morn devoted to his own reading the word and prayer; but even when most busily engaged, he as the rule reserved the afternoons for visiting the poor and the sick, his evenings for public prayer, fellowship, or ministry. Indeed whole days were frequently devoted to scripture readings wherever he moved, at home or abroad. But his clothes were plain, and he wore them to shabbiness, though punctiliously clean in his person, which dressy people are not always. In Limerick once, kind friends took advantage of his sleep to replace the old with new, which he put on without a word, as the story went.

“In middle life he trudged frequently on foot through a large part of France and Switzerland, sometimes refreshing himself on the way with acorns, at other times thankful to have an egg for his dinner, because, as he said, no unpleasant visitors for certain could get in there! In his own house, or lodging,

all was simplicity and self-denial; yet if invited to dine or sup, he freely and thankfully partook of what was set before him. Still he had a vigilant eye for the Lord, particularly with younger fellow-labourers; and I remember that when with me on first setting up house, he deliberately looked at a table-spoon or fork before him. Happily I passed muster; and nothing was said: they were only plated! So he lived himself. Even in such things he hated for Christians the pride of life, and justly felt that one little licence opens the way for many greater.

“His largeness of heart, for one of strong convictions and of practical consistency, showed itself in many ways. After he left the Anglican Establishment he preached occasionally at the call of godly clergymen who urged it; but he only appeared for the discourse and was not present at the previous service. So in France afterwards he preached for pious ministers of the Reformed Church; nor did he refuse the black gown as an academical dress; but when they brought the bands, ‘Oh! no,’ said he: ‘I put on no more.’ Again, he did not spare but warmly rebuked the zealots among half-fledged brothers, who were so ignorantly bitter as to apply what the apostle said of heathen tables to those of the various Denominations. It was only fundamental error which roused his deepest grief and indignation. Then, as one of these (a heterodox teacher) said to me, J.N.D. writes with a pen in one hand and a thunderbolt in the other.

“As a more public instance, take his letter from Barbados to Archdeacon Stopford, when cast down by Mr. Gladstone’s disestablishment and spoliation of the Irish Protestant church, to assure him of his sympathy. ‘If the Protestants trust God, this will remain their position. Let them, because of the word of God, and in honouring it and what is called Protestantism, as owning it cordially, coalesce with the Presbyterians, as you have noticed they did in the best times under Bramhall. . . . Only be yourselves, and trust God. Have done with the State, reject it, making no terms for a little money

and much subjection; if you do, you are lost.' But none the less, when the pious and learned Dr. O'Brien, Bishop of Ossory, who had married his niece, wrote a defence of Baptismal Regeneration, which he had long rejected, Mr. Darby wrote a vigorous reply, and proved that the argument on the formularies as well as scripture was simply and grossly a begging of the question.

"Even in his own circle his forbearance towards prejudice was as great as his decision in momentous things. He often worked with another, when he did not shrink from preaching in the open air so much as later. Once his companion was a man of singular eloquence, but slow to learn fuller truth and addicted to form. So the naval ex-commander read a petition from the Common Prayer selection, and the ex-clergyman made the gospel appeal. Perhaps one such experiment sufficed. Incongruities happened in those days. At a later date he became more chary of preaching in so-called churches or 'temples' (as they call them abroad), when superstition crept in and rationalism. The recent indifferentism that prevails also curtailed in practice the readiness with which outside Christians were received, though the principle abode as ever; but its application could not but be abridged, when some wished to break bread who were insensible to notorious and grievous error taught where they usually attended.

"It will interest many to hear that his paper on the *Progress of Democratic Power, and its effect on the Moral state of England*, immensely struck the late Sir T. D. Acland, who was Mr. Gladstone's intimate friend from Oxford days till death. In acknowledging the gift of *Miscellaneous I.*, which contains the sketch, he wrote to me that it was (though written many years before) the most wonderful forecast and just appraisal he ever read of what is come and coming.

"This then is my conviction, that a saint more true to Christ's name and word I never knew or heard of. He used to say that three classes, from their antecedents, are apt to make bad brothers; clergymen, lawyers, and officers. He

himself was a brilliant exception, though a lawyer first and a clergyman afterward.

“A great man naturally, and as diligent a student as if he were not highly original, he was a really good man, which is much better. So, for good reason, I believed before I saw him ; so taking all in all I found him, in peace and in war ; and so, in the face of passing circumstances, I am assured he was to the end. Do I go too far if I add, may we be his imitators, even as he also was of Christ?”

CHAPTER VI.—HIS WRITTEN WORKS.

THE briefest sketch of Mr. Darby would be manifestly incomplete, were mention of his literary labours omitted. He was one of the most voluminous and certainly the most original writer of theological books and tracts of the nineteenth century or any other.

First and foremost amongst his works must be mentioned his *Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, an entirely free and independent rendering of the whole original text (using all known helps) into German and French, and of the Greek into English. The revisers who used his N. T. were astonished at an amount of painstaking research exceeding that of most, if not of all, as two of the best in the Company wrote to Mr. Kelly. This in itself would have been the life-work of an ordinary man. His aim appears to have been to bring men into touch with the exact words of Him Who is "the Truth," knowing that it is the truth that liberates the soul. First in interest, if not quite in point of time, may be noticed a pamphlet entitled *The nature and unity of the Church of Christ*. This was published in 1828, and thence till his death there followed in quick succession works of marked spirituality covering the widest field of scriptural enquiry. He laid bare Irvingism and Puseyism; he demolished the scepticism of F. W. Newman, and the dishonesty of his elder brother. He exposed the absurd *Thoughts on the Apocalypse* of B. W. Newton, as well as his frightful errors as to Christ. He refuted the "perfectionism" of J. Wesley, and the spurious Free Churchism and its eldership of Dr. J. H. Merle D'Aubigne. He was as unsparing on Popish error in several works of much research, as he was in helping the Free Church of Scotland against the Rationalism of the late W. R. Smith. Then, again, the fearful errors about sin and its punishment which are abroad, and have been spreading so rapidly—such as annihilationism, non-

eternity of punishments, and all the other phases of the eschatological scepticism and infidelity—were fully refuted by Mr. Darby. Dr. J. Milner, Archbishop Whately, Bishop Colenso, as also the writers of *Essays and Reviews* were attended to, each in turn; their sophistries exposed, and arguments refuted by this fearless well-instructed man of God.

His expository works are of the highest value. Take his *Synopsis of the books of the Bible* in five volumes. Where is there any single work of any author affording such help to the study of scripture? Yet several others are comparatively of only inferior worth, *Evangelic, Practical, Doctrinal, Ecclesiastical, Prophetic, Miscellaneus*, etc. His *Critical Vol.* is a fund of thought for a student. But all were able and scholarly, some profound, others simple; yet alike stamped with that devotion to Christ and faith in God's word, which so characterised the man and his labours from first to last. Time would fail to enumerate the detail of this industrious author; yet he never sacrificed quality to quantity, and never was an author more indifferent to literary distinction. Mr. Spurgeon said that "It needed a mind of peculiar organisation to enjoy these writings." With this we cordially agree; it certainly does need a mind freed from sectarian bias to appreciate the beauty of the whole counsels of God. But his expression no doubt was difficult to the uninitiated, and many pieces were mere notes of readings or lectures taken by others.

A very thoughtful and studious brother recently remarked to the writer, that "Mr. Darby's teaching was always fresh and to the point;" and he gave as his reason, that Mr. Darby not only sought the Spirit's guidance in glorifying Christ, but invariably kept within the covers of the sacred volume and expounded scripture by scripture. He had a highly critical faculty; yet he avoided all such remarks in ministry. His works are not popular, because they are solid, spiritual, and profound. Confectionery is more palatable to present-day appetite, as indeed has been the case in all ages. The con-

sideration of the multiplicity and thoroughness of his works would lead one to imagine that he must have devoted himself exclusively to literary pursuits. Yet so far is this from being the actual fact, that he was an incessant traveller not only over a large part of Europe, but Canada, the United States, the West Indies, Australia and New Zealand, constantly lecturing, holding readings, teaching and preaching Christ, and at the same time keeping up to the end a vast correspondence with many lands. Three vols. of his Letters have appeared, many of great interest.

Truly if ever man in this or any other age did with his might what his hands found to do, and in the main with a single eye to the Lord Jesus, it was John Nelson Darby. Now he is at rest; his labours are ended; but his works still follow him. After he had served the will of God in his own generation, he fell asleep in Christ at Sundridge House, Bournemouth, in April 1882. A very large company followed his body to the grave, the South Western Railway running a special through from Waterloo, thus enabling many to be present who might have otherwise been debarred. There he is laid to rest until the Morning Star, and the shadows flee away. What a moment of unparalleled blissful rapture that will be, when the glorified Man of sorrows shall stand surrounded by the fruit of His soul-travail, the innumerable company of the redeemed at home with their Redeemer! As Mr. Darby himself sings, for he was a poet too, deep, rugged, yet grand and tender:—

“So it must be, Thy love had not its rest,
Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest.”