

William Basil Jones.

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NOW that the idea of disestablishing the Church of Wales is again in the air, it may be well to recall the memory of one who, in the generation now passing away, was among the foremost opponents of it—a man of large and powerful intellect, a Welshman keenly alive to everything concerning the welfare of Wales. The personality is always what gives weight to the utterance. Basil Jones was a remarkable personality in many ways, apart from being ecclesiastical chief of the largest and most important of Welsh dioceses for about a quarter-century.

His was a brilliant career—at Shrewsbury, under Kennedy, and at Trinity College, Oxford. In the “*Anthologia Oxoniensis*,” a sister volume to the “*Arundines Cami*,” and in the “*Sabrinæ Corolla*,” there is nothing more exquisite than his rendering into Greek choric verse of Tennyson’s “*Song of the Dying Swan*.” It stands on the same high level as the “*Roll on, thou Sea!*” and the “*Land of the Leal*” of James Riddell, his dear friend at school and college, whose early death was a loss irreparable to Oxford and to a larger world. Edwin Palmer, also of Balliol, was one of Basil Jones’s intimate friends; so was Edward Freeman. Basil Jones was one of the founders of the “*Hermes*,” a society for discussion like the “*Deccad*.” If one regrets that he did not achieve more in literature, it must be borne in mind that a remarkable fastidiousness of taste, as well as the pressure of other duties, deterred him from publishing.

James Riddell died young—*non diu sed multum vixit*—leaving the legacy of an influence for good at Shrewsbury and at Oxford not soon to be forgotten. The words inscribed on Sir George Cornwall Lewis’s statue at Hereford are singularly appropriate to James Riddell: “*Justissimus unus et servantissimus æqui*,” for, like Basil Jones, he was absolutely free from prejudices.

There was something gracious in the Bishop’s “bodily

presence." The small, spare figure was not wanting in dignity; the refined features and the shrewd but kindly glance of the grey, thoughtful eyes were impressive. Very sparing in diet, he was too sedentary, taking too little exercise. He seemed, like Disraeli, averse to the outdoor games of strength and agility, which are rated rather too highly in England nowadays. A delightful conversationalist, he had a quick sense of humour, and, though naturally critical, there was an element of superstition in his nature. Ghost-stories and other abnormal experiences had a fascination for him. It was part of his Celtic temperament. There was in him a combination of qualities apparently conflicting. Very precise and with a lawyer's grasp of intricate questions, he yet had the imaginativeness of a poet. In one of the litigations about ritual in which he had to sit as an assessor, his clear insight into the intricacies of the case won the admiration of the lawyers. He had the delicacy of touch needful for the laboratory or for the studio of the artist, the carefulness about details which belongs to the man of business, the alertness about common things which are indispensable every day to everyone, with the larger outlook of philosophy. Intensely loyal to the Prayer-Book, he could appreciate other forms of religious earnestness. Above all, he reconciled in himself acuteness of perception with the gentleness which takes into account everything which can excuse or extenuate. In Italy the warmest praise awarded to anyone is that he is *simpatico*. This was Basil Jones emphatically. He had a singularly balanced judgment, the result of a powerful intellect, tempered by tactfulness and by far-reaching sympathy. Naturally reticent, he was genial with intimates and very stanch in his friendships.

He was no orator, but he was an excellent chairman of a committee or of a public meeting. When the Church Congress met at Swansea, his grasp on the helm was admirable. Shy and reserved by nature, he rose to the occasion. Episcopal charges are apt to be heavy. His, like those of his great predecessor Thirlwall, were statesmanlike, succinct, and relieved by flashes of genius.

Being asked once whether a written or unwritten discourse was to be preferred, he replied: "The written sermon, if it seems as if it was not written; the unwritten which seems as if it was." He used to say: "The beginning of a speech or sermon decides whether people will listen or not; the concluding words determine what the practical result will be."

It is not on the public platform, nor in the pulpit, that the main work of a Bishop is done. Lord Palmerston once gave a very imperfect definition of a Bishop's duty—that he must answer letters punctually. Yet there is a truth in the saying. From the Bishop's study, by interview or, more often, by letter, the influence emanates which permeates the diocese. All letters were answered quickly and fully by his own ready pen. He could put his finger at once on the point in question, strip off all that was redundant or irrelevant, and disentangle what was complicated.

Generally he preferred deaconesses to sisters, as more likely to work in harmony with the parochial system, but he welcomed both. Party war-cries and party banners were nothing to him.

Never compromising principle, he aimed at drawing together round the Cross those who stand outside the pale of the Church. His aim was union, not disintegration. As a truly patriotic Welshman, he denounced the political severance of Wales from the rest of the Island as unjustifiable by any considerations, geographical or ethnical, which would not, by parity of reasoning, detach other Keltic parts of the Island, such as Cornwall or the Highlands, from England. To disestablish the Church in the Principality was to him, as to Gladstone, like tearing a bleeding limb from a living body. His unflinching opposition to Disestablishment in Wales was based on the conviction that it would imply a national repudiation of Christianity, and would be injurious to religion generally. Nonconformists, he said, would themselves have deep cause for regret if ever they were successful in achieving it.

Even after the lapse of a quarter-century, Bishop Jones's

charges are worth reading. Indeed, the lapse of time makes one appreciate all the more the far-sightedness into the future which is one of the marks of genius, and the carefully guarded statements which show a balanced and judicial mind. It was a critical time when he delivered his primary charge, in 1877. There were ominous mutterings of imminent Disestablishment for Wales; within the Church the air was rife with excitement from the recent judgment of the Court of Appeal and from the Public Worship Act. The Bishop's measured words were just the thing to still the turmoil. Upholding the necessity of discipline, enforcing the duty of obedience, he pointed to the example of Christ, who "pleased not Himself." While insisting on the importance of definite religious teaching, he advised his clergy to make the best of Board schools, if a Church school was really impossible. Valuable statistics on Church work in the diocese were given, evidencing remarkable progress. He dwelt encouragingly on the symptoms which he had observed of spiritual vitality, especially at Confirmations. He ended with the words of the Psalmist: "The city of God: God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early."

In his charge, 1883, he spoke of two things urgently needed to settle the troubles about ritual: a clear and explicit rubric, in place of the ambiguous "Ornaments Rubric," and a judicial tribunal, whose authority "shall be recognized generally." He acknowledged that the Church, though intrinsically independent of the State, as spiritual in origin and functions, yet, as forming in this kingdom a part of the national organization, cannot act independently of the State. He foresaw that this needs "a mixed representative body of clergy and laity, with authority to speak and to act in the name of the Church, if Parliament is to listen." He foresaw the need of an organizing visitor of Church schools, and of duly appointed lay-readers. All these things came into being. He was one of the first to recognize the value of the Girls' Friendly Society. In the settlement, 1880, of the burial question he foresaw, though it was not foreseen

then by Churchmen generally, that the concession to Dissenters would be for good eventually.

The same statesmanlike prescience showed itself on many other topics. The diocese had been without a Conference. Under his initiative the Conference was so framed as to be pronounced by competent judges one of the best of Diocesan Conferences. A very useful feature of it was its Parliamentary Committee, to watch proceedings in Parliament affecting the Church. He deprecated any lessening of the number of *ex-officio* members, warning the clergy "not to be frightened by the bugbear of officialism." His comments from time to time, in Conference and in charges, on new Acts of Parliament all show that he was a leader of thought. In 1880 he spoke "of the great vessel of the State twice heeling over, so as to impress careful observers (of whatever party) with a painful sense of insecurity and instability." It was a graphic touch in reference to recent unexpected changes of Ministry. He wished always to convince and persuade, rather than to say "Marchez!" to his clergy. He said "we" to them, not "you," generally.

Two of the chief difficulties in Wales are the bilingual difficulty and the scantiness of educational opportunities. Bishop Jones was very careful, as has been said, that there should be a Welsh-speaking ministry for a Welsh-speaking parish, but he looked forward to the time when increased intercourse between Wales and England should make the bilingual difficulty a thing of the past. He saw clearly that "the language of the home is the language of the heart." An ardent Welshman¹ himself, as well as an ardent student, he trusted that the old language would always be treasured for literary purposes. But he saw that for practical purposes England and Wales are one. "Wales is nothing more than the Highlands of England without a Highlands line—it is a 'geographical expression.'"

¹ "I almost dare to appropriate to myself the bold words of the Apostle, and to wish myself anathema for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen after the flesh."

The test of true statesmanship is to foresee. One is struck in the Bishop's charges by this insight and foresight as to the co-operation of the laity in parochial and diocesan organization of every kind. He expressed a hope in 1886, while disapproving altogether of giving to parishioners any power of vetoing an appointment to the incumbency, that "public notice should be given of any presentation," in order to give the people an opportunity of making their objection to the Bishop, who should be assisted by lay and clerical assessors in adjudicating."¹ This is done now. In 1883 he foreshadowed the plan now adopted widely for laymen, tried and approved, to receive a commission from their Bishop for various functions in their diocese, and expressed a hope for the revival of the order of sub-deacons. He foresaw the danger of a Diocesan Conference degenerating into a mere debating society, and, therefore, while reserving to himself the responsibilities inherent in his office, he promised to consider fully any suggestions from the Conference. He regarded the mere fact of the clergy, scattered over a wide area, meeting thus for brotherly interchange of thought and experience as especially valuable in a very extensive "and somewhat heterogeneous diocese."

It has been said of Thirlwall's charges that they are a running comment on the history of his time. The same thing is true of his successor's charges. They were not merely a survey of the diocese, but also of important movements in the Church at large. Terse and racy passages abound; there is "the wit that loves to play, not wound." Admitting the need of Church reform on certain points, he laid a stress on the distinction between this and "the panic which seizes the mariner in foul weather on a lee shore to throw heavy merchandise overboard." In the same charge he speaks of "scoffers without and grumblers within." The best defence of an established Church is "that it should be established in the hearts of the people." "Before the ark comes into the haven, where she

¹ Popular election to an incumbency he thought the worst way of all.

would be, she will have to pass not only through rough, but also through very foul, water." After going very thoroughly through local affairs in his last charge, he adds: "Perhaps we are all too local in our feelings; perhaps we think too little of what is going on beyond the limits of the district assigned to each of us. "There are people," says an old German proverb, "even behind the mountains." When necessity demands, the tone is uncompromising, all the more telling because of the habitual moderation of language and scrupulous care not to overstate. "Spiteful, pettifogging tactics," are his words on the persistent obstruction in Parliament of Bills to improve Church discipline. He speaks indignantly of men "stooping to the inconceivable baseness of trying to force the Church's position by opposing reforms." During the tithe-war of 1889 he said: "The cynical avowal that some opponents of the Church wish to keep the tithe-law as it is, as a lever to overthrow the Established Church, surprises us by its excessive candour. When a man does or wishes to do a base thing, we think him tenfold more base if he is not ashamed to avow it. The utterly contemptible device of an anonymous letter," are his words when he complains "that people will not speak out; they will make complaints, adding the invariable proviso, 'But don't make use of my name.'"

In his latter charges he referred to the proposed division of the enormous diocese of St. David's, consenting but not without regret. Personally he was unwilling to divorce himself from any of his people, especially from his native county of Cardigan. The division would, he thought, separate Gower and Brecon from the West. He did not live to see the scheme carried into effect. Meantime he appointed a Suffragan Bishop "of Swansea," but without any territorial jurisdiction. Partly from the prepossessions of a lifetime, he failed to realize how increasingly urgent is the need: he clung to the traditions of the Episcopal Bench as he had known it. Indefatigable and self-sacrificing, he forgot that even absolute self-devotion cannot cope with the ever-growing responsibilities of our dioceses as

they are. Openhanded to the utmost of his power in response to the pecuniary needs of the diocese, he failed to see that large episcopal incomes and grand episcopal residences are a weakness, not a strength, to the Church. On some other points, too, he hardly kept step with the march of time. He was not sanguine as to the efforts made to promote Home Reunion; he was not enthusiastic in the Temperance Crusade; and he tolerated the sale of advowsons. He was never afraid of holding an independent position on questions to which he had given much consideration, but he was not a man to desire the unamiable notoriety of being "a minority of one."

Insight and foresight—these are the intellectual equipments of the truly great; but with this must be the moral equipment of self-sacrifice. Not many are they who are capable of forming opinions for themselves; fewer still who, in doing this, can keep out the bias of self; still fewer who dare put their theories into practice, without caring which way the *aura popularis* may be blowing. Had Basil Jones been by nature less sensitive, more pachydermatous, his career as Bishop would have been smoother to himself, but it would have been to others less helpful; for this natural sensitiveness, tempered by the overmastering sense of duty, is the very thing by which men can be influenced: it is the electric thrill of sympathy.¹



The Memorial Name.

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WHAT does the average English reader understand by the word "Name" in such texts as Ps. ix. 10, "They that know *Thy Name* shall put their trust in Thee"; or Ps. lxxxvi. 11, "Unite my heart to fear *Thy Name*"? Is not

¹ See, for further particulars, *Welsh Political and Educational Leaders*. Nisbet and Co.