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DEAN WACE.

By W. Guy Johnson.

By the death of Dr. Henry Wace, Dean of Canterbury from 1903 to the beginning of the present year, the Church of England has suffered the loss of a very distinguished and exceptionally gifted man. Though he had entered upon his 88th year, his mind was, within three days of his death, as clear and alert as ever, and his readiness and resourcefulness in debate in the National Assembly only last November seemed to have suffered no diminution in spite of the serious accident which befell him some six months earlier. It was, however, evident that the effort to come to London for the week of the Assembly had taxed him very severely, and those who saw him then were prepared for the news, shortly after his return, that he had been taken seriously ill and that recovery was doubtful. He passed quietly away on January 9.

The late Dean, who was born on December 10, 1836, was a son of the Rev. R. H. Wace, sometime of Wadhurst. He was educated at Marlborough, Rugby, and King's College, London, and at Brasenose College, Oxford. He was ordained deacon in 1861, and priest in 1862, by Bishop Tait, and was for seven years curate with the Rev. J. W. Kempe, of St. James's, Piccadilly, a more residential district then than it now is, and the congregation was just of the kind to appreciate his preaching. He left St. James's for the Lectureship of Grosvenor Chapel in 1870, and, after holding the chaplaincy of Lincoln's Inn, was appointed in 1880 to the preachership, which he retained for sixteen years. He was Boyle Lecturer in 1874 and 1875, Bampton Lecturer in 1879, and in 1875 was appointed Professor of Ecclesiastical History at King's College, where he was afterwards Principal for some ten or twelve years. In 1896 the Drapers' Company appointed him to the benefice of St. Michael's, Cornhill, which he held until his preferment to the Deanery of Canterbury. The foregoing summary of his principal appointments gives a very inadequate idea of his activities, for it covers also a period of literary effort which alone would establish a man's reputation. Dr. Wace was, with Sir William Smith, editor of the *Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrine*.

This great work was a continuation of Dr. Smith's well-known *Dictionary of the Bible*, and was designed to furnish in the form of a biographical dictionary a complete collection of materials for the history of the Christian Church from the days of the Apostles to the age of Charlemagne. It was an immense undertaking, for the completed work consists of four stout volumes of an average of 1,000 pages each, in double columns of a small, close type. Of this book a thoroughly competent judge, Dr. Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester (if we may so amplify the initials A. C. G. in the *Guardian* of January 11), writes: "It is by far the best of all the theological dictionaries and encyclopædias which have been published in this country, is remarkable for the amount of work of first-class and original merit, and it is probable that it owes this distinction largely to Dr. Wace."

At the same time Dr. Wace held for twenty years a post as one of the leader writers to *The Times*, and it is interesting that his introduction to Delane, then editor, was through a letter which he wrote to the paper protesting against the treatment of Bishop Colenso by the bishops of the day. He could have had little sympathy with many of Bishop Colenso's views, but he had less with the violent clamour which arose against the man. The letter attracted Delane's attention, and he secured the services of Mr. Wace, then a young curate, for whose work on a great variety of subjects, his first leader being one on the King of the Hellenes, he soon formed a very high opinion. Writing to Dasent in 1863, he said: "I find Wace very useful. I put him, indeed, before George Brodrick. How we should have got on without him is beyond my conception" (*J. T. Delane*, by A. I. Dasent, vol. ii, 71). In the life just quoted from there are included several letters from Delane to "My dear Wace," which show that this opinion, very early formed, was maintained through their whole association. It was no mean testimony to a man's ability to have the entire confidence of so sound and so exacting a critic as Delane. This close and long-continued connection with the leading English newspaper when its influence was probably at its highest, and when his own intellectual powers were at their utmost vigour, must have done much to develop that capacity for dealing promptly and efficiently with public affairs which marked his later life.

It was during this period of strenuous activity that his Bampton

Lectures and Boyle Lectures were delivered. The object of both was the defence and confirmation of the Christian faith, and though they reflect the atmosphere of nearly half a century ago, and deal with difficulties which have changed in form rather than in substance during the intervening years, they are well worth study now, for they deal with matters which are fundamental to human life and thought. In the Preface to the Bampton Lectures, which were entitled *The Foundations of Faith*, he says that the work "is an attempt to exhibit, in some measure, the supreme claim of the Gospel upon our allegiance; and it endeavours to show, not merely that the Christian Creed may reasonably be believed, but that we are under a paramount obligation to submit to it." The subject of the Boyle Lectures was *Christianity and Morality, or the Correspondence of the Gospel with the Moral Nature of Man*. It is to the credit of the reading public that these lectures, when published, passed through six editions in six years, and they have been subsequently republished more than once. Their purpose cannot be better described than in the following passage from the Preface: "The general subject . . . is the evidence on behalf of the Christian Faith afforded by the Moral Nature of Man. The author proposed to deal more particularly with those objections which, admitting the supreme obligation of Morality, deny that it requires any such religious support or superstructure as Christianity affords. Starting from the sense of Right and Wrong, he has endeavoured to show that it can only be explained upon the supposition of our standing in intimate relation to a spiritual world and to a Divine Person, and that it involves spiritual cravings for which Christianity alone offers an adequate satisfaction." There is that in both volumes which reminds us of Bishop Butler: the same gravity and earnestness, the same strong conviction and the same element of surprise that men should treat with the levity they habitually do matters which so vitally affect their eternal welfare. The reader feels in both cases that the writer has not only striven to face honestly the intellectual difficulties of which he has felt the pressure as much as they, but that he is writing from the depths of his own personal experience. In Dr. Wace's other books we have the same deeply religious attitude. We find it not only in *The Gospel and its Witnesses*, a volume of sermons preached at St. James's, Piccadilly, in 1881, and in *Some Central*

Points of our Lord's Ministry, originally prepared for the pulpit of Lincoln's Inn Chapel, but right at the very end of his life, when, in *The Story of the Passion* and *The Story of the Resurrection*, he published the sermons he had preached in successive years during Holy Week in Canterbury Cathedral. These are marked by the same gravity and simplicity of style and the same characteristic dealing with the realities and needs of the human soul. Almost any passage taken at random from either book would illustrate this. The following from *The Story of the Resurrection* is an example:—" It is the supreme blessing of the Gospel that it brings an assurance of deliverance from evil, and of forgiveness for the sins and infirmities which follow upon it. The individual soul craves for forgiveness, for the share it has borne in these violations of God's will, and these injuries to its fellows, and it sees in nature no means of this forgiveness. Still less can it see in the natural order of things any remedy sufficient to purge the whole race of its poison. There is, in fact, only one source from which such forgiveness and such deliverance can come, and that source is the grace of God Himself. He who created is the only Power who can recreate; and He alone can remit to the penitent soul the punishment it has brought upon itself, and remedy its injury" (p. 137).

It was in 1889 that the famous controversy with Professor Huxley took place. Dr. Wace had read a paper at the Manchester Church Congress in the autumn of 1888, and in February of the following year Huxley attacked this in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*. Dr. Wace replied and Professor Huxley wrote a rejoinder, to which there was again a reply and rejoinder. The matter would have been left there, but Huxley reprinted his articles among other papers in a volume of *Essays on Controverted Questions*. Dr. Wace felt that his replies should also be reprinted, and published them in *Christianity and Agnosticism*. But the volume was much more than a reprint of the articles, for it also contained in an appendix the principal passages from Dr. Huxley's articles, so that the reader might be able more fairly to judge of the matter. It is impossible here to give any summary of the controversy. Huxley had attacked the Christian position and the historical truth of the Gospel narratives. Wace defended them with an ability and vigour which astonished people who had come to think that the case for Christianity had broken down. Undoubtedly the articles did much

to steady a public opinion which had been shaken by the current materialism in science and philosophy, and by such books as Cotter Morison's *Service of Man*, Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere*, and others whose names have long been forgotten.

Besides the books which have been already mentioned, Dr. Wace issued his Warburton Lectures on Prophecy, and some smaller volumes on critical and theological questions. For some years he edited the *Churchman* and was a frequent and valued contributor to the *Record*. One of his last periodical contributions was an article on Prayer Book Revision in the *Church Quarterly Review* for October last, written in bed during his recovery from his accident a few months before. It is not generally known that the reprint of Dr. Brewer's historical introductions to the Rolls Series (on the reign of Henry VIII), which were published by John Murray in two volumes, was due to Dr. Wace's initiative and energy. It was a great service to students to have this invaluable historical material more readily accessible. He edited, himself, a volume of Dr. Brewer's *English Studies*, to which he prefaced a biographical sketch of his old teacher and sometime colleague in the field of historical research.

Dr. Wace was, however, not only a scholar and writer and preacher: he was a man of uncommon practical ability. His work on behalf of King's College Hospital, his chairmanship for many years of the Clergy Mutual Insurance Society, of St. John's Hall, Highbury, of the National Church League, and countless other activities, were the wonder of those who knew him. The very fine library possessed by the Corporation of the Church House owes much to the fact that its first Committee of Selection were Dr. Wace, Sir E. Maunde Thompson and Sir Lewis Dibdin.

He was an admirable Chairman of a committee or conference. His unfailing courtesy and tact, his sense of humour which often relieved the asperities of debate, and his uncommon power of disentangling the essentials of a subject at the end of a long discussion from the irrelevancies which threatened to obscure them, often amazed those who were present. In 1900 there was held at Fulham, on the initiative of Bishop Creighton, a Round Table Conference on the subject of the Doctrine of Holy Communion and its Expression in Ritual. On the motion of Lord Halifax, supported by Prebendary (afterwards Dean) Barlow, Dr. Wace was unanimously appointed Chairman. The following year, Bishop Creighton having

died in the meantime, the present Bishop of London arranged for a second Conference of the same kind on the subject of Confession and Absolution, and Dr. Wace was again appointed to the chair. Both Bishops testified to the great value of his services in presiding over two conferences presenting unusual difficulties, as the opinions of the members were so widely and sharply divided.

It is even now hardly credible, it is certainly not creditable to those responsible for it, that a man of such learning and such administrative and practical ability should have been left without any important preferment until, at the age of sixty-six, he was appointed Dean of Canterbury. He should have been made a Bishop twenty years before; and, while he was quite free from any ambitions of a personal kind, there can be little doubt that the persistent neglect to give him a position which should have been his was a disappointment, and to some extent clouded his later years, though he never said anything on the subject even to his most intimate friends. He was a great success as a Dean and threw himself into the life of the Cathedral and the town. His work on behalf of the reparation of the fabric of the Cathedral, for which he raised huge sums, one of them being £20,000, was of national importance. His place in civic life is shown by the presentation to him, about three years ago, of the freedom of the city of Canterbury; and the great concourse of people at his funeral and the signs of mourning in the city showed how he had won the affection of his fellow citizens.

It is a difficult matter to give an adequate appreciation of a man of such great and varied gifts and acquirements. For one thing he was always at work and yet he was never hurried. Whether in hospital with an arm broken in two places, or in bed at the Deanery with a fractured thigh bone, or in his study, or at his club, he was to be found at work and yet apparently always at leisure to give his whole attention to every one who wished to consult him, and was always ready to undertake fresh work if it came to him. He had the most unfailing courtesy, and notwithstanding a reserved and perhaps brusque appearance, great gentleness and charm of manner, and he was a staunch and loyal friend. Though he possessed great powers of mind and a scholarship of unusual depth and range, yet he spoke to those who met him as if on equal terms. And the readiness with which he commanded his stores of knowledge was astonishing. His memory never seemed to fail him. He would

quote long passages from Augustine or Aquinas or Coleridge or Dryden; he could discuss a difficult problem in philosophy or the course of a period of history or a hundred other matters and bring to them precise and accurate knowledge and clear and careful thought, the result of a lifetime of unremitting labour. Modern scholarship in all its departments has become so specialized that this encyclopædic type of mind is now not cultivated and is rarely found. But though specialization has great advantages and in its way is a necessity, it does not easily encourage breadth of outlook, and while giving intensity limits the view.

The period during which Dr. Wace was at Canterbury was that during which the " Anglo-Catholic " party developed to an extreme of teaching and aggressiveness far beyond anything that had gone before, and seriously threatened the doctrinal foundation and the reformed position of the English Church. The Dean was naturally compelled, by his loyalty to the Reformation and by his profound knowledge of the ecclesiastical and theological literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to take an active part in the unhappy and unedifying controversies thus forced on the Church in the last twenty-five years. But he did it in a manner and with an ability which won for him the respect and regard of friend and foe alike.

Just as he opposed the revival of mediævalism, so did he make a strong stand against the developments of what is known as modernism, because he believed that both were contrary to the teaching of the New Testament: one by encumbering it with superstition and false doctrines, the other by depriving it of any historical basis. The distinctive features of the Christian Gospel were lost in both cases; and he stood firmly and immovably upon historical Christianity, for he felt that the facts and truths of the New Testament, verified in Christian experience and illuminated and interpreted by the Spirit of God, were the only sure foundation of our hope in this world and the world to come.