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new House of Commons, elected since Sir Emilius Bayley published this pamphlet, any reforms will be carried, in spite of Liberationist opposition, it remains to be seen.



Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "CHURCHMAN."

SIR,—“The Rev. John Babington, M.A., Hon. Canon of Peterborough Cathedral, and for forty years Rector of Cossington, in Leicestershire, entered into rest at his residence, 10, Norfolk Terrace, Brighton, on the 16th October, three months after his completion of his 94th year.”

This announcement in the daily papers has been read far and wide, and notices of this venerable and distinguished servant of God have appeared in various journals. It is no wonder that these notices are fragmentary, for I do not suppose there is a man living who could give, from his own observation, a complete history of a life so long, and so distributed among several great interests.

The Rev. Canon Carus has favoured the readers of the *Record* newspaper with notes of the commencement of Mr. Babington's long service, and told us particulars of his youthful piety and energy at Cambridge years before I was born. On the other hand, for the last thirty years, during which there were few opportunities of intercourse between these fathers in the Church, I have had the privilege of intimate acquaintance with the dear saint whom I followed to his last resting-place at Hove on the 21st of October. I think that a complete, though necessarily a condensed sketch of Mr. Babington's life, will be interesting to the readers of the *CHURCHMAN*; and I venture to essay a task in which I have been favoured with great assistance courteously given by the Editor of the *Temperance Record*, and by Mr. Cook, the founder of the great Excursion Agency under that well-known name, and by H. Hebbert, Esq., I.C.S., of Brighton.

John Babington was born the 6th July, 1791, and was the son of Mr. Babington, of Rothely Temple, Leicestershire, who was Member for Leicester for twenty years. John Babington had for his god-father William Wilberforce, and for his uncle, Zachary Macaulay, of Clapham, a zealous coadjutor of that great philanthropist. Thus, besides his bringing up under the holy influence of a truly evangelical home, he was surrounded by the atmosphere of philanthropy. He closely followed the efforts of those leaders of whom his cousin, Lord Macaulay, has written: “From that little knot of men emanated all the Bible Societies, and almost all the Missionary Societies in the world. The whole organization of the Evangelical party was their work. The share which they had in providing means for the education of the people was great; and they were really the destroyers of the slave-trade and of slavery.” To such early influences may be traced, under the blessing of God, the zeal with which John Babington ever advocated the causes of thrift, self-help, temperance, and the wide distribution of the Scriptures, as chief means in breaking the fetters forged by bad habits in social life, and ignorance in things spiritual.

His education was completed at Magdalen College, Cambridge. He

graduated in 1814, taking a place among the wranglers, along with Musgrave, and his intimate friend and future brother-in-law Henry Venn Elliott, the former to become a distinguished Church dignitary, and the latter, after adding to his high mathematical honours that of Chancellor's Medallist, to hold a post of vast influence for forty years as the holy and accomplished Incumbent of St. Mary's, Brighton. In connection with him, young Babington inaugurated the association for his University of the British and Foreign Bible Society, as has been related in the *Record* of October 30th.

Mr. Babington was appointed Vicar of Cossington in 1820, and resigned the living in 1859. In 1847 he was made Hon. Canon of Peterborough; and from 1867 to 1873 he was Rector of Walton le Wolds in Leicestershire. This living he accepted at the desire of the then Bishop of Peterborough; but finding in 1873 that, as his years compelled him to be absent a good part of the year, his Bishop did not approve of his holding it, he resigned, and spent the rest of his life, though with much usefulness, yet without parochial charge. The parishes he held were rural and small, and therefore not likely to afford materials for anything unusual in the records of his work. I find, however, a published statement, that in them "he was as the father of one united happy family; rejoicing with them in their joys, and sympathizing with them in their sorrows." I have had the privilege of hearing a few of his sermons. They were characterized by definiteness of aim, clearness of division, copious reference to Scripture, and fervent and vigorous application. But the smallness of his actual charge only set his active spirit free for abounding extra-parochial labours. As far as I can ascertain the order of these labours, Mr. John Babington appears to have inherited from his father, the Member for Leicester, a desire that working men should have each a small piece of land through which they might acquire substance in addition to their wages, by cultivation out of working hours. Mr. Babington, sen., was the parent or first advocate of the "allotment" scheme. Carefully cultivating a portion of his own estate, he divided the remainder among 250 tenants, taken principally from among working men of moderate capital. Canon Babington took over the affairs of his father in 1830, and took part in public efforts of a similar character. "It is worth while to remember," writes the *Blue Ribbon Gospel Temperance Chronicle*, "that this pioneer of the 'allotments' movement, of which we hear so much at present, and his father, were old-fashioned Tories." Mr. Cook was engaged in the same philanthropic scheme, and forwarded it by his efforts and the use of his printing-press. He received Mr. Babington's aid in forming a society for the object. The Town Council of Leicester were moved to grant land. "Mr. Babington himself," writes Mr. Cook, "broke up a large field of his own land between Sileby and Rothely, and let it for allotment gardens." A Cheap-Bread Association was formed and prominently promoted by Mr. Cook and "powerfully supported by Mr. Babington." "On Mr. Babington's recommendation, the Duke of Rutland sent Mr. Cook a cheque for £60 for the enrolment of sixty families as members of the Leicester Cheap-Bread Association." Pending the full operation of the Corn Laws, a system of mutual supply was set up. "Mr. Babington generously advanced money for importing flour and grain, enabling Mr. Cook to bring to Leicester a supply of barrels of American flour from Liverpool, creating no little sensation."

The formation of a penny bank for Leicester was the next effort, and then succeeded an event which gave direction to the whole course of Mr. Babington's future labours for the general good. He had been an earnest advocate of Temperance, but about this time he entered on his total abstinence course, which continued to his death—over half a century.

How this took place, Canon Babington has himself left on record in a paper which he wrote in his ninety-second year, and which was read for him at the Jubilee Fête of the Alliance in 1882, entitled "A Half-Century of Abstinence;" and any who would thoroughly understand his principles and action in the matter should study that most interesting paper. I can only here give extracts. After mentioning instances of the terrible woes which had resulted from intemperance, even in his own "highly respectable agricultural parish," he proceeds :

To meet these evils we found ourselves powerless. For men enslaved by this fearful vice the law of God had no terrors, nor His Gospel any attraction. . . . At this conjuncture our noble-hearted friends from Preston appeared, to persuade us that total abstinence from intoxicating drink was the only remedy. It was a novel doctrine, startling enough for one who had been educated for more than forty years in the conviction that alcohol in some form was an absolute necessity, if not for life and health, yet certainly for any active and valuable work. A public meeting was held in Leicester, at which I was invited to preside by my highly esteemed friend, your present chairman, Mr. Cook. The Preston men were called upon to tell their tale; and a plain tale it was. They proved to us by sure experience that the hardest bodily labour could be sustained continuously without the aid of a drop of alcohol. The facts were undeniable. But now the problem that I had to solve was, whether mental work, of which at that time I had plenty, could be equally carried on upon the same principle. Could I with safety throw my own example into the scale against the use of the drink? I did not hesitate for an instant.

He next refers to his efforts, despite opposition, scorn, and pity on all sides :

We were content to bring people together in barns, or in the theatre, or in any place that could be procured. An audience was collected by the public crier, or the bellman, or the drum! In the public market, in the open field, from the roof of a carriage, from a waggon, from the back of my horse, I repeatedly addressed assemblages of the working classes, who fully appreciated our efforts.

All this is expanded and supplemented by Mr. Cook, who tells me that in the year 1841 Mr. Babington publicly signed the abstinence pledge, and took a very prominent part in several public meetings. He continues :—"In July, 1841, I commenced my excursionist career, by running a special train from Leicester to Loughborough, taking 500 people to a temperance fête, at which Mr. Babington made a powerful speech." The same year he was elected President of the Leicester Temperance Society—an office to which he was re-elected annually to the very year of his death. In 1849 he met other gentlemen at Mr. Cook's house to promote a proposal for a Temperance Hall. Working against difficulties, he accompanied 5,000 persons to Birmingham to raise funds, and made a speech, which greatly stirred his Birmingham auditors.

In July, 1871, when he had reached fourscore years, he attended the Crystal Palace Fête of the National Temperance League, and publicly testified on the same platform with the late Joseph Livesey, "not against drunkenness, but against *the drink*, as the cause of all the evil." Ten years later, when he was congratulated by the committee of the League upon the completion of his ninetieth year, he replied as follows :

With very great satisfaction and thankfulness do I look back upon the part that I was permitted to take forty years ago and more in rousing up the attention of mankind to the mischiefs of the liquor traffic. It was a very pleasant work to me. It brought me into better acquaintance with the minds and habits of our working men and their families. And the opposition we met with had only the effect of calling out stronger resolution, and more persistent efforts to overcome it. Many a happy day I had, and nothing more contributed to call out whatever

there was of manliness in my character. So that mentally as well as physically I was exceedingly the gainer. I do not doubt at all that my present health and vigour of body and of mind are considerably due to the total abstinence that I then adopted, and have never seen any reason to abandon or to shrink from ever since. God be praised for these great mercies! I cannot think that any man enjoys life and its duties more than I do to this hour, and whenever it shall please God to call me away, I shall have the joy of bearing in mind that in my small way as an individual I was helpful to this great cause.

At the forty-ninth annual meeting of the Leicester Temperance Society held on the 21st of September, 1885, Canon Babington was re-elected president of the Society. In a letter to Mrs. E. S. Ellis, written about that time—only one month since—Canon Babington wrote: “I am indeed most thankful and almost amazed at the progress our great cause has made in the world, when we remember the scorn and hostility with which our first efforts were met. God be praised.”

I doubt not that had I time to search the archives of the Bible Society, I should find similar interesting matter with regard to his great work for that cause. He has often told me what pleasure it gave him. How he journeyed from place to place, and every day refreshed his own mind by getting up new matter for the speeches with which he interested others. Once I heard him speak for the Society at the Pavilion, Brighton. I think he must have been then turned eighty, and was perfectly deaf. His line was powerful, “Objections are made to the Bible. Now if you doubt a witness, you put him into the box and cross-examine him. This is what we wish to be done with the Bible. We only wish to present it, and to present it whole and entire to every man’s intelligence. Only let him examine and cross-examine it with a candid spirit, and we have not the slightest fear of the result.” Before ending these notes of Canon Babington’s public life, I must once more quote my kind correspondent, Mr. Cook. He says:

In these and many departments of social progress Mr. Babington won the hearts of thousands of the industrial and suffering classes, and the admiration of those of higher rank. Notwithstanding his well-known devotion to Conservative and Church principles, he bore the character of a true Conservative-Liberal. In the great gatherings of temperance friends which for several years attracted thousands of visitors to Cossington, members of all parties united, and on occasion of the first visit in 1848, one thousand five hundred persons were conveyed by special train from Leicester, a special service was held in the little ivy-covered church of Cossington, and the gardens and surrounding grounds of the Rectory were crowded with delighted visitors. Friends of Mr. and Mrs. Babington, clergymen, and others high in position were delighted to meet these delighted visitors, and not a sound was heard of party politics or sectarian distinction. Mr. Babington was indeed a true man of the people, and as such was esteemed throughout the entire circle of Leicester and Leicestershire. Whilst resident at Brighton the writer of these notes had much correspondence with him, and down to the latest period of his life was always received by him with a hearty welcome.

In the year 1855 Canon Babington, as a widower, married Miss Eleanor Elliott, youngest daughter of the late Charles Elliott, Esq., of Clapham, and of Westfield Lodge, Brighton. This introduced me to the privilege of connection with him, and intimate acquaintance with his domestic life, to the earlier part of which I am a stranger. The lady had been the inseparable companion and sustainer of her elder sister, Charlotte Elliott (well known as the author of “Just as I am,” and much holy and lovely poetry); and the lives of the three were henceforth woven together till death for a short time relaxed the tie. The texture was a thing of beauty; the warp was a common faith, love and service to God, and a common gift of high intellectual power and cultivation.

On this were wrought the varying flowers of simple and robust manliness ; of tender imagination ; and of sprightly humour. In Mr. Babington I admired to see that while his soul was too great to be moved by anything petty which had reference to himself, his sympathy was too great not to be moved by any matter, however trifling, which was large enough to be a trouble to anybody else. His prevailing characteristic was that of buoyant spirits, mingled with tender love and bright geniality. To be almost completely deaf for nearly half his life, must have been a great privation for a man of his public abilities and most sociable temperament. But he never murmured ; he was never suspicious, still less soured. In his family prayers there was always so much thanksgiving that there seemed scarcely room for supplication. Circumstances took him away from his well-used opportunities in Leicestershire (except for annual visits of business), but though he was sixty when he settled at Brighton, he found scope for his energies in which he employed them almost to the day of his death. It was about 1865 when his intimate friend and brother, Henry Elliott, was carried off by sad illness, and left an influential and mourning flock at St. Mary's. To the comfort and edification of these, Canon Babington, stepping into the broken ranks at the age of seventy-four, ministered till Julius Elliott, supported by the strong arm of his uncle, and still more by the power of the Holy Ghost, ascended into his sainted father's pulpit. Within two years' time Mr. Babington had again to be the public and domestic comforter when a terrible fall from the Schreckhorn robbed the flock at St. Mary's once more of a loved pastor.

St. Mary's Hall, which has been so lately commended by you to the readers of the CHURCHMAN, was founded munificently and sustained with unremitting love and care by Henry Elliott. He would say, "If any man would found such another institution, let him be prepared to give his fortune and his life to it ;" and again, " I can apply to myself, with a slight diversion, the Apostolic words, 'Besides that which cometh upon me from without, the care of St. Mary's Hall.' " To the care which Henry Elliott left, his friend of fifty years, John Babington, succeeded, and maintained it to his own life's end. He was appointed Secretary to the Board of Trustees in 1865. The present treasurer, a gentleman of long experience of men and things while holding high office in India, has favoured me with the following :

A man of considerable ability, and full of wisdom and experience, his opinion was always greatly valued by his co-trustees. His earnest desire was that, whilst the pupils received the best secular education possible, their spiritual welfare should ever be the first consideration. He was wont to visit the Hall frequently, and in particular on the pupils first assembling after the holidays, and before they left for the vacations. On these occasions he used to address them as a father, and impress on them the need of their exerting themselves to improve to the utmost their present opportunities. His last visit to the Hall was made in October, 1884, and often since has he expressed his regret that he could not get so far. On his last (ninety-fourth) birthday, in July, he went out in a chair as far as the Chain Pier, in commemoration, as he remarked, of the event, and this gave rise to the hope that he might on a future occasion be able to visit the Hall ; but, alas ! this hope was disappointed. It would be needless to say how much he was beloved by all at the Hall, and how gladly he was welcomed when he went. He knew most of the pupils, and when distributing the prizes had always some kind, cheery word to say to them. During his tenure of office many improvements have been made at the Hall, the last being the erection of a Sanatorium. He exerted himself

greatly to obtain funds for this last, and one week, despite his extreme age, wrote upwards of two hundred notes with this object. The Sanatorium now stands complete, except the colouring of the walls; but notwithstanding his efforts, the contributions received do not as yet amount to half its cost. His loss to St. Mary's Hall is next to irretrievable.

Another object in which Canon Babington took surpassing interest was the nomination of the Incumbent of St. Mark's Church, which vests in four of the trustees of St. Mary's Hall and the Lord Bishop of the Diocese. It might be said that he agonized in prayer that the Lord would raise up a devoted, evangelical, gifted man for the post. It is fervently hoped his prayer has been answered.

H. H.

I will only add to this that his correspondence was enormous. Up till very lately he was always up at six o'clock, "took a bowl of milk," and wrote letters till the ordinary hour for breakfast, and continued his writing most of the day, lying down to read when he was tired.

And if the correspondence was enormous, so was it the greatest strain upon brain, heart, and sensibility. The subjects would be such delicate ones as the selection of new teachers, the allaying the fears of anxious mothers, the meeting of unreasonable critics, the reproof of the faulty, the encouragement of the good and successful, the examination into the circumstances of parents who applied for admissions. For St. Mary's Hall, being intended to give a first-class education to the daughters of clergy who cannot afford to purchase it at the ordinary high charges, the trustees are obliged, in the consideration of applications, to take into account how great is the number of children, and how small the means of the applicants. And could such delicate and strictly private investigations be published, pity and generosity would take the place of ignorant cries about the "bloated clergy of the Church of England."

So the love for his brother men which had led his youth and middle age to make him the "pioneer of the allotment system," and the "clerical Patriarch of Total Abstinence," found him to his death the loving and careful father over a hundred gentle girls, and the friend of their honourably suffering parents. Even in the article of death the same unselfish love shone forth. "He opened his eyes in the middle of his last night on earth," said to me his weeping nurse, "and seeing me, said, 'What! *you* here! You ought to be in bed, resting; pray go!'"

I think his death—as he assured his faithful valet, "with no pain whatever of body or of mind, only weariness and exhaustion"—in his ninety-fifth year, makes any remark of mine confirmatory of his own about the compatibility of health of body and mind with "total abstinence," superfluous.

His love for the Bible Society arose from his love for the Bible. "Let me have," he said to me a year before his death, "my Greek Testament, and Hannah's 'Life of our Lord on Earth,' and power to read them for my remaining days, I could do without any other books." "All night long," said his constant attendant to me, "during the last few nights of his life (when he could no more read) I heard him, whenever awake, repeating *Scripture*." One Saturday in March, 1884, about 7 p.m., he and his "dearest wife spent their accustomed evening hour in reading and conversing on the Word of God, and in prayer. They prayed, as usual, that if it were the Father's will they might be soon taken home to Him; and again, that if He saw good, the tender one, who could least bear being left alone, might be taken first, and they thanked God for His countless mercies." "Two hours afterwards she was stricken, never more to speak and probably never more to be conscious. She died on the

Thursday. He saw her not till after death, and with trembling voice said : "Oh ! how sweet it had been to see her dear calm face " in what Byron calls the

"Rapture of repose. . . .
Before decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers."

Now he only wanted to live one fortnight, till he had settled all business, that none might have trouble after his death ; and then, if it were God's will, he would be with her sweet spirit again. On Saturday, October 10th, 1885, he was in the same dining-room, according to his custom ; but about 7 p.m. he was taken very faint and weary, and walked straight to his bed, where he lay till Tuesday, the 13th, when he rose, lay on his couch, read from a portion of the Bible (probably Ezekiel), had an animated conversation with a dear relative, and went to bed for the last time. He died on the Friday. "Was he sensible on the last day ?" I asked of his nurse. "Oh yes, sir ; he blessed me over and over again, and said, 'One thing I desire for you, that your heart may be *filled* with the love of Christ.' " At 10 o'clock he said, "The doors are open ! the everlasting doors are open ! " Then at 2 p.m., October 16th, he looked up into the face of two or three round his bedside, closed his eyes, and, without a struggle, breathed his last.

The night before, he dictated 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, and Col. iii. 1-4 and 15-17, as his last bequest to his friends and the Church.

On the 28th he was laid by his dear wife, by the gifted poetess, Charlotte Elliott, by the brilliant Henry and the profound Edward Elliott, by their father and mother (*née* Eling Venn, the daughter of Henry Venn, of Huddersfield). If anywhere there will be a resurrection of consecrated talent, it will be from that vault.

Let another than a connection say the last word. His coadjutor, the Treasurer of St. Mary's Hall, thus closes his recollections : "At the beginning of his illness he told me he had been led to review his past life, and whilst conscious of an earnest desire to serve God from his youth, he felt how far he had come short. His faith and hope were in Christ alone. He spoke of his death, and remarked that he had no apprehensions ; he regarded it as 'going out of one room into another.' He has gone. I have said nothing of his loving, genial disposition ; words would fail me. Suffice it to say, that take him all in all, as a man and a Christian, I never expect to see his like again."

I remain, yours very truly,

CLEMENT F. COBB.

Teston Rectory,
October 30th, 1885.

P.S.—Since the above was in print, I have submitted it to several who had some opportunities of intimacy with Mr. Babington beyond what I myself enjoyed. I am told that in several respects I have not done full justice to him, and I believe it. The points suggested to me as requiring stronger delineation are—his overflowing love, which made his closest friends compare him to the beloved and loving St. John—the rare combination with such tender affections of a sound and strong judgment—the freshness of mind which enabled him to read the most modern periodical literature with avidity, even in his ninety-fifth year—and the striking effect produced on the characters of those who came under his influence as pupils at St. Mary's Hall, and afterwards by his wise and affectionate correspondence. For myself, I think I ought more distinctly to have pointed out what shone forth in his last days, and his last reference to Scripture (2 Cor. v. 14), and his last word to his nurse, how the love of Christ was the ruling principle of his character and life.

A HYMN FOR THE NEW YEAR.

"WE GIVE THANKS TO THEE FOR THY GREAT GLORY, O LORD GOD."

"*The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion.*"
ISAIAH li. 2.

We bless Thee, ever Bless'd,
For Thy great glory, Lord ;
Almighty Father, Holiest,
By earth and heaven adored :
O God, from everlasting ages Thou
Inhabitest an everlasting Now.

O Christ, O Lamb of God,
Who on the cross didst bear
The world's insufferable load
Of sin and woe and care ;
O Lord, be merciful, is all our cry,
As clinging to Thy pierced feet we lie.

O Holy Ghost Supreme,
Well-spring of life and love,
Of light the uncreated beam,
The overshadowing Dove ;
Come at our humble prayer, Great Spirit, come,
And make our contrite hearts Thy lasting home.

With all the heavenly Host,
With all Thy saints in glory,
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
We worship and adore Thee :
Here at Thy footstool let us rest awhile,
Our heaven on earth the sunshine of Thy smile.

E. H. EXON.

December, 1885.

Reviews.

Wanderings in China. By CONSTANCE F. GORDON CUMMING. Author of "At Home in Fiji," "A Lady's Cruise in a French Man-of-War," "Granite Crags," etc., etc. Two vols. W. Blackwood and Sons.

CHRISTMAS Day and New Year's Day in Hong-Kong. Of these experiences Miss Gordon Cumming gives an interesting account in the charming volumes before us. Her letters home, as we have often remarked, while welcoming her books of travel, are in every way admirable. And this is how she begins a letter written in Victoria, Hong-Kong, on Christmas Day : "Certainly fortune has favoured me, for we reached "this most lovely city early this morning, and have had a most enjoyable "Christmas Day. I had not the remotest conception that I was coming "to anything so beautiful ; so, when with the earliest light of dawn, we "slowly—very slowly—steamed into this exquisite harbour, its beauty, "so suddenly revealed, left me mute with delight. Perhaps the contrast "between these encircling ranges of shapely hills and the dead level of "the Shanghai coast helps to make these seem more impressive. Certainly "I have seen no harbour to compare with this, though I suppose Rio "Janeiro claims the palm of beauty above all others.

"This is like a great inland lake, so entirely do the jagged mountain-