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ART. I.—*The Zurich Letters; or, the Correspondence of several English Bishops, and others, with some of the Helvetican Reformers, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.* Chiefly from the Archives of Zurich. Translated from authenticated copies of the autographs, and edited for the Parker Society, by the Rev. Hastings Robinson, D. D., F. A. S., Rector of Great Warley, Essex, and formerly Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. Second edition, chronologically arranged in one series.

WHAT will be the ultimate destiny of the established Church of England, it is perhaps impossible to foretell, and therefore, vain to conjecture. We know of no book, however, which throws so much light upon its origin, genesis, growth and complicated structure, as the one before us. It completely exposes the hypothesis lately put forth by D'Aubigné, that the English Reformation proceeded primarily from the people, and was a purely religious Revolution. It is equally at variance with the opposite sentiment, that it was nothing more than a political change dictated by the pride or the policy of her rulers. The truth is, as usual, to be found in the mean between the two extremes. The circumstances of the times were, unquestionably, favourable to the progress of the Reform-

than a tread-mill motion, it requires a firm foothold. Thus, by proving all things and holding fast that which is good, we shall go onward, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Eph. iv. 13-15.

*J. M. Sherwood, ed.*

- ART. IV.—1. *A Pastor's Sketches; or, Conversations with anxious inquirers respecting the way of salvation.* By Ichabod S. Spencer, D.D., Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York. New York: M. W. Dodd, Brick Church Chapel, City Hall Square, 1850.
2. The Same: Second Series. Sixth Thousand. Same Publisher, 1855.
3. *Triumph in Suffering. A Discourse delivered at the funeral of the Rev. I. S. Spencer, D. D., Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, L. I.* By Gardiner Spring, D.D., LL.D., Pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in the city of New York. New York: M. W. Dodd, Publisher, 1855.
4. *Sermons of Rev. Ichabod S. Spencer, D. D., late pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, L. I., Author of a Pastor's Sketches; with a Sketch of his Life.* By Rev. J. M. Sherwood. In two volumes. New York: Published by M. W. Dodd, corner of Spruce Street, and City Hall Square, 1855.

THE qualities of a good pastor, and pulpit talents of a high order, are not always found united in the same person; but then it is a mistake to suppose that there is anything incompatible in the work of a Christian pastor out of the pulpit, and his work viewed simply as that of a preacher. One may be preparatory and supplementary to the other. But men differ not only in respect to the gifts which pertain to public speaking,

but in those which will give them success in the work of pastoral visitation. Some appear to be formed for social life, and have great conversational powers; others, in proportion as they give themselves up to habits of study, feel inclined to withdraw from general intercourse with men. It is not pride, nor indifference which influences them, but they may feel too sensitively the rough contact which is frequently incident to such intercourse.

Again, one man has a peculiar fondness for all inquiries which relate to our ever-varying moral and mental states. Human nature is his study; he wishes to view it, in all its types; to look at the mind in all its postures; to mark the operation of different motives; to notice its shifts when attempting to evade the conclusions of right reason, and ignore the truth; in a word, to learn the true, from the false, action of the moral and intellectual powers. Another man, equally devout and sincere, as a servant of Christ, will have comparatively little interest in all investigations of this character, especially when conducted on this experimental plan. We think we do not mistake when we say that it was doubtless Dr. Spencer's taste for the study of human nature, the human mind and character, in living man himself, no less than his sense of responsibility as a Christian pastor, which made him so diligent in his visitations among the families of his charge. He seems to have made every man, with whom he was thrown into official contact, a study as to his peculiar moral and mental characteristics. When he went out of his study, it was to study men, to make them his books. His visits were not those of mere routine or gossip, a species of dissipation which unfitted him to return to his books and his pen; they rather quickened his intellectual operations and furnished him with many hints, especially for the latter.

In the preface to his second series of Sketches, he speaks of an advantage which he always strove to improve: "When it was practicable, he studied the subjects [of the conversations recorded in the volume] beforehand. Having met an individual once, and expecting to meet him again, he carefully considered his case, aimed to anticipate his difficulties, studied the whole subject intensely, and in many cases wrote sermons upon it,

the substance of which afterwards came out, to a greater or less extent in the conversation. Thus, the conversations aided the sermons, and the sermons aided the conversations." Everywhere, throughout these volumes of Sketches, and, to some extent, of the Sermons, the author's love of inquiry into the moral and mental states of men, and that knowledge of the heart which springs from a jealous self-introspection, are apparent. The secret of his success and power in handling the word of life, and of his marked peculiarity of character, as a spiritual adviser, lay not only in his experimental knowledge of the truth, and excellence of the gospel, but in his singular knowledge of human nature. It is a species of knowledge which is of the utmost importance to success in the ministerial work. A pastor can better dispense with a knowledge of German criticism and literature, and some other branches of valuable learning, than with good sound common sense. But this no diploma can confer; he can obtain it in no school, in no college or seminary, but only from the study of men and of his own heart. Men of peculiar eccentricities, who are unable, or perhaps, unwilling to adapt themselves to their fellow men, have seldom been found to be eminently useful in the ministry. Presbyteries, it is obvious, are bound to pay as great attention to such trials as are designed to keep "weak" men out of the ministry, as to those which are intended to exclude the ignorant. And it has ever seemed to us that Presbyteries have no business more responsible than that of receiving candidates for licensure; for, in practice, it is found far more easy to say to an applicant that he would do well to withdraw his application, than it is to refuse a license, or withhold ordination; and in most cases the judgment of the Presbytery, after having examined the applicant respecting his acquaintance with experimental religion, and the motives which influence him to desire the sacred office, settles with him the question as to his call to preach the gospel. This question is tacitly proposed by every young man who applies to be received by a Presbytery as a candidate. To all who have been so received, and to all the youthful ministry, we commend the example of Dr. Spencer, as it may be gathered from his Sketches, not to be servilely imitated, but to illustrate the great advantage which a

minister acquires, when he goes out into the highways and hedges of the country, or dives into the feculent lanes of the city, to mingle with men, and especially to seek out those who are crushed down by poverty, or degraded by ignorance and vice.

Ichabod Smith Spencer was the youngest but one of eleven children, and was born at Rupert, Vermont, on the 23d day of February, 1798. At the age of eighteen, he became hopefully pious, and united himself with the Church of God. He was fitted for college at the Academy in Salem, N. Y., where it was his privilege to enjoy the ministry and paternal counsels of that venerable and beloved man, whose praise is in all the churches, the Rev. Alexander Proudfit, D. D., whom he never ceased to regard with filial affection. He graduated at Union College, where he maintained a high standing in his class, in the year 1822. While employed as principal of the Grammar School in Schenectady, he engaged in the study of theology under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Andrew Yates, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Union College. He subsequently became Preceptor of the Academy in Canandaigua, N. Y., where he completed his theological studies so far as to be licensed to preach the gospel, by the Presbytery of Geneva. This was in November, 1826.

He continued at the head of the Academy in Canandaigua, for nearly two years after his licensure. It was in the summer of 1828, when he received and accepted a call from the Congregational Church in Northampton, Mass., the same church of which Jonathan Edwards had been so long pastor. He left Northampton for Brooklyn, L. I., in 1832, having gathered into the church, as the fruits of his ministry in the former place, in all two hundred and thirty-three persons. Not an individual was to be found, old or young, in his whole parish, one of the largest in New England, with whose name and countenance he was not familiar. It may be mentioned, as a proof of the reputation which he had already gained, that when it was known that he contemplated removing from Northampton, he received an urgent call from the Park Street Church, Boston; but he believed that the will of his Divine Master pointed him to Brooklyn, and he accordingly accepted a call from the Second

Presbyterian Church, then newly organized and feeble. Here he prosecuted a laborious and successful ministry for more than twenty-two years, until his death. The church was a colony, numbering less than forty members, and worshipped for a while in a school-room. His congregation steadily increased, and at length, erected their large church edifice, which was soon filled with people. Dr. Spencer preached incessantly; for the first twenty years, he was in Brooklyn three times on the Sabbath, habitually.

“Few ministers of the everlasting gospel,” says the venerable Dr. Spring, “if any, are more industrious, and few have less occasion to lament misspent and wasted hours. The result was, that he became one of the best and most effective preachers of the age. Few habitually spake like him in discourses of such instructiveness, such attractive persuasion, such withering rebuke of wickedness, or such happy effects upon the minds of men. He ‘spake the things which became sound doctrine,’ and declared ‘the whole counsel of God.’ He was cautious and wise, but he was urgent and in earnest. He was often tender to weeping, yet was he a most fearless preacher. There was a large commingling of the ‘son of consolation’ with the ‘son of thunder,’ in his character. I have heard him say that he did not know what it was to be ensnared or embarrassed in preaching God’s truth, and that the thought of being afraid to utter it because it was unpopular, never once entered his mind. There was something of nature in this, and more of grace; he was fearless of men, because he feared God. There was great variety in his preaching; he was not confined to a few threadbare topics; his mind and heart took a wide range, and brought out of his treasure ‘things both new and old.’ Nor was he given to crude and imperfect preparations for the pulpit; a volume of sermons might be selected from his manuscripts, which would be a beautiful model for the youthful ministry, and a great comfort to the church of God. His Sabbath evening lectures on the Shorter Catechism, as well as portions of his lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, will not easily be forgotten by those who heard them.”

As a pastor, Dr. Spencer greatly excelled. He always carried a book containing the names and places of residence of all

the members of his congregation, in which he made such entries as might serve to help his memory, and guide him in his visits and conversation, and in which he registered the date of each visit as it was made. It was his rule to call on each family of his congregation once every year, and as much oftener as sickness, affliction, or other circumstances seemed to render it desirable. He had a happy faculty of knowing people; he observed the new faces in his congregation, traced the individuals out, and soon became acquainted with them. Probably the account he gives of his labours, in his new-year's sermon for 1852, would fairly represent his labours from year to year: "Looking back now upon the ministry I have exercised another year, I confess that I am ashamed, and ought to be ashamed, of the feebleness of my ministrations, and that they have been performed with no more faith, and no higher spirituality. On this account, I would be ashamed and abased before God. But I am not ashamed of the affection which I have ever borne to my people, of my desires for their good, nor of the amount of labour and industry which I have employed. In the year 1851, I preached two hundred and nine sermons.

"I visited all the families of the congregation once, and in special instances more than once. The number of these calls was four hundred and twenty-one.

"I visited sick people and dying ones in one hundred and twenty-one different instances.

"I aimed to find opportunity for conversation with those who were not members of the church, that, conversing with them alone, I might if possible, persuade them to seek the Lord. And as they seldom came to me, for the most part I went to them. Such private conversations, and some of them protracted, numbered two hundred and fifty-nine.

"I attended prayer-meeting forty-six times; and other religious meetings sixty-two times; and officiated at thirty-four funerals.

"I did not neglect the poor; I aimed to search them out, and, according to my ability, gave them pecuniary relief. I am sorry the relief was so small, but I am sure it was given with good will in seventy-two instances."

In 1830 Dr. Spencer was called to the Presidentship of the University of Alabama. In 1832, soon after his removal to

Brooklyn, he was invited to the same office in Hamilton College. In 1833, he received a unanimous call to the Essex Street Church, Boston, of which the Rev. Nehemiah Adams, D.D. is now pastor. In 1835 overtures were again made to him from the Park Street Church, Boston, and at the same time he received the tender of a call from the Pine Street Church, in the same city. Many formal calls and numerous overtures were made to him, from time to time, from many different places. In 1853, he was elected to the Professorship of Pastoral Theology in East Windsor Theological Seminary, Conn. In 1836, he accepted the Professorship Extraordinary of Biblical History in Union Theological Seminary, New York, which place he held for about four years.

At the time the New-school body separated from the Presbyterian Church he remained firmly in his ecclesiastical connection, and by this public act, when there were not lacking powerful influences and examples to draw him into schism, gave the strongest testimony in his power that he did not approve of the divisive movement. We do not pretend that he supported all the measures of which the New-school party complained, and which they made the ground of their action, in separating from the Church. In this respect he was like many others, who stood firmly in their places, and retained the confidence and affection of their brethren. On the other hand, it would be doing Dr. Spencer great injustice to represent that he approved of the errors and abuses which the measures complained of were designed to remedy. He was too conservative and orthodox to have any sympathy with the excised heresies, and irregular proceedings, which induced to excise the portion of the Church in which they prevailed.

We have alluded to this subject simply because the chief objection we have to the Sketch of his Life, by Mr. Sherwood, is the notice which he takes of Dr. Spencer's position, in relation to what Mr. Sherwood calls "the dismemberment of the Presbyterian Church." One would suppose from the attention which the author of the Sketch gives to this topic, that Dr. Spencer had taken some conspicuous part in the discussions and measures of that day. And yet we doubt whether his name ever appeared in public, on any occasion, in connection with them. He was



not a member of the General Assembly; and, if he was present at the meeting of the Synod of New York, at Newburgh, he does not appear to have taken any prominent part. The truth is, Dr. Spencer was then comparatively young, and little known in the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. It was but ten years since his licensure, and but five since he came to the Presbyterian Church, from Northampton. Mr. Sherwood says that Dr. Spencer felt that what his brethren, with whom he remained in ecclesiastical connection, had done, "was a high-handed procedure, unwarranted by the state of the Church, and greatly injurious to the cause of truth, and the interests of the Presbyterian Church. And in his own place ecclesiastically, and to individuals on both sides, he never hesitated to speak of it thus." Now if there is anything in the writings of the deceased in which he defines his own position, and which justifies the above statement, we think the public are entitled to it; and if there is not, we think the statement ought never to have been made. He was a man of great precision and carefulness, and had his own way of stating his views; and we do not believe that he would have authorized any man to state his position for him. It is doubtless true that he did not approve of the formation of the New-school General Assembly; but that he was "suspected" by his brethren, with whom he remained ecclesiastically connected, cannot be proved. We know that he was a highly esteemed and useful member of the Presbytery, and that no one was listened to with more respectful attention, in all its discussions. And in the Synod, we know that, on almost the only occasion when he was present, at the opening of that body, for many years, he was elected its Moderator. We dismiss this subject, with a remark used in the last number of this work, that it is obvious that no satisfactory history of the division of the Presbyterian Church can be expected during the present generation. When the grave has covered the actors of the scenes referred to, those who come after us may be able to do justice to all concerned.

Although a man robust in appearance, Dr. Spencer suffered under a painful malady for years. It assumed a more threatening aspect in January, 1854. The violence of the attack, however, after a time subsided; he was able to travel again, and at length

preached to his people, which he did for the last time, on the 30th of July. Dr. Spring thus describes the closing scenes of his life :

“During the last three or four weeks of his life, so severe were his sufferings, that he was not inclined to much conversation. But on the Monday preceding his death, being comparatively free from pain, and perceiving that his time was short, he called his family about his bed, requested them to be so arranged that he could see them all, and separately address each one of them. He told them that he expected to die, and expected to go to heaven, and expressed the hope that he should meet them all there. In his own simple manner, and with all the tenderness of a dying man, he opened to them the way of life by Jesus Christ, spoke to them of his own confidence in the Saviour, and urged them to ‘cling to Christ and the Bible’ as their only hope.” “It was just after this affecting scene, that I knocked at his door. And never was I more kindly directed than in making this fraternal visit. I had some fears, from what I knew of his self-scrutinizing spirit, that I might find him in a depressed state of mind. But as he drew near the close of his struggles, God was kind, and gave him sweet indication of his paternal love. There he tossed, day after day, and night after night, upon that couch of racking pain, with a mind as clear as Newton’s, and a heart as peaceful as a child in its mother’s bosom. The great peculiarity of his Christian character, was his shrinking humility, and self-diffidence. More than once, in the days of his unbroken vigour, I have heard him say, ‘I have mistaken my calling; I never was fit for a minister of the Gospel.’ No one else thought so; yet he retained this self-diffidence to the last. I said to him, ‘Brother Spencer, I am afraid you are about to leave us.’ He replied, ‘I think so.’ I took his hand, and he said, ‘You see I am strong; I may rally, but it is more than probable that I shall leave you by to-morrow morning.’ ‘Is it peace with you, brother?’ His body was in agony; he tossed his head on the pillow, and replied, ‘It is all peace.’ He paused, and fixing his piercing eye upon me, said, ‘I am afraid it is too much peace. I cannot discover in myself those evidences of personal godliness which justify me in enjoying such abundant peace.’ I could not repress a

smile at these sweet words, and then reminded him of those words of the Lord Jesus, when he said, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' He simply replied, 'Pray with me;' and then called his family around his bed, where we knelt and prayed together for the last time. His sufferings continued without any abatement, with the exception of a few tranquil hours, which he employed in giving to those around him his last counsel and charge, commending them to God, and testifying his own precious hopes, and the prospects that cheered him as he bade them farewell. He subsequently conversed but little. His manly frame was exhausted. Three days after this the strong man bowed himself to the impotence and dust of death. An inscrutable Providence made him a partaker in his Master's sufferings; abundant grace made him a partaker in his glory." We do not observe that the date of his death is given either by Dr. Spring or by Mr. Sherwood. We think that event occurred on November 24, 1854.

The "Pastor's Sketches" have been some time before the public, and received the verdict of approval; but as they are productions which indicate their author's peculiar power, and illustrate his remarkable fidelity and wisdom, in dealing with anxious inquirers after the way of salvation, by which his fame was principally achieved, and on which it will no doubt chiefly rest, we must give them some attention. They grew out of the materials which accumulated on his hands, from his habit of keeping a record of the conversations he held in his pastoral visitations. For strictly religious books they have had an almost unprecedented sale. We are rejoiced at this; for while they contain some things which we wish the author had left out, they are replete with wholesome instruction, and the weighty theological truths they contain, as if winged by the engaging and often thrilling narrative, will be borne where the merely argumentative treatise could never have found access. Nor are we surprised at the popularity of these Sketches. Dr. Spencer possessed an insight into human character, and a power of graphic delineation, which, if he had cultivated it, would have made him a master in this species of writing. We do not discover that there is any material falling off in the

second series, a result which might have been well apprehended. Some of these sketches, so far as we can judge, might with advantage have been considerably extended. Dr. Spencer has not in all cases permitted us to see, although he has greatly excited our curiosity, the process by which he succeeded in bringing the troubled mind out of deep distress. Take, for example, "The Miserable Heart, or Delusion and Infidelity;" if he had given the conversations which he had with his young friend, and the condensed arguments which he wrote down for her, we think it would have formed perhaps the most instructive of all his Sketches. We sympathize deeply with such a case as he describes; we feel somewhat as we do for the heroine of a tragic story, who pines in the gloom of a prison; and we would fain learn how the walls were scaled, or undermined, or the brazen doors opened, and the prisoner set at liberty.

The publication of his first book made him immediately known, far and wide, to a considerable class of persons who are labouring under despondency, or religious difficulties of some kind. "I have been," he writes in a letter to a friend, "a very imprudent man in my publications, for they have brought upon me more labour than I could describe—a correspondence of a most delicate and difficult nature, extending from Canada to Florida, and conversations without number and without end, with multitudes of people in religious trouble. A gentleman from Montreal has just left my study after two hours of conversation upon his terrible gloom. A young theological student from Connecticut spent last Sunday evening with me till midnight. I have some of the most wonderful religious histories, I am sure, that ever existed, which I will tell you about when I see you, but *I shall never print them*. [Qu. Did Dr. Spencer suspect that some of these wonderful histories might have been communicated to him, merely to be edited for the press?] In some cases my patients have wonderfully recovered, and in others they are as hopeless as ever. Nerves are strange things; never get nervous."—*Sketch*, p. 110.

The practice of keeping a written account of conversations with persons under religious trouble, and of interesting incidents in pastoral experience, has been very generally recommended to young ministers. So far as making such a record,

in some cases, is concerned, we are disposed to think that the recommendation is a wise one; but we must, at the same time, express the hope, that it will not be understood as extending to the publication of these private *memoranda*. It is not every man that has the same insight into human character, the same skill in meeting cavils and solving questions of conscience, the same discriminating judgment, the same soundness of theology, the same gift of cautious and accurate statement, the same power of description which belonged to the lamented author of these Sermons and Sketches. Moreover, if it comes to be understood that the interviews which a pastor has with members of his flock, are not only subject to record, but that the record may be given to the public, through the press, will not candour and freedom of intercourse in such interviews be put in peril? Is not the pastor's position, in respect to his spiritual patients, so far as the duty of reserve and silence is concerned, often analogous to that of the physician? Besides, human nature is weak, and sometimes betrays its weakness in strange and unexpected ways. There are not wanting persons, who, if they know a minister is in the habit of making memoranda of wonderful histories and remarkable experiences, with a view to publication, would seek to put themselves in his way, merely to gratify the vanity of seeing their own case in print.

As to this whole matter of recommending the plans and ways of one minister to be adopted by others, it should be done with caution. Young pastors may, no doubt, learn much, and should seek to learn all they can from the example of older ones, but should not be encouraged to become servile imitators. What one man can do well, another never succeeds in. Dr. Spencer excelled many, perhaps most, of his brethren, as a watchful pastor; he has been as much excelled by others in other parts of the ministerial work. And we wish to take this occasion to say generally, let no man's peculiarities, his style of preaching, his peculiarities of enunciation, articulation, or gesticulation, be made the model for all others to imitate. Because one man becomes an eloquent and impressive preacher of sermons, written out in every word, to the dotting of every *i*, and the crossing of every *t*, let it not be supposed that this is the true method for every other man. And, on the other hand,

because one minister succeeds admirably in extemporaneous preaching, let it not be supposed that every other minister must throw aside his pen and manuscript, and adopt the same method. It is natural for one man to speak in figures and poetry; when excited, he must speak so, or not at all. Let him speak in figures. Another is without imagination; he always speaks in plain prose. Let him speak in plain prose. One man never speaks in ordinary conversation without gestures; if they are natural, and have character and meaning, do not attempt to teach him, even if they are not in accordance with the rules of the "Complete Speaker," to lay them aside. Another man never uses gestures; he cannot possibly make a graceful one; do not attempt to make him display his natural awkwardness. He may have a burning, earnest spirit, which will do more for him than the most finished graceful manner. Nature is fond of variety, a truth which should not be forgotten, even in endeavouring to make Christian orators and effective Christian ministers. We need not a Procrustean bed in our colleges and theological schools, but the art of teaching every man to understand himself, to know what are his own peculiar gifts, and how he may most effectively use them for the glory of his Master.

As to the Sermons, which the enterprising and worthy publishers has given us, in these two volumes of nearly a thousand pages, Mr. Sherwood informs us that Dr. Spencer had made a careful selection from his sermons, to the number of one hundred and thirty-seven, which he regarded as most worthy of publication. He had prepared twenty-three of these for the press, all of which are here published; and we are given to understand, that the residue of the volumes was selected from the remaining one hundred and fourteen. We think it a highly auspicious circumstance, that the author of the Sermons had so large an instrumentality in designating those which should be given to the public. Ordinarily, the author of such productions is the best, and, in many cases, he is the only competent, judge of what should be given to the public. We are satisfied that great injustice has sometimes been done by posthumous publications. Partial relatives and parishioners wish some memento of a deceased friend and pastor; but in making the selection,

perhaps just those discourses which the author would have committed to the flames, are committed to the press. Such publications should be rarely made; and, when resolved upon, should be made with the greatest care, by some man of critical skill and cultivated literary taste, who would not publish for a deceased friend what he would not publish for himself. The example of some of our venerable clergymen, who devote the evening of their days to the publication of such portions of their writings as they wish to be preserved, imposes no such difficult and delicate task upon survivors. The course of Dr. Spencer, in making the above-named selection, was the next best thing he could do; and relieved his affectionate biographer and editor of a great responsibility.

The Sermons are all characteristic of their author; but are of course of varied excellence. Those contained in the first volume are mainly practical; and those in the second, doctrinal. We might enrich our pages with many fine passages; and we cannot forbear to present a few, as specimens of the author's style. The following will be found in his sermon on "Sorrow for the death of friends:"

"The sorrow of those who have no hope has a character and depth which arise from their own unbelief and the false estimates they put upon the world. They judge of the happiness of others very much as they judge of their own. And since their own felicity is found in the world, they sorrow for those who are taken out of it, as if they were deprived at once of all their enjoyments. They think of the dead very much as if stripped of every comfort, and consigned to the dark and cheerless tomb. This is common. Go out with me and I will lead you to a desolate habitation where the widow weeps with her fatherless children, and bemoans the lot which has taken the husband and father away from the comforts of life. Draw near. Listen. What is she saying? Alas, says she, that dear companion of my life has gone! That friend on whom I leaned, that father of my children, that tender husband who sought to do me good, has gone from all the enjoyments I hoped he would have shared with me! He sleeps in the cold grave! No comfort can reach him! No voice of friendship breaks the eternal silence of the tomb! Turn again to another habitation. Here is a mother, but she is child-

less! Fresh tears flow unbidden at the recollection of her babe! Poor babe, (she is saying,) he sleeps in his little grave! No mother's kindness can reach him! I can never do him good! he has gone to his cheerless and lonely tomb!"—Vol. I., p. 159.

"If we are to give our bodies to the grave, we know who owns it, who has conquered it, and robbed it of its victory. Ah, more: we know how he robbed it. Our best Friend, our Almighty Saviour, has been down into its bosom. He has softened, sweetened, sanctified that bed of sleep! Oh! if I am a Christian, I would rather go by that dark path to heaven, than go like Elijah with his chariot and horses of fire! It will be more like Christ. I shall lie where he lay. I shall prove his love. I shall experience his power. This dead body shall rise, and in heaven, a sinner saved, redeemed, loved, raised from the dead and taken into the family of God—in heaven, I shall love to tell what Jesus Christ hath done for me! Angels shall hear it! I will tell it to the old prophets! I will hunt up my fathers who got there before me, and tell it to them! I will wait for my children to die, and as they come there, I will tell it to them! Oh! my God, my God! this is enough! I will praise thee for it for ever! Oh! I am comforted now. I can bury my friends, my minister, my father, my daughter; I can set my foot upon the grave; and, with a heart filled with comfort from the God of heaven, I can wait the day when that stilled heart shall beat again, and those dumb lips shall speak from the opened coffin, and we shall be caught up together in the air." Vol. I., pp. 162, 163.

Frequently, in these discourses, we perceive that the author had an eye for the beauties of nature, and a pen capable of describing them; as in the following passage from the one on "Contentment."

"It is not one of the distinct and separate sensibilities of the heart, standing by itself and to be examined and understood alone, so much as it is a general sensibility which mingles with and tempers all others—which spreads its cast and character over the whole. It is not the rock on the landscape nor the rill—it is not the distant mountain of fading blue which loses its head in the heavens—it is not the tree, or the flower, or the contrast between light and shade, or that indescribable some-



thing which seems to give it life, as if the grass grew, and the flowers breathed, and the winds were singing some song of pleasure, or sighing some mournful requiem. It is none of these. These can be more clearly described. But it is rather that softness, that mellow light, which lies over the whole—which sleeps on rock, and river, and tree, on the bosom of the distant mountain, and on the bosom of the humble violet that blushes in the sweetness of its lowly valley.”—Vol. I., pp. 278, 279.

He everywhere deals earnestly with the consciences of men. In the Sermon entitled “Delay of Conversion,” occur the following solemn and instructive words:

“What becomes of those who die, we know not; thank God, we know not. They are in his hands. There we must leave them. But among all the instances of supposed conversion on a sick bed which I have known (and I have known many in a ministry of twenty-five years), only four of those who recovered gave in after life any evidence of the religion which they thought they had gained when they were sick! Only four! Where were the nine? yea, the more than ninety and nine? Only four! What a lesson on the delay of conversion! what an appalling lesson! The mists of delusion seem to be thickening around the bed of the graceless. He neglected religion, delayed it all his life, and now in his dying moments he seems to be most peculiarly exposed to the dreadful, damning hope of the hypocrite! The hour of dying! oh! what an hour for conversion! Distracted thoughts, disordered mind, increasing danger, strange alternations of hope and fear, contradictory symptoms, physicians and medicines to occupy attention! a pained body! weeping friends to minister their last offices of kindness before we leave them! parents, wives, children to be left in this cold, wicked world! the grave! eternity and all that is in it!—these are some of the things which press upon the hour of death! My friends, my dear friends, leave not your conversion to that hour.”—Vol. I., p. 401.

How tenderly he addresses the believer's heart in the “Sketch of the Plan of Salvation!”

“One of you has been saying: Years have rolled on since I first became a communicant. Grace met me, I hope, a great while ago. But it was grace. There was nothing in me then,

and there is nothing in me now by reason of which I could ever live to God, and hope to be purified and live with him in heaven. The more I see of my heart, through all this course of years, the more experimental proofs I find that just by the grace of God I am what I am. Another of you has been saying: This hope of mine is the work of God. I am a new creature, and God's workmanship in Jesus Christ. Once I was far different from this. I neglected religion; I did not love God. I was worldly. I was envious. I was covetous. I was proud and unforgiving: but now I can forgive my bitterest enemies. I love God, and love his service. I can give up the world and take Jesus; and I humbly hope that he who has begun a good work in me will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Another of you has been saying: A few years since, I thought the world was everything. An ardent boy, my heart panted for riches, honours, pleasures. My thoughts were all occupied about the world; I plunged into it; I forgot God! I forgot death! I neglected prayer! I was bound toward perdition! But grace rescued me from my dreadful delusion and peril! God opened my eyes, and led me to seek first the kingdom of heaven. Another of you has been saying: A little while ago, I was a wild giddy girl; I cared little for the love of God! I lived for the pleasures of the world. If I prayed at all, it was by constraint, and not from the attractions of holiness, and the love of my God. But grace saved me. It was God's own operation. He sent the message which opened my eyes to see the precipice on which I was sporting, and down which it is a thousand wonders that I had not plunged! He opened my heart to the love of Jesus; and made me know that his love is better than all other loves. Oh, I would not go back to the world:

'Jesus, I my cross have taken,' etc.

—Vol. II. pp. 404, 405.

The experienced pastor speaks in the following:

"In the early part of my ministry, I used to aim very often to soothe the afflicted, and encourage the darkened and depressed, by a reference to natural principles, such as the courses of this world, the common lot of life, the uselessness of repining, the mercies still left, or some such thing. I have done with all

that. I do it no more. It never did any good. It only dammed up the currents of grief for a little while, to become the more deep and dreadful, when they burst away the frail barrier. It never carried healing to the grief-spot of the heart. It only smothered the fires of trial, to burn the more fiercely and more deeply too, when, in a little while, the heart should find they were only smothered. I hope, I have done with all that. I have learnt its inefficacy. If I cannot lead to the exercises of faith, I cannot do a smitten heart any permanent good."—Vol. II., pp. 456, 457.

He shows his heart, his earnest spirit, as a preacher of the gospel:

"These are hard times! Their trials strike deep! They make a minister feel as Isaiah did, when, forsaken by those who ought to have sustained him, he retires from his toils for man, to indulge his tears with God, and, seated on the lone crag of the mountain rock, he wraps his face in his mantle: 'Lord, who hath believed our report?' They make a minister feel as Jeremiah did, when, his message rejected by so many, he seems to wish he had never been born: 'Woe is me, my mother! thou hast borne me a man of strife and contention to the whole earth.' Or, when he seems resolved to renounce a useless ministry, which made him so miserable: 'The word of the Lord is made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily; then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name:' he resolved never to preach another sermon. This oppressive, this miserable idea, drove me upon this text. (Eph. ii. 4-7.) It had two influences upon me. One was, I dared not form a plan of a sermon; I dared not select any theme from this wide field of the gospel, and attempt to explain, divide, demonstrate, and apply it under the ordinary rules of composition. The other was, I hoped, yes, I did hope, and I bless God that I can hope, that a passage like this, just the ideas of the Holy Ghost, without any plan or arrangement of mine, and a passage, so full of the mercy of God, might still find some access to your hearts."—Vol. II., 392, 393.

Here we see the same hand that wrote the "Pastor's Sketches:"

"One poor sinner, now I trust redeemed, said to me lately:

'I never knew till you told me that I might fly to Christ now, and just as I am. That amazed me. I was such a stranger to him. You told me to give God my heart just as it is. That surprised me. I thought you did not know me. Fly to Christ just as I am? To Christ now? Such a stranger to him? Give God my heart just as it is? I had never thought anything about Christ! He had always been last in my thoughts, as one to resort to after I was religious—and fly to him first? Fly to him now? Stop trying and he do all? Impossible! You did not understand me! My powers seemed stunned! It was entirely new truth to me.' So she thought then. But she has learnt better now. Before she believed, she says: 'I cannot describe my ineffectual efforts to grope and feel after Christ through thick darkness. I could not find him. I could only cry, Jesus, Master, have mercy on me, and ask him to take my heart—for I could not give it to him—and make it for me what I could not make it myself. I never knew the promises were for me, until you told me. I thought they were not for me.' 'Not for you!' said I. 'It is the lie of the devil! They are for you if you want them. It is the very act of faith to take them, and trust Christ to do all he has said.'—Vol. II., pp. 443, 444.

Preaching like this must have made a strong and lasting impression on the minds of hearers. We are not surprised that Dr. Spencer was successful in gathering a large and influential congregation in Brooklyn, that he was always acceptable in the pulpits of his brethren, and not only to the cultivated, but to the less cultivated among his hearers; nor that he was frequently solicited to enter other fields where a high order of talent was demanded. We think we understand what Mr. Sherwood means, when he says that Dr. Spencer was not what is commonly understood by a *popular* preacher. He did not covet popularity. He did not, for form's sake, take a text from the Bible, and then preach upon any other subject, save the doctrines and duties of the Bible, esteeming it the chief end of the preacher, to attract a crowd, who must have their modicum of excitement as well on a Sabbath, as on any other evening of the week, and in the church as well as in the theatre. He was not influenced by the fear that his people,

young or old, would tire of regeneration, justification, imputation, faith and repentance. His interest in these doctrines was too hearty to allow the admission of such a fear, or even the suspicion that they could fail to seize with power upon the attention and hearts of men. He did not think it necessary to assume theatrical grins and starts, and seek to provoke smiles that he might win souls. He did not let Paul "serve" him with a "text," while "Epictetus, Plato, Tully preached." But, we venture to say that within the walls of the Second Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, under the preaching of the lamented Spencer, audiences have been held in as rapt attention, and the souls of men as deeply moved, as by any oratory of the greatest masters of rhetorical science. His preaching was in the true and noblest sense popular. It was addressed to the understanding of the plainest people. His manner, and weighty thoughts, his appeals to the conscience and the heart, were fitted to win respect for him as a minister of Christ, even from those, who, with itching ears, for the excitement and amusement of the hour, run after those who cultivate the flippant, *ad captandum* style, which the experience of the platform has taught them is sure to bring down the house—a respect for him, which was sure to bring them back, in their season of affliction, or of solemn thoughtfulness, to sit at his feet, and learn the way of salvation. Men who because they must advertise the pews and draw a full house, and be reported in the Monday's *Times* or *Herald*, fail to preach the gospel, may succeed in all that they propose to do; but let them not be surprised if their admiring hearers, when they become hungry for the bread of life, resort to others to be fed. It is evidence of a lack of earnestness, and of real talent—talent to appreciate as well as set forth the great soul-moving truths of the gospel, when a professed preacher of the gospel leaves those truths, to descant upon themes of mere passing interest, in a flippant, wordy style, to tickle the ears of the unthinking. The church may be made to have the attractions of the theatre, but then it will be, so far as moral impression is concerned, a theatre. There can be no more enlivening themes than those contained in the gospel, the incarnation and sufferings of Christ, the lost estate of sinners, the mercy of the cross,

judgment and eternity; why then leave these for the paltry topics of merely temporary interest.

We have reserved but little space to notice such doctrinal peculiarities as have struck our attention, in examining these volumes of sermons. Among those which are distinguished in the work as doctrinal, we find such as bear the following titles: "The Light of Nature," "Atonement," "Legal and Evangelical Justification distinguished," "Election," "The Mercy of God." A great and important truth lies at the foundation of the sermon on the "Light of Nature," viz., its insufficiency to teach men true religion: but, in his course of argument, he repeatedly makes the impression, that he means to deny any such thing as a light of nature, in respect to the being of God, his nature, or the worship which belongs to him. He says that most of those ideas found in the heathen classics, which have been so much commended, came, probably, not from the light of nature, but from tradition, handed down from Noah or Abraham; or they were derived from intercourse with the Jews. "The real utility of all the light of nature on the subject of religion consists in this; that it demonstrates its own insufficiency for teaching us a single important truth, and thus turns us over to the word of God." "Alone, it teaches nothing. It never did. God never said it could." Among the truths which he specifies as those which the light of nature fails to teach, are, the existence of one God, and the attributes of the Deity, naming two as examples—immutability and goodness. "How often," he says, "is that passage in the Epistle to the Romans quoted, only to be perverted for bolstering up a conclusion, directly the opposite of its own! '*The invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, even his eternal power and Godhead.*' What is the Bible conclusion? It is this; '*so, then, they are without excuse.*' Excuse for what? For having a knowledge of God? That would make the Apostle talk like a madman! No. Without excuse for not knowing God. But what is the conclusion of our poetic and naturalizing Christians? It is that the light of nature, the creation, the things that are made, are quite sufficient to give man a knowledge of God! And this conclusion they take for the foundation of theories, and songs, and lectures, though

directly in the face of the conclusion stated in the text itself. The text plainly affirms the practical inefficacy of the works of God to teach men religious truth. It says they are not taught, they are without excuse. They are only condemned, instead of being enlightened and saved. They do not read nature rightly."—Vol. II., pp. 16, 17.

Now we do not call in question, as we have said, the correctness of the doctrine which lies at the foundation of this discourse, that the light of nature is insufficient to teach man true religion. But it is clearly a mistake to suppose that to defend this doctrine it is necessary to deny that the light of nature teaches any truth, even the existence of one God. When the Apostle represents the heathen as without excuse for not knowing God, we ask a question which Dr. Spencer does not ask in this sermon, Why without excuse? Obviously because they had light enough from the things which are made, to know that they were changing the glory of the uncorruptible God, and were guilty of horrid impiety, when they made images like to corruptible man, birds, four-footed beasts and creeping things, and worshipped them as divine. They had not light enough to answer that ancient question, "How shall man be just with God?" but they had sufficient to teach them the folly and inexcusableness of idolatry. It is the object of the apostle in Rom. i. 18–23, to show that God had given such a revelation of his existence and character that idolaters were inexcusable for being idolaters. This revelation is given externally in the works of creation, and in the very soul of man, or in the constitution of his nature. When any of the heathen do by nature the things contained in the law of God, they show the work of the law written in their hearts. Rom. ii. 14, 15. Whenever they perform any moral act which the revealed law requires, they prove that they have light, that a rule of duty has been engraven on their hearts. The same thing is proved by the operations of their conscience, and the correct moral precepts of some of their sages. This light, this rule of duty, is that by which they will be tried on the last day, and which will condemn them. But if they have no light, how are they without excuse, and by what law will they be condemned?

The Sermon on the Atonement, which is admirably calculated

to commend the orthodox view to those who have been prejudiced against it, appears nevertheless faulty to us, in its construction; especially, in the distinction which the author endeavours to make between "two different methods of apprehending the atonement." He does not profess to treat the subject doctrinally, or so much as a "matter of theology, as of experience." One method of apprehending the atonement is to view it as a satisfaction rendered to divine justice and authority for the indignity done to them by sin. The other method, according to Dr. Spencer, makes the essence of the atonement to be a satisfaction rendered to the Deity for the offence of the sinner. And he enters into a lengthened argument to prove that our hearts ought to apprehend the Saviour's atonement, not so much as a plan to prepare the way to save sinners, not so much as a transaction due to law, as a more personal and special sacrifice to meet the sins, sorrows and wants of the soul itself. The difficulty we have with this distinction is, that we do not see how a guilty soul can apprehend the atonement as a sacrifice to meet his own spiritual necessities, unless he first, and at the same time, apprehends it in its relation to law, and as sustaining the honour of that law, while the sinner is pardoned. But the discourse makes the impression deeply, and in this respect is highly valuable, and will no doubt be read with profit in latitudes where the orthodox statement is viewed with suspicion and dislike, that the atonement of Christ was made for the very persons of those who are saved by it.

But we must conclude: while the Sermons are no ordinary productions, and contain an amount of manly, able discussion, not often met with in volumes of mere sermons, we are inclined to the opinion, intimated on a preceding page, that Dr. Spencer's fame will rest mainly on his "Pastor's Sketches." These will make his name known in the distant hamlets of the land, and will perpetuate his usefulness long after his hearers and his own generation have mingled with the dust.