

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

reflect, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, and are led by His Spirit. They that overcome the evil overcome the sorrow. For them—gentle souls they are, most of them, unknown to the great ones of the earth, but dear to the Almighty—for them, in the midst of life's trials, there is always peace; for them dying is not death, but the gate to a nobler form of life; for them there is safe passage over life's troublesome waves. They know nothing of storms when they hear the voice that says, "It is I; be not afraid." They walk with their Lord; the waters are firm beneath their feet; no more sea casting up mire and dirt, but that which rests and shines before the throne. They walk in the light; they have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus cleanseth them from all sin. The sea is no more, nor the night. The great vision of the Revelation is no mere dream of a world yet to come in which everybody is to be made comfortable by a change of circumstances. It is an ideal which may become real in this world, here and now, to all who are willing to have it realized. The unwilling are "without," with everyone that loveth and maketh a lie. For them there is no Immanuel, God with us; for them the tears are not wiped away; for them death reigns as heretofore, and death's forerunners and followers, mourning and crying and pain; whole seas of trouble—yes, and even before they die the first or natural death, their part may be in the second or spiritual death. (Rev. xx. 6, 9; xxi. 8.)

J. FOXLEY.



ART. V.—DEAN FARRAR.

AMONG the religious teachers of the nineteenth century Dean Farrar held a foremost place, and the details of his "Life," written by his son, Mr. Reginald Farrar, and published by Messrs. Nisbet at the modest price of 6s., will be eagerly read by thousands of persons in England and America who owe to him a debt of undying gratitude. The biography is not a long one, and consists in a great measure of "reminiscences" written by various friends who had special knowledge of his work at different periods of his career.

Of Farrar's early life there are but few incidents to record. He was born at Bombay in 1831, his father at that time being a chaplain of the Church Missionary Society. At the age of three he was sent to England, and placed under the care of two maiden aunts who lived at Aylesbury. Here he passed

a happy childhood, and developed, we are told, at a very early age a voracious appetite for books. His school-days were spent at King William's College in the Isle of Man, where, with little difficulty, he became head of the school, and where he was conspicuous for that habit of unremitting industry which was so marked a feature in his after-career. For games, as we should expect, he cared but little, and found his chief recreation in long rambles amid the beautiful scenery of the district. Here, too, he laid the foundation of that marvellous knowledge of English poetry in which, perhaps, he has never been equalled, except, it may be, by Lord Macaulay.

At the age of sixteen Farrar was entered as a student at King's College, London, where, in addition to a London University scholarship, he gained a classical and theological scholarship, and thus relieved his father, who had returned from India, and was acting as curate of St. James's, Clerkenwell, from the burden of any expense for his education. At this time his life was indeed one of intense and incessant application. He seems to have taken as his model the poet Milton, whose portrait, with the following lines from the "Paradise Regained" inscribed beneath, hung for many years in his dressing-room :

"When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
What might be public good; myself I thought
Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
All righteous things; therefore, above my years,
The law of God I read, and found it sweet—
Made it my whole delight."

At King's College he came under the influence of F. D. Maurice, at that time Professor of History and Literature, and for whom he ever after entertained the most profound veneration and affection. Among the students he found a congenial companion in Edwin Arnold, who speaks of Farrar's friendship as "one of the most prized possessions" of his life, a friendship "which never changed, and never grew colder on either side." It was Arnold's almost invariable fate to be *proxime accessit* to Farrar, but, along with others, he tells us, he grew accustomed to these inevitable defeats, soon learning to recognise that nothing could make head against his indomitable energies.

In due course Farrar went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, as a "sizar," and supported himself at first entirely on the income derived from his sizarship and King's College scholarship. So poor was he and so rigid was his self-denial that

during his early undergraduate days he refused himself the luxury of tea for breakfast, and drank only water. He soon, however, obtained a Trinity scholarship, which greatly improved his circumstances; and after a brilliant undergraduate career he graduated, in a very strong year, as fourth classic in the Classical Tripos. He also won several University prizes, including the Le Bas Prize, the Norrisian Prize, and the Chancellor's Gold Medal for English Verse, for a poem on the "Search for Sir John Franklin," which, says the present master of Trinity, was "a real poem, marked by deep feeling and rare wealth of language." A Fellowship at Trinity followed as a matter of course; but it is worth recording that during the examination his paper on Moral Philosophy attracted the favourable notice of the famous master, Dr. Whewell.

Shortly after taking his degree, Farrar received Deacon's Orders at the hands of the saintly Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury, and became for a brief period an assistant master at Marlborough College. In the following year, however, he was offered by Dr. Vaughan, who remained to the close of his life one of his dearest friends, a mastership at Harrow, which he at once accepted.

At Harrow he remained for fifteen years, during which period he not only threw himself with unbounded energy into all the duties of his position, but found time for literary labours and philological research. His book on the "Origin of Language" secured for him, at the instance of Charles Darwin, a Fellowship of the Royal Society. His stories of school-boy life, especially "Eric; or, Little by Little," achieved an immediate and remarkable success. More than 30,000 copies of this book have been sold; and hardly a week ever passed, we are told, without its author receiving from all parts of the English-speaking world letters from earnest men who were not ashamed to write and confess with gratitude that the reading of "Eric" had marked a turning-point in their lives, and that its lessons had been with them an abiding influence for good. With reference to Farrar's preaching at this time, the following testimony of Mr. George Russell will be read with interest: "As some critics," he writes, "have depreciated Farrar's preaching, it is only fair to say that at Harrow it was a powerful influence for good. His sermons in the school chapel were events long looked forward to and deeply enjoyed. His exuberance of rhetoric, though in later years it offended adult audiences, awed and fascinated boys, and his solemn yet glowing appeals for righteousness and purity and moral courage left permanent dints on our hearts, and—what is less usual—on our lives. I have never forgotten the first sermon I heard from him. Never before had I heard

eloquence employed in the service of religion, and the effect was indelible." "Hundreds of Harrow boys, I cannot doubt it," writes Dr. Butler, at that time Headmaster of the school, "will look back upon Farrar's words from the chapel pulpit—his voice, his look, his whole personality—as among the chief blessings of their school life."

In 1871 Farrar returned to Marlborough, for which place he had always entertained a deep affection, as Headmaster, in succession to Dr. Bradley, who had been elected to the mastership of University College, Oxford. His five years' reign at Marlborough, during which period the school rose to the very zenith of her great reputation, was marked by the publication of his Hulsean Lectures on "The Witness of History to Christ," by two volumes of sermons preached in the college chapel, and, above all, by the appearance of the *magnum opus* of his marvellous literary career, the well-known "Life of Christ," which at once attained a phenomenal popularity. Within a single year it passed through twelve editions, and has since been translated into almost every European language, and even into Japanese. Considered merely as an achievement, the writing of such a work, amid all the thousand duties of a headmaster's life, is in itself sufficiently remarkable; but when it is remembered that the book bears evidence on every page of wide reading and scholarly research, when it is borne in mind that theologians like Lightfoot and Westcott and Vaughan at once recognised the undoubted erudition and immense value of the work, it can only be regarded as a further proof of the stupendous industry and rare genius of the writer. To condemn the style of the "Life of Christ" as "florid" and "exuberant" were an easy task; but it should be remembered that it was this very quality which recommended Farrar's writings to those for whom they were intended. As a writer, it has been well said, he came down into the market-place with the treasures of Biblical and historical learning, and put them at the service of the simple. "If," writes a generous critic, "the faults of Dr. Farrar's mental temperament, in his love of gorgeous phrase and encrusted epithets, are to be discerned in these pages, it does but render them like a missal which has been a little overgilded and painted, the book itself being a noble and precious product of English theological learning, and an enduring witness in every line of the piety, the lofty faith, and the conscientious accuracy of the author." It should further be remembered that it was this very exuberance of language, this marvellous capacity for quotation, this gorgeous gift of rhetoric, which rendered Farrar's preaching so popular and effective. It was at Marlborough as it was at Harrow. Dr. James, the present Head-

master of Rugby, does not hesitate to say that the channel through which Farrar's influence principally found its way into the school was the chapel pulpit. His sermons were an unfailling source of delight, interesting the dullest, kindling the ablest, going to the very core of boy-life, moral and spiritual. They were written always in most pictorial English; they were replete with illustrations from poetry, history, biography, which he poured forth "like wealthy men who care not how they give"—vigorous, pathetic, denunciatory, persuasive, by turns, but always splendidly eloquent. Take them all in all, he adds, "I have heard no such sermons to boys as Farrar's."

After the publication of "The Life of Christ" in 1874, it was generally recognised that the gifted author would at no distant date be certain to receive offers of high preferment. Successful as he was as a schoolmaster, he was still more famous as a preacher and theologian. His book had made his name a household word throughout the entire English-speaking world, and alike at home and in America, among Churchmen and Nonconformists, he was regarded with feelings of deep reverence. It was, therefore, no matter of surprise when, in 1876, Mr. Disraeli offered him a canonry at Westminster, to which was attached the Rectory of St. Margaret's. Farrar clearly felt it to be a call of duty, and, keenly though he felt leaving his beloved Marlborough and the beautiful country in which he delighted, and great as was the sacrifice of income, he had no hesitation about accepting it. The change was indeed a great one, but no sooner was he settled in Westminster than he threw himself with characteristic energy into the new duties of parochial work. We have no space to describe in detail the way in which, under his guidance and inspiration, the parish improved and prospered. And yet no record of his life would be complete which left out of sight his labours as Rector of St. Margaret's for the long period of nineteen years. The world knows that he was an accomplished scholar, a brilliant writer, and a preacher of prophetic power; but only those who were brought into close association with him at Westminster, writes one of his curates, are fully aware of the influence that he exercised in the less conspicuous sphere of a pastor. In all the details of parochial life he took the keenest interest. He was ever ready to visit the sick and sorrowful, and "never," relates one of his colleagues, "did I know the possibilities and beauty of extempore prayer until I knelt with him one day by the bedside of a dying man in a small street close to the Aquarium." The Sunday-schools, the clubs, the guilds, the mission services, the temperance societies, the confirmation classes, all received his personal care

and attention, while he restored and beautified his church at a cost of £30,000.

Of Farrar's position as a preacher during the time he remained at Westminster it is difficult to speak too highly. He was beyond all question one of the most powerful religious influences in England. As his son truly says, no one can deny that the eloquent pastor fed the spiritual hunger of thousands of earnest men and women. And his words rang out with authority, and came home to the hearts and consciences of men, because his hearers felt that the passionate eloquence was no mere rhetoric, but the language of utter sincerity and of intense conviction. Those who have been privileged to hear him preach will never forget the magnetism of his personality or the matchless music of his voice—now melodious as a flute, now ringing out like a clarion, anon sinking to a hoarse whisper of passionate emotion. To the world at large he will, it may be, in the future be chiefly remembered as the preacher of the gospel of "Eternal Hope." Nowhere, perhaps, is Farrar's style of preaching better exemplified than in these striking sermons, delivered in the Abbey during the late autumn of 1877, which at once arrested the attention of the religious world and raised a storm of furious denunciation. It was not that Farrar originated the teaching which is associated with this volume of sermons. The views that he took of the conditions of the future life have been held, and are held, by many of the most distinguished and orthodox theologians, but it was given to him to deliver the message of God's love in a way that touched the hearts of men. "You cannot," wrote Westcott to him, "have the subject more at heart than I have, but *you can bring it home to men*, and that is a great privilege." That sentence exactly describes Farrar's power: he could bring the message home to men; and he did so by means of that very rhetoric at which unkindly critics have delighted to point the finger of scorn and depreciation. It is doubtless true that the sermons on "Eternal Hope" barred his way to a bishopric, but the fearless preacher was more than rewarded by the heartfelt gratitude of tens of thousands from whose lives he had lifted the load of intolerable anguish and gloom.

But it was not only as a bold preacher of righteousness and a fierce denouncer of social wrongs that Farrar exercised a wide influence for good. His books had an enormous circulation. We have already referred to his "Life of Christ," probably the most popular of his numerous writings. This great work was followed a few years later by "The Life of St. Paul," and this again, in 1882, by "The Early Days of Christianity." In these volumes we have a series of scholarly and, at the same

time, popular commentaries on the various books of the New Testament, in which the ripest results of modern criticism are placed within the reach and understanding of the ordinary reader. With reference to the former work, no less an authority than Professor Margoliouth writes to the author: "I have now read and re-read, attentively and critically, your great work, the 'The Life and Work of St. Paul.' I have the courage of my conviction to pronounce it the greatest useful practical work that the Church of England has produced since the Reformation." This testimony of the great Hebrew scholar is worth quoting, in the face of a persistent tendency to disparage Farrar's scholarship, and to belittle his services to Biblical criticism. In addition to these books on the literature of the New Testament, his immense industry enabled him to produce a number of minor works, the value of which to the ordinary student cannot be questioned. Among these we would specially mention his excellent commentaries on "St. Luke's Gospel" and on "The Epistle to the Hebrews" in *The Cambridge Bible*, "The Messages of the Books," "The Minor Prophets," and "The Lives of the Early Fathers."

It was often a cause of surprise that a man of such pre-eminent claims to the highest distinctions of the Anglican Church should have been persistently overlooked by both Liberal and Conservative Governments. That Farrar, who was highly sensitive, keenly felt the slight was only natural, but it was the price that he paid, and paid willingly, for his fearless advocacy of what he held to be the truth, and his splendid denunciation of what he regarded as superstitious or wrong. It was, therefore, to his numerous friends a source of deep satisfaction when, in 1895, his conspicuous merits received at any rate a partial recognition in his appointment by Lord Rosebery to the Deanery of Canterbury. To Farrar the change was a most welcome one. For twenty years he had toiled at Westminster, and age was creeping upon him. Moreover, it was, we are told, as though "a load of suspicion and depreciation had been removed from his shoulders, as though his deserts, so long disregarded, had at length been acknowledged, that he entered upon his new position. Old friends and acquaintances perceived in him an unusual contentment. Eager always and incessantly active, he had now the air of cheerful satisfaction. Canterbury, too, felt that a very conspicuous person had come to occupy the decanal stall, was proud of the distinction conferred upon the city, and at once was fascinated by the fervour of his splendid rhetoric, the richness of his historic knowledge, and the high moral inspiration of his aims." The fabric of the Cathedral stood badly in need of structural repairs, and with his old

characteristic energy he set to work to collect the necessary funds. Thousands of letters he wrote with his own hand. From one end of the country to the other he pleaded the cause of the Mother Church of England. As the result a sum of nearly £20,000 was raised by his untiring efforts, and expended during his tenure, only too brief, of the decanal office.

This brief sketch of Farrar's life would, we feel, be incomplete without a reference to the last, lingering illness which closed his strenuous career. The story of those two years of suffering, when the restless energy gave way to calm and peaceful resignation, is best told in the words of those who were privileged to be near him during that pathetic time. The muscular atrophy, which at first showed itself in "writer's cramp," gradually stole over his whole body till his hands and arms were helpless and he could no longer hold up his head. A friend who came to see him said: "Farrar has preached many an eloquent sermon, but nothing in his life was so eloquent as the patience and resignation with which he bore his suffering. Then the real man shone out." "With him," wrote Canon Page Roberts, "patience had its perfect work. Gradually the silvery voice became inaudible. The fluent pen refused to answer to the will. The energy which never flagged, but carried the orator from one end of England to the other, ebbed away into trembling helplessness." But no word of complaint was ever uttered. All impatience, all fretfulness, were banished. "We saw nothing," says Canon Mason, "but cheerfulness, gratitude, evergrowing thoughtfulness for others, the courageous determination to go on doing what he could and so long as he could. Not the greatest of his sermons at Cambridge or Westminster was so eloquent as the sight of our speechless Dean carried day after day to his place in the choir. Not the most influential of his books was so convincing a witness to Christ as that 'epistle known and read of all men.'" In the touching lines written by one of his daughters:

"How the light of love streamed round him when his noble frame was bowed!

In what a Sabbath calmness did the last long shadows fall!

Hushed was the wondrous voice that used to thrill the listening crowd;

But this his latest sermon was the holiest of all."

JOHN VAUGHAN.

