

**FIRM UNTO THE END; OR,  
BRIEF MEMORIALS OF THE  
GRACE OF GOD IN  
CONFIRMATION**

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Firm unto the end; or, Brief memorials of the grace of God in confirmation by G. W. Bence

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# Firm unto the End;

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BRIEF MEMORIALS

OF

THE GRACE OF GOD IN CONFIRMATION.

WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY THE

REV. G. W. BENCE, M. A.

VICAR OF BISHOPSTON, NEAR BRISTOL.

"If thou would'st reap in joy,  
First sow in holy fear;  
So life a winter's morn may prove  
To a bright, endless year."

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

LONDON:  
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1874.

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## PREFACE.

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THE author remembers a conversation he once had with a Calvinistic Baptist, of somewhat bigoted views, who did not scruple to deride the custom of the Church in respect to Confirmation, and who pointed in scorn to some who had broken their vows, and brought discredit upon their Christian profession; and so he had made up his mind that Confirmation was nothing but "a mere form" or ceremony, and that it did no good to anyone. He was then asked, "What if only *one* soul may be found who was brought to God through the medium of Confirmation, and endued with the Holy Spirit, would that be a sufficient evidence of its value?" He was candid enough to say that he thought it would; and an instance of a person then living in the neighbourhood was mentioned to him, on whom the holy rite had left an abiding impression. This gave quite a new turn to his thoughts, and seemed in some degree to mitigate the rigid prejudices of his creed.

This book has been written with the two-fold object of encouraging all sincere and devout candidates to *expect* a

blessing from God, and of offering some interesting examples of the grace of God to those whose minds may have been in any way prejudiced or rendered indifferent upon a subject of importance; and it may also prove to those already confirmed an affectionate memento and appeal to continue in the grace of God "firm unto the end."

The author is gratefully indebted to the Rev. Dr. Gatty, of Sheffield; and to Dr. Champneys, Dean of Lichfield, for their kind permission to insert some valuable extracts.



## INTRODUCTION.

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THE resolution to be a faithful soldier and servant of Jesus Christ, when it comes from the heart, is a genuine token of the grace of God. It is said of Æschines, a disciple of Socrates, the Grecian philosopher, that when his fellow-disciples, upon a certain occasion, brought handsome gifts to their master, he having nothing else to give, went and presented himself to Socrates. "A more acceptable gift," said the philosopher, "you could not have given me than yourself, and I will take care not only to keep it safe, but I will return you back again to yourself better than I received you."

Now, Confirmation rests upon even a higher principle than this. It is a transaction not merely for time but for eternity. It is on the one hand a grateful acknowledgment of the Heavenly Master's calling in our Baptism, and on the other hand a loyal and devoted act of self dedication to His service,—a yielding of the body and soul to Jesus Christ for all circumstances, whether of prosperity or adversity,—a life-long membership with the Reformed Church of England, to be sustained and increased by the grace of God in the use of holy ordinances, and by the due exercise of every talent committed to us in promotion of our great Redeemer's kingdom in the world.

Instances will readily occur to illustrate the invigorating character of a vow simply as an act of devotion to God.

The Hon. Robert Boyle had been sent as a young man to travel abroad. One night as he was staying at Geneva, the city was visited by a most awful tempest, accompanied with terrifio

thunder and lightning. The wind howled frightfully, the rain fell in torrents, the electric flashes were frequent and dazzling, the thunder was such as he had never before heard. He started out of sleep, and thought that the end of the world had arrived, and that the day of judgment was at hand. His conscience told him that he was unprepared for that solemn tribunal, and, feeling the wretchedness of being in such a condition, he resolved that, if a further respite were given to the world and himself, he would devote more attention to religion. The morning came, and he ratified his determination so solemnly, that from that day he dated his conversion to God, renewing, now that he was past danger, the *vow* he had made whilst he believed he was in it. For some months bitter and distracting doubts oppressed his mind, until it pleased God to give him an assurance of His pardoning love when receiving at church the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.<sup>1</sup>

A similar tale is told in the life of Sir Matthew Hale. When he was at Oxford, he had for a time been giving himself to frivolous pursuits. One day he was invited, with some other students of the University, to an entertainment in the neighbourhood. In the course of their festivities one of the company called for so much wine that, notwithstanding all that Mr. Hale could do to prevent it, he went on in his excess until he fell down as dead before them, so that all that were present were greatly alarmed, and did what they could to bring him to himself again. This so affected Mr. Hale in particular that he immediately went into another room, and shutting the door, fell upon his knees and prayed earnestly to God, both for his friend, that he might be restored to life again, and that he himself might be forgiven for affording so much countenance to so much excess; and he made a *vow* to God that he would never again keep company in that manner,

nor drink a health while he lived. His friend recovered, and he most religiously observed his vow till his dying day.<sup>1</sup>

That such resolutions are in multitudes of cases made and blessed by God in Confirmation, who shall gainsay the statement?

The Rev. J. Hutchinson, in "Parish Recollections," quotes the following words from a Sunday scholar, who died at the age of twenty-three, in the hope of the better life. "It is you that brought me to Confirmation: that happy day which I have cause to remember with joy unspeakable, because on that day I chose my heavenly Father to be my Master, Where should I now have been had I not had Him for my guardian Friend, though I have kind and affectionate parents, minister, and teachers?" In the churchyard where she was buried, the following epitaph of another candidate will speak for itself.

"IN THIS GRAVE LIE THE CHILDREN OF

• • • • •

MARY,

DIED NOVEMBER 25TH, 1842,

AGED 20."

"BUT TWICE ABSENT IN FOURTEEN YEARS FROM THE  
CHURCH SHE LOVED."

"She never could forget her vow,  
Her Confirmation hour,  
When, in 'the laying on of hands,'  
She sought the Spirit's power.

"Two years she treasured for the tomb  
The white scarf worn that day;  
Her single aim a circlet pure,  
That fadeth not away.

"A Crown, the purchase of His Blood,  
Who, rising from the grave,  
Speaks to the world in righteousness,  
The world He came to save."

<sup>1</sup> "Godly Laymen," by the Author, Parish Magazine, Vol. viii. 1867.