

**THREE LECTURES
ON THE CHURCH OF
SCOTLAND**

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Three Lectures on the Church of Scotland by Robert Rainy

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ROBERT RAINY

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ON THE CHURCH OF
SCOTLAND**

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ON THE

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER'S
RECENT COURSE ON THAT SUBJECT,

DELIVERED IN THE MUSIC HALL, ON THE 24th, 26th, AND 31st JANUARY, 1872.

BY

ROBERT RAINY, D.D.



EDINBURGH:
JOHN MACLAREN, PRINCES STREET,

MDCCLXXII.

110. m. 106.

NOTE.

THE Course of Lectures delivered by the Dean of Westminster, and referred to in those which follow, closed on Friday, the 12th of January. Those now published were resolved upon on Tuesday, the 16th, and were delivered on the earliest days thereafter on which the Music Hall could be procured for the purpose—viz., on the 24th, 26th, and 31st of January. Readers will understand that no great elaboration is to be looked for in such circumstances. The Lectures are now published as they were delivered; except that passages omitted in delivery from want of time, are restored to their places, effect is given to one or two corrections in matters of fact, forwarded to me by the courtesy of gentlemen on whom I had commented, and one or two notes are added which have occurred to me in passing the sheets through the press.

R. R.

EDINBURGH, 3rd February, 1872.

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

FIRST LECTURE.

WHEN a clergyman of the Church of England comes among us to deliver to us his impressions of our Churches and of our Christianity, we owe him first of all a courteous reception. We are to presume that he came among us on a benevolent design to do us good, and we are to treat him accordingly. In that, I hope, we have not failed. And we thank him for all that was friendly, either in his criticism or in his praise. Next, however, we owe him, and we owe it to ourselves, to sift the statements which he makes and the conclusions which he implies. In the present case this duty is the more incumbent, because Dean Stanley has given us, not a version of our history only, but a version with a moral. No one, I suppose, is so blind as not to see that it is the moral rather than the story which interests the Dean. He did not come among us merely to reform our notions about our past history. He came to influence, if possible, the history of the years that are before us. Every one of these lectures, like *Æsop's Fables*, looks towards a practical application. The Dean, one may complain, does not state his moral quite so plainly as *Æsop* did. But we shall have no great difficulty in gathering what it is as we proceed.

The element of the lectures now referred to is that which

gives them a claim to attention, and this alone has induced me to ask you to hear me to-night on the other side. I should count it an idle thing to ask you to take so much trouble merely for the purpose of showing that an Englishman has fallen into some mistakes about our antiquities or about our controversies. So ordinary and natural a circumstance could discompose no one. Still less have I come here to try to defend through thick and thin the Scots in general or my own ecclesiastical progenitors in particular. They were men, and therefore fallible and failing; they were Scotsmen, and therefore when they went wrong they did it energetically, blowing a trumpet before them, and defying all the world to refute them. Yes, and being Scotsmen they had like ourselves the moral and intellectual physiognomy which the world, favoured with many a wandering specimen, knows so well; an ungainly people, shall I say, wearing our principles in a serious pedantic way, angular, lumbering, roundabout in our motions, argumentative, inflexible. Why, the very birds, of the air, passing us on easy wing, could they see our inner man as they see our outer, would judge us, from the point of view of *their* consciousness, much as the Dean does. Defence here is useless; let us not attempt it. The Dean, coming among us, discerns this family likeness in us all. He only discerns in us all what we have all discerned in one another. To enjoy a joke and a laugh at one another is a privilege that has been claimed and exercised by religious parties in Scotland ever since the days of John Knox. Long may it be ere so wholesome a practice shall be proscribed. We have been able to combine it with reverence, with earnestness, with a strength of conviction and of purpose not easily shaken either by laughter or tears.

It is no untried "strategical operation" which the Dean has employed, in making our history the means of raising doubts in our mind about our principles and our prejudices. Every

reader of his works knows this method well. I remember a passage somewhere in which he dwelt with delight on the idea, that theological principles, carefully built up and fenced by argument, often simply vanish into air when they are brought into contact with great and good men, whose greatness and goodness is not of the regulation pattern of the theologians. Such men, he said—Socrates, for instance, Spinoza, William Penn—simply walk through the fences the theologians have set up. And the method has an opposite application. The representative of a principle makes himself and it ridiculous on the Dean's page, and so principle and representative are turned about their business together. Just so we have seen, of late, a long procession of Scotsmen, headed by Lord Pitsligo, and Bishop Jolly, and closing with Robert Burns and Walter Scott, marched up and down through our Scottish principles and practices, upsetting all our fences, obliterating all our demarcations, driving us from our fixed points, tearing off our theological garments, until we are left nearly as naked as we were born. It cannot be wondered at, surely, if we drop some natural tears at finding ourselves so maltreated by kindly Scots of our own flesh and blood. Yet we need not wonder, perhaps, that these well-tried tactics should have been applied by the Dean to the case of Scotland and to the minds of Scotsmen. The Scottish vote has once or twice come heavily into the scale in decisive moments of the history of these islands. Two hundred and thirty years ago, when the liberties of England were in question, the Scottish vote determined the issue. Two years ago, when the maintenance of the Irish Establishment—always questionable on other grounds—had begun to threaten us with the endowment of Romanism (and no man advocated the maintenance of the one and the adoption of the other more ably than Dean Stanley), it was the Scottish vote that, right or wrong, determined its overthrow. There are other questions rising on which the Scottish vote may again tell heavily. If the Dean thought he

could either win us, or bewilder us, he surely had a perfect right to try; and he has shown no lack of courage in the effort he has made.

But if profitable lessons are to be drawn from our history, our mentor must first understand it and us. For I hope it is not Scottish arrogance to assume that with all our faults we have done enough in the world to have a claim to be understood. Perhaps Dr. Stanley does thoroughly understand us. But if so, I shall take leave to say that it is his first great success in this department. Through all his works—works written always so charmingly—works that bear token of an eye which nothing picturesque escapes, either in the physical or the moral world—this is precisely what one misses—a sympathetic appreciation of the deeper and the stronger currents of religious life and of doctrinal controversy. In Dr. Stanley's pages movements dependent on these have their outside wonderfully depicted, but their inner meaning scantily realised. And the reason is plain. Dr. Stanley's mind turns ever to the limitations, the compensations, the counterpoises which balance and qualify all assertions, which take away the sharpness of the definition, which temper and assuage the confidence with which it is propounded. That habit of the understanding may or may not be desirable in itself; but let this be remembered, that Church history has been mainly made, certainly in all its worthier passages, by men of intense convictions; and hardly without the experience of intense conviction shall it be understood or represented.

I am anxious to be done with these preliminaries. But I must yet further say that in any estimate the standard by which we are to be measured, and the point of view from which it is applied, is the main point. One way of applying a standard was not, I think, intended by the Dean. But it might, I fear, be impressed on the audience, and how to deal with it I don't know. In many a smiling allusion and many a quip-courteous, as events and

characters pass in review, I seem to hear a gracious gentleman saying—I am an Episcopalian; surely you could not have any objection, or let us say, any strong objection, to Episcopacy. And I am an Erastian; now, is it not absurd of you to pretend to me that there is any great harm in State supremacy? And I am a Moderate; why in the world should you cherish any objection to the Moderates? And I am a Broad Churchman; I don't believe in or don't care for many doctrines you believe in or care for; surely you won't pretend to justify yourselves in making any great fuss about these points? To all this what can a man answer,—at least a well-bred man; especially when one has been reminded that we owe all our civilisation to England?

Now I leave introductory observations. And I pass the sketch which Dr. Stanley has given us of the early Christianity of Scotland. Those fragments of our buried past, which he pieced so gracefully together, he treated with a cordiality of appreciation which we in turn appreciate. I will not be tempted to say one word of the changes introduced by Margaret and her sons. Nor will I meddle much with the history of the Scottish Episcopal Communion in its separate state. One point must be touched upon, perhaps, before I end. But for the present it is enough to say that while I have the very worst opinion of the system of Scottish Episcopacy as it existed in the days of its supremacy, I admit most willingly that all along men memorably good were found among its adherents; and adversity brings out the best points of all Churches. I do not know a pleasanter experience than when, in travelling through the strifes of ecclesiastical parties, one stumbles on a clear instance of unequivocal religious and holy life associated with that very thing which one is for the present called to fight with. In so far as the Dean held up truly devout and good men in any of the Scottish Churches to the admiration of the