



Chesham Hall Church

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SOME
REMINISCENCES

OF THE

Days of a Schoolboy,

IN

THE LAST CENTURY.

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." *Heb* xiii. 7.

J. WRIGHT, STEAM PRESS, BRISTOL.
WERTHEIM AND MACINTOSH, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1853.

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TO
JAMES OLDHAM OLDHAM, ESQ.

OF
BELLAMOUR HALL,
IN
STAFFORDSHIRE,

THESE PAGES
ARE WITH MUCH AFFECTIONATE RESPECT
INSCRIBED;

WITH BEST WISHES TEMPORALLY AND SPIRITUALLY,
FOR HIM, AND HIS ESTIMABLE FAMILY,
BY HIS SCHOOLFELLOW,
AND GRATEFUL FRIEND,

J. R.

1853.

SOME REMINISCENCES

A few years ago, the unexpected discovery of an old letter which was sent to me in the hope that I might be able to explain its very particular signature of "Jane Russell without hands," the letter being dated, although a long time back, from my birth place, and then still the place of my abode, I felt it to be not less than a duty to tell what I knew of "Jenny Russell," as she had been familiarly called; who as it happened, had taught me my letters. Her story was indeed remarkable, and the more for her happy connection with my present object, and their mutually strong association in my mind; but I am not about to tell it again here, my mind being, after having long had such a thought, to tell all I can of my SCHOOLMASTER, who also was a very remarkable man.

Of the first master, indeed, to whom I was sent after Jenny Russell, and of his school, I remember only that it was noisy, there being quite a crowd of boys,

and a great deal of punishment generally going on in it, of which, and of the fixed and fierce look of *that* master, I have quite a picture in my mind, with something like the confusion in my ears, which there was between the up-stair and the down-stair school, the one being over the other. But having no good occasion to think any more of that part of my time, for I can hardly call it my education, I long to begin to talk of my real schoolmaster.

Rev. Thomas Clarke of Bolton Co. Lanc.
This was the REV. THOMAS CLARKE, who was then, and for twenty-seven years, Rector of Chesham Bois, in Buckinghamshire, where he died a blessed death, in 1793. He was born in some part of Lancashire, in 1719; went to Oxford; and after taking the degree of B. A., at Brasen Nose College, ¹⁷⁴⁴ became Curate of Amersham. *Matric. 17 July 1739. April 19.*

Of his first labours in the gospel at that place, not many particulars could now be collected; but enough has come down, even to this time, to associate a holy veneration with his name in the neighbourhood, whenever the state of religion, and of the church in that neighbourhood in those days, has been called to the recollection of the aged who knew, or of those who through them had heard of him. He preached, and he lived as they must who have been "moved by the Holy Ghost," (as all clergymen of the Church of England are very properly required to be) to "do the work of an Evangelist; to make full proof of the

Ministry:" and he soon came to know that to "endure afflictions" is to be looked for as a part of that same sacred dedication and devotedness. Thirteen years, nevertheless, he continued to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," in that Cure; and then served the same blessed cause at Kippax, in Yorkshire. *1752 to 1767*

The next and last of his movements was to the rural Rectory of Chesham-Bois, to which he was presented by the Duke of Bedford, in honourable and doubtless tender regard to the mind of his son, the Marquis of Tavistock, whom he had lately lost by a melancholy accident, and who had become acquainted with Mr. Clarke's character and circumstances. Happily indeed, it ought to be gratefully remembered, for Chesham-Bois, has the noble house of Russell then and since proved its conscientious care there; and in true keeping were the considerate words of the last kind presentation, by the present Duke of Bedford, in 1843. And thus he was unexpectedly brought back to the very neighbourhood; for it was within a mile of Amersham, from which he had been in a very particular manner, and to the grief of so many, removed.

That was indeed "a day of small things." And sharp to flesh and blood must have been sometimes what was perhaps not often then called *persecution*: Locke's common-sense argument being always, and especially in such times as our lot is cast in, too little

recollected; to wit, that *the principle* is one and the same, whatever the penalty threatened; if only the interdiction of the most trivial supplies of the humblest tradesman to the needy, the stand should be made and kept, with its consequences. "We ought to obey God rather than man," being the only answer of the faithful in every such conflict, up to the faggots of Queen Mary.

Alas! that we should again be, to all appearance, living into days when a Priest of Rome can, face to face, say, as it has just now been printed for our eyes to see, to a Minister of the Church of England; (let all who still have the Bible open in their own hands before them, observe the words) "I would not burn you *now*, because it would be just now *inexpedient* to do so, and would do much harm to our cause; but if we had the power—I wish that I had the power! I would kill every Protestant. Nothing but the punishment of *death* will ever do for heretics. This worked well while the Inquisition worked." "These sanguinary expressions he again and again used before we parted."*

At Chesham-Bois, Mr. Clarke spent the rest of his life, the most active and the most important part of it; a life indeed to the last, of as earnest occupation as

* See "Romanism in London, a Priest's Confession: the substance of a conversation between the Rev. John Bonus, a Romish Priest, and the Rev. Robert Maguire, B. A., Clerical Secretary of the Islington Protestant Institute." Seeleys, Fleet Street.

could be put into the six days of the week, crowned with as much as the seventh could well admit of, and all in so calm and quiet a manner, that his whole aspect was rather that of inward contemplation than of engagement without; and a beautiful sight truly it was, as if nothing could have been more alive to the business in hand, whatever it might be; while something underneath, far better, silently waited for the uppermost place again.

And here I cannot but interpose another word or two of Chesham-Bois, before I pass on to say what I would fain leave behind me, of this my most dear master, seeing that no better hand has taken the pen for him. For "few and far between" as Mr. Clarke's grateful scholars have become, this very inadequate memorial may nevertheless perchance fall under an eye even now, here and there, which may glisten at the thought of it;—of the old Rectory House, since swept away, because in truth it could stand no longer; of the green common, with its dells and its ponds, every one of them with its particular name, and difference, and interest, (without *bounds*, such as most school-boys are shut up in,) for our playground; and the school, humblest of all buildings for anything like learning. And there in his gown, something like a sign itself of ancient and master-like days, our master, venerable man! all emphasis, yet benign as a father among his children, teaching Latin and Greek in his own peculiar, conversational,

companion-like manner; and in such a way too, (unseemly passages always, as they easily may be, being passed over) that a boy of any classical capacity at all could hardly fail to get more or less of a classical taste, that surprisingly rare characteristic of after life, considering the plentifulness of provision for it.

But it was not of the school within, but of the scene without, I intended now to speak. Justly might one who, not far off, grew up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," "now to the grave gone down" in peace and hope, who could but now and then however have heard Mr. Clarke's school or domestic sermons, as they might be called, touching as they sometimes were to the quick of his juvenile auditory; justly might she observe when we were one day talking of him, as we generally did talk when, long years after, we occasionally met—
 "Yes! Mr. Clarke carried his religion into all the minute actions of life." For so indeed, as far as man might judge, assuredly he did; and so to his pupils, to his people, nay to the very world itself, which "cares for none of these things," he was made by the grace of God in such a measure "a burning and a shining light," that verily it may not seldom be discerned even unto this day. And what cannot be told, because it cannot be known, may yet notwithstanding be believed, even that as "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth

much," the earnest cry of his soul for the sheep and the shepherd of that small fold in the days which were to come, ascended not in vain.

Again has his modest church, with devout thankfulness be it spoken, been filled with the glad sound of the gospel; and the voice of exhortation and prayer has been heard throughout that quiet scene, as it were from beneath his own mantle. More than half a century has passed over its farms and its cottages; upon the scene and them to whom dominion has in turn been given over it, since he, who while he sojourned there was ever about his divine Master's business, rested from his labours. And "I call you to witness," were among the farewell words, within the same walls, of one who could not be thought less, by any who had the happiness to know both, than a true successor of Mr. Clarke, though at such a distance of time, "I call you to witness, there is not one inhabitant of this parish, from the oldest to the youngest, capable of understanding, whom I have not privately admonished and solemnly warned." So spake, as he took leave of them, he who left the pulpit of one saint in no long time to fill that of another, then standing in the honoured place of Mr. Clarke, now in that of Mr. Bickersteth. May the Holy Spirit, and "the fruits of the Spirit," be with them who remain on the favoured ground, whether they teach or be taught, and with them whose lot has thus been cast henceforth in another part of the Lord's vineyard!

Most honoured friends! may they be so blessed in all their "meek and quiet path," that a still goodlier number may be added, who shall in their new home learn from both their lips and their lives what it is to "receive the truth in the love of it," walking accordingly.

Very graciously towards Bois, (as commonly it was called in the days of Mr. Clarke.) after thirty years or more of melancholy contrast, have its sacred ministrations been again ordered; for truly there has been nothing kept back "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Hopefully was soon filled again the sacred place, as it seemed for years to come; but then even once more in a little space to be made void; the heavenly light which shone along the path of the righteous so soon pointing to the departed in the heavens; "absent from the body, to be present with the Lord." For so with humble reverence may we also cherish the memory of the name of Stevens, and his brief passage through "the wilderness of this world."

And so, Peace to Chesham Bois! the scene not surely of my happiest, with reverent thankfulness be it written!—but of singularly happy days, for even then I thought them so. How can I now but think with gratitude, of him at whom, when I was but a boy, I never looked but with reverence and the most con-

fiding affection; whose image after all these years is to this hour as a part of me; whose death-bed I stood by and kneeled by! How can I, in solitary musings, yea, in the busy world itself, but think of him, and how but solemnly! and not of him only, and as he was; nor of dear and like-minded friends there since, and to this very, this still privileged day, when the voice which once cried to the Heathen of Tinnevelly, to cease from their Devil worship, and "look unto Jesus," and be saved! is now lifted up to win, if so it may be graciously given, to the truth, the glorious "truth as it is in Jesus," for the rest of its time at Chesham-Bois! Thus not seldom musing of the generation which sleeps beside the holy guide of my youth, I think with comfort and thankfulness of them who have followed him in the same paths of "pleasantness and peace;" and who have also in turn been listened to there with kindred reverence and love. And while thus, in lowliest humiliation, adoring the goodness of God, how can I but in better moments rise to the thought of "that great multitude which no man could number!"

"Where the bright Seraphim in burning row
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow;
And the cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires;
With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout, and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly!"

And so the reverie and the vision vanishing, bring me round to the reality; and I go back to old times.

Out of school hours Mr. Clarke was much in the cottages on the common, and in the out of the way recesses of the parish, talking to all ages, (it may well be believed from their manner of speaking of him when he could come to them no longer,) as a Christian Minister should talk; to the ignorant and the vicious, sternly or otherwise as the case might be; or comfortably to them of whom there is seldom more than "a little flock;" walking slowly and with a very thoughtful air, from one to the other. The "parlour," in which his older pupils spent part of the time with him between school hours, was said to be often the scene of very learned, oftener of religious, familiar discourse, never of frivolity, nor of that which is so commonly, in what is called conversation, worse than frivolity. And surely it may be frequently not without reason lamented after half hours and hours of "foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient," that we have not remembered that "of every idle word we must give account." So passed the week, and then came the Sunday.

Of Mr. Clarke, as a Minister of the Gospel, a boy could have said but little; and what can he say now at threescore years after him! In truth I pretend not to say more than a little of the much which some others might have said. All I should be

glad to do, if I could, is to put the image then printed on my mind, rather on my heart, and which seems still as fresh as ever, into every mind and heart which may condescend to look into these pages. Because I do believe him, in the strength of that indelible impression, to have been as nearly after apostolical example as may perhaps have been since apostolical days. I mean that the week was from beginning to end occupied throughout with its proper duties, all and each to the letter and in the spirit conscientiously fulfilled; the Sabbath then being indeed "kept holy." Pleasant truly it may be to him who remembers Bois in the days of Mr. Clarke, to have seen at length like sabbaths revived there; the paths across the Common, and through the meadows and woods leading to the Church, cheerful in all directions with people, the near and the distant, and then the overflowing church. To have again seen and still to see such sabbaths, could but indeed seem to say "It is a joyful and a pleasant thing to be thankful."

His affectionate scholar, my dear and honoured con-disciple, the Rev. John Bishop, so long the assiduous Chaplain of the Mercer's Company's Whittington College, reminds me of "his daily morning retirement with part of his pupils, to read the scriptures to them, with remarks, concluding with solemn and seasonable prayers, and of his practice to assemble his neighbours at home on the Sunday evenings, and read a

portion of scripture, expounding longer than a common sermon." "From what I know of his pastoral visits," says Mr. Bishop, "they must have been particularly serious, impressive, friendly, like all he did, and truly pathetic."

Of his sermons I scarcely presume to speak. Some few which remain in manuscript are precious evidences of his ability and efficiency for that form of pulpit address. I cannot say what were his habits of preparation for them; what time he took, or where, whether in his closet, or

"When Isaac like, the solitary Saint
Walked forth to meditate at even-tide;"

I only know that they were delivered with an earnest voice and countenance, and that commonly they were extemporaneous, as preaching is said to have originally been; and as it may naturally seem that it should be, to make impression and to leave it.

And is it not a little strange, as to this point, that a course should be taken with sermons, which is not thought of in any other public teaching or speaking? The Medical Lecturer, the Lecturer on Chemistry or Astronomy, being an educated man, knows that he need not particularly concern himself about his language, any more than he does in ordinary conversation or communication. Being master of his subject, and desiring to make his hearers understand it, *that* is his only object; and both they and himself would think

all palpable care beyond the perspicuity of his words and their arrangement, out of place; he is in no danger of vulgarity or of bad grammar; and to be seen to aim at eloquence for its own sake would be affectation and vanity in the opinion of his audience, and a misapplication and waste of mind, the whole powers of which ought to be devoted to his subject. How much more, so far as human influence of itself is concerned, would the Minister of the Gospel effect, did he proceed on a like simple principle; the Bible in his hand, in his head, and in his heart. Of small account indeed would be the disadvantages he might occasionally fall into, compared with the formality, the monotony—to be plain, the dullness—so common to the written sermon. Does the lawyer read the address with which he hopes to win the cause of his client; or the judge that which warns the criminal to prepare for his punishment? And who, in the finest assemblies for this world's business, would expect to be heard to the end, if he rose to *recite* his oratory!

To quote the words of another of his pupils, the Rev. T. T. Thomason, afterwards so honourably known at Cambridge, and then in India, "Mr. Clarke every Sunday morning, in *my* time, preached at the new church of Loudwater, nine miles distant, first reading the prayers; then read prayers and preached at Bois; and expounded at his house in the evening. Before and after he so served at Loudwater, (that church

after a time having a settled minister,) he did the whole duty twice at Bois." "His earnestness and love of souls," says Mr. Thomason, "are so great that I look at him and hear him with admiration. In conversation his cheerfulness and vivacity can be compared to nothing but that of a person of eighteen. He abounds in tales and humour, and they are made the channels of instruction. Two children whom he boards in his house, declare they are never so happy as when in his company. In his school he is equally pleasing. The more questions his pupils ask, the better he is pleased; and he will not let us pass over one word until it is well understood. It is a pleasure to be taught by such a Master, and to carry him the fruits of our labours."

"Mr. Clarke has been with us," writes Mr. Thomason to his mother, "and given us some rules which I here copy." "Being dressed in the morning, let each meditate on the Divine perfections, his dependence upon God; his obligations to obey Him. Let each recollect his own particular defects and weaknesses; and wherein he is most likely to fail in the duties which he owes to God and man; remembering his reliance on the Redeemer for the forgiveness of his sins, and for power to discharge every duty. Having meditated on these subjects, let each separately apply himself to God in prayer, begging that he may have more enlarged views of the extent of God's laws, and of his own sins, whether in

temper, words, or actions, entreating for an increase of dependance on the Redeemer in every office, and for ability to discharge every duty, and to suppress every wrong temper."

"In my last walk with him," says Mr. Thomason on leaving for Cambridge, "which was very affecting, he gave me his parting blessing, and told me he had no doubt we should meet again with everlasting joy upon our heads." "Watch strictly," said he, "over your heart, be much in prayer; and cleave closely to God. Pray for spiritual discernment, that you may have a clear perception of the path you should walk in. Pray to walk in that way in spite of all opposition; thus knowing and doing the will of God, you must be happy!"

"For many of his latter years," says the highly respected Rev. Charles Jerram, Vicar of Witney, also a pupil, "his school cares were principally confined to young men intended for the ministry. For this work he was eminently qualified. He was an excellent Hebrew scholar, and Biblical Critic."

"That venerable and truly excellent minister, Mr. Clarke," continues Mr. Jerram, "was for nearly half a century the learned and indefatigable Tutor of some of the most distinguished men, both as Clergymen and Laymen, of the time in which he lived. It having been my privilege to receive his last instructions as a Tutor, I could not prevail on myself to omit an opportunity of recording the respect I feel for the

memory of one of the most learned, humble, and useful men of the last century; and one of the most efficient agents in the revival of religion in our Church, towards the middle and conclusion of it. Many clergymen of the most decided piety and popular talents, most of whom have now entered into rest, received both their education, and their deepest religious impressions from him. Except with his most intimate friends, he was for the most part silent, so as often to appear as far below the common standard of literary men as he was really above it. No argument could prevail upon him to let his name appear in print, although he has assisted, and perhaps had the principal share, in several publications. I do not like to keep from other eyes some lines by Dr. Lowth, on his daughter, in Cuddesden Church, with their translation by Mr. Clarke.' "

'Cara, vale, ingenio præstans, pietate, pudore;
Et plusquam nata nomine cara, vale:
Cara Maria, vale! at veniet felicius ævum
Quando iterum, tecum, sim modo dignus, ero,
Cara, redi, læta tum dicem voce, paternos
Eja, age in amplexus, cara Maria, redi!'

'Mary, Farewell: of modest worth possess'd,
With wit, with sense, with genius richly bless'd:
Farewell my Child! till happier times arrive,
When thy fair form shall from the dust revive:
If worthy judged, thy joyful Father then
To his fond breast shall clasp his Child again!

"Among his more public avocations," says Mr. Jerram, "he was by no means inattentive to the individual concerns of his parishioners, assisting the poorer with money and the perplexed with advice; being afflicted with their distresses, participating in their comforts, and so endeavouring to promote the happiness of all. His ministrations were blessed with much success, his discourses being remarkable for evangelical simplicity, for affectionate earnestness and for his striking manner of setting forth Christ in all his spiritual dominion, enforcing entire conformity to Him in all the beauties of holiness. A conscientious minister of the Church of England, he rejoiced in the success of evangelical dissenters in spreading the knowledge of the gospel, and in his humility would often exclaim with St. Paul, "To me who am less than the least,"—

And well may the office of the preacher lead to this humiliation! If there has been graciously given to him a right sense of sin, the whole world's and his own, it is wonderful that he can do less than "Cry aloud and spare not" to all around, while "my soul cleaveth to the dust" is his continual confession. It is not then the language which is called Composition, howsoever in itself to be admired, with its divisions and subdivisions, which can satisfy him for either. All he thinks of, and desires to speak of, is far too awful for that. Life is too uncertain, too brief at the longest, for him to lose one moment. As an

aged saint, well known to Mr. Clarke once said, "The best study is Divinity, and the best Divinity is the Bible." He finds there a mine which cannot be exhausted, "light" in the darkest of it; and "life and immortality" there only. What then can he do, but "in season and out of season" give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people!"—remembering that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," he sets all forth as indeed the very word of the Great God. The more he learns of his own heart, the more he cries—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" And the more he has to do with the world, the more earnestly, far and wide as he can, would he proclaim—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!"—never forgetting to remind all that "without Holiness no man shall see the Lord." Not that in the amazing richness in which it is his delight to expatiate, he is bounded to the right or to the left; he finds no end to the terror of the Lord; nor to "His wonderful works to the children of men." And so seeking to declare "*All* the counsel of God," he lives, as it were, on his Bible; not taking one leaf, and passing by another; having no thought but that all who hear him should understand it as he understands it, and by the Grace of God follow on to love and to obey his blessed Gospel, even unto "Eternal life in Christ Jesus."

In fine, it is in this great matter, as in all which

belongs to Truth of any kind; what is wanted is, that it should be seen in its reality, and its importance—unspeakable importance!—first by the speaker, and through him by the hearer. And none can be duly qualified for the momentous office, nor be likely to promote its great end, who are of any other mind;—who think of their language beyond the necessary care for the full and proper conveyance of that Truth; of themselves, when their divine Master should be all in all.

This was Mr. Clarke's manner of preaching; not making a system of his own, nor following any made by another, that sure and endless source of division, but taking the Bible as it stands, and expounding it as it stands, never apprehending any real, any practical inconsistency from so dealing with chapter by chapter, verse by verse; sure that so all would end well, (and that no other course was good, nor could come to good,) so long as Scripture was given with Scripture.

But let us turn again to the school. This was filled with a multifarious assemblage. A few gratuitous scholars from the surrounding cottages occupied some humble forms, and some boys scarcely to be distinguished from these, from the farm houses, learning to read and write, with a little arithmetic; a considerable number of boarders, and day boys from the two neighbouring towns made up the bulk, some of them for "English" only, but most of them engaged in the

ordinary school classics; and then always a few, younger or older, Oxford or Cambridge students, or to be such hereafter, interspersed generally, unless writing, or sitting with the master; and then usually reading, or quite as often conversing with him, on some passage in their books. And here I cannot but desire to preserve a few lines remaining in two letters of his clear handwriting, addressed on his ordination, to the late truly venerable and very benevolent and Christian vicar of Somerford-Keynes in Gloucestershire, the Rev. Nathaniel George Woodrooffe, a true admirer of Mr. Clarke, and formerly his pupil.

“MY DEAR FRIEND;

I cannot dismiss you without a few words of plain but wholesome advice, which I beg you to accept at my hands. Believe that whatever I say proceeds from a sincere desire of your future welfare and happiness. If you could see the feelings of my heart, at the moment I am writing, you would think so.

Beware of Infidelity, I mean *practical* Infidelity. Be assured that God's eye is always upon you. Let this be the subject of your frequent and most serious reflection. Say to yourself: Is it true, than which nothing can be more so, that wherever I am, in whatever company I am conversing, God, He that made me, by whose power I live, and Who will dispose of me for Eternity, is now present with me: stands as it were by me; is writing down every action, every word, and every thought of mine, and will produce the account in the presence of all

the inhabitants of Heaven, Earth and Hell? Is this true, and shall I be guilty of actions, utter words, or admit of thoughts and desires, which must at last be produced to my everlasting shame and sorrow? Think, and think again, and again, upon these things. This will not make you unhappy, but may prevent unhappiness.

Be therefore assured that sin, shame, and misery, are inseparably connected. Know for certainty, that if you sin, “your sin will find you out.” Bad passions indulged are so many tormentors, are so many thieves let into your house, who will certainly despoil you of all your treasure, and all your peace.

Keep no company, at least have no intimacy, with thieves and robbers. Know, that of this character are all wicked men. They are robbing God of his honour, and would strip him of every attribute. They are robbing you, if influenced by them, of your best friend, of every thing that is valuable, of whatever can contribute to your happiness. Consider seriously what they are attempting to take from you. Without enlargement, I leave this to your own reflection, begging that you will think attentively and earnestly upon it.

Fail not to pray to God constantly, not only morning and evening, but whenever you feel yourself in danger. Sin is of a very subtle and insinuating nature; and where there is a predisposition towards it, powerfully works upon the heart. Be sure to seek for protection against it under the power of God, who through faith in a Redeemer is always accessible. Remember the end upon which you are now entering; that you are to learn to be wise and good, and to be a means under God of communicating

knowledge, wisdom, and true religion. Think what a disgrace it would be to betray the cause you profess to defend and promote.

I will add nothing further, only desiring you to believe that what is now said and advised is spoken by one who continually prays for and most earnestly desires your eternal welfare.

T. C."

"DEAR SIR,

I am very glad to hear that you continue in health, that you have succeeded in your application, and that the Arch-bishop has been pleased to honour you with his recommendation. I doubt not, my dear Sir, that you will be faithful and diligent, faithful in your endeavours to represent to sinners the purity and extent of the Divine Law; the nature and fatal effects of sin; and the means, and only means, by which the offender can be reinstated in the Divine favour; and the holiness, and heavenly mindedness to be attained, without which no one can be admitted into the presence of God. To be successful ministers, we must well understand all the essential doctrines and duties of our profession, be able to discourse upon them with some degree of readiness and plainness, to understand what are deviations from the laws of God in actions, words, thoughts, and desires. To be accurate in the knowledge of the last article, we must not only be diligent in studying the law of God, and every precept and prohibition it contains, but examine ourselves by it, and that constantly, impartially, and particularly. When we know well what is evil in

ourselves, we shall be better able to discern what is evil in others. One great part of our office is to convince men of sin; as it is in vain to attempt to apply a remedy, where the disease is unknown. But not only our own defects, our Lord's perfections and absolute purity will furnish us with means of distinguishing the character of men. Deformities and blemishes are best discovered when compared with perfect beauty. When vices are known, they are then to be described; vices, to which the hearers are likely to be subject, not such as seldom fall to their share; not the vices of a court or of bishops, or of the clergy in general. Besides being applicable, our sermons must be particular, not describing sin in general, and its effects, but particular transgressions; pride, anger, malice, revenge, envy, sins that have their seat in the soul: those that arise more immediately from the body, lust, drunkenness, gluttony, idleness; and such likewise as spring from both the soul and body, covetousness, frauds of every kind, vanity and sensuality indulged in dressing, entertaining, furnishing, &c; gaming, lying, sabbath-breaking, are to be ascribed to various causes. To a spirit of profaneness and malignity of heart we must ascribe swearing, cursing, profaning God's name, contempt of God's word and neglect of it; these seem to arise from unbelief, which has its foundation in pride and sensuality. In describing sins, care ought to be taken that the description may be as extensive as the vice, or comprehend the whole of it, not limited to a certain degree of it. For instance, poets, satirists, and many moral writers, in describing covetousness, represent only the worst degrees of it. With them, the covetous man is

one who grudges himself the necessities of life, is unmoved or but little affected with the distresses and sufferings of his fellow-creatures, &c. the love of money having excluded generosity. But under this description by far the greatest number of those who are guilty will acquit themselves of the imputation that *their* covetousness is a vicious disposition, with which they are *therefore* not chargeable. Covetousness, rightly understood, is every such degree of the disposition for the pursuit of gain as lessens or weakens our love to God or man.

The love of money unfits or indisposes us for any duty we owe to God or man: so far it must be considered as having something of a criminal nature in it. The same must be observed of every other vicious disposition. "Charity suffereth long and is kind," says St. Paul. If we cannot suffer; if we cannot suffer long; if we cannot suffer long and be kind, to the person that injures us, there is a defect in our charity. But I must desist, and beg your kind pardon for straying into a series of thoughts, one of which, excepting what is placed in the beginning of this letter, I had not the least intention of putting down when I began. The trust however, committed to us, suffer me to say, is very important.

May we be found faithful!

May God bless you!

I am, My dear sir,

Your very affectionate friend

THOS. CLARKE.

Bois, Feb. 22, 1791.

The routine of the busy, and not particularly, it may be acknowledged, orderly scene of his school, was not seldom varied by his call to "Stand out, boys!" This was a well understood summons to us to arrange ourselves, standing (the University gentlemen keeping their seats) in a semicircle before him, while he addressed us, in consequence of some casual incident, and sometimes from no incident at all, but only from the working of his own ever working mind for good, yea the everlasting good of the souls committed to his charge, setting out some moral or religious principle, or precept, or prohibition, from the root to its branches, the evil and the good; from a boy being found to have passed a bad half-penny, and so, "Thou shalt not steal," being brought out in all its meanings before the whole school; to such sublime and beautiful illustrations of Christian principle, Christian doctrine, and Christian walk and conversation, as, I doubt not, were often remembered at Oxford and Cambridge, and ever after. Not always were they heard without tears. Such was the continual impulse and desire of his mind, his whole mind and spirit, that we should be made "able to comprehend with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height"—of all the wonderful Revelation of God to man.

And thus to his old age proceeded days at Bois. And here I know not how to refrain from a word in honour of old age; and the less because I so well

remember my young imaginations concerning it, notwithstanding this palpable, and by me never forgotten example to the contrary; these being that it was apt to be "harsh and crabbed," and could only be apprehended by us all, should we be spared to it, to prove so; yet some of the kindest people I have ever known have been amongst the aged, so that it became at length a settled, and very comfortable opinion with me that there is no peculiar tendency in Time to harden the heart: and that it is only as all habits grow into more and more confirmation, the ill tempered may be expected to become more so; the selfish to be cross and miserly; the passionate to be more angry, as years roll on in indulged evil; while in like manner the kind to be still kinder; the effect of either habit being alike to strengthen itself, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. And oh! the inexpressible importance therefore of cultivating the better frames, repressing the contrary, in the great business of Education—Scriptural Education! the only education when old age at last comes, to be much valued! For then to excuse the wrong, to cover it over with a word literally not to be found in the Bible, (for anger, malice, revenge, envy, are not called "*tempers*" there, but always by their own proper names,) will give little satisfaction either to him who has allowed himself in the sin, or him who suffers by it. Not so indeed has the Old Age I have so seen, so honoured, so loved, come to its "Crown of Glory!"

But unwilling as I am to part with my subject, it is time I draw in. Gladly would I have given a more exact picture of the School, this "School of the Prophets,"—of the Church, and of him who thus made Bois what it has through life been even to me, of small account indeed compared with many unto whom, ever after they knew it, it was so dear.

The charm was that Mr. Clarke was altogether a Christian; never seen but as a Christian; never heard but as a Christian. No matter for the circumstances of the moment, the day, or the place,—always a Christian. His religion was not a separate thing, to be taught, to be set forth, to be practised at expected or at any particular times; but, being a part of his whole frame, incorporated with his mind and life, neither boy nor academic in his school, nor man or woman in his Parish, nor poor or not poor in his Church, could look at him, or listen to him, but as a Christian.

Not that I would for a moment speak of him otherwise than himself spake of the descendants of Adam, one and all, from the beginning; and as on his death-bed he did speak, not merging the awful truth in generalities, which are more calculated to dilute it away altogether than to warn and alarm to "watching unto prayer." "He had been passionate," he said, "all his life; and his only remedy to the last was to fly to his knees!" and so, had occasion then presented, he would doubtless have confessed to more,

although to others no such fault had appeared. I had myself never found out this, nor probably had many others, for I had never heard of it; but himself knew it, and that the victory was not yet.

This school sent forth no small number into the various walks of life, in ultimate character as various, but with a goodly proportion of the best; witness especially the office which is justly placed before all others. And truly reverent and very affectionate did all grow up and grow on toward him. Among whom I delight, whensoever I may, remembering "honour to whom honour," to greet still the name of the Rev. Joseph Mendham, of Sutton Coldfield, as another Bois scholar, so advantageously known by his valuable publications, and especially by the earnestness he has manifested against the Popish dangers of days in which we have been spared to see withal so much happily of a contrary nature to be thankful for.

And how can I but be transported, as it were, into the midst of old times again, with all their strong associations in my mind, when looking back to our revered Preceptor; to the lessons, and the evenings with "Thomason and Bishop" so present to me now once more, then all kindness to me, their grateful junior, as both were: the one early called to his rest; his more than octogenarian survivor through half a century of devotedness to the gospel, ever humbleness itself; and in affection so sensibly ripening for the land where all is love!

Would indeed that I could recall, and here record, the names of other learners in the same unostentatious seminary.

"Honoured in their day,
Now to the grave gone down!"

And I doubt not "in the book of life!"

One however is specially in my thoughts, at this stage of my pleasant task, the Rev. William Rose, afterward the much and justly respected and valued Rector of Beckenham, concerning whom, by favour of one worthy in all truth of her name, I will now gratefully take advantage of what has been so kindly communicated to me:—

Mr. Rose was the son of a country gentleman of fortune, and went to Oxford to pursue his education for the bar, with his two hunters and his groom, and all the love of field sports which a lively youth brought up in the midst of those who are eagerly pursuing them can scarcely fail to imbibe. I do not know how much of his Oxford course had passed, when his father, fearing that his love of horses was carrying him a little too far, and anxious that he should not attend the approaching races in a neighbouring town, wrote to a young relative, Mr. Stevenson, who was at that time reading with Mr. Clarke, requesting him to invite his son to spend the week with him at Chesham Bois. The invitation was accepted, and Mr. Rose arriving at Bois just before the early dinner

hour, was invited to join his cousin at Mr. Clarke's simple but hospitable board. There was in Mr. Clarke's countenance and whole manner an expression so marked with sweetness and holiness, that, united with his emphatic and striking conversation, was well calculated to make a powerful impression on the mind of his young visitor; and this was greatly increased by the first sermon which he heard from his lips on the following Sunday morning. Under the influence of these new feelings, Mr. Rose very soon conceived an ardent wish to quit Oxford for the present, and join his cousin at Bois to read with Mr. Clarke, and prepare himself for becoming a preacher of the blessed Gospel. It was some time before his father could be prevailed upon to consent to this change in his course; but he at length gave way to his son's earnest desires, and after remaining three years at Bois, Mr. Rose returned to Oxford to complete his terms there, and take his degree. This accomplished, he was anxious to proceed at once to enter the ministry, and preach to others that Gospel which had brought light and peace to his own soul; and hearing that the clergyman of a village about six miles from Oxford was in want of a curate, he lost no time in proposing himself for the office, and waited on the clergyman in question for this purpose. It was late in the year, and upon quitting Oxford, and inquiring of a countryman whom he met, the nearest road to the village, he was told that "the waters

were out," and that it was impossible for him to reach it. "Only tell me the road, good man, and leave me to find my way," was the reply. The countryman pointed out a Church on a distant hill, and said, "That is the Church, Sir, but it is not possible for you to get there." Mr. Rose with his groom arrived safely, however, at the door of the clergyman, was ushered into his presence, and made his errand known; but when the Vicar heard that he had come from Oxford, his first exclamation was, "But, Mr. Rose, *how* did you get here? why the roads are utterly impassable!" "Oh I did not find any difficulty, Sir, I came as the crow flies!" "Oh! then you have been used to hunting, I dare say?" This answered in the affirmative, the Vicar said, "Well, before proceeding farther, I *should* like to see the horse that could bring you!"

The gentlemen went together to the stable, and great was the admiration of both horses expressed by the clergyman. On returning to the house, he said, "Well, Mr. Rose, I dare say we shall have no difficulty in coming to an agreement, and you will find very little to do, you will only have a few old women in their red cloaks to preach to on the Sunday." The agreement *was* soon made, and Mr. Rose entered at once upon the duties he had undertaken; and soon the Church began gradually to be filled, numbers of people coming from a distance to hear him. On the approach of Christmas, Mr. Rose being in Dea-

con's orders, it was settled that the Vicar (who resided in another village) should attend his Church, and take part in the Communion service. When Mr. R. arrived at the village on Christmas day, people were coming in on foot, on horse-back, and in carts, in all directions, to attend the service; and on entering the Church, he saw sitting in the Vicar's pew, one of the Dignitaries of Oxford, and concluded that he was brought there to give *his* opinion of the doctrines he might hear. When the service was over, and Mr. R. went into the vestry, this gentleman came forward, offered him his hand, and said "Mr. Rose, I thank you for your sermon, I agree with you in every word that you have said; but I did not know that there was another man in Oxford who thought as I do." Mr. Rose replied, that he had "a little band of friends there who were of one mind, and to whom it would give him much pleasure to introduce him; an offer which was very thankfully accepted; and thus instead of the purpose for which this gentleman was probably brought to the church, the matter was graciously so ordered as to be the means of introducing him to the christian society and fellowship he had longed for, and of confirming Mr. Rose in his place, to the blessing of many souls."

But I had better now let good Mr. Rose speak for himself. In a letter written by him many years afterward, giving an account of this period of his life, he says, "I was at once exceedingly struck with Mr.

Clarke; his good sense, his humility, his knowledge, his piety, his simplicity, and his kindness, strongly impressed my mind. His judicious way of behaving to me led me to entertain a very favourable opinion of him; and to look up to him with respect. He reminded me much of the account of Goldsmith's brother. I began to feel what I could not describe; seeing his happiness, and in some measure reflecting on my own life, my mind was perplexed, and somewhat distressed, though I hardly knew why.

"Soon after, a very trifling incident made a deep impresson on me. I was walking in the garden belonging to farmer Hunt's house, where I resided, and musing upon many things which occupied my whole attention, when I ran against the wall at the end of a grass walk. The observation I made was, 'I did not suppose I had got half way.' At that moment the thought, which I can never forget, rushed into my mind; '*my life* might have been cut off before I supposed it had been half spent.' This was succeeded by the consideration of what *might* have become of me. I did not believe there was a hell; but there *might* be; I became desirous of knowing whether there was, yet did not know how I could be sure whether there was or not. The Bible told us there was one, but how did I know the Bible was true? I had formerly read books to prove it true, but they did not prove it to me.

"When it was dark at night, I walked by the woods

which extend a great way from the field adjoining the house, praying in my way that some supernatural appearance from heaven or hell (I did not care which it was, for I seemed prepared for either) might convince me of the truth of Scripture, if it were true.

"In this state of mind I continued for some days, till I determined to speak to Mr. Clarke, who had gained my confidence. When he thought my mind sufficiently composed, he put Leslie's 'Short and easy method with the Deists' into my hand. I read it with the greatest attention and eagerness, convinced, that if the four tests could be realized in their application to Scripture, the proof of its inspiration was unanswerable. Their application to Scripture was clear, and I made my most invaluable friend Mr. Clarke happy, by telling him the result. I read the book over and over again, wrote out the *four tests*, and carried them in my pocket book: changing them from one to another; I have them in my pocket at this time.

"From that day to this, I have never had any doubts, beyond what the wickedness of my heart may have suggested, when infused by him of whose devices 'we are not ignorant.'

"Still it was weeks before my mind was *seriously* impressed, either with the vanity of the world, or the blessings of the Gospel. The first time I recollect to have been really impressed by either was one Sunday at Bois church, to which I had gone in a

more serious state of mind than ever before, and much better adapted to receive 'instruction in righteousness.' But that part of the service which most particularly struck me, was the following hymn:—

'World, adieu! thou real cheat,
Oft have thy delusive charms
Filled my heart with fond conceit,
Foolish hopes, and false alarms;
Now I see as clear as day
How thy follies pass away, &c. &c.

I was so much affected by this hymn, connected with the other circumstances of the service, that I could scarcely refrain from tears, probably I did not. So sensible an impression was made upon my mind that I can almost date the first truly religious state of it from that day. I began then to take a lively interest in my attendance at the house of God, and Mr. Clarke's expositions and evening meetings, which were afterwards so delightful. From that evening I desired to give out the hymns at his house, and continued to do this ever after."

"Instead of a few days," as my kind correspondent says, "my dear father remained at Chesam-Bois for *three years*, having with his father's consent, given up all thoughts of the bar, with a view to taking orders. During this time he studied diligently under Mr. Clarke's guidance, who treated him like a son. He was to have been ordained to the curacy of Bois, but

it was found that, being a donative, and not at that time under Episcopal jurisdiction, Mr Clarke was unable to give a title. Of the signal blessing attending the early part of his ministry I have before told you.

"My father used to delight in recounting the names of faithful and evangelical clergymen who were educated by Mr Clarke, and the testimonies of high respect borne not only to his Christian character, but to his wisdom and learning by some of the most eminent clergymen of the day. Among others I remember an expression of the Rev. Henry Venn's on my father's saying—'Such was Mr. Clarke's opinion,' respecting a text of Scripture; 'Sir, I'll take Mr. Clarke's opinion 'till Solomon rises from the dead:' also the remark of the Rev. William Romaine, 'I consider Mr. Clarke like a great *Synopsis*, he gives you the opinion of every Commentator, and then gives his own which is worth all the rest put together.'"

And I cannot but be glad, before taking leave of this choice company, to particularize a few more Bois names, some indeed far better known already than I could make them, as the Rev. Basil Woodd, the Rev. Stephen Langston, the Rev. William Goode, (father of the Rev. William and Francis Goode,) the Rev. J. S. Pratt, Prebendary of Peterborough, the Rev. Mr. Stevenson, of Olney, the Rev. Ambrose Serle, the Rev. Edmund Beynon, the Rev. Edward Burn, of Birmingham, of whom I gladly copy a few words from

the kind hand of my much valued later friend the Rev. Josiah Allport. "I used often to hear Mr. Burn when a youth. At that time he stood alone, as the only preacher of the Gospel in the Church in Birmingham; and his church used to be crowded to excess: the savour of his ministry yet remains, and is felt precious by many;" Sir Henry Blisset, chief justice of Bengal, whose early death was not a little lamented; James Oldham Esq. who, after also filling many years a high office in the same more and more important part of our Empire, now occupies his *otium cum dignitate* with his ancient Bois interest and principles. And surely the christian administration of the present Lieutenant Governor of the north-west Provinces of India, the worthy son of the sainted Thomason already named in these pages, bears strong testimony to the influence of Bois teaching, descending to another generation; confirmed too by his ready and liberal help, for his father's sake, to the humble school for the poor of Bois, recently built, and now prospering there.

Happy Thomason! The last time I saw him, we walked together to our dear master's grave, in the same mind about him, with the superadded tenderness and solemnity of the thought, that he had for years been *there*. And now I have to think of *him*, the pleasant scholar and missionary, with his ever winning countenance and voice, with tenderness and solemnity too.

Many other familiar names, precious in the dim light of the past, there were, in the church and out of it, given to those dawning days of the blessed Gospel from Bois. But they are not for the present or the future, save in that never on earth acknowledged stream of silent illumination, gently penetrating and pervading around, which, glory be to Him from whom alone it can flow, shall never altogether fail such favoured sources as Heaven-seeking Bois.

Of Bois church, and of Mr. Clarke out of his church, in consistency with himself in it, the more I try for suitable words, the more they seem to elude my reach. I do not mean that the idea of the reality of his religion is so present to me in contrast to the absence elsewhere of that specific idea, for indeed I have no such disparaging thought; but only that it was so predominant, the one idea that, as it were, always looked you in the face,

“And put so much of heart into his act,
“That his example had a magnet’s force!”

The unspeakable, awful importance of religion seemed always uppermost in his mind. The glorious Gospel having been sent down from Heaven by God in Christ Jesus His Son, brought by Christ Jesus himself, yea, dying for us on the cross, “what else, (one might have imagined to be always in his mind) can we be thinking of?” Many a boy, of the rudest from the common, I doubt not, at his solitary toil in

the fields years afterwards, may have thought of his loving exposition of the old Saxon “Good News,” and many another in cloister or grove, of its Greek. This it is which completes the Pastor, and insures discipleship; and this alone,—this reality of tone and aspect; of “walk and conversation;” this ever ready turn to apt illustration, which, with the blessing of God, leads to “edification;” yea to salvation!

Mr. Clarke died, after a fortnight’s illness, in his 75th year, on the 4th of October, 1793. Mr. Jerram who was then at Bois, and constantly with him, says,

“His patience under excruciating pains, his meekness, humility, thankfulness, and cheerfulness; and above all, his confidence in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ inspiring him with ‘hope full of immortality,’ filled all with admiration and thankfulness to God, who bestowed such grace. He did not cease to speak in a most affectionate and instructive manner. In a sermon he had lately preached, he had spoken of the watchfulness required to guard against the vanity apt to be inspired by knowledge; on my thanking him for which he said:—‘I did not intend its application to you alone, but also to myself.’ He addressed us individually; and for some he seemed to be in an agony of soul: to the youngest present, warning him against the vices of his age:—‘Avoid them; pass not by them; turn from them; and flee away’; praying for another, that he might be made a faithful and useful minister, enlarging on the neces-

sity that ministers should watch against pride, vanity, and ambition, and beware of preaching in anger or opposition. On his desiring to speak to one of his people by himself, (numbers waiting to come into the room in small parties) it was intimated that this person, it was to be hoped, must be a serious man, as he had sat so many years under his preaching. 'Yes,' said he, 'but don't you know that there are stones in the Church aisle which have been there many years, and that they are stones still?' And it being remarked that so much speaking might exhaust him, he replied 'I can preach best now.'"

He was buried in the Churchyard of Chesham-Bois, his beloved friend, eminently indeed worthy of such a friendship, Mr. Rose, in fulfilment of a reciprocal promise to that effect, performing the last duties. Mr. Rose afterwards addressed his afflicted people from 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy Victory?"

Mr. Clarke was twice married; and had two sons and a daughter, of whom only the eldest son survived him.

And now I come, whether I would or not, to the end of my dear subject, not altogether content indeed with the way in which I leave it—how could I with any account of it, of mine!—and yet rather glad nevertheless that I have done what I could. For the image of my beloved Master, however it may fare with others, has shone out the more expressively to me as

I have gone on. I see him again, I hear him, and I talk about him to Whitechurch, and Thomason, and Bishop, and many another of whom I love to think. The whole scene, the school, the Common, and all, are again full before me, my morning and evening walks to it and from it, a mile and more, are almost as fresh as yesterday. The very hum and buz of the school, the rise and fall of particular voices, with many a long forgotten face, all have come back to me, and for a little while I live the sweet time over again. For even then I enjoyed those days with a precious measure and sort of enjoyment. Even then I thought them precious, and well remember that I did not at all wish to be a man. My solitary walks thither were very sweet to me; and I went in all weathers, for there was then, I suppose, less valetudinary care generally. Certainly, I never staid away from school for rain, or snow, or whatever else would now perhaps be admitted for lawful excuse. I do not pretend to set up this with its half-dried *sequela* through many a shivering lesson, for all the year round, as *per se* a recommendation of Bois days or Bois ways. But I do believe, with all my regard for the progression of my own more and more favourite calling, that it is truly much to be doubted whether the constitutions of the nineteenth century have, when they come to be proved, to say nothing of them *in transitu*, the happier hardihood.

I remember with special interest these walks in my

latter school years. For a time I had a troop of companions with me, of the ordinary diversity of ordinary character, afterward I went to school *solus*, in silence therefore necessarily, and more than willingly meditative. My reverence and my affection for my Preceptor grew into strong and earnest confirmation; and I had not a little happiness in my books, and in those with whom I then read them; they being, to my great delight and advantage, Oxford and Cambridge "men," or in due season so to be. And truly the voice and the sight of him, to whom we all so looked, rise upon me in such a manner to this day, that I can hardly think I should do wrong here to say—I have not "looked upon his like again!"

But he is gone! The school is gone, and the generation in and around it is well nigh gone too!

What can I say more! It is a solemn thing to look back from the still seat of Old Age to the busy world of Boyhood! and oh! how much more to that of Manhood! Of the three, the middle stage now seems to me the most difficult to be reconciled to. Then, we *knew* so much more than in the first; could *do* so much more than in the last; and yet find in *it* now so little wherewith to be satisfied; whereof to think that, as to what we either *knew* or *did*, in that our best estate both to know and to do, the "fruits" were only what they were!

My "conclusion of the whole matter," is, that this is a mercy to be thankful for! this humbling retro-

spect! that, when I was a School boy, such Prophet-like denunciations of sin, with an authority, a countenance, and a tone never to be quite forgotten; and such earnest reiterations of "Good tidings of great joy" in the Lord Jesus Christ, were in turn, as the occasion might be—my daily hearing. And that now the remembrance thereof, and of the departed, with adoring thankfulness be it written, is anew as "life from the dead" to me. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!"

Amen! and Amen!

In the chancel of his Church, his surviving scholars nearly forty years afterward erected a tablet with the following inscription :—

Sacred to the Memory of
The REVEREND THOMAS CLARKE, B. A.,
Twenty-Seven years Rector of this Parish.
He was an able, a learned, and a holy man ;
Always abounding in the work of the Lord
In his Parish,
In his Ministry,
And in his School,
Wherein he trained up many,
Whose praise has since been in all the Churches :
He was made a burning and a shining light,
Doing the work of an Evangelist in season and out of season,
That all might repent and be converted unto God ;
And after a life and conversation becoming the Gospel,
Full of zeal, and brotherly love, and clothed with humility,
Died before many witnesses to his faith and patience,
A blessed, although painful death,
On the 4th of October, 1793,
Aged 74.
He was buried with his Family,
Beneath the stone at the entrance
To this his house of prayer ;
Waiting the Resurrection of the Redeemed ;
This monument being erected,
From an affectionate and reverent sense of duty to his name,
By a few of his surviving scholars,
A. D. 1831.

" Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, '
in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."—2 Timothy i. 13.