

Some Letters of Toby and James Bonnell.

THE labours of writers interested in the field of Irish ecclesiastical history have within recent years recalled attention, after a lapse of two centuries, to the 'exemplary life and character' of James Bonnell. A careful notice in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and a more popularly written account in the *Churchman* for October 1899 have sufficiently explained the importance of Bonnell's figure in the history of English churchmanship in the Ireland of the Restoration period. And these notices abundantly vindicate the title of their saintly subject to the 'testimonials of those right reverend fathers of our church' with which Bonnell's first biographer prudently fortified a scarcely discriminating panegyric. The concurring testimony of five of the most eminent of contemporary Irish prelates, including two so distinguished as Narcissus Marsh and William King, to the peculiar piety and essentially religious temperament of Bonnell has probably done at least as much as the *Life* itself to establish Bonnell's reputation as an exemplar of the art and practice of holy living and holy dying. For certainly the attempt of Archdeacon Hamilton to interpret his hero's character by a medley of devout 'meditations' fully justifies the shrewd misgivings of Bonnell's most intimate friend, Archbishop King, as to the possibility of doing justice in a biographical compilation to powers of religious contemplation which have been praised without extravagance as slightly recalling Thomas a Kempis. King had himself at first undertaken to be his friend's biographer, but had prudently withdrawn from the task, 'feeling myself unable to undertake such an excellent piece as I figure to myself the just image of Mr. Bonnell would make,' or 'to make the reader apprehend his peculiar charms and graces, that almost ravished those that conversed with him.'¹ Yet, in spite of the inherent difficulties of the task, there emerges from the *Life and Correspondence of Bonnell* a figure of singular purity. In the active duties of a lay office he continually manifested an unaffected piety; and amid all the licence of a licentious age he exhibited from earliest manhood a devotional quietism which, a generation earlier, would have better fitted him

¹ King's intimacy with Bonnell was cordial and his admiration sincere. Bonnell in his last years frequently visited King in Derry, and several letters from the archbishop to his friend are preserved in the King Papers. In one of them, 12 Dec. 1693, King tells a good story of Queen Mary's conscientiousness in regard to episcopal preferment. 'I hear from England Dr. Bladen bids fair for a bishopric, Lord C. his friend, and that the countess of Anglesey spoke last summer for him to the queen, who answered, "Madam, you don't care for bishops, and so are indifferent who fill the places; but I am of another mind and would have none but well-qualified persons."'

for the community of Little Gidding than for the struggles of an active career.

It is not, however, for the purpose of illustrating more fully the title of Bonnell to the admiration which his devotional spirit aroused in his contemporaries that attention is called to him here. We propose rather to show how our knowledge of affairs in Ireland during and immediately after the Revolution is illustrated and enlarged by Bonnell's papers and correspondence. For this lay saint was closely involved, in spite of himself, in merely mundane affairs. His father, Samuel Bonnell, whose grandfather was one of the many Dutch refugees from the Alva persecutions who settled in Norwich, had, after a prosperous career as a merchant in Leghorn, involved his fortunes in those of the exiled royal family of England, and had beggared himself to meet the necessities of Queen Henrietta Maria and her children. He was rewarded at the Restoration with the position of accountant-general of Ireland. Though Samuel Bonnell, dying in 1662, did not long enjoy this reward of his services, his appointment did not expire with him. 'In order to the better education and maintenance of my dear son James Bonnell I have obtained,' so runs his will, 'letters patent for him to be joined with me in the office of accountant-general of the customs and excise of Ireland, which with the fees thereof he will as survivor enjoy solely after my death during his good behaviour.'² Thus James Bonnell found himself provided with a competence, and dedicated, in spite of himself, to a lay profession which he continually deplores in his correspondence as hindering him from embracing a clerical career. It is evident that motives of purely personal advantage would not have restrained him from resigning the office and its emoluments. But his mother being left with slender resources, Bonnell elected on completing his education to retain the office and discharge its duties in person. To this circumstance we owe it that an observer peculiarly competent to record the signs of the times was a resident in Dublin during the stirring period of the Revolution and in a position which enabled him to see below the surface of things. In the *Exemplary Life and Character* depicted by Archdeacon Hamilton but little attention is bestowed on these aspects of Bonnell's career. Yet even there some few allusions to sublunary affairs have escaped excision; and Macaulay has quoted, in his paragraphs on the state of Dublin at the moment of the flight of King James and the entry of William,³ the following graphic passage from a meditation written by Bonnell at this time:—

How did we see the protestants on the great day of our Revolution, Thursday, the third of July (a day ever to be remembered by us

² Original in Irish Public Record Office.

³ *History of England*, ch. xvi.

with all thankfulness, O had it been begun with visiting our churches and presenting ourselves there to God our deliverer!), congratulate and embrace one another as they met like persons alive from the dead! like brothers and sisters meeting after a long absence, and going about from house to house to give each other joy of God's great mercy; inquiring of one another how they passed the late days of distress and terror! What apprehensions they had; what fears or dangers they were under; those that were prisoners how they got their liberty, how they were treated, and what from time to time they thought of things.⁴

Passages of this sort are, however, rare in the *Life*, and it is to a very different source that we are indebted for the letters reproduced below.

The well-known Cambridge ecclesiastical historian John Strype was a near kinsman of the Bonnells. A member, like the latter, of the community of French and Dutch refugees at Norwich, Strype's father had married Hester, the sister of Samuel and the paternal aunt of James Bonnell. The Bonnells, as appears from some letters written from Dublin by Toby Bonnell, a brother of Samuel Bonnell, kept up their English connexion even after their emigration to Ireland, and when James Bonnell was ready for the university 'he removed to Catherine Hall, Cambridge, having been entered there a year before by his friend and kinsman Mr. Strype, then of the same house.'⁵ Strype was ten years the senior of his Irish cousin, but a community of tastes and interests quickly united the two in a close friendship which only ended with the life of the younger man. From the date of Bonnell's taking up his permanent residence in Dublin on his return from travels in France, Holland, and Italy, to that of his death, but fourteen years later, the two men were in constant communication. Strype's share in the correspondence has not survived, but the careful historiographer systematically filed all his friend's letters. A series of above thirty of these are preserved among the Strype MSS.⁶ in the library of the University of Cambridge, together with a few from other members of the Bonnell family, two of which, from Toby Bonnell, containing respectively a lively account of the proclamation of Charles II in Dublin and a comment on the Dutch war, are printed below. Other letters from Bonnell to Strype are among the Stowe and Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, and, as already mentioned, a few others from Bonnell to Archbishop King are extant among that prelate's papers. The letters to Strype are mainly conversant with those ecclesiastical and theological topics which were the main interest of their writer's life. They illustrate by criticism and allusion, perhaps as clearly as any surviving documents, the phases of religious thought and the schools of religious

⁴ Hamilton's *Life of Bonnell*, 8rd ed. 1707, p. 60.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 9.

⁶ The letters quoted in this paper are in vol. iii. pt. i.

opinion in the church of Ireland at a singularly interesting period ; and as such they possess a distinct value for those who desire to understand the part played by the church of England and her sister church of Ireland in the Ireland of James II. and William III. The present paper is, however, confined to extracts from those portions of Bonnell's correspondence which throw light on the social or political history of the time, and more particularly to the letters which relate to the state of affairs in Dublin during the Revolution, though even in these the ecclesiastical leanings of Bonnell are apparent in every line.

I owe my knowledge of the letters here printed and the suggestion of this paper to Mr. F. Elrington Ball, whose keen interest in the social and topographical history of Ireland has led him to procure a complete transcript of the letters in the Strype MSS. at Cambridge. This transcript has been deposited by Mr. Ball, for the benefit of Irish students, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, where it is catalogued *Bonnell's Letters*, MS. I. 6, 31. For permission to inspect the letters from and references to Bonnell in the King MSS. my thanks are due to the present owner of those papers, Mrs. R. D. Lyons, who has most courteously facilitated my inquiries. The spelling of the following letters has been modernised.

C. LITTON FALKNER.

I.

THE PROCLAMATION OF CHARLES II AT DUBLIN.

Mr. Toby Bonnell to Mr. John Johnson, Minister of Wapping, London.

16 May 1660.

On Monday, the 14th instant, the king being proclaimed, this city were even besides themselves with joy, the design of all being how to express and manifest it most. I confess I never saw the like for rejoicing. The state, our farmers, and private merchants and others gave many hogsheads of wine to the multitude ; the shops were drained of their silks, gold and silver [? lace] and ribbons, cloths and stuffs. The nobility, gentry, army, and citizens were in arms in all possible gallantry ; the shops not open all day. Happy were they that could fasten most of their wine on passengers in the streets. At night we had the great guns and volleys of lesser, bonfires and fireworks more and better than ordinary, which lasted till midnight. Neither may I forget to tell you that we rump-buried thus. Before it went mourners, viz. several, in white frocks and white scarfs made of towels and napkins, with banners—*Vive le Roy* on them—attended with many links. After them followed the hearse, being three or four slit deals made fast together, beset with candlesticks and candles in them : thereon a seeming carcass of a man stuffed with hay, but without a head. This hearse was behung with the state's arms round about it. After it followed the close mourners, viz. several that had besooted themselves like negroes. Meanwhile the trumpets sound a one while dolefully in form, and the while confusedly, as they use to sound when some devil is conjured up in a play. Meanwhile the people,

with their naked swords and staves, hacked at and butted the rump all along well favouredly as it passed. At length 'twas brought before the mayor's door, who bestowed cakes and ale on the funeral guests, and, after it had been thus scorned and derided of all people, it was in part burnt in the bonfire before the door, and part trod to dirt and mortar by the rout.

II.

THE DUTCH WAR, 1666.

Mr. Toby Bonnell to Mr. J. Johnson.

23 Oct. 1666.

We perceive by our news letters that the Dutch, for all their brave [talk], are desirous of a peace. But a merchant newly come over to England from those parts talks oddly of them, saying the Dutch are generally for keeping up this war, hoping yet to make their gains by it; that Tromp is so far from making a party either in his person or the laying him aside that the children spit at him for a false-hearted traitor; that seventy of their last fleet had not a ship that carried less than 50 guns; that 80 new great ships lay there ready for a supply which had never been abroad; that 10 ships were now on the stocks, of 110 guns each, for the next summer's expedition; that so soon as the fleet comes in there are multitudes of vessels with masts, yards, sails, cordage, anchors, cables, provisions and ammunition of all sorts, and some vessels with money to pay them off the day they arrive; that seamen are so plentiful among them that the captains refuse some of those volunteers that offer themselves to go to sea, and pick and choose as they list; that their merchants, magazines, and warehouses are full of goods, and as cheap as they were wont to be before the war, by reason of the continued great trade they drive to all parts; that they lay no stress on the side of the French, thinking it sufficient that he is in amity with them, and no enemy, holding themselves sufficient for us. These and the like stories are told to the credulous rabble; but our wise men laugh at them and extol the courage of the English, that are not daunted after all these disasters, even that of the fire; nor the king nor the duke of York so cast down as to forbear their harmless diversions by comedies. We here are not defeated neither. We have indeed our sermons on fasts in two or three churches in the morning; but then, if the weather be fair, in the afternoon we are for the bowling-green, even the very best of us. If foul, a glass of wine or a cup of good ale entertains us after dinner, and we keep our markets howsoever.

III.

LOUIS XIV AT VERSAILLES, 1684.

James Bonnell to John Strype.

Custom House, Dublin: 20 Aug. 1684.

I am indebted for your kind letter, which I received at Paris.⁷ . . . I come now to give you my third and last stage of France. Of Paris truly

⁷ Bonnell was abroad in 1684 as travelling tutor to the eldest son of Mr. Ralph Freeman of Apsden Hall Hertfordshire, whose education he had undertaken on leaving Cambridge.

I have enough ; for it stands in a bottom on the river, with hills about it ; and no good water in it, but such as gripes strangers and carries off many. Besides, in hot weather the *pucezes* [?] are intolerable : all which made me exceeding glad to get away. Yet I must own it is much finer than London, taking all parts of it together, as being built of stone, without sea coal and brew-houses. As for Versailles and the court, I know not how to describe them in a letter. Will you know how I was affected and what I thought ? Is this the mint of all the affairs of Europe ? Is this the man (that I see now tying on his own cravat) that gives law to all the world ? Is this the head that all nations revere, and whose ordinances are the laws of the Medes and Persians ? What is there more than a man in this countenance which would difference him in a crowd from an officer of the guards ? *Nos te, nos facimus Ludovice, Deum !* When his cravat was on he kneeled down a small quarter of an hour by his bedside, and in a decent posture paid his devotions, while we kept silence in the room. A little picture of the V. Mary hung before him, and some gown men kneeled behind him. At mass likewise (where I need say nothing of the music, being so much renowned) his posture and behaviour was very grave and reverend, kneeling against a desk in the middle of the chapel ; and the dauphin behind him, who, being weary of kneeling so long, diverted himself with pinches of snuff. I saw him afterwards in a garden buying a horse. He has a very familiar mien and a look not too big with empire ; however they compliment him with *solī orienti*, his father's motto being *nec pluribus impar*. The house and place, exceeding description, produced in me at their view this mean thought, that I was drinking some of our last Christmas beer out of a frozen barrel, pitying the poor vapid body of the liquor that had sent all its strength and spirits to enrich an ambitious centre. 'Ah,' said I, 'it was some of those poor people's pistoles that I saw lately in the rays that helped to gild this and that pinnacle.' In effect glory inebriates like avarice, and both render our actions as unaccountable to reason. From Paris I returned to Orleans, a fair long town upon a level, but not low ; however the wine and air do not generally agree with an English constitution. One may pension there for 10 or 12 crowns a month. In all other places on the Loire it will cost 15 or 17.

IV.

THE DEATH OF CARTWRIGHT, BISHOP OF CHESTER.

*James Bonnell to John Strype.*⁸

Dublin : 17 April 1689.

With the king came over the bishop of Chester, Dr. Cartwright, of whom his clergy here was a little shy. But the bishop of Meath, the only bishop left in these parts (I reckon not our primate, being decrepit), was civil to him. The college, of which the bishop of Meath is standing vice-chancellor, and the clergy of these parts waited with the said bishop, who received them graciously and promised them protection ; that he was satisfied the principles of the church of England were loyal. The bishop of Chester would have put them on addressing, but

⁸ The original of this letter is in the Stowe MS. 746 at the British Museum, and not at Cambridge like the rest.

they declined it. When the king went hence to Londonderry he fell into a looseness which killed him in a few days, he being in his great climacterical. In his sickness he was visited by some gentlemen of the Roman church, whom he desired not to trouble themselves—that he was so well satisfied in his religion that it was not in the power of anything they could say to change his sentiments; but that his condition was such that it made him fit to think of something else than controversy. He was buried decently from the bishop of Meath's house, and at his charge, for he had no money. I pray God send you grace and compose the present confusions.

(To be continued.)

The 'Discours Politique' attributed to Pombal.

IN an article in the *Historisches Jahrbuch*, xxiii. 270,¹ Dr. Hans Schorer has examined the question of the authenticity of those passages which John Smith in his *Life of Pombal* attributed to this statesman. By a long series of comparisons he proves that the passages in question are translations from a *Discours Politique sur les Avantages que les Portugais pourraient retirer de leur Malheur, etc.*, published in the year after the great earthquake of 1755 at the Hague and at Lisbon, and accompanied by a *Relation Historique* of the event.² Smith was followed by all the writers on the eighteenth century in Portugal, who have used the passages to illustrate Pombal's policy. Dr. Schorer's doubts as to whether Pombal was the author of the work were roused by the continual strain of hostility and even hatred towards England which runs through it, a sentiment far from according with Pombal's foreign policy; moreover the clear-cut, strong style of the *Discours* is very different from the laboured, halting style shown in Pombal's despatches. A comparison with the ideas and style of Ange Goudar's most famous work, *Les Intérêts de la France Malentendus*, evinces such a likeness that, in Dr. Schorer's words, 'any doubt as to both works having come from the same pen was destroyed.'³

Further evidence against Pombal's authorship may be added to

¹ See *English Historical Review*, xvii. (1902), 832.

² The *Discours Politique* is to be found translated into Portuguese among Pombal's writings collected at Lisbon in 1820. The Portuguese translation also exists in manuscript at the British Museum (Add. 15591). In the former case the editor simply says that he saw the manuscript in a private library at Lisbon in 1783; in the latter case Pombal is set down as the author on the title-page. This manuscript is clearly not an original. Smith may have taken his quotations from one of these sources.

³ To Goudar in fact the *Discours* is attributed in the common works of reference; see Barbier, *Dictionnaire des Ouvrages Anonymes* (8rd ed., 1872), i. 1023, iv. 231; Quérard, *La France Littéraire*, iii. 418; *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, xxi. 365; Ersch and Gruber's *Encyklopädie*.