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Dr. Forbes B. Winslow, M.D.,
D.C.L., Oxon. 1810-1874

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DR. FORBES B. WINSLOW,

M.D., D.C.L., OXON.

TRUE Science and Revealed Religion are synonymous terms in God's vocabulary—cognate principles in the administration of His divine government. Their influence is co-ordinate and reciprocal. Science is never so true to itself, or attractive to the eye, as when in alliance with religion; and religion is never so fully attested as a system, or so irresistibly felt as a power, as when wedded to science: strength and beauty are thus blended in a union of forces which God has united, and never intended that man should divorce. "Science ever has been, and ever must be, the safe-guard of religion."* It is not, however, by every well-informed mind that this conjunction is recognised, or, when recognised, is frankly owned. It was reserved, therefore, for the pen of the religious biographer to embalm the memory of Dr. Forbes Winslow as a Christian man, and thus to fill a blank in the published reminiscences of his history, the existence of which would have left unaided the most essential and polished stone in the fair edifice of his life.

It is always interesting to trace religious convictions to their primal cause. In the present instance we have no difficulty in following the sacred stream to its more remote and hidden source. We must ask the reader to travel back with us to the early teaching, influence, and prayers of a godly mother, as revealing the foundation and source of Dr. Winslow's Christian character. *Her* teaching inculcated those principles of truth, virtue, and godliness in his young mind, which, in long after-years, when she had

* Sir David Brewster.

been gathered to her fathers, culminated in the character which he manifested as a Christian physician.

The Church and the world have yet much to learn of their indebtedness to the pious mothers of the nation for the great men who guide their counsels and shape their destinies. It is the mother, and not the father, who makes the future man; it is the mother, and not the father, who trains from childhood the future Christian. Her hands bend the supple twig, her hands mould the unshapen material. The nursery of the mother is the school-room of the child. From her heart the first inspiration of love is received; by her lips the first principles of virtue are inculcated; her hands plant the first germ of truth; on her lap the first story of Jesus is learned; and at her feet her child's first prayer to God is breathed! What a moral power is the pious mother! She it is who forged and riveted the chain around her son, which no circumstances in after-life can sever. Years have swept on; adversity has furrowed the brow, time has silvered the locks, want has warped the mind, and sin has ossified the heart; and, drifting far away from its moorings, it would seem as though the frail bark must founder, freighted with all that mother's early teaching, counsels, and prayers! But no! The chain, fastened to her praying heart, has held fast the drifting soul of her tempest-tossed one; and ere the sun of life has set he has dropped his anchor in the calm waters of Christian faith and hope,—and so a mother's love and prayers have triumphed at last!

Such a woman of God was the mother of Dr. Forbes Winslow. Her early religious training and holy example laid the basis of his future successful career; his own hands building upon the foundation thus laid. His youthful virtue, unwearied earnestness, rigid self-denial, dogged and undaunted perseverance, and arduous study, adding another name to the illustrious roll of self-made, godly sons of science, who, laying down their high attainments and honours at the feet of Jesus, have counted all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ their Lord.

We have but scanty data guiding us to the first actual religious workings of his mind which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, led to his personal and entire decision for the Lord. That the necessity and importance of personal religion were not entirely absent from his thoughts at the very outset of his student-life, would appear from the following memoranda prescribed for his future guidance, found appended to one of his class-books :—

“The three main objects to be sought in life ;

1. To be a Christian.
2. To be a gentleman.
3. To be skilful in my profession.

The *first* is to be sought by prayer daily to God through Jesus Christ.

The *second*, by the society and observance of gentlemen.

The *third*, by a steady reading and study of proper books.”

In all his future relations and conduct—domestic, social, and professional—the principles thus laid down were the guide of his life. Upon them he fixed his eye as steadfastly as the mariner upon the north star, and by their holy and unerring light pursued the even tenor of his way to usefulness, fame, and fortune. Unconsciously to himself, yet how visibly to others, he unveiled in these simple, practical propositions—penned upon the threshold of his professional career—the grand secrets of his future success. Beginning the world a mere youth, without wealth and without interest, yet with a spirit of self-reliance the most brave, with an earnestness the most unwearied, and with a perseverance the most unflagging ; above and beyond all, with a faith in God child-like and devout, he selected a branch of his profession the most difficult and anxious, yet the most useful and humane ; and, pursuing the path he had thus marked out for himself, at length reached the goal of his highest ambition and prayers, leaving a name which neither science nor religion will soon let die.

It is interesting to know—and this fact forms no insignificant link in the chain of primary causes which issued in so happy a result—that, throughout

his career as a medical man, Dr. Forbes Winslow was the subject of much Christian and prayerful interest on the part of many who had derived permanent relief from his skilful treatment. Some, whose lost nervous power he had restrung; others, whose jaded and exhausted brain he had vitalized; others, whose morbid religious feelings he had soothed; and yet others—and these constituted the highest triumph of his art—whose unbalanced and beclouded reason he had reseated calm and radiant upon its throne, bore him in grateful and devout remembrance to God as the chosen instrument by whom He had recalled joy to the spirit, sunlight to the heart, intelligence and repose to the mind. Considering the personal benefit to his own soul, and the immense and far-reaching blessing it would be, professionally, to others, were the element of spiritual religion engrafted upon his marvellous knowledge of, and his close contact with, mental phenomena in their varied morbid conditions, “prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him.” It is known that the late Sir James Young Simpson, of Edinburgh, was foremost in this band of holy intercessors on behalf of his attached and admired friend. Himself but recently a believer in Jesus, his conversion, at a late period in life, was marked by all the most beautiful and loving traits of genuine religion; “and thus had joined”—to quote the words of his biographer—“that illustrious company of foremost men who, bringing all their gifts and varied attainments with them, have entered the kingdom of God as little children. To the list that holds the names of Newton, Boyle, Boerhaave, Cuvier, Abercrombie, Chalmers, Brewster, Lyndhurst, and other ‘chiefs of the mighties,’ we add James Young Simpson;” and to his honoured name we now append that of—Forbes Benignus Winslow.

“Learning has borne such fruit in other days
On all her branches: piety has found
Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer
Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dew.”

But the time appointed of God had arrived when these intercessory breathings on his behalf should receive a divine response, and be crowned with signal success. It does not clearly appear what was the proximate mental and spiritual impulse which led to the result; but on one occasion, on the last night of the year, he directed his steps to a place of worship in which a public service had been announced commemorative of this solemn epoch of time. It was midnight—"a night much observed of the Lord"—when, as the church bells solemnly tolled the knell of the dying year, and sweetly chimed the advent of the new, and as the whole assembly bent in silent prayer to Almighty God, Dr. Forbes Winslow bowed as a humble, believing sinner at the feet of Jesus. Auspicious night! That night his mother's prayers were answered, her faith was rewarded, and the heavenly life began. That night he returned to his own house "a new creature in Christ Jesus," henceforth to be supremely and for ever the Lord's. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." Thus spake the Lord Jesus. Reader, hast *thou* thus received it?

The period when this great change transpired supplied no little evidence of its reality. He was now in the meridian of his professional career, and the zenith of his fame. A practice was increasing, demanding mental anxiety, physical energy, and professional responsibility the most exacting. Cases of insanity, both civil and criminal, in which he was frequently called upon by the law officers of the Crown to give evidence, involving enormous wealth, the liberty of the subject, and even life itself, hung upon his decision. At the same time, with pen in hand, gathering up the fragments of time gleaned from his consulting-room and from sleep, he was either preparing lectures for his professor's chair, papers for his Quarterly Journal, or composing works for the press, on the most philosophical and scientific studies of his profession,—

"The rich relics of well-spent hours."

It was at this remarkable and unlikely period of his professional life that Dr. Forbes Winslow became, in its truest and most scriptural sense, a child of God and a disciple and follower of Christ,—beloved more deeply and sought for more eagerly than ever by those who could appreciate the consecration of high-born intellect to the noblest benefit of man and the truest love and glory of God. Referring to this, the most important and the happiest epoch of his life, in a letter addressed to the writer of this tribute, he thus speaks,—

“From that time I felt that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. I was conscious that I was born again, had become a child of God, and was cleansed from all sin by the most precious blood of Jesus Christ. My happiness knew no bounds. I felt obliged to tell every one what the Lord had done for my soul. I fear in some instances my zeal got the better of my judgment, and that, under the influence of my ‘first love,’ I did many indiscreet things which might have injured rather than have done good to the cause of Christ. At the suggestion of a Christian lady from Croydon, I went down there and spoke in public for the first time since my conversion. The service was held in a theatre, and several of the Lord’s children went down from London to take part in the proceedings. I was very nervous, as this was my *début* in the work of the Lord; but He sustained me, and enabled me to confess Christ before the world. I felt very happy after this,—happy because God had inclined my heart to speak of Jesus before many who, perhaps, did not know or love Him; and from the hope that some poor souls might be awakened by the Holy Spirit to a realization of themselves as sinners, and be brought to the foot of the Cross to find peace beneath the sheltering blood of Jesus.”

There is one feature in this genuine, artless narration of his new-born feelings which will not fail to arrest the attention of the thoughtful reader. We refer to the unhesitating faith with which Dr. Forbes Winslow received experimentally, and on terms the most humbling to the pride of human intellect and merit, “the truth as it is in Jesus.” The solution of what to some philosophical minds would appear a perplexing problem in religion, is simply this: Trained from earliest childhood in an intellectual knowledge of the way of salvation, he had no religious speculative doubts to remove, no profound mysteries in revelation to be explained, no apparent

discrepancies in historical statements to be harmonized, no pet theories of inspiration to be exploded, no lordly demand of reason upon the obedience and homage of faith to be ignored; but, with the sincerity of an earnest inquirer, and with the docility of a little child, he at once believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and was instantly saved! Verities of the Christian faith which to the mind of some men of equal intellectual power would appear enveloped in a haze of impenetrable obscurity, were to him as lucid as though bathed in noon-tide splendour. From a child he had known the holy Scriptures taught at a godly mother's feet, expounded at the domestic altar, and clearly and faithfully proclaimed from an evangelical pulpit. And, when in long after-years, amid the anxieties and excitement of an absorbing profession, he became convinced by the Holy Spirit of his need of the Saviour, it was but to present the crucified Redeemer before his mind in order to awaken in a moment that responsive life-look of faith which, rapid and luminous as the electric flash, kindled in his soul a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There exists not on earth a fact more instructive, or a spectacle more sublime, than that of a great mind receiving the kingdom of God as a little child! It may possibly be inferred by some from this simple narrative of the commencement of Dr. Forbes Winslow's religious life, that he was scarcely qualified, from his own personal experience, to meet, in the course of his special branch of the profession, cases of morbidly depressed thought arising from religious difficulty and doubt. But quite the contrary. If he had not arrived at his own religious convictions and hope in Christ by the tortuous and thorny path of speculative doubt and difficulty—the inquiry ever upon his lips was, "What is truth?"—nevertheless, his remarkably scriptural and lucid views of God's method of pardoning and justifying the sinner by faith in the Atonement

ment of Christ, together with his own experience of the "joy of His salvation," rendered him pre-eminently fitted to meet all such cases with a tact, sympathy, and success to which the most skilled theologian might in vain have aspired. No one was more sensible of the fact, that all doubters were not sceptics, and that all sceptics were not infidels, than he. Scepticism, which by some individuals is regarded as a term implying the most repugnant unbelief, was interpreted by him, according to its Greek acceptation, as signifying an inquiring state of mind, "looking about itself" for truth. No one was more conscious than he that the region of religious doubt was a perilous one, out of which, however, there was an avenue of escape, and from which the sooner the perplexed mind was rescued the better. At the same time, sympathizing acutely with what a Christian poet has termed "honest doubt," he was prepared—with his profound acquaintance with the philosophy of mind, and his simple views of evangelical truth—to take by the hand, and gently and skilfully lead into the good and the right way, all who repaired to his consulting-room mentally and spiritually depressed,—

"———tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt."

"Have you found peace with God?" was frequently the first inquiry put to the agitated patient who sat trembling at his side.

From the first moment that Dr. Forbes Winslow received Christ into his heart, he lost no opportunity of confessing Him before the world. Throwing open his spacious drawing-room, he gathered around him—for Bible reading, prayer, and Christian conference—representatives, clerical and lay, of different branches of the Christian Church, often himself either opening or closing the meeting with a prayer, beautiful and touching for its simplicity and fervour. Renting one of the metropolitan theatres, he secured the services of well-known and approved evangelists for preaching, occasionally himself taking part in the service. At the

Barnet Conference—since transferred to Mildmay Park—he responded to the invitation of the beloved and lamented Rev. William Pennefather to take a part; and at the “believers’ meetings,” held in Dublin, he was an occasional attendant, and an earnest and acceptable speaker. Among the various benevolent schemes which he set on foot, may be mentioned the gathering of about three hundred poor in one of the most destitute districts of London, for whom he provided annually a Christmas dinner; always closing the banquet with a religious service, sustained by different ministers and lay-evangelists. For the continuance of this yearly gathering after his death he has left suitable instructions.

It has been already remarked in these pages that Dr. Forbes Winslow’s Christianity pre-eminently contributed to his singular success in the treatment of mental disease, especially when it arose from morbidly religious feelings. To the glory of God it is mentioned that not a few individuals thus afflicted ascribe their spiritual quickening and mental recovery to his affectionate and earnest appeals to their personal religious consciousness. His first great aim was to lead them from the human to the Divine Physician, from himself to Christ; to lead the sin-oppressed conscience to the atoning blood that cleanseth from all sin; thus pouring the oil of Divine peace—peace with God through Jesus—upon the broken waters of spiritual and mental agony darkening and surging around the soul. Unprofessional and unphilosophical as the remark may appear to some whose eyes scan these pages, it is yet the solemn and intelligent conviction of the writer—and facts, he believes, will bear him out in his statement—that the most skilful and successful practitioner in the noble art of healing, be the case physical or mental, is the *Christian* physician; and that the man most competent to deal with the morbid phenomena of mind, incipient insanity, and religious melancholia, is he who is himself experimentally acquainted with “the balm that is in Gilead, and the Physician that is there.” The moral and mental

elements of our nature are so closely entwined and dependent upon each other, that the proper and successful treatment of cerebral irritation, morbid melancholy, religious despondency, the distressing conflict between reason and insanity, and in many cases, the nervous apprehension of approaching madness and self-destruction, demand at the hands of the physician something far beyond a mere knowledge of the pathology of the brain. He needs to be thoroughly conversant with the religious, as with the mental, condition of the patient—with his moral, as with his physical structure, who would skilfully and successfully treat cases so unique and important as these. And who is equal to this solemn and responsible task but he who from personal experience knows the way of peace with God through Christ Jesus ? *

* While these pages were passing through the press, the writer was favoured with a note from a well-known and highly-esteemed minister who at one time had occasion to consult Dr. Forbes Winslow while suffering from extreme prostration of nervous power, with its consequent symptoms of cerebro-psychical disturbance, arising from overtaken physical and mental energies. As this personal testimony is so appropriate and impressive, illustrating the beautiful harmony of Dr. Winslow's religious and medical character, we venture to append the following extract : " I sincerely condole with you in the bereavement you have sustained in the loss of one so eminent as Dr. Forbes Winslow, who, on my first acquaintance, much impressed me with the idea of a thoughtful, serious Christian. He most kindly evinced much interest in my health, and when anxiously asked whether he thought I should ultimately recover so as to be able to do duty again, replied, ' I have lived long enough never to give any decided opinion ; ' adding most emphatically, ' We can never restrict the power of God ; ' words from such lips showed his reliance upon the Great Physician. In a kind note accompanying a prescription, he closed it with these words : ' I have prayed that God may bless our conversation and the medicine prescribed. ' It is needless to say that this, with the few years of perfect rest and travel, caused that restoration to health for which I feel, with my family, so grateful ; and but for the skill, advice, and prayers of him whose removal you so deplore—and which also is a nation's loss—when so completely prostrated, my case might have proved far more serious. While there may be those who are so engrossed in their professional pursuits—with the ' things seen

But it is time that we approach the close of this little tribute to the Christian memory of Dr. Forbes Winslow. Ere, however, we do so, permit us to remark that we sincerely trust it has been the object of these pages, not unduly to exalt the creature, but most truly and only to magnify the free and sovereign grace of God in him. We seek to win admiration for no faultless picture. Were it possible that his voice could be heard from the "excellent glory," where now it sweetly blends with the symphonies encircling the throne of God and the Lamb, he would be the first to frown upon such an attempt, if, indeed, a frown could darken a countenance illuminated with heavenly glory.

His last illness, though of a trying nature, was not, in its final stage, of long duration. A fall from his horse some years ago, in St. James's Park, laid the foundation of the disease which eventually terminated his valuable and useful life. Resorting to Brighton for a change of air, he was enabled to take carriage exercise up to within a few days of his death. So rapidly did his disease mature, and so extreme were the consequent pain and exhaustion which he experienced, that much mental or spiritual expression of thought and feeling seemed almost entirely precluded. Intellectually clear and vigorous as his mind was to within a few hours of his decease, his physical weakness was such as forbade any spiritual conversation beyond repeating to him portions of God's word, a short prayer, and an occasional verse of a favourite hymn appropriate to his present affliction and his future hope. It was evident, however, that he was resting, as he himself expressed it, simply and only as a conscious sinner upon the Saviour's blood and righteousness; and that no dread of his solemn departure, or of its after result, in

and temporal' as apparently to neglect those things that are 'unseen and eternal,'—it is indeed gratifying to know that there are those who are eminent as Christians as they are eminent in their professional skill; and the example of one so distinguished as Dr. Forbes Winslow cannot fail to stimulate and encourage others to glorify God as he did."

the slightest degree deepened the shadow of death now closing and darkening around him. With all who were acquainted with his Christian life, not a doubt rested upon the conviction that the "blessedness" of those who "die in the Lord" was most surely and pre-eminently his; and that he now fully realized the truth of the touching sentiments found inscribed by his own hand upon the fly-leaf of his Prayer-Book: "It is Jesus who comes when the Christian dies. Death has been painted as a fearful and terrible thing; but it is Jesus, our *Friend* and *Brother*, who is drawing near to the dying Christian: 'I will receive you to myself.'"

"Servant of God, well done!
Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle fought, the victory won
Enter thy Master's joy."



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