

BROWNLOW NORTH:

THE STORY

OF

HIS LIFE AND WORK.

BY THE REV.

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II.

BROWNLOW NORTH'S CONVERSION.

“Since the dear hour that brought me to Thy foot,
And cut off all my follies by the root,
I never trusted in an arm but Thine,
Nor hoped but in Thy righteousness divine.
My prayers and tears, imperfect and defiled,
Are but the feeble efforts of a child.
I cast me at Thy feet; my only plea
Is, what it was, dependence upon Thee.”

COWPER.

THE 12th of August, 1854, found Mr. North busy once more upon the Dallas moors; and to show that his hand had not yet lost its cunning, on the 14th, after the other sportsmen had all started for distant beats, he went out, and with only his muzzle-loading gun brought in fifty brace and a bird as his contribution to the day's total. His son Brownlow claimed fifty-one brace for himself, and it was always an undecided point as to who capped the bag on that day.

But now the Spirit of God was about to revive impressions in his mind and heart with much more than their old power, to imprint them on that living tablet in such a manner as that they should never be effaced. His longsuffering was not exhausted, though that of most Christians would have been so.

In the beginning of November 1854, while he had still health and vigour to relish sport as much as ever, his thoughts were wandering away to his relation to his offended God. Prayer was still ascending for him, and there was one watching to drop the word in season; for though Mr. North had the night of his startling arrest so vividly impressed upon his mind as to regard it as the whole process of his awakening, Miss Gordon recalls the following important reminiscence:—

“Before his conversion he was spending the day in Elgin, and dined and stayed all night at my house. Our conversation, as it often did, took a serious turn. Sometimes he broke it off hastily, saying, ‘You always draw me on to make admissions which make you think me better than I am.’ But this evening he seemed depressed, and after some minutes’ silence he exclaimed, ‘I have a great mind to give it all up and go to Blackwell,’ meaning, I suppose, intimacies in the Highlands where he went every Christmas, most hurtful to him, but which no entreaties could prevail on him to give up. I said, ‘Who is Blackwell?’ He said, ‘An evangelical clergyman of the Church of England, a nephew of my mother’s, a good and pious man.’ I earnestly urged him to do so, and there for the time it ended.” We may explain that soon afterwards, in the period of his spiritual distress, he did go up to visit the Rev. Edward

Blackwell, at Amberley Rectory, whose experienced Christian counsel, then and always after, was much valued by him, and whose views of the doctrines of Divine grace appear, to a large extent, to have influenced and moulded Mr. North's own.

Mr. North then said to Miss Gordon, "You never come to see us now at Dallas; you promised my mother you would never give us up." Miss Gordon promised to come, perhaps that week, and on leaving he said to her, "Remember your promise."

In a day or two she received a note from Mrs. North, imploring her to come to them, and saying that the night before her husband had been very ill, and that she thought it was something on his mind, and if it were, he would open his mind to her, and that he had requested that she should be written for.

That had been the night of Brownlow North's remarkable awakening, the circumstances of which were often related by him in public. We shall here narrate it as it was given from his own lips to the students of the Edinburgh University in March 1862, as this account, taken down at the time in shorthand, is slightly fuller than any of the other published narratives of it.

"It pleased God," he said, "in the month of November 1854, one night when I was sitting playing at cards, to make me concerned about my soul. The instrument used was a sensation of sudden illness, which led me to think that I was going to die. I said to my son, 'I am a dead man; take me upstairs.' As soon as this was done, I threw myself down on the bed. My first thought then was, Now, what will my forty-four years of following the 'devices of my own heart profit me? In a few minutes I shall be in hell, and what good will all these things do me, for which I have sold my soul? At that moment I felt constrained to pray, but it was merely the prayer of the coward, a cry for mercy. I was not sorry for what I had done, but I was afraid of the punishment of my sin. And yet still there was something trying to prevent me putting myself on my knees to call for mercy, and that was the presence of the maid-servant in the room, lighting my fire. Though I did not believe at that time that I had ten minutes to live, and knew that there was no possible hope for me but in the mercy of God, and that if I did not seek that mercy I could not expect to have it, yet such was the nature of my heart, and of my spirit within me, that it was a balance with me, a thing to turn this way or that, I could not tell how, whether I should wait till that woman left the room, or whether I should fall on my knees and cry for mercy in her presence. By the grace of God I did put myself on my knees before that girl, and I believe it was the turning-point with me. I believe that if I had at that time resisted the Holy Ghost—of course, I cannot say, for who shall limit the Holy Ghost?—but my belief is that it would have been once too often. By God's grace I was not prevented. I did pray, and though I am not what I should be, yet I am this day

what I am, which at least is not what I was. I mention this because I believe that every man has in his life his turning-point. I believe that the sin against the Holy Ghost is grieving the Spirit once too often.”

On the following day he announced publicly to his friends staying in the house, and to others by letter, that from that instant he had become a changed man, a resolution to which in the strength of the Saviour he was enabled to adhere.

When his friend, who had been so suddenly summoned to Dallas, reached the house, she found Mr. North in his dressing-room, at his writing-table. He seemed as if just risen from a long illness, and was very gentle and subdued in manner. He said to her little but “I am, dear Auntie, I trust, by the grace of God, a changed man, and I have been writing to some of my former companions, to tell them of the change.” In the evening, between nine and ten o’clock, he came and joined the family; a bell rang, and she was astonished to see the household assemble for prayers. He read a portion of God’s Word, and made some remarks on it, as if it had been the habit of his life. His manner had no excitement in it, but a gentle gravity. By prayer and reading of the Scriptures he strove to find God and pardon and peace; but during many, many months he rose night after night from his bed, that he might retire in agony of soul to the dressing-room, and there engage in earnest supplication. Some years afterwards, when visiting Dallas with a friend, he went into the billiard-room, and pointing to the chimney-piece said, that when in that room he had been so suddenly awakened he took his cigar from his mouth, and laid it down there, never to be touched again. For though he had been in the habit of constant smoking from the time he was twelve years of age, and became so addicted to it that he often even took a cigar in his mouth when he went to bed, and fell asleep with it between his lips, he never afterwards touched the weed or took a billiard cue in his hand.

The announcement made by Brownlow North to his old friends of his sudden change, whether orally or in writing, created no small sensation among them. Some thought he had gone out of his mind, others thought it was a temporary impression or excitement, and that it would soon pass off; and this was specially the case with those of them who were acquainted with his previous convictions and temporary reformation, while in some of the newspapers it was even said, after he began his public work, that the whole thing was done for a wager, and that he had taken a bet to gather a certain number of thousands or ten thousands of hearers in a given time. So little do carnal men understand the workings of the Spirit of God, even when they see the most striking and manifest proofs of it. Not only did worldly people stand in doubt of him, but Christian people stood aloof from him for a time, and he underwent the trying ordeal of St. Paul, when he essayed to join himself to the disciples, recorded in Acts ix. 26, to whose case his own experience of

God's sovereign awakening power had borne a very marked resemblance. Mr. North recorded this similarity of his case to that of Saul of Tarsus in a marginal note on John iv. 27, "Upon this came Jesus' disciples, and marvelled that He talked with the woman." "It is often a marvel to disciples in every age the people Christ speaks to. When Paul was converted, they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. So it was with Brownlow North, and no wonder; yet, for all that, he does believe that the Lord has spoken to him. To Him be the gratitude and the glory!" So on the remark of Festus to Paul at his trial (Acts xxvi. 24), that the apostle was "beside himself" and "mad," Mr. North notes from his own experience, "Christians in all ages have been called mad; but who was the most mad, Paul or Festus?" and at ver. 22, when Paul said that it was by the help of God that he had continued from the day of his conversion until that day, he doubly underlines Paul's words, and adds, "It was God who enabled him to continue. Give Him the glory, and trust in Him, and He will enable me."

But some at least of his old Christian friends, who had known the history of his careless godless days, and the history of his religious impressions, stood by him and encouraged him at this crisis of his life. Especially was this the case with Miss Gordon, who writes in September 1877, after describing her arrival at Dallas and the evening family worship: "He was soon obliged to go on a mission of kindness promised to godless friends (for he was by nature kind and generous). His family were fearful for his health, and he did not seem fit to go, for such a mental revolution had acted on his frame; but no one else I found could do it. I asked him to let me hear soon from him. He wrote from Inverness, having gone there on Saturday to catch the Fort William boat early on Monday {formerly he always went on the Sabbath), and his note contained a few words. 'I have been twice to the Free Church. I am kept. Yours, etc.' And '*I am kept*' were long the last words in his notes to me."

It was probably on this very journey to or from his destination in the steamer on the Caledonian Canal that by his altered appearance he attracted the attention of the men on board the ship; for in the year 1866, when, in conversation with the steward of one of these steamers, the writer happened to mention the name of Brownlow North, the steward said to him, "Do you know him, sir?" and on our replying in the affirmative, and asking if he knew him, or had heard him preach, he said he had seen him on board the steamer shortly before and shortly after his change, and that he never in his life saw such an alteration in any man. In going northward he attracted his observation by the great amount of spirits he consumed, and the general recklessness of his bearing, while in returning he was so pulled down and weakened, that he had to lean heavily on a staff in coming on board, and seemed very solemn and very much shaken, like a man who had just recovered from a fever. Then

he learned that what had so pulled him down and so shaken his stalwart frame was no bodily illness, but distress of soul; and he seemed thoroughly satisfied that it must have been a very deep and very severe anguish of spirit that had produced such an effect on his outward frame, that, as he said, he would hardly have known him for the same man.

Thus suddenly arrested, awakened, and reformed, it must not be supposed that Brownlow North as rapidly found peace in believing in the Saviour. As we have already indicated, he underwent a very severe and prolonged period of deep spiritual conflict, which made the strong man become feeble through the intensity of his emotion and the protractedness of his distress. With him it was of a truth the strong man striving, and striving with all the powers of his being, and the faculties of his mind and spirit, to enter in at the strait gate; while he wrestled not only against the flesh and blood of his old nature, but, as he himself felt, against principalities, against powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph. vi. 12). His being brought through such a severe ordeal, and kept for so long travelling through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, were probably due in part to his having so long resisted the strivings of the Divine Spirit, but in part also to the design of the Almighty to fit him by his own experience to enter into the sympathies and spiritual difficulties of multitudes of anxious souls, by giving him a deep knowledge of the deceitfulness and sinfulness of the human heart, and of the countless snares and devices of the wicked one. Certain it is that not a few of those men of God who have been the honoured instruments of turning many to the saving knowledge of Jesus, and delivering them from the bondage of sin and corruption, were led in like manner through fire and through water, before they were brought out into the wealthy place. The cases of Martin Luther and John Bunyan, along with others, will at once suggest themselves to many of our readers.

During this long period he read nothing but the Bible, not even looking at a newspaper. The Rev. Charles G. Scott, afterwards of Harrow Road Church, London, who was working in the parish of Dyke at the time of Mr. North's conversion, mentions that Mr. North told him that at that time he was so engrossed with the concerns of his soul, that although the Crimean War was raging, its thrilling events were all unknown to him: so that one day when the country had been ringing with the details of the battle of Inkermann, happening to be travelling on the outside of a stage-coach, he overheard a conversation about the great battle which had been fought on the 5th of November, and of which he knew nothing, so entirely absorbed was he in the greater and more terrible conflict that was raging within his own breast.

He has stated in public that at this season he often put himself upon his knees, or stretched himself upon his rug, with his mouth in the dust, seeking to get hold of the truth that the Person he called God heard him. At last he

was enabled to realize this fact by reasoning with himself that if God had been present with him since he was a child, and knew every act he had done, then surely He must know what was passing now, and must be present though he did not see Him.

Mr. North also states that through this period he was very much afraid of God and of Christ.. As an instance of this he has recorded that, five or six weeks after his awakening, a Christian friend was sitting with him, and asked him if he ever prayed for the coming of Christ; to which he replied, "No, I should be afraid. Suppose He were to come, I should be in dreadful fear." "Well," said his friend, "we are told to do it." They talked together, and his friend showed him that there was a positive command to pray for His coming. Soon after they united in prayer. Mr. North joined in the supplication, and when he concluded, his friend reminded him to pray for Christ's coming. To this Mr. North replied that he did not desire it, and therefore it would be hypocrisy to ask for it. His friend said, "Pray God to make you wish it. Tell Him the truth." Mr. North then reasoned with himself, that he had accepted His atonement, had laid the burden of his sins upon Him, that if the Redeemer came, He would come as his Saviour, therefore he felt he could honestly desire it, and he prayed, "Come, Lord Jesus!" This incident also evinces that thorough genuineness and transparent honesty which characterised the whole of his religious life from its very commencement.

In the month of December 1854, he went up and visited his mother, spending Christmas with her, and remained with her for a short time, when she rejoiced over the answer to her long interceding for his salvation, and was filled with thankfulness over her son who had been dead and was alive again, who had been lost and was found. He was much encouraged by his saintly mother saying to him, "Brownlow, God is not only able to save you, but to make you more conspicuous for good than ever you were for evil!" At the same time he visited his relative, the Rev. Edward Blackwell, who was a skilful analyst of the human heart: he dealt very faithfully and kindly with him, although at first, Mr. North told a friend, the only text he would give him was that "Esau found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." But there was no one from whose counsel then and afterwards Mr. North derived more benefit.

It was in this prolonged period of anxiety of soul that many of the truths which he afterwards preached with such amazing fervour and force were written by the Spirit of the living God upon the tablet of his heart, and burned into the very texture of his being. It was now that the thought of eternity was ever present to his distracted mind; now that he was taught that *God is*, when tempted long and sorely to doubt it; now that he was brought to realize not only God's existence, but His immediate presence beside him, so that he foresaw the Lord God always before him, and believed that he could not

escape from His presence. It was now that he learned to hang for his life upon the naked word of God, feeling that only that which had divine authority, and was fully inspired by the Spirit of God, could afford ground for hope or confidence to a sinner such as he was; now that he was led to sound the depths of corruption within himself, and learned that he was absolutely helpless towards God, and that he must be renewed by the Holy Ghost. It was now also that he was taught at last to believe in the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God as sufficient to cleanse from all sin, even from sins so scarlet-coloured and doubly-dyed as his had been; and now that the lesson came home that the sinner is justified instrumentally by faith, and not by his own feelings, that what is subjective and changeable can never be the ground of an unchanging state of reconciliation, or of a peace which will bear the brunt of many a hellish battery, and stand unshaken amid the changing circumstances, the drifting tides, and the driving storm or sunshine of an unstable world. During these weary months he had many difficulties about the truths of God's Word, and he tells us that he had to humble himself, and though an elderly man, to enter into the kingdom of God like a little child.

One of his difficulties was about the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. One day, about three weeks after his awakening, he was reading John v. 16-30, after having sought the Holy Spirit's teaching. After reading the words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," his thoughts wandered from the passage before him, and he began to meditate about the deep things of the Divine Word, and after thinking for a long time on these abstruse subjects he was aroused by a violent headache. "I had been thinking," he says, "probably for hours, about the plainly revealed but unexplained mysteries of God, and was no wiser; they still remained unrevealed and still unexplained, and all the fruit of my thinking seemed a headache." After a time he began to think again, and said aloud to himself, "Brownlow North, do you think by your own reason or deep thinking you can find out God or know Christ better than the Bible can teach you to know Him? If you do not, why are you perplexing your brains with worse than useless speculations? Why are you not learning and holding on by what you learn from the Scriptures? You are shut up to one of two things, you must either make a god and a religion for yourself, and stand or fall eternally by it, or you must take the religion of Jesus Christ as revealed to you in His Word. You cannot receive a little of God's teaching and a little of your own, you cannot believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and the wisdom of your own heart at the same time. Choose then, now and for ever, by which you will stand or fall" He then struck his hand forcibly upon his open Bible, and said, "God helping me, I will stand or fall by the Lord Jesus Christ. I will put my trust in His truth, and in His teaching as I find it in the written Word of God; and doing that, so sure as the Lord Jesus Christ is the truth, I must be forgiven and saved." After that, he tells us he

ceased to try to reconcile apparently opposing doctrines of Scripture, or those that were above his reason, submitting his intellect like a little child to the teaching of God's Word and Spirit. (See "Christ the Saviour and Christ the Judge," pp. 214, 238.)

He tells us that on the day here referred to the a 1st verse of John v. struck him very powerfully as he read, "The Son quickeneth whom He will." He saw it was a certainty that if he received the kingdom of God as a little child, since Christ could quicken whom He would, He could quicken him. At least he felt that he *might* be saved, for he had found one who was able to save anybody, and therefore could save him. Still fierce temptations beset him, and much darkness beclouded his soul for many months after this.

In the month of March 1855, he let his house and moors at Dallas, and went to reside in the town of Elgin, where he attached himself to the ministry of the late Rev. Donald Gordon, son of the well-known Rev. Dr. Robert Gordon of Edinburgh. Of Mr. Gordon's ministrations he always spoke most thankfully, and gratefully acknowledged the spiritual help which he derived from them. One who was at the time a member of the congregation writes: "Mr. North on his arrival in Elgin, seemed in great distress of mind, so overwhelming was the sight of himself which he had got. At that time Mr. Gordon was lecturing through 'St. Mark, and Sabbath by Sabbath the subjects of the lectures that came in course seemed to suit Mr. North's case so startlingly, that I think I see him now with his eyes riveted on the speaker, and sometimes for very gladness of heart I have seen the tears run down his face in church."

Miss Gordon, of Wardhouse, in recalling this time, says, "In the spring of the year, Mr. and Mrs. North came to stay with me. His health was very much shaken. Mr. Gordon, the Free Church minister, was much with him, but he lived much in his little study which I had prepared for him, and except for meals and family worship we seldom saw him. He took long walks, and gave a tract to every one he met, at first with diffidence, but he said he never had but one refusal. His time in the house was occupied in studying the Word and in prayer. He sometimes got up in the night, went to his study, and prayed aloud, I would say, agonized in prayer." The Rev. Adam Lind, United Presbyterian minister in Elgin, writes: "For some time after coming to Elgin, he lived in great retirement, deeply engrossed with his Bible, and abounding in private prayer. I saw him occasionally, and had ample opportunities of observing the workings of his mind; and the mark of true grace which struck me first in his case was the spirit of profound humility, penitence, and adoring gratitude. He seemed like one unable to get out of the region of wonder and amazement at the sovereign kindness of that benignant Being who had borne with him so long in his sin, and such sin, and so much sin; and not only borne with him, but shielded him, and held him back from self-ruin, at length

arresting him in his career of folly and wickedness, and bringing him to Himself, a pardoned penitent, a returned prodigal.” The Rev. H. M. Williamson, of Belfast, who, as minister in Huntly, was much honoured in connection with revival work in the North-Eastern counties, and intimately associated with Mr. North in his labours, writes: “The first time I saw him was in the Free Church, Elgin, then under the ministry of Mr. Gordon. I was preaching on the Fast-day, and he was present. I had scarcely reached the pulpit when I was arrested by his appearance. Indeed, I was so fascinated, that I felt considerably disturbed during the service. There was the exhibition of such force of character, such a strength of will, the lines of a life for self and evil, an air of unrest, and a hungry look of soul, that cannot be described, as with lowering brows he looked into the speaker and listened to every utterance. When I came down from the pulpit I asked Mr. Gordon, ‘Who is that remarkable person, and what is his strange history? He looks as if he had been a servant of evil, and yet he looks as if yielding wholly to God.’ Mr. G. replied, ‘Oh, that is Brownlow North; he has been remarkably awakened, and we trust really brought to God.’”

During these long dark months he was often sorely tempted to deny the very being of God, and to find relief in atheism from the accusations of conscience and the weary struggles of his soul towards the light for which he was vainly, as it seemed to him, groping. We have heard him tell how at this momentous period of his history the suggestion that there was no God, and that His existence was a mere fable, often so persistently pressed itself upon him, even when on his knees in prayer, that he felt as if Satan were at his elbow, constantly whispering, “*There is no God, there is no God!*” that he would then have to rise from his knees, and walk up and down the little gravel path in his back garden at Elgin for hours, almost like one demented, iterating and reiterating the words, “*God is, there is a God,*” in reply to these temptations of the devil or of his own heart; until, enabled once more to realize His existence, he returned to his devotion. It might be when he went out into the street upon some business, perhaps before he was aware, his faith in the existence of God again would fail, and, plunged into a sea of doubt and distress, he would return to repeat his whole wrestling and struggling until God satisfied him once more of the truth of His existence. It was a trying ordeal to go through; but when once the way of escape from this temptation was opened to him in God’s good time, it left his foot planted upon a rock which never trembled beneath him, and gave him a manly, almost a Titanic grasp of the truth of the being of God, which added vivid colour and character to all his lifelong preaching. We shall refer to this again in its own place.

At one critical time during this period of soul-conflict he stated in one of his addresses that the question, “Believest thou that I am able to do this?” was made a word of life to him. He writes: “I was very near death; I was

almost despairing. The only thing that kept my head above water was the promise, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’ I repeated it again and again, and prayed very earnestly, when the word came to me with such power, and with such a rebuke, ‘Believest thou that I am able to do this?’ He *was* able, and I believed Him, and He did it.”

That text, John vi. 37, was one which he never wearied of quoting, to which he never failed in public and in private to direct the anxious and returning sinner, and no words are oftener written on the pages of his private Bible than those which, like the old woman, he could mark as both ‘tried and proved,’ “*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*”

At length he was delivered out of all his distresses and perplexities through the Word and by the Spirit of God. We shall best give the description of his deliverance in his own words. “I had risen from my bed in my soul agony, for I was many months in trouble about my soul, though I need not have been as many hours, if I had only had faith to believe in Jesus Christ, and to make my own heart a liar; but my own heart told me that I was the chief of sinners, that Paul, who called himself the chief, was not to be compared—no neither was he—to me, and that there could be no hope for me; and for months I believed my own heart. One night, being unable to sleep, I had risen and gone into my closet to read the Bible. The portion I was reading was the third chapter of Romans; and as I read the twentieth and following verses, a new light seemed to break in on my soul ‘By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God’s sight.’ That I knew. But then I went on to read, ‘But now, *now*, the righteousness of God *without the law* is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ *unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.*’ With that passage came light into my soul. Striking my book with my hand, and springing from my chair, I cried, ‘If that scripture is true, I am a saved man! That is what I want; that is what God offers me; that is what I will have.’ God helping me, it was that I took: **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD WITHOUT THE LAW.** It is my **ONLY** hope.”¹

Now could Brownlow North utter with a depth and fulness of significance which few could surpass, the inspired song which a few years afterwards became the favourite and characteristic hymn of praise of young converts in the Great Irish Revival of 1859-60.

“He took me from a fearful pit,
And from the miry clay;
And on a rock He set my feet,
Establishing my way.

¹ From “The Lord our Righteousness.”

He put a new song in my mouth,
Our God to magnify:
Many shall see it, and shall fear,
And on the Lord rely.”

PSALM xl. 2, 3. (Scotch Version.)

So terrible had been the protracted spiritual conflict from which he now emerged, that looking back on it after ten years he stated on one occasion in public that he wished his worst enemy might be spared going through the same ordeal. He also said that his friends had sometimes feared that his reason might give way under the severity of the strain upon his mind and spirit.

We have heard it remarked by some that a great part of the influence afterwards wielded by Brownlow North, and by others who like him had gone great lengths in the service of sin and Satan, was owing to the very fact that they had so long and openly served “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” whose service they afterwards as openly renounced; and that on this account they made more effective preachers of the gospel than those who had been more under the control of restraining grace. While not denying that the conversion of a John Newton, a Colonel Gardiner, or a Brownlow North, and their subsequent zeal for their Lord and Saviour, have been the means of arresting others who like them were living without the fear of God in the world, we are sure that the service of sin is in all cases very bitter, and must always have bitter fruits and baneful consequences, even in those cases in which God may in His all-wise and almighty grace bring good out of evil. Where the conscience has been cleansed from flagrant sin by the sweet sprinkling of the all-atoning blood of the great propitiation, the memory must through life retain sin’s dark stains and saddening recollections; evil has been done to others, which it may be impossible ever wholly to undo; and habits have been formed through a long course of sinful indulgence which are most injurious to the man himself. These can be unformed by the Spirit’s assistance only through much tribulation, and the effects of them in many of the subjects of renewing grace are never entirely removed in this life. Mr. North never was in the habit of dwelling except in most general though emphatic terms, and in a passing way, upon his unconverted days (as some do, surely most unwisely both as regards themselves and others); and the fact that nearly forty-five years of his life had been spent in open disregard of God had not only left him the painful retrospect of a waste of valuable years, but impressed his character with certain defects and blemishes which were never wholly erased. The want in him of such entire and constant self-denial, as distinguished from Christian self-surrender, as has characterised such men as the Rev. Robert M. McCheyne and Mr. North’s own dear and attached friend and fellow-labourer, Hay Macdowall Grant, of Arndilly, may perhaps be traced to the long course of years during which he lived for and worshipped

self before the idol was broken and he was led to worship God. This beautiful trait in the Christian character is indeed rarely found in its perfection, but is very attractive and influential wherever it is present in a marked degree. It always must be “an evil thing and a bitter” to have openly forsaken the Lord our God; and when the iniquity is freely pardoned, and the yoke of the transgressions broken, the scars from the yoke and the marks of the chains often remain. Still the change effected in Mr. North at his conversion was not only very real and deep, but very marked. Abundant proofs will appear in this volume, that from being eminently a lover of pleasure, he became eminently a lover of God.

It was ever with deep sorrow and humiliation that this man of God on occasion alluded to himself as being like the man who was above forty years of age on whom the miracle of healing was showed (Acts iv. 22). On the first page of the New Testament which he began to use on New Year’s Day, 1855, is the affecting inscription, written apparently at first in pencil, and afterwards traced in ink: “*B. North, a man whose sins crucified the Son of God.*” And his words and manner alike in alluding to his having been as one born out of due time proved that his deepest feeling was—

“Alas, that I so lately knew Thee,
Thee so worthy of the best;
Nor had sooner turned to view Thee,
Truest good, and only rest!
The more I love, I mourn the more
That I did not love before.”