

CALVINISM IN HISTORY.

BY THE

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already laid upon him by the God who made him.

It is this practicalness of the Calvinistic morality which has ever made it so beneficent. It is this which has formed its adherents into the most moral of all classes of human society—which gave to the Puritans the very title which is significant of their eminent moral qualities, and transformed the idle and slothful into the industrious and respected citizen. “Grave as we may count the faults of Calvinism,” says one who is not at all given to lavish compliments upon it, “alien as its temper may in many ways be from the temper of the modern world, it is in Calvinism that the modern world strikes its roots; for it was Calvinism that first revealed the worth and dignity of man. Called of God and heir of heaven, the trader at his counter and the digger in his field suddenly rose into equality with the noble and the king.”* The same author also accredits to Calvinism the formation of that sacred institution, the *English Home*, saying, “Home, as we conceive it, was the creation of the Puritan.” When there was no such institution in the world as Home; when the family existed without the sacred ministries of

* Green, *Hist. Eng. People*, ii. p. 280.

domestic life; when the woman was but the slave or the idol or the amusement of the man, as his temper or power or will might dictate; when the worst of vices were practiced within the domestic circle,—the Calvinists, by their constant aim at self-control, and their perpetual endeavor for the purity of morals, and their high regard for the marriage-covenant as symbolical of their relations to Christ, and their belief in the sublime possibilities of the woman as the man, formed, out of a loose and corrupt society, the hallowed shrine where the holiest affections are brought into play, and around which the fondest recollections of man cluster. That they did this one thing—formed the Christian Home—entitles them to the imperishable gratitude of mankind.

Let this also be remembered as a diadem upon the brow of Calvinistic morality: that in all the history of the Puritans there *is not an example of a divorce*. That is enough to offset the modern liberalistic cry against Puritanic strictness. Is it not Puritanism which modern society needs to purify and sweeten its corrupt and bitter waters and to give a healthful tone to all its moral life? “The Calvinists were the men,” says Froude, “who abhorred, as no body of men ever more abhorred,

all conscious mendacity, all impurity, all moral wrong of every kind so far as they could recognize it. Whatever exists at this moment in England and Scotland of conscientious fear of doing evil is the remnant of the convictions which were branded by the Calvinists into the people's hearts."* They were they "who attracted to their ranks almost every man in Western Europe that hated a lie."

"There is no system," says Henry Ward Beecher, "which equals Calvinism in intensifying, to the last degree, ideas of moral excellence and purity of character. There never was a system since the world stood which puts upon man such motives to holiness, or which builds batteries which sweep the whole ground of sin with such horrible artillery."† "Men may talk as much as they please against the Calvinists and Puritans and Presbyterians, but you will find that when they want to make an investment they have no objection to Calvinism or Puritanism or Presbyterianism. They know that where these systems prevail, where the doctrine of men's obligation to God and man is taught and practiced, there their capital may be

* *Calvinism*, p. 44.

† *Leading Thoughts of Living Thinkers*.

safely invested.”* “They tell us,” he continues, “that Calvinism plies men with hammer and with chisel. It *does*; and the result is monumental marble. Other systems leave men soft and dirty; Calvinism makes them of white marble, to endure for ever.”

You may examine all the history of Christian people and of religious systems, and you will not find any more eminent for piety and morality than the Calvinists. In charity, in liberality, in industry, in temperance, in purity of life, they stand without a superior—perhaps without an equal. Compare the Huguenots and Jansenists, who were Calvinists, with their countrymen, the Romanists and Jesuits, who were Arminians. Were not the former as illustrious in virtue as the latter were notorious for immorality? “The destruction of the former by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was,” says Lecky, “the destruction of the most solid, the most modest, the most virtuous, the most generally enlightened element in the French nation, and it prepared the way for the inevitable degradation of the national character, and the last serious bulwark was removed that might have broken the force of that torrent of

* *Even. Sermon*, Feb. 10, 1860.