

THE REV. RICHARD BAXTER AND HIS LANCA- SHIRE FRIEND MR. HENRY ASHURST.

BY F. J. POWICKE, M.A., PH.D., D.D.

BAXTER seems never to have been in Lancashire, but his most intimate and honoured friend, among laymen, was a Lancashire man, and of ancient Lancashire stock. The name Ashurst¹ is still attached, it is said, to a Beacon Hill in the township of Dalton, nr. Wigan—a reminiscence of the time when the Ashursts were its chief people. At least as far back as the reign of Henry III. (1216-1257) they held land there; and, soon after 1598 they became sole lords of the manor—having bought out, or otherwise acquired, what had been the possessions of the Orrels and Bradsaghs (Bradshaws). A distinguished member of the family was Adam Ashurst, who fought in the French Wars under Edward III. (1336-1360), was knighted and accorded grants of land in Essex and Herts. Down to the Reformation the family would be Romanists, but William Ashurst, first lord of the manor, was reported in 1590 to be “soundly affected in religion”; and from him, no doubt, his descendants inherited their clear Protestant stamp. He died in 1618, and was succeeded by his eldest son Henry, who married Cassandra, “daughter of John Bradshaw of Bradshaw, of the same county, Esquire.” He was, says Baxter, “a gentleman of great Wisdom and Piety, and zealous for the Reformed Religion in a Countrey (County) where Papists much abounded.” He was one of the few who openly protested against the second Book of Sports, issued by Charles I. in 1633; and when on one occasion the Papists “sent a Piper not far from the Chappel to draw the people from the public worship” Mr. Ashurst, being “a Justice of the Peace (as his ancestors had been), sent him to the

¹In 1285 it appears in the form de Aschehyrst. Later, it is de Assherst, Asshhurst, de Asshehurst. Finally, in 1577, it is Ashhurst, then, more usually, Ashurst (Ekwall's “Place-names of Lancashire,” Chetham Society's Publication, 1922. The etymology is O.E. aesc-hyrst = ashhill.

house of correction." For this he was complained of to the King and Council and "put to justify the loyalty of what he did, at the assizes : which he so well performed that the judge was forced to acquit him (though he was much contrary to him). . . ." Henry died about 1645 leaving three sons and three daughters. Baxter does not mention the daughters—Jane,¹ Margaret² and Mary³—but he speaks of William the eldest son, as "a man eminent for his wisdom, integrity and courage, a Member of the Long Parliament called (in November) 1640." He says, further, that William "was abused and cast out by the Conquering Army" at Pride's Purge (Dec. 6, 1648).⁴ His Presbyterianism was too stiff for the Army but not for the fourth Lancashire Classis, which he joined in 1646. Nevertheless (or, on this account) he was returned to Cromwell's first Parliament (Sept. 3, 1654)⁵ as one of the four Knights of the Shire for Lancashire. He died in January, 1656. Of his younger brother John, Baxter merely says that he was a Colonel, taking it for granted that the reader would add 'in the Parliamentary Army.' We find him, in fact, as *Captain* Ashurst under Colonel Assheton, taking a conspicuous part in the defence of Bolton (Feb., 1643) ; then as *Major* Ashurst, among the besiegers of Lathom House in the second and successful attack upon it (1645).⁶ In the same year, we find him Governor of Liverpool where he is said to have done good service in forwarding Parliamentary troops to Ireland.¹ In 1651 when Charles II. passed through Lancashire on his way to Worcester he showed himself inclined to him but could do, or did, nothing effectual—to the disgust of the royalists. Nor did he take an active part in Sir George Booth's

¹ Married to Harry Porter of Lancaster, Esq.

² Married to Peter Sergeant, of Newton, Co. Lancaster.

³ Married (*a*) to Andrew Stones, merchant of London ; and (*b*) to Theophilus Howorth, of Howorth of Lancaster, Dr. of Physick (Dugdale's "Visitation of the County Palatine" . . . 1664-5). If Dugdale is right, as he is, the D.N.B. is wrong in making Mary the daughter of Henry Ashurst, Jr. (*Our Henry*).

⁴ While, however, the Presbyterians were a majority of the House, he managed to get himself appointed to the lucrative post of Clerk of the Crown for Lancashire (Feb. 25, 1647).

⁵ In the Long Parliament he represented Newton.

⁶ Its surrender on December 4th was hailed (too hastily) by the Puritans as a final clearance of Royalism out of Lancashire.

⁷ Newcome's "Diary," p. 47, note.

rising (August, 1659), though Henry Newcome alludes to him as one who was 'engaged' to it.¹ He was still living in or near Manchester in May, 1663, neighbour and dear friend of Newcome.² But before 1670 he had migrated to Ireland where, according to Burke, he founded a family.³ He married Elizabeth, a daughter of Richard Duckenfield of Duckenfield, Co. Chester, so that both he and his wife might be described as Lancashire born and bred, but the dates of their birth and death, or the names of their children, etc., are unknown to me; and it is time to remember that our chief concern is with Henry, the third son. The date of his birth has been considered doubtful; and so it is as regards the month, or the day, but when Baxter says we were of the same year for age⁴ we know that he was born in 1615; and the next thing we know is that at the age of fifteen he became apprentice to a merchant in London. This was no degradation of status. The choice of a business career even by cadets of a county family had, not so long since, been thought disgraceful. But the extraordinary prosperity of the merchant class, especially in London, on the one hand, and the decay of fortune among landed proprietors on the other, had wrought a change of opinion. And scions of noble houses, to say nothing of the squirearchy, are not unfrequently met with in the later seventeenth century who took to trade and lost neither social caste nor self-respect.⁵ Young Henry, then, by taking to trade, did not need to feel less bound by the aristocratic traditions of his home. *Noblesse oblige* might still be his motto. And he showed that it was *that* and something higher. His master, we are told, was 'somewhat severe,' a mild description, surely, of one whose treatment of his apprentices was such as to tempt the ordinary youth to break loose from his control and seek forbidden pleasures at Play-houses, Taverns,

¹ Newcome's "Autobiography," p. 110.

² "Diary," p. 193.

³ By 1844 'long since extinct in the male line'. (Burke's "Extinct Baronetcies," p. 17). That he was in Ireland in 1670 appears from Newcome's request to him that he would 'take a journey to Dublin.' Newcome was considering an invitation to Dublin and wanted someone trustworthy on the spot to supplement his letters.

⁴ "Funeral Sermon," p. 59.

⁵ E.g. a grandson of Sir George Croke, once the proud owner of Waterstoke, which was sold to the Ashursts, went to drapery in the Haymarket while his elder brother went to Court (Kenneth's "Parochial Antiquities," p. 492).

and perhaps with Harlots, etc. But Henry was not an ordinary youth. He had already set his heart on religion ; and “ this affection did helpe to drive him to hear good preachers for his comfort, and to betake himself to God in prayer and to search the Scriptures for direction,” . . . “ and having no place of retirement but a cold hole in the Cellar, in the coldest nights he spent much time (there) in prayer and meditation ” : “ and his good Father allowing him a yearly pension for his expenses, he spent it mostly in furnishing his poor closet with good books.” He was helped in the right way by the Rev. Simeon Ash—‘ good old Simeon ’—minister of St. Austin’s (at the back of St. Paul’s) to whom probably he brought an introduction. He not only joined his Church, but also worked for it, and made himself his ‘ faithful Pastor’s right hand.’ The Pastor’s house became a second home to him. It was there Baxter first met him, and ‘ how seldom did I visit Mr. Ash at any time, but I found and left them together.’ He commended himself to many godly ministers and people by his ‘ sweetness of temper,’ but to the childless Simeon and his wife he took the place of a beloved son. Nor did he ever pass a Sunday away from them, if he could help it, until the old man died on the eve of black Bartholomew (August 23, 1662). Meanwhile, the young man was intent on his business, and all the more so because of his religion. ‘ See’st thou a man diligent in his business ? He shall stand before Kings ’—was a favourite Puritan motto, and Ashurst did not doubt its congruence with the religious spirit. ‘ For godliness hath promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.’ But diligence is fickle without the right aptitudes ; and that the young man had these is evidenced by the fact that when he left his master to set up for himself, after nine years of service, the master soon came to grief—so much so, that if his late apprentice had not taken care of his indigent children they would have starved. He set up for himself in partnership with one Mr. Row, a draper, his initial capital being £500, a small annuity, and £300 lent by Mr. Huet a minister. At the end of three years, Mr. Row withdrew his capital, and joined the Parliamentary army under the Earl of Essex, by whom he was made a Major, which is the last we hear of him. But, by that time, Ashurst was well able to stand alone, as to his business. Not so, however, as to his personal affairs, if it be true that he was on the point of stumbling into an unsuitable match, but was happily

rescued by Mr. Ash, who went further, and introduced him to the lady who became his wife, Judith Reresby, whose excellent qualities were not likely to be dimmed to the eye of an ambitious young tradesman by the dowry of £1500 which came with her. He was about twenty-five at his marriage,¹ and at least it did not check his prosperity. Nor did the war. In his case, as in that of many another London merchant, he appears to have thriven exceedingly during the years 1642 to 1649—although we may be sure there was no unfair profiteering, and that his contributions to the 'good cause' were always on a liberal scale. For he made conscience of every object in which he believed and he believed in the cause of Parliament with his whole heart. Baxter attributes his steady advancement to his pious integrity. "He dedicated yearly a good part of his gain to God in works of Charity; and it increased greatly. And as his known trustiness made men desirous to deal with him, so God strangely kept those men that he trusted from breaking, when the most noted tradesmen in the same Towns broke, to the undoing of those that trusted them. . . . He usually was at one word in his Trading." That is, his yea was yea, and his nay, nay.

Baxter outlines his daily routine. He rose about 4 a.m. and spent the first two hours in reading, meditation and prayer. This was followed, before breakfast, by Family Duties or Worship. The rest of the day, till evening, found him absorbed in business—"he was a great improver of his time"—without interruption, except, one must suppose, for a mid-day meal. His evenings, as a rule, were reserved for intercourse with his family. His house (which may well have been, also, his warehouse) was, at first, in Watling Street, but, at least after 1660, he had another house at Hackney—the house where Baxter knew him, and of which he could say, it was a school of piety and meekness, and like a church. Yet there was no suggestion of gloom. Though its Head, seconded by his wife, insisted on 'godly trusty servants,' and godly conduct always, and a godly observance of every part of the Lord's day, his personal religion did not sour his natural sweetness, but intensified it, and so presented religion as an easy yoke. We shall see later how Baxter illustrates this. Meanwhile, we may note in him a characteristic fruit of all genuine Puritanism, namely, its

¹ His eldest son was born in 1646.

abundance of good works. Faith might be the saving principle, and due to the grace of God ; but works, inspired by the Christian temper, were its indispensable manifestation. The Puritan was a practical mystic, consciously deriving his ideal of everyday goodness, and his motive for it, from the springs of his faith—springs hidden with Christ in God. And Ashurst, to Baxter's delight, was, in this respect, a typical Puritan. He was especially a typical Puritan in his use of money. Money, to him, was not so much something gained as something given—which meant something he must 'improve.' He must increase it honestly, spend and save it wisely, distribute it with generous discretion. All this he did. What he gave away to individuals privately was known to himself alone. But it was known that no necessitous case appealed to him in vain. "He did not love with barren words, nor serve God of that which cost him nothing . . . indeed charity was his life and business." And of course, not a little of his charity was of so visible a character that it could not be hid. For eighteen years before his death, for example, that is, from August 1662, he gave £100 a year to the ejected ministers of Lancashire, and some schools there, and in the neighbouring parts.¹ He gave, besides, many Bibles, Catechisms, and other Books to divers places. He did his best to organise relief for the ejected ministers throughout the land by getting the 'pious citizens of London' to take in hand 'the several counties where they were born' and contribute each to such ministers of his own county as were necessitous—a scheme largely defeated by the fear that it might be charged with 'fomenting a faction'. Nor did he limit his charity to ministers. As an eminent instance of his devotion to pious enterprises, he tells the story of what Ashurst did in furtherance of the work of John Eliot, the missionary to the Indians of North America, for whom Baxter's admiration was unbounded.²

Eliot's work evoked the sympathies of Cromwell who "caused a collection to be made in *England* in every Parish ; and People did contribute very largely. And with the Money was bought 7 or 800£ *per annum* of Lands ; and a Corporation chosen to dispose of the Rents, for the furthering of the Works among the *Indians*. This land was almost all bought, for the worth of it, of one Colonel

¹ But latterly £20 a year of it went to Northumberland. Baxter heard this from the friend who was almoner of the money.

² He tells the story more fully in R.B., Pt. ii, p. 290.

Beddingfield, a Papist, an Officer in the King's Army. When the King came in, *Beddingfield* seizeth on the Lands again, and keepeth them, and refuseth either to surrender them, or to repay the Money ; because, all that was done in *Cromwell's* time being now judged void, as being without Law, that Corporation was now null, and so could have no right in Money or Lands. And he pretended that he sold it under the worth, in expectation of the recovery of it, upon the King's return." So gross an act of injustice moved Mr. Ashurst's indignation. He made it his business to obtain redress. Calling the old Corporation together, he got Baxter to meet them, and, no doubt to plead the urgency of the matter—with the result, that all agreed "that such as had incurred the King's Displeasure, by being members of any Court of Justice in Cromwell's days, should quietly recede, and we should try if we could get the Corporation restored, and the rest continued, and more fit men added, that the Land might be recovered." There ensued twelve months of suspense, caused by *Beddingfield's* intrigue with the Attorney General and some others, but he had to disgorge at last, thanks chiefly to the Lord Chancellor, Hyde, with whom Baxter just then had considerable influence. A new Corporation was granted by the King's decree—a Corporation which included Mr. Robert Boyle as President, some Lords, many citizens, and Mr. Ashurst as Treasurer. Mr. Boyle threw himself whole-heartedly into the work ; so, more or less, did the citizens, but, especially, the care and trouble of all was on Mr. Ashurst, who undertook it all gladly, as he did "all other Publick Good which he could do." It is not surprising, therefore, that when he died, it was the common speech of Magistrates, godly Ministers and people that "we have lost the most excellent pattern of Piety, Charity and all Virtue that this City hath had in our times."

"Some of us seem to shine to strangers, who are cloudy and contemptible to those that are near us. . . ."

"But his esteem and honour and love was at home and abroad, by his Children, Servants, Neighbours, Fellow-Citizens, that I say not even by some that loved not his Religiousness, or that took him to be too much a friend to those whom their opinions and interest engaged them against."

And why ? Looking to the deepest cause, "It was (says Baxter) the Image of Christ and the fruits of His holy Doctrine and His Spirit" in him.

“1. His *Religion* was only the *Bible*, as the *Rule*. He was a *meer Scripture Christian*, of the *Primitive Spirit* and *Strain*. No *Learning* signified much with him but what helpt him to understand the *Scripture*. The *Bible* was his constant *Book*, and in it he had great delight. And he loved no *Preaching* so well as that which made much and pertinent use of *Scripture*, by clear exposition and suitable application. He liked not that which worthy *Dr. Manton* was wont to call *Gentleman Preaching*, set out with fine things and laced and gilded, plainly speaking *self-preaching*, *man-pleasing* and *pride*: for when *Pride* chooseth the *Text*, the *method* and the *style*, the *Devil* chooseth it, though the matter be of *God*. . . .

“2. He neither much studied books of controversie nor delighted in discourse of any of our late differences. I scarce ever heard him engage in any of them. But his constant talk was of practical matter, of *God*, of *Christ*, of *Heaven*, of the *Heart* and *Life*, of *Grace* and *Duty*, or of the sense of some practical *Text* of *Scripture*. He so little savoured and minded the quarrels that many lay out their greatest zeal on, and find matter in them to condemn and backbite one another, that he either carried it as a stranger, or an adversary, to such discourse.

“3. Accordingly, while Men were guilty of no damning Heresie or Sin but held all great and necessary Truths in love and holiness and righteousness of *Life*, he made little difference in his *Respects* and *Love*. A serious godly Independant, Presbyterian or Episcopal Christian was truly Loved and Honoured by him. Indeed he Loved not *Church Tyranny* nor *Hypocritical Images of Religion* on one hand, nor *confusion* on the other; but the *Primitive Spirit* of *Seriousness*, *Purity* and *Charity* he valued in all. A differing tolerable opinion never clouded the glory of sincere Christianity in his eyes. He was of no *Sect* and he was against *Sects* as such, being of ‘a truly Catholick Spirit; but he could see true godliness and honesty in many whose weakness made them culpable in too much adhering to a *Side* or *Sect*.’

“4. He greatly hated backbiting and obloquy. *Speak evil of no man* was a *Text* which he often had in his mouth. I never knew any noted Men so free from that vice as *Judge Hale* and *Mr. Ashhurst*. If a Man had begun to speak ill of any Man behind his back either they would say nothing or divert him to something else, and shew their distast of it. *Sin* he would speak against but very

little of the *Person*. Only one sort of Men he would take the liberty to express his great dislike of; and that was *The Hinderers of the Gospel, and Silencers of faithful Preachers of it, and Persecutors of Godly Christians and Oppressors of the Poor*: and their pretenses of *Government and Order*, and *talk against Schism*, could never reconcile him to that sort of Men. But his distast was never signified by scurrility nor anything that savoured of an unruly or seditious Spirit.

“5. His Heart was set on the hallowing of God’s Name, the coming of his Kingdom, and the doing of his will on Earth as it is done in Heaven, on the propagating of Religion, and encouraging all able faithful Preachers and Practicers of it to his power.

“6. ‘Some may think that he wanted a publick spirit because he avoided being a Magistrate and payed his Fine rather than take an Alderman’s place. But it was only to keep the peace of his Conscience, which could not digest (a) the Corporation Declaration and Oath, nor (b) the execution of the Laws against Nonconforming Ministers and People. . . . Yet I never heard him speak uncharitably of those worthy Men who do what he refused, supposing that they in *words or writing*, declared as openly as they *sware and took the Declaration*, that they took it but in such or such a lawful sense: though he could not do so himself.’¹

“7. But he was so far from lacking a public spirit that ‘he had an earnest desire of the welfair of the City that it might flourish in Piety, Sobriety, Justice and Charity, and that good men might be in power—believing that the welfair of the World lieth not so much in the *forms of Government* as in the *goodness of the Men*; and that that is the *best form* which best secureth us from bad Men. And all such services as he could do, no Man was readier to do, as, when he was Master of the Merchants Taylors company and on many other occasions, he shewed. His Relations tell me that he then gave them (*i.e.* the company) about 300£ of his own money, and greatly promoted the improvement of their Stock, to the rebuilding of their Hall and abatement of their debts.’

“8. He never was a Souldier, even when *London* was a Garrison but always for the ways and works of Peace. He was ever against

¹ It seems clear from this that he was never an ‘Alderman’ though so called; and even by Baxter himself, at least once [R.B. iii. 189].

Tumults, Sedition, and Rebellion ; and I never heard a word from him injurious to the King and higher Powers. He was greatly troubled at the last resistance¹ made by the Assemblies in *Scotland*, and glad when his Letters thence told him that they were but a few hotheaded Men, whom the generality of the godly Presbyterians disclaimed and would oppose. *Peace* was his temper, and *Peace with all Men* to his power he kept and promoted, and I never knew Man that lived in more Peace with his conscience, and with all Men good and bad. I never heard that he *was an Enemy*, or *had an Enemy*, save Sin, the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, as all good Men renounce them. Nay I never heard of any one Man that ever spoke evil of him, so strange a reconciling power hath such a Mind and such a Life.

“9. He excelled all that ever I knew in the Grace of *meeekness* ; and Christ saith *That such shall inherit even the earth*. For Men know not how to fall out with such, while (*i.e.* so long as) no publick employment doth, by cross interest, cause it. They that were nearer to him than I, say that they never saw him in any undecent passion. He knew not how to shew himself angry, no, nor displeased otherwise than by mild and gentle words. His countenance was still² serene, and his voice still² calm and quiet ; never fierce or loud, no, not to a Servant. He oft used to women the words of Saint Peter (i. 3, 4, 5) *A meek and a quiet Spirit is in the sight of God of great price*, which is the ornament there commended instead of gold and gaudiness. . . . God fitted him for his place. Had he been a *Magistrate* or a *Preacher*, a little more sharpness had been needful. And though I once knew one that, for want of just anger, was too like *Eli* and could not sufficiently reprove or correct a child, yet it pleased God that *his mildness* had no such ill effect, but his Family loved and revered him the more.

“10. I never observed a Father carry himself to his children (as well as to his wife) with more constant expressions of Love, and with a greater desire of their holiness and salvation. He spoke to his children with that endeared kindness as men use to do to a bosome friend in whom is their delight. And indeed *Love* is the *Vital*

¹ Apparently a reference to the troubles which led up to the fight at Drumclog (1 June, 1679) and the rout of the Covenanters at Bothwell Bridge (22 June).
² still = always.

Spirit, which must make all Education and Counsel effectual,—which, without it, usually is dead, both to children and all others, though there are seasons when we must be angry and not sin. Indeed he was made of *Love* and *Gentleness* (so) that I may say that *Love* was his *new Nature* and his *Temper*, his *Religion* and his *Life*, and that he *dwelt* in *Love*, and therefore *in God* and *God in him*. His *looks*, his *smiles*, his *speech*, his *deeds* were all the constant significations of *Love*.

“11. And no less eminent was his *Humility*. His *Speech*, *Company*, *Garb*, *Behaviour* and all his *Carriage*, did declare it. He was a great disliker of proud vain attire, boasting speech, and pomp, and inordinate worldly splendor, especially that which was *chargeable* (*i.e.* costly), while so many thousands were in want. He was *poor in spirit*, suited to a low condition though he was rich; and (he) condescended to men of low estate. The poor were his pleasing friends. He loved the Rich that were rich to God, but he hated ambition and flattering great men. Indeed he was a *plain christian* of the Primitive stamp; strange to hypocrisy and affectation, and all that is called *the lust of the flesh*, *the lust of the eye* and *pride of life*; and the Sins of *Sodom*—*Pride*, *Idleness*, and *fulness*. His *Habit*, his *Furniture*, his *Provisions* were all plain. Nothing for excess, as provision for the flesh to satisfy the lust thereof; yet all that was needful for right ends. No niggardly parsimony, but sparing to do good: sparing from all the ways of *Pride* and *Pomp*, but never sparing from decency of good works.

“12. The Government of his Family and the worship of God there performed, was wise, cheerful, grave, and constant. He worshipped God as other good Christians use to do: Besides his secret Devotions, reading the Scriptures (after the craving of God’s help) and giving some plain short notes which were suited to his Families use, Catechising and taking an account of their profiting, singing Psalms and Prayer. And on the Lord’s day, hearing and repeating the Sermons—a nonconformist preaching¹ an early sermon to many in his house which so ended that none might be hindered from the further work of the day. The whole day seemed not too long to him for the delightful

¹ A ray of light on the practice of many nonconformists of the Baxterian type: a preaching service at home and then attendance at the Parish Church.

employment of his Soul toward God.¹ O how far was he from being weary, or needing any vain recreation ! In his Family worship, he played not the Orator nor was very tedious, but in conference of good things, and in his counsels, plain and short ; much like the Style of Mr. Greenham's writings.

" 13. He had a special care to place his Children in a way of Employment and with good relations ; out of the way both of idleness and ill company, and wordly vanity and temptations. And God hath so blessed him in his wise and holy endeavours for them that of four Sons and two Daughters there is not one whom we have not good cause to hope well of, that they will in piety and welfare answer his endeavours.

" 14. Others can tell you more than I of his management of his Trade. Only this I will say, that God greatly blessed his honesty and liberality ; and men knew that they might Trade with him without any danger of deceit ; so that he grew up to a very considerable estate : And yet was never so intent on his Trade, but he was ready for any service of God, and help to others, or publick work. And those that say they shall lose their custom except they tittle and make their bargains in Alehouses, Coffee-houses, or Taverns, or use much prating and enticing words, may see here that one hath thriven more than most have done, that yet took a quite contrary course.

" 15. He was a stranger to vain talk and frothy jests, and also to a soure morose converse. But good short cheerful discourse was his ordinary entertainment.

" 16. It is no wonder if in such a life, so absolutely devoted to God, he lived in a constant serenity of mind. He that had peace with God and man, had peace of Conscience. I never heard him speak one word which savoured of any doubt of his salvation, or discouraging thoughts of the life to come. He lived not in bondage to tormenting fears, or sad apprehensions ; but studied fully to please God, and joyfully trusted him, rejoiced in his love, and hoped for his Kingdom, but without any overvaluing of his own worth or works, having much in his mouth those words of St. Paul, *I have nothing to glory of, and I am nothing.*

¹ Sheer delight in their religion is the key to that endurance by the Puritan Saints, of services which sometimes lasted five or six hours—even twice a day.

17. Last and best of all was "his marvellous *Patience*, as through all his life, so specially in his last and sharp affliction." Years before his death "it too painfully appeared" that he was suffering from "Stone in the Bladder. He long resolved to endure it to the death, but, at last, extremity of torment and despair of any other ease, did suddenly cause him to choose to be cut. Two stones were found, and one of them, in the operation, was broken into pieces, many of which were taken out, by very terrible search, and about thirty pieces, after, came away through the wound. Physicians and all present admired at his Patience. No word, no action signified any distressing Sense. And though he was about 65 years old, God did recover him and heal the wound; but we were too unthankful and his pains returned—gently at first, but afterwards as terribly as before. And, after that, a strong Fever, of which unexpectedly he recovered; and then oft inflammations and, at last, a dangerous one. And, finally, so great torment that, a French Lithotomist being here, he was overpersuaded to be searcht and cut again, and a third stone was taken away with competent speed and ease, and divers big fragments of it, which had been broken off in the first operation. Thus was he cut twice in about a year's space; and the wound seemed marvellously to heal for divers months; and when we had prayed hard for him, we turned it to thanksgiving, and thought the danger of death was past. But, after, his strength failed, and he died in peace. God gave him those months of ease and calmness, the better to bear his approaching change."

Surgery in 1680 was a crude affair compared with what it has since become, and there were no anæsthetics. No wonder the sight of such protracted tortures of a good man put a strain on faith. 'It was a providence which posed many of us.' It raised Job's problem over again. And though they silenced all murmuring thoughts of God by falling back on 'Gods oracles' they found no solution of the problem any more than Job. Nay, their Puritan conception of God did but aggravate it. To think of God as actually sending the pain just to test Faith and Patience; and intervening, directly, to heal his poor agonised creature for a time in answer to prayer, and then allowing the pains to return because the sufferer's friends were too unthankful for his temporary relief, what a monstrosity it makes Him! The sublime thing, which one might expect God himself to wonder at and admire, was the Spirit of Man still cleaving to Him, like Job, and still striving to

believe in his goodness, even in his love ; and still crying ‘ Though he slay Me yet will I trust in Him.’ Strange beyond words is it that men could learn to love a loveless God, and trust the justice of a tyrant in heaven, while striking down the tyrants of earth !

One of Mr. Ashhurst’s last words showed him loyal to his native county to the last. To one of his old friends, a Lancashire man, who came to see him he said : ‘ *Countryman, you and I will take care for Lancashire that the Gospel may be more preached among them.*’ There was a great scarcity of preachers in Lancashire and an abundance of Papists—a state of things which (to a Protestant saint) called aloud for remedy.

Baxter applied the moral of his subject to “ the Magistrates and People of this city ” (London)—If all were like him in the ordering of their life the Lord would make “ London still the glory of the Cities on earth ; ” to his children—“ Will they ever forget the instructions, the love, and the life of such a Father ? ” to the Clergy and their Agents—Can they still continue to think it according to the will of Christ that such humble followers of Him shall be treated as schismatics because they are unable to subscribe all the canons of their church ? When Christ has owned them and said that his Father will honour them, dare they make the “ church-doors too narrow to receive them ? ” and finally to himself—“ This pattern of Sincerity, Love, and Patience ” is “ set before me, ” “ for my reproof and imitation. ” “ We were of the same year for age ; and of the same judgment and desire and aim ; but I have not attained to his degree of goodness and patience. Being not unlikely to be exercised with some like afflictions, after a life of wonderful mercy, and quickly to follow my departed friend—I beg of God that He will not trie me beyond the strength which he will give me, but so increase my *faith and patience* that I may finish my course with joy. ”

The foregoing is mostly taken from the funeral sermon preached by Baxter at the request of Mr. Ashurst’s eldest son, and published in December, 1680. Funeral sermons were common at that time—too common, because too often unreal in their eulogy, or undeserved. But Baxter defends them, if their purpose is simply to preserve the memory of worthy men. “ Let none think that the praise of the dead is a useless or inconvenient work. Christ himself praiseth them and will praise them when he justifieth them before all the

world : *well done good and faithful servant*, Matt. xxv. He will be *admired* and *glorified* in them, 2 Thess. i. 2. The 11th of the Hebrews is the praise of many of them, of *whom the world was not worthy*. . . . Christ will have the tears and costly love of a poor penitent woman, who anointed Him, to be spoken of *wherever the Gospel* is read. The Orations of excellent *Gregory Nazianzen*¹ (Greater than Gregory the Great)² with many such, shew us that the Ancients thought this a needful work. Many live in times and places where few such men are known : and they need to know from others that there are, and have been, such. Had I not known such, I had wanted one of the greatest arguments for my Faith. I should the hardlier have believed that Christ is a Saviour, if I had not known such as he hath begun to save ; nor that there is a Heaven for Souls, if I had not known some disposed and prepared for it, by a holy mind and life. I thank God, I have known many, many, many such, of several ranks, some High, more Low : O how many such (though not all of the same degree of holiness) have I lived with who are gone before me ! Holy Gentlemen ! Holy Ministers of Christ, and Holy poor men ! I love Heaven much the better when I think that they are there. And while I am so near them, and daily look for my remove, though I here yet breath(e) and speak in flesh, why may I not think that I am nearlier related to that Congregation than to this. The saying is, *a friend is half our Soul* ! If so, sure the greater part of mine is gone thither long ago. It is but a little of me that is yet in painful weary flesh. And now one part of me more is gone ; the Holy and excellent *Henry Ashurst* : and God will have me live so long after him, as to tell you what he was, to his Father's and Redeemer's praise, and to provoke you to imitation."

He dedicated his sermon to the widow Judith and her children, but, especially, to Henry the 'eldest son and executor,' of whom he could say, "I have long known you so well that I am comfortably persuaded that your Father had great cause to place that great affection on you and confidence in you which he did. Your dear Love to him, and great Reverence of him, and hearty Love to the good which he loved, and your singleness and uprightness of Mind and Life are your amiableness and better than the greatest earthly birthright." Some five years later

¹ 330-389 or 390.

² Between 540 and 550-604.

this Henry evinced his quality on that day of glory and shame—glory to the sufferer and shame to his Judge—when (May 30, 1685) Baxter was browbeaten by Jeffreys at the Guildhall, and Henry, “ who could not forsake his own or his Father’s friend, stood by him all the while.”¹ He was then not yet a Baronet, though he had been M.P. for Truro since 1681.² He was made a Baronet on July 21, 1688 and, considering that the honour came from James II. just when the king was at the height of his Romish adventure, one wonders why. Was it bestowed for services rendered, or in hope that he might win over his fellow non-conformists to the king’s policy? There is no trace of the former, and the latter is more likely. Henry like his father was a ‘ moderate,’ and not favourable to extreme measures even against a Popish King until the last moment; but neither he nor his father could compromise on the Papal question. Indeed, the fact of his continuing (till 1695) to represent Truro, a thoroughly Protestant constituency, is proof positive of this. There is proof, too, in the fact that Baxter dedicated to him and his wife, the Lady Diana, (July 31, 1689) his ‘ Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared,’ and appealed to him, with all confidence, to work as ‘ a member of this present Parliament ’³ for a complete reversal of the persecuting Doctrines and Practices which had disgraced the last twenty-eight years, and to do this partly in order to present a united front to the Papists. If further proof were needed, it might be seen in the fact that his name is on the first subscription list (July 29, 1690) of the Common Fund for the benefit of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers; and that in 1695 he was appointed a manager of the fund. In short he did not forsake his father’s faith any more than his father’s friends. As to the latter he was, e.g., the ‘ cordial friend ’ of Henry Newcome;⁴ and he was on intimate terms of affection with Matthew Henry whom he tried to allure from Chester to London in 1708.⁵ But it was to Baxter that he gave peculiar reverence and love and care. He appears never to have had his eye off the frail and suffering old man. In the dedication from which I have already quoted, Baxter publishes—with warmest gratitude—not to his own age, which knows it well, but, ‘ to Posterity ’ Sir Henry’s unflinching

¹ Calamy’s “ Life of Baxter,” p. 606.

² Afterwards for Wilton, Wilts., 1698-1702.

³ I William III.

⁴ Newcome’s “ Autobiography,” vol. ii. 170, etc.

⁵ “ Life of Matthew Henry ” by Williams, p. 97, etc.

kindness "during my publick Accusations, Reproaches, Sentences, Imprisonments, and before and since. Who knoweth you that knoweth not hereof?" With Sir Henry, Baxter associates his wife. She too, and her children as well, had been eminent for their "Friendship and Kindness" to him. She was Diana, fifth daughter of Lord William Pagett of West Drayton; and Baxter seems to intimate that Lord Pagett himself and his relations generally, had been equally kind and friendly. Thus the Ashurst family did much to brighten his last years; and it was but a small sign of appreciation when Baxter made Sir Henry one of his executors.¹ A far greater sign lay in his description of him as the "Heir and Imitator" of his father's "Faith, Piety, Charity, Patience, Humility, Meekness, Impartiality, Sincerity and Perseverance."²

Sir Henry died on April 13, 1711, aged 65. Lady Diana died on September 3, 1707. Both were buried at Waterstock (or -stoke) in Oxfordshire—an estate bought from the Crokes subsequent to 1680³ by Sir Henry—though a property near by at Ennington had been bought by his father some years before.

My purpose does not lead me to notice other members of the Ashurst family, else something might be said of Sir Henry's younger brother William, knighted October 31, 1689, and Lord Mayor of London in 1693; also, of William's grandson Thomas Henry Ashurst, born in 1700, who succeeded to Waterstock about 1736; and of His son, William, born at Ashurst in January 1725, who acquired fame as a judge and died at Waterstock on November 5, 1807.

Sir Henry's male line died out, and so his Baronetcy lapsed in 1736; others of the same name, but of inferior quality, came into his inheritance. Not even the famous judge was his equal. The greatness of the Ashurst race attained its culmination in Sir Henry and his father. Was it not an evidence of their greatness to have discerned an ideal worth in Baxter?

¹ Though Matthew Sylvester exaggerates this into a token of "great confidence," a "great honour" which "cannot but raise great expectations of the world from" him, etc., *Dedication of the "Reliquiæ Baxterianæ,"* 1696.

² *Dedication to "Treatise of Knowledge and Love compared,"* 1689.

³ See Kennett's "Parochial Antiquities" (1818), p. 492.