BISHOP JOHN CHRISTIAN KEENER

By Bishop Charles B. Galloway, D.D., LL.D.

Tributes from Other Colleagues of Bishop Keener

BY

BISHOPS GRANBERY, DUNCAN, HENDRIX, KEY, FITZGERALD, CANDLER, and SMITH

JOHN CHRISTIAN KEENER.

BISHOP JOHN CHRISTIAN KEENER

BY BISHOP CHARLES B. GALLOWAY, D.D., LL.D.

TRIBUTES FROM OTHER COLLEAGUES OF BISHOP KEENER

BY BISHOPS GRANBERY, DUNCAN, HENDRIX, KEY, FITZGERALD, CANDLER, AND SMITH

NASHVILLE, TENN.; DALLAS, TEX.
PUBLISHING HOUSE OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH
SMITH & LAMAR, AGENTS
1906

BISHOP JOHN CHRISTIAN KEENER*

BY BISHOP CHARLES B. GALLOWAY, D.D., LL.D.

THE death of Bishop John Christian Keener at his home in New Orleans, La., January 19, 1906, in the eighty-seventh year of his age, removed from earth one of the most remarkable men in the South. An ecclesiastical leader of rare gifts and vast influence, a preacher of apostolic spirit and power, and an eminent citizen of passionate patriotism and undaunted heroism, he made for himself a large and unique place in the story of his times. There was a charm in the originality of his genius and an awe in the grandeur of his character, and a splendor in the power of his pensonality, and a flavor in the quaintness of his humor, and a marvel in the vastness and variety of his public services that altogether produced a man worthy of high place in America's Hall of Fame. There were some notes in the psalm of his life that rarely fall upon the ear of the world. There are some lessons in the toils and triumphs of his noble soul that will make him an inspiration to every generation of reverent and aspiring spirits. We had nothing like him. In many respects he dwelt apart—a star of the first magnitude—a genius without genealogy.

John Christian Keener was born in the city of Baltimore, February 6, 1819. He had the richest Teutonic blood in his veins, and from both parents inherited qualities that contributed to his greatness. His father, Mr. Christian Keener, was a man of sturdy character, strong convictions, and vigorous mental fiber. A

* Reprint from *The Methodist Quarterly Review*, April, 1906.

devout Methodist and successful merchant, his home was the home of the great men who laid the foundations of our Zion in this Western world. Of his mother, a woman of rare gifts and grace, and her influence over his life, it may be said, as he so beautifully said of the mother of Dr. W. E. Munsey: "It was her firm but gentle hand that shaped the ark of his fortunes, and that reared the precious babe for the 'King's daughter.' Her judicious and pious management of his early life laid the foundation of its highest honor and achievements."

In that beautiful steel engraving, "The Ordination of Bishop Asbury," there is a stately figure, in official robes, assisting Dr. Coke and the elders in the laying on of hands. That is William Philip Otterbein, a native of Nassau on the upper Rhine, for years a minister of the German Reformed Church, founder of the "United Brethren in Christ," sometimes called the German Methodists, and the first bishop of that Church. In his great speech on the Centenary of American Methodism, delivered in McKendree Church, Bishop Keener made this characteristic and instructive reference to the ordination of Francis Asbury:

> The converging lines of the Holy Spirit from Germany and from England, through the Wesleys and the Moravians, upon Georgia, now reappear after the lapse of many years in this event about to transpire in Baltimore. When Mr. Asbury was to be ordained, there were present, notably Dr. Coke (now Bishop) and the elders ordained by Mr. Wesley, all sent over from England with letters and authority for this purpose. But the most experienced, cultivated, and distinguished divine present, who was about to take part in the ceremony, was the "great Otterbein," as Mr. Asbury calls him—a man of fifty-six years of age, who had been preaching in America since 1752. He, too, had come to America, sent by the Evangelical Lutheran Church from Germany as its representative and minister. He had, as Mr. Wesley, come to the knowledge of the new birth, had established churches, sent forth ministers to preach it, and had thousands of converts, seals to this doctrine. Indeed, had America been filled with a German-speaking people, the United Brethren and Otterbein would have swept the whole country before the arrival of Dr. Coke.

The blood of that stalwart and apostolic German, who, according to Bishop Asbury, was "one of the greatest scholars and divines that ever came to America or was born in it," flowed in the veins of John Christian Keener. And much of the heroic spirit

of Asbury's great friend fell upon his far more distinguished descendant.

He was educated at Wilbraham Academy and Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., both under the presidency of Dr. Wilbur Fisk. Some facetious references to his college days, often published, may have left the impression that he never had much acquaintance with text-books, and had scant claim to scholarship. That, however, is a mistake. He read with ease the Old Testament in Hebrew, and up to the end of his days was an enthusiastic student of the Greek Testament. He was for some years a specialist in chemistry, had extensive and accurate knowledge of astronomy, and would have been distinguished as a university professor in the chair of history.

After graduation at Middletown, he entered upon business life, in association with his father, as a wholesale druggist. But for reasons, romantic and other, he left Baltimore to seek his fortune in the new state of Alabama. There he soon yielded to the divine call to the ministry, and in 1842 was licensed to preach by the Quarterly Conference of Linden Circuit, at Rehoboth Church, in Wilcox county. A vacancy in the pastorate of the circuit having occurred, he was at once placed in charge. He had twenty-four appointments and a young wife. The next year he was at Franklin Street, Mobile, as junior preacher with Lovick Pierce, and from there went to Demopolis, where his ministry was remarkably successful.

Nearly sixty years ago two young itinerant Methodist preachers were sent to the city of New Orleans to take up the work which had tested the fiber and almost broken the heart of other apostolic men. They were cultured, consecrated young men, whose faith had never been weakened by bitter reverses, and whose courage had never been foiled in life's fierce battle. They were full of hope and high resolve. One was a graduate of Wesleyan University, at Middletown, Conn., with the impress of Wilbur Fisk upon his strong character; the other, a graduate of Randolph-Macon College, with the name of Landon C. Garland on his diploma. One was John C. Keener, the other was Holland N. McTyeire. Both became historic men, both were editors of the *New Orleans Chris-*

tian Advocate, and both were bishops of conspicuous ability and commanding influence. Closely united in their confidential friendships and connectional responsibilities, they must be forever near together in the companionship of the skies. Of his honored colleague, and his self-sacrificing and eminently successful labors in New Orleans, Bishop McTyeire thus wrote in his "History of Methodism":

> The systematic and comprehensive plans laid and carried out by Dr. John C. Keener date an epoch in the present New Orleans Methodism. He was appointed by Bishop Paine pastor of Poydras Street Church in 1848; met the yellow fever and outlived it in 1849, and has since resided in the city, a witness, and, under God, the chief director of the prosperous condition of its Methodism.

In addition to the care of a large church and the erection of the new building on Carondelet street, he had charge of a colored congregation of two thousand souls, and there did some of his greatest preaching.

Most of Bishop Keener's strenuous life was bound up with the city of New Orleans. Into the texture of its very being he wrought his noble history. He mixed his richest blood in the mortar that cemented the stones of its vast structure from deep foundation to lofty dome. That was the scene of his hardest toils and greatest triumphs—his deepest sorrows and his highest joys. There are his most sacred treasures, and there his own ashes will gently sleep.

His life embraced the most tempestuous period of our ecclesiastical and national history, and for fifty years he was a conspicuous actor therein. The year after he entered the ministry in Alabama, the memorable General Conference of 1844 was held, which resulted in the division of the Church. Then came years of contention and litigation, followed by four years of war, these to be succeeded by the bitter period of reconstruction. Happily, before the hour of his going, the era of peace had dawned, with the spirit of reunion in the nation, and of fraternity and federation in the Church.

It is, however, necessary to the truth of history to state that Bishop Keener was ever jealous for the distinct autonomy of

Southern Methodism, and feared any movement that looked toward organic union with anything or anybody. His prompt action at the General Conference of 1870, when Bishop Janes and Rev. Dr. W L. Harris visited that body in an official capacity, was only one of a hundred instances of his alertness when the historic position of his Church was in danger of misstatement or misdirection.

Bishop Keener was passionately devoted to the section in which his long and useful life was spent. He was intensely and aggressively Southern in every fiber of his being. Though born in Baltimore and educated in New England, his profoundest sympathies were with the social, political, and ecclesiastical ideals of the far South. And to the end of his checkered life that devotion never knew the slightest variableness or shadow of turning. On the issues that first divided the Church and then the nation, his opinions became his deepest convictions, and those convictions were but slightly affected by the lapse of years.

For personal injuries he never harbored resentment, but for wrongs against a cause or a people he allowed small room for repentance and had little hope of amendment. While doubtless he recognized a Providence in the results of our Civil War, and rejoiced in a restored peace and reunited country, he resented the slightest imputation upon the motives of his people, and never apologized for a single act. And in those intense convictions he was, if possible, more firmly fixed by the agonies and horrors of reconstruction in the South.

Only a few facts in his brilliant history, and some estimate of a masterful man, are possible within the pages allowed for this loving tribute.

A great editor was Dr. Keener. Like his intimate and lifelong friend, Holland N. McTyeire, he had a genius for journalism. Though his active editorship of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* only embraced a period of five years—from January, 1866, to May, 1870—he was intimately associated with its history from the beginning. The early story of that journal, told in the bishop's quaint and half-humorous way, is so suggestive that a liberal extract must be reproduced:

Fortunately at this time there was in the city a newspaper firm that had had but little experience in publishing, and the most hopeful member of this firm was an official member of Felicity Street Church. The preacher in charge of Felicity was the Rev. H. N. McTyeire, then equally inexperienced in editing. We can now readily conceive how two such hopeful spirits could see the way very clear to start an *Advocate*. Articles of agreement were drawn up by which the publishers of the *Crescent* were to put up two sides of original matter and put in two sides of transferred matter, and were to have all the profits (?). The editor was to have the opportunity of doing good. Not very long after this one of the firm, Mr. Frost, was killed in a duel, and during the year brother J. W. Crockett sold out his interest in the *Crescent* to a Mr. Maddox. Just about this time my genius for attempting something came into play. Fortunately for us again, Mr. Maddox was a politician, capable of many things, but wholly inexperienced in publishing a paper. He found the *Advocate* a good thing to talk about, and so made a contract to continue it, allowing somewhat to the editor. The *Crescent* that year secured some fat contracts from the Legislature, but in the course of a year or so changed hands again. It became now the property of Mr. Garland, with Mr. Nixon as manager. These gentlemen had sublime conceptions of the resources of a newspaper and very considerable ideas of the worth of the *Advocate*. They gave us a contract which secured some $1,500 per annum for clerk and editor, besides the publishing of the paper without risk or cost to us. This lasted for two years, until the General Conference of 1854, which came to our relief with a grant of $2,000, more or less, and we bought out Mr. Nixon's interest in accounts, etc., for $1,000. Then we bought a press and office. The engine was the gift of a friend at Waterproof, Mr. Curry. Meanwhile our editor was doing a fine work; was both able and pungent as a writer, and made good character for the paper and for himself. In fact, he wrote too well, for after a while he was translated to Nashville, and that came near being the death of the *Advocate*. The Rev. C. C. Gillespie was appointed in his place, and the war presently ensued. Of course the press and engine stopped; the editor became the colonel of a Texas regiment. Our dear friends who had the idea of securing a conscientious possession of whatever had been dedicated to holy uses belonging to the Church, South, by virtue of an order of the War Department, seized all our city churches, but never touched anything in the *Advocate* office. We never could explain this, but would only state a fact: the lower story of the office was rented to an undertaker, who, after the usual style, stood his coffins in ghastly array all around the room. One had to pass through this room in going upstairs. Could it be that men accustomed to preach of death, and in a measure prepare others for it, would hesitate to face a row of mute coffins? I can hardly think it.

It was his vigorous pen and commanding voice that rallied our scattered and disheartened forces immediately after the Civil War, and urged forward the work of rebuilding. He went in person to Washington and secured an order from the President for the re-

covery of our churches in New Orleans which had been taken from us by military authority. And in every way he displayed the eminent qualities of heroic leadership.

At the General Conference of 1870 he was elected to the high office of a bishop in the Church of God. In that exalted position his genius shone with an unwonted brilliancy, and in the discharge of its sacred duties his great name will have most undying fame. For twenty-eight active years he bore its heavy burdens and met its exacting and multifarious responsibilities with an ability and conspicuous fidelity that demonstrated his worthiness to be a successor of the apostolic men whose names he cherished and whose illustrious examples he daily emulated. He had the missionary fervor of Francis Asbury, the rigid adherence to constitutional law of William McKendree, and the consistent, persistent conservatism of Joshua Soule. He magnified the apostolic office. Throughout the Church his powerful leadership was everywhere felt. And many a long year will come and go before the inspiring echoes of his mighty voice will die upon the ear of American Methodism.

However much any of us may have differed in judgment with Bishop Keener as to the wisdom of any official act or connectional policy, about one thing there was never a dissenting opinion—first and foremost he placed the interests of the Church. He never had any personal ends to serve or personal ambitions to subserve. All his concern was for the Church, which was to him dearer than life.

Not even a single chapter of Bishop Keener's noble life could be written without some reference to Centenary College, and his powerful championship of higher education. For old Centenary he labored much and suffered not a little. In one of his earnest appeals for the college, every chapter of whose history was dear to him, he recited these interesting facts:

> The college remains as a monument of the Centenary subscriptions and public spirit evoked from the Methodism of 1839 in behalf of higher education. It holds in its walls and history the memory of McGehee, Winans, Lane, Burruss, and a host of noble spirits who labored to establish it and give it to the Church, as an expression of their gratitude to God for the

rise and work of Wesleyan Methodism. While many monuments have crumbled and yielded up their charge, this, thanks be to God, abides. After the war it survived to find that its endowment had vanished; but friends were again raised up who started it upon a new career of usefulness.

For that firstborn institution of learning in Louisiana Methodism the bishop gave many toilsome years of service and thousands of dollars from his modest income. So much of his life had been wrought into its struggling history that every brick in its stately buildings and every tree on its beautiful campus became sacred to him. There was a note of deepest pathos in that provision of his will which left five hundred dollars to be used in preventing the removal of Centenary College from its present location.

He was the founder of our Central Mexico Mission, and for years bore its burdens and administered its affairs. The circumstances connected with his first visit to the City of Mexico and the founding of our prosperous Mexican Mission—a veritable spiritual romance—he gave, some years ago, in a letter to the *Southern Christian Advocate*. So interesting is the history and so graphic his recital, that much of it is here reproduced:

The purpose was slowly formed, but unexpectedly to me, during a missionary anniversary of the Louisiana Conference, then being held in Carondelet Street, it was suddenly developed into immediate expression. Bishop Pierce had just finished speaking. I arose and added somewhat, and alluded to the field of Mexico as ripe to the harvest, and cited the fact that I had seen a Mexican who had come out of Mexico in search of Christianity; and who had been mysteriously brought to Christ in Brownsville, Texas, while worshiping for the first time in a Protestant congregation; and that I had both seen and appointed him at the West Texas Conference a few weeks before.

From the back part of the congregation one asked if I would go to the City of Mexico if the money was pledged to pay my expenses. I answered yes, and brother Walmsley opened the subscription for raising a thousand dollars in gold by giving one hundred. The amount was soon made up.

The following Sabbath morning I arose early and went down to the vessel; my wife, Dr. Poisal, of Baltimore, brother Tudor, and brother Walmsley went down to see me off. The craft was the *Tobasco,* a little steamer that had been in dock for repairs. It was intensely Spanish in its make-up, shape, crew, cabin, captain; all had a Mexican imprint. At 8 o'clock A.M. she hauled in her lines and steamed down the river. This gave me full time for meditation. It was a venture under the impulses of the Spirit. I felt strangely alone. What I should do in a land where even the tongue was unknown,

or how I should do, was left to the openings of an unseen Hand. The Gulf was somber and rough, the sky leaden during the entire trip, and not a sail was seen from the time we left the river until we came to anchor at the Castle of San Juan d'Uloa. It so happened the railroad was just opened, and I went up to the City of Mexico on the first regular through trip. Only three English-speaking persons were on the cars—an engineer, a contractor, and myself. The scenery of the Cordilleras repaid me for all the odors and motions of the *Tobasco*. The Southern Cross stood over the land of the Aztec in its brilliant significance—"*Mexico for the Saviour.*" Yet the first hours spent in the city alternated between hope and fear. Sometimes it seemed impossible to make a lodgment with the slender resources at command. Mr. R. M. Walmsley had generously given me a letter of credit for several thousand dollars. But others were there trying to start work with unlimited influence and money.

A good Providence sent to my aid a poor man, Christian Breme, a Swede, and a translator for Maximilian, who spoke English well. I put a new suit of clothes on him; then he found our noble old Mexican, Sosthenes Juarez, and brought him to me. Juarez was the first president of the first Protestant Assembly we held in Mexico. We instinctively took to each other on sight. The old man gives me a good Spanish hug every time I go out to the mission; he is now the presiding elder of the Morelos District. It was through these two that I bought the old chapel of the Capuchins, on Fifth street, where brother Daves afterwards built our "Templo de Messias." Well, it was a great triumph, as it was the first property bought by Methodism in Mexico.

His annual visits to that field for a number of years gave him highest joy, although he was burdened with the problem of a rapidly growing mission and a scant treasury. The native preachers almost adored him, the whole mission revered him, and the Church at home enthusiastically followed him. Some of his letters from Mexico are among the choicest specimens of descriptive writing in our language.

A few paragraphs from the one giving an account of his official visit when the mission was organized into an Annual Conference will be reproduced. What a joy it must have been, when he looked upon that body of valiant men, and recalled his first lonely search for a spot to plant our banner, and left only one frail man, Alejo Hernandez, to uphold it:

You will please imagine yourself transported by the genii of steam over gulf and gorge, sleeping valley and bold mountain peak, past plains fertile and cultivated, on, on, by foothills, towns, villages, and interminable rows of the maguey plant, until you are set down at the depot of Mexico, about ten o'clock, whence a hack soon brings you to the warm precincts of the Mission House, bright with the presence of American ladies, American children, and

Dr. Patterson. It was, indeed, to us not unlike a wonderful dream in its panoramic variety and rapidity of change.

At this "Junta Annual" the members of the mission all met for the first time. It had in it, therefore, the true elements of a Conference occasion; the power of new faces, the inspiration of the Spirit's unity, the sublime harmony of a New Testament Church. The calling the roll was in itself, as are all roll calls, full of meaning; name after name was responded to, Mexican, American, and Indian, which gave forth the keynote of a gospel mission, and which, I am sure, thrilled more than one heart. I do not think the interest flagged from this initial moment to the reading out of the appointments.

The following incident, recalling some thrilling chapter in the martyrdoms of France, he often referred to on missionary platforms and with inspiring effect:

Two of the preachers who were present at the martyrdom of Mr. Stevens in Ahualulco, ten years ago, now met for the first time since that event. One of them was the bandit who, at the suggestion of the priest, carried the torch and led the mob against the missionary; the other was the friend who prayed with Mr. Stevens just a few moments before he was shot; they then separated, and Gallegos escaped through the garden. Crisanto Zepeda fled to the mountains, and remained away for four years. He came back to Guadalajara filled with wrath against Protestantism. A friend sent him a Testament. This he read, shutting himself up for two weeks that he might, without disturbance, see whether Protestantism was of God. Upon his first visit to a Protestant church, after this reading, while at the door, he was powerfully converted, and ever since he has been a fearless and humble minister of the gospel. I saw two men standing together, the tears coursing down their faces, their arms about each other, brother Grimes with a hand on each. Brother Watkins and others gathered about, silent and weeping. When the scene was explained, my own heart was filled and subdued with this wonder of the Holy Ghost.

Bishop Keener was *a great preacher*—one of the greatest I ever heard—though not what is known as a popular preacher. He lacked those histrionic talents that please the multitude, and was too serious a soul to amuse the galleries. As a quickener of thought and an original expositor of the Word, he was the Frederick W. Robertson of Southern Methodism. He had all the suggestiveness of the great Brighton divine without his theological eccentricities. He was a man with a message, and often spoke with a tongue of flame. He only discussed great themes—doctrines that are vital and eternal. Those who heard his great sermons on the "Temptation of Jesus," the "Resurrection," the

"Transfiguration," "Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones," and others, can never forget his masterly deliverances and their profound impression.

Bishop Keener's characterization of Dr. Munsey, whose genius he so ardently admired, may, in large measure, describe himself as a preacher in his best form at a camp meeting or on a Conference occasion:

> His logical power was of the highest order, his grasp like that of a vise. Added to this, he was capable of the profoundest analysis and discussion; and yet above all his imaginative lift and creative power could only be compared to that of the sixth book of "Paradise Lost" in its sustained grandeur.

In his earlier ministry Bishop Keener was a remarkably successful revivalist. The first four years of his itinerant service were a continuous revival, recalling the golden days of the early Methodists in England. Demopolis, Tuscaloosa, and Montgomery, Ala., were swept by the power of this flaming evangelist. The whole Supreme Court of the state was converted at one of his meetings. Forty persons joined the Church at Baton Rouge, La., one Sunday morning after a sermon he preached when presiding elder of the district. At the close of a three weeks' revival near Marshall, Tex., in 1865, in which E. M. Marvin and J. C. Keener were the evangelists, Mr. Marvin pronounced Dr. Keener the greatest preacher he had ever heard. A like estimate of the great bishop was entertained by Mr. Jefferson Davis.

His style of speech was often sublime, in perfect accord with the majestic movements of his great thought. His brilliant imagination invested all the incidents and doctrines of the Word of God with scenic grandeur. The following reference to the book of Job was characteristic:

> Since the days of Job many ages have passed, intellectually; and yet with no book preceding, and myriads succeeding, what one composition equals it in the majesty of its periods, in the firmness and delicacy of its outlines, in the boldness of its flights, in the thunder of its machinery, in the ghostly terror of its atmosphere, in the sustained resonant speech of the divine lip, in the depths of its fathomless agonies, in the anthems of the seraphic choirs?

And this, from an eloquent deliverance on the Transfiguration, is in his best vein:

It was an atmosphere of joy on Mount Hermon. There were no angels present, and the exclamation of Peter reveals the infinite favor with which God honors men for the sake of his Son. Within that halo all was security and confidence; outside of it were regions of fear and death. This revelation was in marked contrast with that of "the Lion of the tribe of Juda." There all is stormy; here all is peace. There all is judicial in aspect; here all is merciful. Here the Church alone constituted the company; there the whole vast sum of intelligent being was gathered; all before the flood and since; all of heaven, before the fall of angels, and since; and of hell, the home of Abaddon, all its hosts, now held in chains of darkness; all stand in this amphitheater of judicial award. Here the Church is within the palisades of redemption; where mercy rejoiceth against judgment. There "he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy."

There, upon his throne, the Son sits in his glorified humanity; clad in vestments of light; girt with a golden girdle; his voice as the sound of the sea; his words two-edged and piercing. Upon sight of him John fell at his feet as dead.

A few of the characteristics which so strikingly distinguished this great man I venture to recount. *He was a majestic personality.* His massive form was a fitting home for his stalwart character. In all his physical as well as mental movements he had the tread of a giant and the stride of a commander. His very appearance was suggestive of serious purpose and rugged honesty and fearless courage. As he so graphically described Bishop Joshua Soule, the Wellington of American Methodism, and his ecclesiastical prototype, so may we say of Bishop John C. Keener—"his was a character of colossal proportions, grand without infirmities." There was strength in every sinew, and steel in every nerve, and iron in every drop of his blood. He had the head of a Roman senator. His wonderful face was a study for artists, suggestive of genius, and a revelation of granite character. Who can ever forget it? His large hand was made to wield the battle-ax of Richard rather than the light sword of Saladin. There was authority in the tones of his voice, and majesty in the sweep of his imperial thought. In all his movements he reminded me of some great ocean liner, walking the seas with as firm a tread when lashed into fury by a storm as when placidly shimmering like a lake under a cloudless, starlit sky.

He did everything grandly—whether preaching to a vast congregation on some majestic theme, or delivering a missionary ad-

dress on some notable occasion, or officially presiding over some high senate of the Church, or expounding some constitutional principle or policy in the councils of his colleagues, or driving an ox team over the prairies into Texas during the war, with his family, to escape the Federal armies. He could not do or say a commonplace thing. I doubt if Bishop Keener ever entered any company, whether conference or convention or congregation, that he was not instantly and universally accorded the chief seat.

He was far above the envies and jealousies of small men. He never coveted anything except the "best gifts," and the best possible service for his Lord. Describing in his own graphic and unique way a certain toilsome itinerant preacher, traveling his lonely Louisiana circuit, passing the mansions of wealth, with their Corinthian columns and wide verandahs and halls of mirth, to preach the gospel in the humble cabins of the slaves, he closed his characterization with these words: "Owning nothing himself and envying no man anything." And so this majestic man was innocent of envy and a stranger to jealousy.

When shall we look again upon such a towering personality? His very presence stirred every sentiment of the sublime. He made one think on high themes and turn his eye upward toward the shining summits. His was the majesty of a mountain, scarred it may be from summit to granite base, but unshaken in its deep foundations and calmly oblivious of every storm and scudding cloud.

Another distinguished quality of this masterful man was *his decision of character.* A man of his positive nature could not long remain in doubt or suspense about anything that involved personal conduct or character. However patient and painstaking the process of his investigations, when conclusions were reached they were clear cut and final. From them he rarely ever took appeal, and not often found occasion for reargument. Never hasty in judgment, it was not easy to revise well-formed opinion. He knew his own mind, and others could not fail to understand him. Positive in conviction, he was emphatic in statement, if not dogmatic in utterance. Nobody ever thought of him as a man in soft raiment or as a reed shaken by the wind. He wore the garb of a spiritual

and mental mountaineer, and the authoritative notes of his silver trumpet rang out loud and clear on the morning air. There was nothing in him of the Brother Pliable. He was little affected by the size or noise of the multitude. His conclusions had been reached without regard to their popularity—their acceptance or rejection by others. He loved the confidence and approval of his brethren, but would not sacrifice a conviction or surrender an honest judgment in order to secure it.

But while tenacious of opinion, he was not intolerant in spirit. Indeed, he had respect, even to admiration, for those who differed from him if their views were strongly supported. On one occasion, discussing in his own masterly and philosophical way that mystical character of the far-away time, he said: "Job always fought in a dark room." So, alone with God, and in the solemn councils of his own great intellect, did this mighty man solve the problems of life and work out the basal principles to which his eternal hopes were anchored. That gave him calm confidence and clear decision and unshaken purpose.

One of his well-known and most striking characteristics was *his inflexibility of purpose.* He had an imperial will that no discouragements could daunt and no obstacles could thwart. It seemed to challenge impossibilities. He appeared a stranger to discouragement and innocent of the sense of despair. If defeated, he never knew it, or refused to acknowledge it. That gave him a Napoleonic courage in the prosecution of an enterprise that compelled admiration of the man, if not approval of his plans. When the night was darkest he proclaimed with loudest voice his unshaken faith in a more hopeful morning. Before the ashes of war had cooled, standing amidst the smoking and charred ruins of fire and tempest, he sounded a trumpet and announced the resurrection of our Southern Methodism.

And that same spirit he carried into every cause he espoused and every duty assigned. If he saw any lions in his path, he never ran from them or walked around them. The tribute was true that the brilliant editor of the *Richmond Advocate* paid him some years ago:

The Roman who bore the eagle of the Tenth Legion had not truer manhood or sterner devotion to duty. He was no parleyer, but if a Greek, his body would have lain among the Spartans at the pass of the Hot Springs, and near the gory corpse of Leonidas.

Bishop Keener was an *ecclesiastical statesman* of rare prescience and high courage, but a rigid conservative. He had scant patience with any suggested change that did not assure improvement. For mere experiments in legislation he had instinctive antagonism. The Discipline under which the fathers wrought such mighty things he thought should be handled with great care. Only less sacred to him than the ark of God was the Discipline of his Church. While in no sense an idolater of the past, he would not readily surrender or radically modify any measure the wisdom of which had been vindicated by success. The great constitutional safeguards of our polity he watched with a sleepless and godly jealousy.

In the General Conference of 1866 he opposed the introduction of lay delegation, and through all the subsequent years he never saw the good in it that others discovered. In 1878 he seriously questioned the wisdom of organizing independently the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, and never had occasion to revise that judgment. He deplored the increase of societies—an excessive multiplication of machinery—and predicted the results now almost universally felt and feared.

It is possible that his highest efficiency as a great ecclesiastical leader was sometimes much affected by his rather excessive conservatism. We should not undervalue the pressing needs and inevitable changes of the growing years. To recognize these, and adjust our legislation and administration thereto, is the demand of wisdom and the logic of history.

But we cannot withhold admiration for one who stands for something. In these days of a shifting expediency and a nimble diplomacy and a superficial knight-errantcy, it is at once refreshing and inspiring to feel the sturdy strength and independence of a man.

He was a man *of marvelously brilliant gifts*—gifts that would have distinguished him in any land or age. His genius was many-

sided, and each flashed with a splendor all its own. He had poetic genius, without the technique of the poet. Undoubtedly the divine afflatus was his. Many of his sermons were prose-poems, and all his utterances betokened a soul into whom the muses had sung. The following lines from his poem on "The Transfiguration" are a fair specimen of his imaginative genius:

In greater Hermon's hoary height,
The blessèd Lord of Holy Light
In prayer is found:
There soon the wealth of heaven lay,
As bright as Eden's Sabbath day,
Empurpled round.

Three favored men, too worn to pray,
In that aureate circle stay;
Asleep near heav'n:
A latticed tent of opal threads
And tinted beams rose o'er their heads,
In glory wov'n.

Lo! sparkling with celestial morn,
Its steeds and ruby rims unworn,
Elijah's car!
And stepping from its golden seat,
Two noble forms—their Lord to greet;
They came from far.

. . . . . .

"O God, how good! here let us stay,
Where heaven's morning curtains day,
And all in peace;
Far from the storms of earth beneath,
On every brow a golden wreath,
The wealth of grace.

"The Spirit's life no longer waits,
The King of Glory lifts the gates
Omnipotent;
Let's clothe, O Lord, these men of might
In thy pure flesh and crimson light,
Jehovah's tent."

'Tis Peter speaks—bold speaker he;
Lost in prophetic ecstasy—
So near the throne.
The cloud! a Voice—the abyss of love:
"To ages, worlds, beneath, above,
This is My Son."

This voice of Majesty they fear;
The prophets gone—the mountain drear—
The Lord's alone!
The Son, transfigured back to earth,
Disrobes himself of kingly worth,
And stays t' atone.

And yet he had a philosophical cast of mind. The grasp and sweep of his thought indicated a man who was acquainted with Grove and Academy. The following shows how rigidly and with what logical precision he could pursue an argument:

The natural universe is the realm of One will: the moral universe is the realm of Two wills—the will of the Lawgiver and the will of man to whom the law is given. The realm of one will is as distinct from the realm of two wills as "the heavens and the earth" are distinct from "the law and the prophets." The lack of those who have attempted a Theodicy has been a clear definition of these realms, which, while appearing intimate, are really far apart. One may ask, What divides them? Are they not the creation of One Mind? If we know the laws of nature, their wisdom, order, stability, have we not an exact statement of the Divine will in the realm of grace? Are not its laws as fixed, and were they not as wisely determined in advance and as easily calculated, as the angles and curves of a celestial mechanism?

Moral law is flexible, natural law is fixed; the one illustrates the other. Moral law is indivisible, pressing with its whole weight upon each offense: "He that offends in one point, he is guilty of all." Natural law goes by measure and weight, and is, therefore, divisible. Moral goodness is the assent of man's will with the will of God; moral evil is the dissent of man's will from the will of God.

The school that would relieve the moral universe from the cast-iron necessity of natural law finds its citadel in the constitution of the will; that it is a cause, therefore free; that it cannot be fixed and free, no more than a geometric square can at the same time be a triangle; that a conscious freedom could not exist in the atmosphere of absolute necessity, and in that of absolute truth, at the same instant.

As an author he won enduring fame. In earlier life he wrote a book that has become a Methodist classic, and will so remain as long as covetousness is to be scourged and the stewardship of wealth needs a conscience. Had he never written another line, the author of "Post Oak Circuit" would deserve to live in our literature. Other volumes from his pen are "Studies of Bible Truths" and "The Garden of Eden and the Flood"—these written after his retirement from active service.

He literally intermeddled with all knowledge. It was marvel-

ous what he knew. He was equally familiar with the stars and the hills. Writing a letter from the seat of the North Alabama Conference, he thus indicated his acquaintance with agricultural chemistry:

> Probably no part of the South has such a basis of wealth for manufacturing. A mountain runs through it, not exactly of gold, but what is better, of red and brown hematite, and full of various kinds of hard and bituminous coal. The soil is of the best levigated lime and clay, and has the power of surviving the destructive methods by which the average farmer makes his farm poorer with every crop that is taken off. Intelligent farming, that is, the combining the production of vegetable and animal life, so that the one supports the other and leaves more on the soil than it takes off, will make this undulating North Alabama country the garden spot of the South.

And who could ever forget the brilliancy of his wit or the sparkle of his humor? Had he not restrained it, he might have rivaled the satire of Sidney Smith or of Dean Swift. He had a strangely alert and eager mind that continued its search for knowledge up to the day of his going away. Like the great Mr. Gladstone, who at eighty-six issued an annotated edition of Butler's "Analogy" and wrote metrical translations of Homer, this veteran of the South displayed all the mental alertness and eagerness of his ardent young manhood. The freshest books from foreign publishers were always on his desk.

Bishop Keener was a deeply spiritual man. He was marvelously converted "at the end of a nine days' struggle,"—a fact as distinct in his consciousness as the radiant sun in the heavens. So vivid were all the experiences in that crisis of his spiritual life, and so divinely clear the transition from the old mental and moral estate into the new, that it was indeed like passing from death into life—from utter darkness into marvelous light. And his zealous ministry of sixty years was an eloquent insistence upon the absolute need of regeneration, and the divine privilege of the Spirit's attestation of the redeemed soul's acceptance with God.

He knew by a wonderful experience the secret of the Lord. Into the highest mysteries of the spirit world possible to a soul in this mortal life he had been graciously introduced, and with them he had large and intimate acquaintance. He dwelt much in the realm of the unseen and communed freely with the Spirit of

the living God. More than any preacher I ever knew did he delight to discourse on the office and work of the Holy Spirit. It is not surprising, therefore, that he left a volume in manuscript—the ripest fruit of his richest experience and deepest thought—on "The Principia of the Holy Spirit."

In his sublimely beautiful farewell address to the General Conference—his last will and testament to the Church—he disclosed the depths of his own spiritual life in these wise words:

> The new birth is the keystone of Wesleyan doctrine. This is that "scriptural holiness" which Mr. Wesley sought to spread throughout England and America—that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"; that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." My brethren, let nothing divert you from preaching this great law of life: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Put men in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and he will see to the rest. He will lead them through green pastures beside still waters; he will
>
> "Make them for some moments feast
> With Jesus priests and kings."

His belief in Providence was absolute. And no man I have ever known had more eager delight in tracing the providence of God in the world's history. This gave vividness and charm to his public addresses, and invested every page of dry annals with the beauty and glow of pulsing life. Especially was he felicitous and instructive in studying the various lines of Providence which culminated in Methodism.

In his admirable and facetious reply to the inspiring fraternal address of Rev. Dr. Waller, of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, at the General Conference in St. Louis, he said:

> Have you ever thought for a moment what would have been the result if Mr. Wesley had come to this country and not the Moravians, or if the Moravians had come to this country and not Mr. Wesley? If they had not met here by these converging lines of the Holy Ghost, our territory being the objective point, where would Methodism have been? We must recollect, sir, that the birth of Methodism was the grand final expression of the missionary pulse of the Holy Spirit, first in the heart of Mr. Wesley, and then in the heart of the Moravians, and then perfected, cemented, developed, and consecrated, and organized in our own Methodism.

Reference to his religious life and character may fittingly conclude with a clause from his will:

CODICIL TO THE WILL OF JOHN C. KEENER.

Above all in this my last will, I desire to acknowledge the wonderful love and mercy of my Saviour during all my life. The strange and benign Providence that brought me to this Southland, the honor and service of His Church in giving me a position of great responsibility and usefulness for so long a period. I have been feeble, but I trust sincere, in much weakness, in upholding the cause of His kingdom. I have made many mistakes, but have been greatly blessed in my children. My three sons have been a power for good, and have greatly honored their parents and the family. My daughters have been the elect of God. I depart in the full hope of a Saviour's mercy and an abiding trust in his sacrificial merit, and into his hands I commit my spirit.

J. C. KEENER.

Oct. 1st, 1903.

His retirement from the active duties of the episcopacy, on his own motion, at the General Conference in Baltimore in 1898, was a most impressive occasion. It was immediately after the Conference had been organized on the morning of the first day. Not one of his colleagues had the slightest intimation of the step he was about to take until he arose to read his farewell address. Of that memorable scene Dr. Lafferty thus wrote:

The speech itself was in keeping with the career and quality of the man. His habitual continence of emotion was subdued by the reflex pathos of his audience of bishops, veterans, seasoned men out of Southern Methodism, each heart quivering with sorrow, for the silence seemed a muffled sob. How like the Levantine shore with its choking grief of Ephesian elders weeping sore around Paul!

Too sternly honest with himself and the Church to continue in active service when in doubt as to his ability to meet the momentous demands of his high office, he retired without a trace of soreness in his heart or a syllable of sorrow upon his lips. He was the same cheerful companion, and brilliant conversationalist, and sunny-hearted Christian, and eager student of the world's affairs, as before. The noise of battle was as musical to his ear as when he was in full command of the advancing hosts, but he chafed not at the Providence that compelled him to sit in his tent.

Two years after his superannuation, in a letter to Dr. Buckley, of New York, he wrote these exquisite lines:

I am now *hors de combat.* I hear the sound of marching hosts, but my trumpet hangs upon the wall. Yet with those who serve the Lord of Glory, there is plenty of light after the sun is below the horizon.

Similar sentiments, and just as beautifully expressed, I have in every letter received from him during the past eight years. It was hardly possible for him to write a letter on any ordinary matter without dropping into it a brilliant or beautiful sentence. What a delicate touch of refined tenderness in this closing line of a private note: "I send you and Mrs. G. *much fireside home love.*"

Writing of the then recent death of our mutual friend, Mrs. C. K. Marshall, of Vicksburg, and of his visits to her delightful home, he concluded with these words that have the aroma of the skies:

> Please convey to the family these memories, which are a heaven on earth to Christians, and the harbinger of our higher communion in the world of spirits; when the Master himself promises to wait upon the entertainment of his servants.

Having served the Church with fearless fidelity, he loved it to the end, and was prayerfully solicitous for the integrity of Methodism. In his last address to the General Conference, on the occasion of his asking release from active service, he reaffirmed with emphasis his adherence to our great ecclesiastical polity in these vigorous words:

> My conviction as to the scriptural value of Methodist doctrine has never wavered since my conversion in 1837. I thank God that he heard my cry, that he called me as a Methodist itinerant in the far South. There I was licensed to preach, and there I have spent my days continuously in fellowship with those noble spirits who have fashioned and built up our Church until this present hour.
>
> Having had opportunity for so long a time to know and estimate our connectional system, I wish to record my testimony to its value—a system that places a pastor in every church and provides a church for every pastor; that penetrates every neighborhood, preaches at every crossroad, builds a church in every village, and reaches from the Atlantic to the Pacific; that traverses every prairie, keeps up with the pioneer, and includes the Indian reservations; a system in which thousands of ministers are annually appointed to go and none refuse, often going to a work with only a name, and financially naked as a rock, but returning in a year with sheaves of precious converts, a circuit established, a church and parsonage built. Such a patriarchal, military system could only have been the outgrowth of the divine influence that made Mr. Wesley the spiritual father of his people, and guided him in shaping connectional Methodism, which he held to be as essential for efficiency as the doctrines which he preached.
>
> Such a guild cannot be surpassed by any body on earth, whether social, political, martial, or industrial, in its *esprit de corps*—men that eat of the

same loaf, drink of the same cup, who have enlisted under the same banner, move with equal step to the conquest of the world for Christ.

His home life was beautiful. Within that sacred circle there was the genial warmth and sweet unrestraint of affectionate confidence. There the dignified official, presiding over ecclesiastical councils, and the great preacher speaking with the sternness of a Hebrew prophet, and again with the passionate pleading of an apostle, gave way to the gentle, confiding, companionable husband and father. His only surviving son, Dr. S. S. Keener, thus writes of that charmed home circle:

No father received more joy or delight from his family. Hallowed memories abide of those Sunday nights when, at home, he told us Bible stories, the miracles of Christ, the histories of the Old Testament, with a vivid imagination and realism never surpassed by him in the pulpit. Those seasons of Bible stories are still with me.

I never saw anything more beautiful than this venerable man of eighty years showing the same knightly attention to the mother of his children as when, more than fifty years before, he proudly led her to the bridal altar. Nothing could be more exquisitely beautiful than this, in the first page of one of his books:

Dedicated to One
Who has made my home only a little
Less than Eden.

His end came no doubt as he would have preferred—quietly, on the afternoon of a beautiful day. He was sick only a few hours, and knew the time of his departure had come. For a long while he had been sitting at the gate watching the coming twilight shadows, ready to go with the going down of the sun. Every preparation was made for the journey—even the hymns selected for the funeral service—so he stepped into the celestial chariot and went home to God. In his modest cottage home, where he had lived so many beautiful years, near the slow-moving tides of our greatest river, he sweetly fell asleep, to awake on the bank of that other stream, clear as crystal, that flows near the throne of the King.

TRIBUTES FROM OTHER COLLEAGUES OF BISHOP KEENER.

BY BISHOPS GRANBERY, DUNCAN, HENDRIX, KEY, FITZGERALD, CANDLER, AND SMITH.

BISHOP KEENER was unique, though not eccentric. Depths of feeling and the working of mighty forces were hid beneath his serene and often impassive face. He had strong affinities and antipathies. Some men he gripped to his bosom; others he loved at arm's length. On questions of conscience it was safe to forecast his position and action; apart from these, the personal equation must be taken into account.

No smoke, little flame, white heat marked his spiritual experience. Humbly, obediently, trustfully, he walked with God. Bishop McTyeire once said to me with deep earnestness: "I was closely associated with John Keener for years, and I can testify that he always put the Church first, never himself." He was not bigoted, not narrow; but "for better for worse, for richer for poorer," the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was his true love, and he clung to her all the days of his life.

The tenderness and affection of this strong man made home his paradise. Beyond that sacred circle he had a wealth of intimate and enduring friendships. The tenacity with which he held on to those whom he had trusted and loved, and the ingenuity with which he sought excuse or palliation of their failings, were in some cases surprising. But he was unselfish and true-hearted, whether correct or mistaken in judgment.

Physcially, intellectually, and spiritually, vigor and endurance were his striking characteristics. In mind he was more intuitive than logical. In addition to robust good sense he was noted for quick insight, subtle discrimination, genial humor, and pungent wit. He had in good degree the ideal and poetic temperament. Commonplace, surface views, showy rhetoric, did not content him. He longed to get at the heart of things; especially to pierce

beneath the letter and superficial interpretation of Holy Writ, and reach a truer and more sympathetic understanding of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of God's revelation of himself in Christ. But others are more competent than I to describe this side of his studies and sermons. If he could only speak to us now that he has looked on the face of God, and is satisfied!

J. C. GRANBERY.

At the age of twelve Bishop Keener was sent to the Wilbraham Academy, Massachusetts, and he remained there and at Wesleyan University, Connecticut, for seven years. According to the traditions, he was more given to making fun than to study. The late Dr. E. E. Wiley, one of his fellow-students, was credited with saying that "if any mischief went on in school, Jack Keener had a hand in it." In all of his fun-making there was nothing malicious. In the whole of his career, his great wit and humor would every now and then make themselves known and felt in all circles. A friend once asked him, "Was the course at Wesleyan pretty full when you were there?" "Oh, no," said he, "they didn't teach much, and I didn't learn that." "What were you doing, then, during those seven years?" "Well, incidentally, I learned to skate and to eat codfish, but chiefly I was engaged, though not aware of the fact at the time, in investigating New England character." However, he brought away from the university that which was to him and his friends of greatest value, a profound reverence and admiration for Wilbur Fisk.

For a few years he engaged with his father in business, when he removed to Alabama, and there in 1843 he entered the ministry and began his wonderful ministerial career. In 1866 he was made editor of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate,* and held that position until 1870, at which time he was elected bishop by the General Conference that met at Memphis, Tenn.

Among his brethren he was always in the forefront in all the great interests and enterprises of his Church, especially so in the great educational and missionary movements. He not only urged

upon his people the importance of liberal response to the great enterprises of the Church, but he set them the example of generous giving. His freedom from anything like selfishness or covetousness was rarely, if ever, equaled; for instance, writing to an editor who had sent him a check for an excellent article, he said, "When I come before the public, it is as a bishop of the Church, and not as the paid contributor of any paper." Therefore his brethren of the ministry loved him and honored him.

His devotion to the educational interests of his Church was recognized by all, and was very remarkable, even to the last day of his life. Our flourishing Mexican missionary work was, humanly speaking, his creation.

As writer and author, he was attractive and very suggestive. "Post Oak Circuit" was widely read, and having gone out of print, a new edition was recently published. He was a student, and kept himself posted with the best and most recent publications. For years he probably imported and read more rare books than any other Methodist preacher of his day in America. My library can bear testimony to his generous and wise contributions, especially in the "Lives of Twelve Good Men," by John William Burgon, Dean of Chichester.

As a preacher, it is not easy to describe him. He often preached with great power, and there was a sweep and breadth and depth that was rarely seen in any other man. At times there was a lack of sharp and clear outline and definition, there being a sort of "poetic mist" about his sermons. But whether preacher or conversationalist, his reading was so general and accurate, and he was such a student of men and books, that whether traveling or in the quiet of home, he was always a charming, suggestive, and helpful companion.

Those who were fortunate enough to be present in the General Conference of 1898 and witnessed the scene, when he made his address asking the General Conference for retirement from active work, will not easily forget the profound impression and deep feeling of the hour. I wish space were mine for reproducing the whole address.

He always gave great emphasis in his preaching and in his ex-

perience to the New Birth as the keystone of Wesleyan doctrine. He ever insisted that scriptural holiness and the witness of the Spirit, "and that as many as were led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God," were fundamental in Methodist doctrine. He closed his remarkable address with these touching words:

"My hope is to meet my illustrious colleagues who have gone before, and the godly men throughout our Zion, with whom I have often taken sweet counsel, and my precious parents and relatives, and the yet nearer ones, who have made my home only less than the heavenly home to which we are journeying. In your prayers do not forget me."

As was said of another we may well say of him, "He was one of God's Century Plants." W. W DUNCAN.

A striking illustration used by Bishop Keener tells the story of his own official life: "Dromedaries choose their own leader by shouldering to the front of the caravan a dromedary who, instinctively dreading the perilous position, because of robbers and simoons, resists until he finds it hopeless to do so any longer but once he accepts the trust he maintains his place of leadership at all hazards, brooking no interference." Bishop Keener, so retiring both before and after his effective episcopacy, felt keenly its responsibilities during his twenty-eight years of service. Unwilling ever to indicate his preference in the assignment of work consideration was shown him by his colleagues; for all knew that he would undertake anything assigned him, regardless of his health. He contemned the place-seeker in the ministry, and by his own lofty character and example rebuked him. He was an itinerant of the John Wesley type, and Wesley would have chosen him for great tasks.

His gift of imagination made him creative of plans. He had the power of initiative, yet was somewhat distrustful of his own judgment in carrying out his plans. He used to say playfully that no man was fit for a pilot after he was forty, as he hesitated to take risks after he had found the channel full of snags and shallows.

Strong in his personal attachments, when once he gave his confidence he never questioned either the sincerity or fidelity of the men he trusted. His loyalty to his friends was a passion. Most notable was his friendship for Bishop Marvin, whom he first knew as an army chaplain, and whose character and preaching he greatly admired. It was his advocacy of Marvin for the episcopacy, despite the fact that he himself was much spoken of, that influenced many votes of delegates to whom Marvin was a stranger.

His devotion to the Church was part of his devotion to Christ, whose Bride he believed her to be. Bishop McTyeire once remarked concerning his lifelong friend: "I have known Brother Keener a long time, and with him the Church is always first."

His preaching, like his writing, was unequal. His favorite themes were few. His epigrams were many. He used to say that he had formed the habit of looking at every subject in the light of an editorial paragraph. He knew his own limitations, one of which he insisted was that he could not write a Review article, although late in life he consented under pressure to furnish several notable ones. At times he preached with great unction, one such sermon resulting in the awakening of the wife of Dr. Ahrens who, being a German, was at the time ignorant of a single word the bishop spoke. His approach to a subject was by some unexpected entrance, and sometimes he simply vaulted in.

None was ever his guest that did not take away a delightful memory of his charming hospitality, whether at his favorite seaside home at Biloxi or in his modest cottage in New Orleans. The writer was fortunate in being his guest when Jefferson Davis, who was very fond of Bishop Keener, was a fellow-guest, and cherishes a sacred memory of their beautiful friendship. No wonder that Mr. Davis said to me, "In my old age the most sacred friendships that I love to recall have been with bishops of the Church." What a company of friends in both Church and State awaited the bishop on the other side! E. R. HENDRIX.

"A prince and a great man hath fallen in Israel." So David spoke when one of his great captains fell, and so say we at the announcement of the death of Bishop John Christian Keener.

While for eight years he had been retired from the public view, still he was recognized and felt. Time and again he would send a bugle blast from his retirement, which gave notice that the old warrior-statesman was watching the march of events and solicitous as to its course. The telegraphic notice of his death, therefore, was a great shock to the Methodists of the South and beyond. A landmark is removed. A great light is extinguished. The Church he loved so well has lost one of its foremost men.

Bishop Keener was a born leader of men. Strangers recognized this on meeting him. A ferryman in the Northwest, while taking him across a stream, continually addressed him as "Judge," "General," "Governor," and when told he was neither, but a bishop of the Church, said "he knew he was at the head of his crowd." And such he was at every stage of his development. Of commanding presence, with a voice of authority, a big brain highly cultured, a lion's courage, an unconquerable will, and a poise the result of conscious strength, he dominated individuals and masses of men. His leadership was daring and self-reliant. It was not tactful and hidden, like Richelieu's and Talleyrand's; but rather on the order of Bismarck, the old Iron Chancellor—forceful and open. He never employed diplomacy, but moved straight to the accomplishment of whatever purpose his judgment approved.

For more than fifty years Bishop Keener has filled a conspicuous place in the Church,—first, as pastor and presiding elder in New Orleans and Louisiana; and then as editor of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate;* and for thirty-five years as a General Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. For ten years, and up to the time of his retirement, he was Senior and Chairman of the College of Bishops. In every place he led.

He was a reader of books, a writer of great accuracy and beauty of style, an independent and original thinker, a man of theories. He dared investigate all subjects,—theological, ecclesiastical, scientific, governmental,—and reached his own conclusions. He was neutral on no question. He could not be. The very make-up of his mental nature made him highly positive and a partisan.

His intellectual industry and his mental activity, even down to

old age and long after most men go into decay, present to younger men both encouragement and warning. He read the newest books and the ablest, and in his library to-day will be found the very latest publications—many of them imported from abroad.

Among the most marked characteristics of this eminent man were his loyalty to his section and his devotion to his ministry and his Church. Born and reared in Baltimore, he came in early life to New Orleans, where he fixed his home and lived and labored to the end. No son ever loved his mother more than did Bishop Keener love the South, its people, and its cause. It amounted to a passion with him. He followed its fortunes through the war, having charge of the army chaplains in the Trans-Mississippi Department and sharing a soldier's fare in the field, preaching in the camps and ministering to the sick and wounded. Perhaps at no period in his long life was his ministry more fruitful. The results of the war did not daunt him, but seemed to kindle his love and devotion into a holy flame. Henceforward he became a self-constituted champion of the South, sensitive to every breath of criticism and every act of aggression, and ready with voice and pen to resent them.

Bishop Keener was a man of stainless purity of life. Men sometimes resented his rule, but no man ever doubted the snow-white purity of his heart and life. What a blessing to any Church to have for leaders, not only men of ability, but also of preëminent virtue. In this respect our Church has been fortunate.

Bishop Keener was neither selfish nor self-indulgent. He was too intent upon the upbuilding of his Church to seek his own profit. He doubtless had ambitions, but they were for the glory of his Church and the spread of the kingdom, and not for himself. His high sense of integrity and honor lifted him above a sordid temptation. When approached at the time of his election to the episcopacy by a delegation offering their votes on condition that he would change his residence and settle in their state, he rejected the proposition and indignantly dismissed them.

Preaching was his delight. He never tired of it, and repeatedly before his Conferences he urged and insisted on the preaching of the gospel as God's method of reaching lost men. His preaching

was unequal. Sometimes he rose to great heights and preached grandly; and again he would fall below himself. And even in the same sermon parts would be great and others obscure. This, perhaps, was the result of his poetic temperament, which, while capable of high success, is erratic and uncertain. He was a poet of no ordinary ability, and often made contributions to the press.

Bishop Keener's real self was to be found in his home life. His family was his paradise. His devotion to wife and children was beautiful. He was blessed with three sons—all ministers—and one daughter, the wife of a minister. To these he gave his love and admiration, and in the charmed circle of his home he found rest and joy. Long were they spared to bless him, but at length one by one his loved ones left him, and life had been lonely to him since.

For these last years the patriarch, living amid the wreck of his desolate home, with only a granddaughter to cheer him, and his youngest son, a member of the Conference, has waited in patience until his change come. It has come at last, and he is at home.

JOSEPH S. KEY.

Bishop Keener was a large man. Measured by any just standard, he stood high among his fellows. Seen in any assembly of his contemporaries and coworkers, he was a conspicuous figure. The perspective in aftertimes will give him more of symmetry, but will not diminish his size.

He was unique in his personality. If at any time he seemed to be eccentric, he was so regarded only by persons who saw him but seldom or only in passing glimpses. He had a way of his own in doing things, and he looked at all matters that came under his notice from points of view all his own.

He was a strong man. No man who ever fought by his side as an ally could doubt this fact. No man who ever met him as an antagonist in intellectual combat could doubt that he had met a man of extraordinary powers. He was a man of strong convictions: his decisions were not delayed, his movements were not weakened by doubt. On all questions that interested him he was

prompt in taking sides, and he threw all his strength into his contention. There was a martial element in his nature. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ he felt the thrill of the battle-shock, the victor's joy; and he could lift his soul in thanksgiving unto God through whose grace the victory was given. He had that sense of power which is an indispensable part of the equipment of men called to such service as that rendered by him to the Church of God. When troubles came upon him he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. He bore heavy burdens in the strength which grace supplies. This strong man had strong consolations, because with the grasp of genuine faith he had laid hold of the hope set before him in the gospel. Taken all round, Bishop Keener was a strong man—yea, in the words of the Book, he was a mighty man of God.

Bishop Keener was a kindly man. He was not emotional or effusive in the pulpit. In the discharge of official duties he was incisive, trenchant, and at times seemingly abrupt in speech. But all who ever met him in the family circle knew that he had a kindly heart. A Methodist mother in whose home he sojourned for a few days in California speaks tenderly to this day of the benignity of his presence, and of the benediction he left behind him when he left. He loved children and was loved by them. In his own immediate family he was loved with a devotion mixed with the veneration accorded only to a great soul that was lofty and loving.

O. P. FITZGERALD.

Viewed from any standpoint Bishop Keener was a very great man. His massive figure embodied perfectly the imperial manhood which dwelt within. The strong but gentle features of his face expressed the robust and affectionate nature which beamed from his kindly eyes.

His mental qualities were of the highest order, and they presented such a combination of excellencies as to suggest at times contradictory elements. He had executive ability and poetic gifts, philosophic insight and great powers of imagination, humor, and reverence, tenderness and sternness. He was a great preacher,

though not what men call a great orator. He was a great editor, and, if he had been led into that field, would have been a great teacher. Indeed, it was easy to conceive of him as a great man in any line of life. He presided over the Conference at which I was received on trial into the traveling connection. During the first days of the session he impressed me as an extraordinary man of business who would have been a great banker if he had had a mind to try the field of commerce. I heard him preach on the following Sunday, his theme being the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness; and he then seemed to me to be an expositor suggestive as Ellicott and witty as South, with a poetic nature not unlike Milton. He awed me. I met him the next day in the social circle, and he so won me by his affectionate, approachable nature that I forgot to be afraid of the great man I had heard the day before. After the adjournment of the Conference, and I was away from the spell of his presence, I concluded he could have done anything within the reach of human greatness and goodness; and the closer acquaintance of later years has modified but little the conclusion of my youthful mind. He might have been anything, but it is almost as easy to conceive of him as not having been at all as to think of him as being anything else than the great religious leader he was.

And greatness sat easily upon him. He did not need to strain after it. In fact, he strained after nothing, for what he did always seemed to come easily to him. He left the impression after any effort he put forth that he had an inexhaustible reserve of power left unused.

The most striking thing about him was his religious character. He was first of all a man of God. He was equally removed from the skepticism of rationalism, the folly of fanaticism, and the hollowness of cant. He was a man of genuine reality in his piety. He believed God and trusted the Lord Jesus implicitly. When he preached on Isaiah's vision his hearers felt that he was at home amid the shining ones of that high company and might of right explain to souls less lofty the meaning of their presence there. When he talked of Job and the faith of the man of many sorrows there was no incongruity between the preacher and his theme. He

would have understood Job better than all the comforters who came to the man of the East in his griefs. He understood Job because he knew God.

He lived like an apostle and died like a patriarch, coming to his grave "in full age, like a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

W A. CANDLER.

Bishop Keener was one of God's special providences to the Church. When we think of special providences we usually look for them in events and incidents, whereas most of the displays of God's personal and particular leadership of his people have been the men whom he has provided for special junctures, and for special work. History is full of such instances. Moses was not an accident, nor was David or Eiljah, or Paul, or Luther, or Wesley. Bishop Keener may well be placed among the chosen of God for his time and his work. Born in Baltimore, educated in New England, entering business in his native city, when he felt his call to the ministry he went to the Southwest and there began his work. Who can doubt he was providentially led in his choice of work and the place where it should be done? Here was a field to which he was peculiarly adapted and where his talents found largest opportunity for usefulness. His life fell in a time and was directed to a place where leadership of the strongest and sanest kind was needed; and this he was especially fitted to supply. One great man multiplies himself by as many as come under the power of his influence; and for such a man to reach his fullest power he must be able to mold opinions and to direct movements. He must be endowed with the ability to lead; must have the prophet's vision and the master's power to command. All this was true of Bishop Keener. His presence impressed all who saw him with a sense of power, and when he spoke the impression became conviction. So masterful was he that other men did not feel compromised in following him. He was a born leader of men. He exercised great authority because he himself submitted to authority. He was a man of indomitable will, but that will was in subjection to the law of God. The truth as he saw it was ever the

law to him. He made no compromises himself and he had little patience with those who did. Such men are sometimes charged with intolerance. There is an intolerance of profound conviction. Minds uncertain of truth may be tolerant of error or may oppose it weakly, but not so those who know the truth and have the courage to hold and defend it. Bishop Keener knew what he believed, and he held to the truth with the same profound convictions as characterized St. Paul when he said, "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." Such men are needed now. It was not my privilege to know Bishop Keener intimately, and I heard him preach only four times; but his influence for good is not confined to his intimate friends; we all felt stronger because he lived and held high place in the councils of the Church.

A. COKE SMITH.