

THE REV. GEORGE BICHENO.

Among the elect spirits that have enriched and adorned; the Ministry of our Church an honoured and foremost place will be unanimously assigned to the beloved and now sainted George Bicheno. This kingly soul was a splendid product of rural Methodism, his birthplace being the small village of Over, in Cambridgeshire; and the date of his birth, April 26th, 1863. His early youth was unreservedly consecrated to God, and with eager gladness he gave himself to the service of the Church he so passionately loved and in whose interest he so nobly toiled through all the passing years. Though on the physical side Mr. Bicheno was a frail sufferer, on the spiritual side he was superbly endowed. To a naturally winsome personality there was added a most generous and tender heart, and with a cultured intellect was combined a deeply spiritual nature, so that amid conditions often difficult and sometime depressing, he ever retained an unconquerable faith; like his Lord and Master he possessed a sunny optimism right on to the end. A lover of good books and of all things beautiful in Nature or Art, he was still more a lover of his fellow men, and in the spirit of the Christ he loved his joy was not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life in sacrificial outpouring for the edification and spiritual welfare of his brother man. Those who knew him best loved him most, and the testimony of ministerial colleagues and intimate friends is that George Bicheno was one of the most lovable and Christly souls it has ever been their privilege to know. In 1888, after a term at Hartley College, Manchester, Mr. Bicheno entered upon Circuit work, his first station being Balham, in the London Second District and for thirty-two years, often in broken health, he toiled with passionate devotion, winning successes and achieving results which permanently remain as monuments of his quenchless enthusiasm and dauntless faith both in himself and the God who had called and commissioned him to this great ministry. Subsequent spheres of labour were:- Bristol, Clitheroe, Shipley, Hull, Kettering(twice), St. Annes, and Eastbourne. On all these stations his ministry proved rich in blessing and the joy of harvest rewarded his faithful and untiring labours. But, as is well known throughout the length and breadth of our Church, the beloved name of George Bicheno will ever remain indissolubly associated with Kettering and St. Annes-on-Sea. These commodious and debtless structures will speak to the generations yet to be of his marvelous industry and triumphant success. But though so frequently absorbed in building schemes and matters of debt reduction, our departed friend was ever keenly alive to the spiritual interests of the Churches committed to his care. To his pulpit ministrations he gave careful preparation, and his appeals to his hearers were characterised by a tenderness and graciousness which often made a deep impression and proved of lasting good to multitudes of people. In pastoral work he excelled. In the homes of the people he was ever a welcome visitor; the aged and afflicted were never overlooked. Since coming to Eastbourne, I have again and again heard loving tributes to his memory, showing how welcome and heartening his pastoral visits had proved, especially to those in affliction. In his home and family life, Mr. Bicheno was supremely happy and blest. In all his great undertakings he was nobly assisted by his gifted and devoted wife and daughter and son, who now so deeply mourn his loss. Apart from their tender ministries and unremitting care he must have succumbed beneath the burden and strain of his exhausting labour long before

he died. His last station was Eastbourne, to which he came in the summer of 1918. He was in a poor state of health, but the hope was cherished that a term of residence in this health-giving watering place would prove of permanent benefit, and at the same time with renewed strength his ministry be the means of resuscitating the ebbing life of our cause in this town. But alas! it was not to be. We have no doubt had life been prolonged and health given his ministry would have resulted in much blessing to the Church and neighbourhood, But he was compelled to take a year's rest, and after submitting to a critical operation, which at the time was regarded as quite satisfactory, he gradually sank, and on Monday, November 8th, 1920, in great peace exchanged mortality for life.

*'Night dews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary, worn out winds expire so soft.'*

On the following Friday all that earth could claim of him was laid to rest in the Cemetery at Kettering. In addition to the sorrowing family a large and representative gathering assembled to pay their last tribute of affection and esteem. The service in the church was conducted by the Pastor, Rev. T. Greener Gardner, the lessons being read by the Revs T. Harrison and George Armitage, Connexional Secretary. A beautiful tribute to the character and worth of the departed being given by the Rev. W.H. Matthews. Prayer was offered by the Rev. J.H. Hirst. At the cemetery the Rev. J.T. Barkby committed the body to the grave in sure and certain hope of everlasting life. The service closed with the singing of the hymn, 'Breathe on me breath of God,' and the Benediction,
ARTHUR BEVAN.