

HENRY BILTON.

1807-1868

The records of the lives of faithful Christian are invaluable to the Church, and often prove a channel of grace to unawakened souls. There is an influence accompanying consistent piety which by God's blessing often prevails when all other influences are feeble. HENRY BILTON, of Uranby, in the Brigg circuit, passed away in triumph to the heavenly and everlasting rest, February 10th, 1868 in the sixty-first year of his age. Of his early history little is known, only that he lived a stranger to true godliness and saving grace, following the maxims of this world, sometimes falling into the sin of drunkenness; but the Spirit of God followed him in his revellings and wanderings. Often did conviction flash into his mind, and the thunders of the violated law speak in his ear. He violently struggled against conviction for a long time, but ultimately yielded to the strivings of the Spirit; he became a true penitent, found his way to Jesus, by faith obtained the forgiveness of his sins, and was a consistent exemplary Christian "a burning and a shining light" on earth until he went to heaven. For several years he was a member with the Wesleyans, but during the Reform agitation he left them and cast in his lot with our people.

Principally through his labours a society was formed and chapel built at Uranby, of which he was the leader and steward. In the discharge of these offices he showed great diligence, zeal, and punctuality, which rendered him a very useful member of the Church. But like Moses he is gone, and we are at a loss to find a Joshua to succeed him. How very mysterious are the ways of the Lord! How often he takes his children away when they seem most needed by the Church, their families, their country, and their race. But when we view his workings and designs in the light of eternity we shall have to say "He hath done all things well." Present mysteries shall be the subjects of future explanation.

*"God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."*

There are trials and bereavements the good of which we cannot see now, but we shall see it hereafter.

As a Christian our departed brother obeyed the truth, and lived according to its directions, walking consistently and irreproachably. The whole of his deportment was one uniform obedience to the will of God. He was a man of great integrity, and generally spoke his mind on all subjects and occasions. His general conduct evidenced to his friends the sincerity of his heart. He was not an angel, he was a man; he had a nature that was human, and like other men he had his faults and failings, but towards them we would exercise charity. He loved the cause of God much, and supported it according to his ability. His house was always open for the preachers; local or travelling, all were welcome. When Zion extended her borders and moved forward in great strength, he rejoiced; when the tide of converting glory was at a low ebb, he was active in producing a revival in the Church, and promoting the salvation of his fellow men. He was not given to religious fluctuation, cold one month, and all on fire the next; but the fire of heaven burned steadily and constantly on the altar of his heart. He took great delight in the means of grace, and was regular and punctual in his attendance. Often have we seen his face shine, his eyes sparkle, his tears flow, and heard his response while sitting under the preached word. Only the week before he was seized the writer spoke at Uranby from Ruth i. 16 and 17, "Thy people shall be my people," &c. He enjoyed the service, seemed very happy and filled with heaven; that was the last time the writer saw him in a conscious state. As a leader he was simple, faithful, affectionate, and earnest; he understood well the art of administering consolation to the distressed in spirit, cheering the downcast, strengthening the courage of the faint-hearted, urging the growing Christian further into the life of God, and

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stirring up those who would rest on the lap of sloth. He loved his class and lived in the affection of his members. The love they had for him was manifested on the day of his interment in the deep sorrow they evidenced. The last time he led his class, when he had spoken to the last member, turning round and addressing the rest he said, "We know not which of us will be the first to go," little thinking that it would be himself. How uncertain is human life!

As a husband he was kind and obliging; as a father he was affectionate and indulging. In his house an altar for God was reared, and he taught his children the fear of the Lord, most of whom are on their way to heaven.

The affliction that terminated his earthly life was a stroke on the brain. He was seized suddenly while on business, and lingered from Friday, February 7th, till Monday 10th, during which time he was mostly unconscious and spoke but little; but at intervals, when he was able to speak, his mouth was filled with praise and thanksgiving. His utterances were either portions of Scripture or verses of hymns. The following were often uttered;

*"My God, I am thine, what a comfort divine;
What a blessing to know that the Saviour is mine."*

And again

*"My God! my God! to thee I cry,
Thee only would I know;
Thy purifying blood apply,
And wash me white as snow."*

The last line he would repeat over and over again. His sufferings seemed great, but his patience and resignation were equal to his sufferings. He seemed at times to recognize his friends but could speak but little to them. The writer saw him twice during the time, but he was unconscious on both occasions. It was his wish to be able to bear testimony to the power of religion in death, but our great Lord and Master appointed it otherwise. But though he was not allowed to bear testimony in death, he had borne many in life. Many are taken as suddenly, but few as safely. In his death the Church has lost a pillar, the ministry a good supporter, the world a luminary, and his family a friend.

JAMES AUSTERBURY.

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(For Uranby read Wrawby)