

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XX., No. 50.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, December 15, 1875.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXXIX., No. 50.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

SONNET.

A sparrow watched the eagle's upward flight,
"Ah me," he sighed, "how sweet it were to
rise,
Like you proud eagle, to the glorious skies,
And glancing downward from the fields of
light.
Behold the admiring gaze of those below."
His mate looked upward from her lowly nest,
And sweetly to her tiny lord addressed
This little homily: "Twere vain to go,
In wish or deed, beyond our own bright
sphere.
Birds made to soar have length and strength
of wing.
In your blue heights I could not hear you sing
Those tender strains so pleasing to my ear.
And up the eagle's path to smelt a thing,
Would shrink to nothingness and disappear;
Let's love and honor then our own estate,
Small things grow smaller when they would
be great." S. S.

Religious.

DEATH OF REV. DR. BROCK.

We have by the last English mail full particulars of the sudden death of Rev. Dr. Brock. He was so well known as one of the most prominent Baptist ministers in London, that a notice of his life and character will interest our readers, as well as Baptists everywhere. His visit to Nova Scotia a few years since is still remembered with pleasure by many. His preaching in Halifax was greatly enjoyed by not a few who were privileged to listen to his commanding eloquence, and powerful presentation of Divine truth. Christians who were formerly members of his Church at Norwich and at Bloomsbury Chapel are to be found in many lands. One at least of these is in Halifax, and received a letter dated Norwich, Nov. 14th, by the last mail; which said,

"No doubt the news of dear Dr. Brock's death has reached you before this. It took place on Saturday last. It was announced from the pulpit by Rev. George Gould, his successor, who made very touching allusion to it. There were many weeping eyes at St. Mary's his former Church. His work is done and the crown already. How glorious the thought. He did not long survive his devoted wife."

We have made the following summary from the abundant materials furnished by our English papers:

"Another standard bearer has passed away. 'A prince and a great man has fallen in our Israel.' Dr. Brock died at St. Leonards, on Saturday Nov. 13th. He caught a cold on the occasion of his visit to the Isle of Wight, of which we gave a report in a recent number; and perceiving a return of the symptoms which have troubled him during previous years, he hurried off to Hastings, where he has of late passed the winter. The symptoms increased in severity after his arrival there; and in a few days his family received a telegram telling them to hold themselves in readiness to go. They had not been long with him when he breathed his last, and entered into rest. For about three days he was unconscious; but during a brief interval was able to recognize them.

He had almost reached the term of life generally allotted to man; and if years be measured by the amount of work done, he had lived longer even than that. He seemed still capable, however, of good service, and many hoped that he might be spared to render it for years to come. Only the other week a minister expressed the conviction, in which many shared, that he might be as useful as he has ever been, by visiting the churches and exercising a sort of friendly and paternal episcopacy, for which, by his experience

and natural gifts, he was peculiarly qualified. This hope of his friends must have been strengthened by his recent appearances both at Plymouth and Newport, his address at the former place, especially, being one of the finest he ever delivered, showing no signs of failing ability, but characterised by such excellence that Mr. Spurgeon declared it to be among the best he had ever heard.

LIFE AND LABORS.

At Norwich he exercised a ministry of growing influence and usefulness; and left it when he was yet in his prime, for his more important sphere at Bloomsbury, which he occupied for about twenty-three years, with great credit to himself, and benefit to the denomination of which he was such a distinguished member. His coming to London was an era in the history of our denomination there. Bloomsbury was the first Baptist Chapel in London which could really be considered large. Before its erection we had no place of worship which would contain more than seven or eight hundred. The erection of Bloomsbury Chapel by Sir Morton Peto, and the entrance of Dr. Brock on his ministry, inaugurated a new order of things, of which numerous large chapels in various parts of the metropolis are the signs, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle the culmination. The work begun there affected not London only, but exerted an influence which was felt throughout all the land, while the occasional visits of its pastor supplied a stimulus to denominational extension.

STRENGTH AND CATHOLICITY.

His services, however, were not confined to his own denomination. He knew how, while maintaining his own principles, to cherish a Catholic spirit, and to take part in movements for the promotion of the public weal. On all the great questions connected with civil and religious liberty, or with social reform, he kept himself abreast of the age, and his powerful advocacy was freely given for the furtherance of their ends. We once heard a young man speaking to another about our friend, make the remark which appeared to us to be peculiarly characteristic—that you generally found the old man up to time. This describes, rather roughly, an excellent feature in his character. You could always depend on him doing in the best manner possible to him whatever he undertook. Old people leaned on him with reverential fondness, and young people dearly loved him for his genial and hearty manner. And not until the great day of reckoning shall declare it will it be known what numbers of young men and women were restrained from vice, and won to the love and practice of goodness, by the manly and paternal utterances of the Bloomsbury pastor.

Dr. Brock, after having gone through the usual course of training at Stepney College, entered upon his ministry at St. Mary's Norwich, nearly forty-five years since. He was the successor—and, we believe, the immediate successor—of Mr. Joseph Kinghorn, who fought so hard a battle with Mr. Hall on the question of communion: At Norwich, he was held in high esteem by all parties, partly because of his power as a preacher and speaker, and partly because of his large-hearted catholicity of spirit. He was on terms of intimacy with the late bishop, father of the present Dean of Westminster. One day, the bishop passed by on horseback, when Dr. (then Mr.) Brock was making some alterations in his chapel at St. Mary's, and when he happened to be standing at the door. "Good morning, Mr. Brock," said the bishop, "I see that you are making some improvements in your chapel." "Yes, my lord. Will you look in, and I wish you would come and give us a sermon on the opening." "Ah, Mr. Brock, I should like to do so, but you know I cannot ask you to preach in the cathedral in return." "Well, my lord, perhaps you may be able to ask me some day!" And he might have done so, if the bishop and the Baptist minister could both have been spared for half-

a-century longer! Dr. Brock remained at Norwich till about six and twenty years since, when he was invited to occupy the pulpit of the chapel at Bloomsbury which Sir Morton Peto had then just erected. The choice of a minister was a wise one. No sooner was the chapel re-opened than it was filled with an audience which crowded even beyond the doors. At that time Mr. Spurgeon was as yet unknown to fame, and Dr. Brock occupied a position, among Baptist ministers, that was entirely his own. Bloomsbury Chapel was then the cathedral of the denomination. For a visitor to London to go and hear Dr. Brock was, twenty years since, almost as much a matter of course as it is now to go and hear Mr. Spurgeon. His labours were incessant and manifold.

About four years since Dr. Brock resigned his position at Bloomsbury, not because there was any falling off in his power, or because there were any indications of any diminishing acceptableness in his ministry, but because he had made up his mind to retire before any such indications should be possible. He continued his public services, however, quite to the last. In his old pulpit at Bloomsbury, until Mr. Chown happily settled there a few months since, he appeared often, and his appearances were always eagerly anticipated. His last service was, we believe, at Newport, in the Isle of Wight, in association with his old friend, the Rev. F. Tréstrail. He spoke then of being hardly equal to the occasion, but nobody thought so except himself.

Dr. Brock was a Devonshire man and of stalwart frame. He came to London early in life and joined the church then under Dr. Price's ministry at Devonshire-square. His occupation at that time was watchmaking. Dr. Price's preaching took hold of him, and he resolved to consecrate himself to the ministry. He therefore entered Stepney College, then under the presidency of Dr. Murch. After the completion of his studies he was called, in 1833, to the pastorate of St. Mary's Baptist Church, at Norwich. The church had been under the ministry of Mr. Joseph Kinghorn for forty-four years, and Mr. Kinghorn was a man of unusual power and singular character. Mr. Brock was ordained on July 25, 1833, when Dr. Murch, of Stepney College gave the charge.

The Freeman gives an excellent notice, from which we make a brief extract or two:

It is not too much to say that Dr. Brock carries with him to his grave more love than is accorded to any other public man. The breadth of his sympathies was only equalled by their extreme sensibility and impartial bestowment. His manly direct outcry in favour of the downtrodden and oppressed made him, in the early part of his career, a power in the land. His genial presence and ready service in all the trials of the Christian life and of the Christian community, made his fame the property of multitudes who had experienced the endearments of his friendship or the benefit of his counsels.

He, Dr. Brock, ever brought a holy sunshine with him, and wherever he was "there was lifting up." We mourn for him, not only as a great light lost to us, but, still more poignantly, as the centre of social Christian warmth, comfort, and encouragement. On placing in the tomb in the Abney-park Cemetery the outer envelope that once contained such a full life, we remembered Faraday's touching mention, in one of his letters, of a peasant's grave which he saw in the Black Forest. The mourners had been too poor to erect the customary votive tablet, but they had written a few words on a scroll of paper placed under a little shelter at the top of a stick. Under the rude ledge thus formed a caterpillar had sheltered, and got into the chrysalis state, and then had winged its way off, leaving its case behind. Even so the soul of our dear friend has winged its way to the eternal glory long ere we had disposed of the

honoured remains in the silent tomb. Unlike the butterfly, however he leaves an after-glow here on which we may still gaze with admiration. *Non omnis moriar!*

William Brock was born at Honiton in 1808. His grandfather was the pastor of the church at Prescott, in the northern part of that loveliest of all the English shires; and the subject of our sketch was wont playfully to say that any excellency which might be in himself was inherited from the old pastor of Prescott. Some of his early years were spent in the quaint, lace-making little town of his birth; and he remembered seeing his mother baptized there in a little Baptist chapel which is now shut up, the church having gone over to Arrianism, and gradually sunk out of existence altogether. After receiving an ordinary school education, he was engaged for some time in trade, we believe as a watchmaker, but while he was yet a young man he had begun to develop qualities which made the most intelligent of his Christian friends the most anxious that instead of remaining in business he should devote himself to the work of the ministry.

DR. BROCK'S PREDECESSOR AND HIS CONGREGATION AT NORWICH.

Of his Norwich days the editor writes:

It was in 1832 that William Brock entered on his work as a pastor. After a short experience in, we believe one of the rural churches of Northamptonshire, he was called to occupy a more conspicuous sphere. It was no easy task which fell to the young preacher when the suffrages of the brethren at Norwich called him, in 1833, to the pulpit which had been occupied for so many years by Joseph Kinghorn. The capital of East Anglia has not yet ceased to be one of those provincial centres of intellectual light which in the early years of the century occupied a position in the land from which they have since been dislodged by the centralizing process which has tended, unhappily we think, to aggrandize London at the expense of the country towns. "Norwich at that time," as an East Anglian writer has remarked, "was very literary. William Taylor, the first Englishman to sound the German Ocean, and to return laden with the spoils of heresy and erudition, lived there; as did also Wilkin, the editor of the best edition of that rare light of Norwich, Sir Thomas Browne and William Youngman, a severe critic, though a writer little known beyond the city in which he so long resided. At that time Norwich drove a considerable trade in logic as well as in woollens. The whole city had a disputatious air. The weaver boys—and William Fox was one of them—learned to dispute and define and doubt. There Harriet Martineau philosophized in petticoats, and George Borrow, at his grammar-school, fitted himself for the romance of his future life." In a city thus given to thought men of superior power were required in the pulpit, especially of the dissenting pulpit; and Dr. Kinghorn had unquestionably proved himself equal to the demand made upon him as the chief representative of the Baptist cause. A distinguished Hebrew scholar, a keen dialectician, a sound theologian, this "strange, spare man," as some one described him, could hold his own with any of the divines in the ancient eastern city; for he had not dared even to break a lance with the most illustrious of all his Baptist contemporaries, Robert Hall, on the communion question? Dr. Stoughton describes Kinghorn as "an ethereal kind of man, of large and peculiar powers, who looked as if he had come from another world, and who had won to a very large degree the affection of his flock." During his protracted pastorate he had gathered around him a rich, intelligent, and exceedingly influential congregation. The principles which were so precious to his own soul he had instilled into their minds. Thus Mr. Brock had peculiar difficulties to contend with when he entered on his pastorate at Norwich. "The church,

with such a pastor as Mr. Kinghorn," says Dr. Stoughton, "had been under peculiar training, and many of its members, were of course, strongly impregnated with their old pastor's views and modes of thought. But from that moment when he entered upon his work at Norwich, Mr. Brock was as much distinguished by his prudence and wisdom as by his hearty and manly eloquence." "The cause," says a local historian, "prospered, the church increased, the place was enlarged, and still the pews were full. It was considered a great treat to hear Mr. Brock. An air of taste pervaded the chapel." By some of the flippant on-lookers it was called "the fashionable watering-place." But solid work was done in those days in that congregation; it was a centre of light and blessing, not only for the city, but for the province in which it was situated.

There was indeed a rare triumvirate of ministerial friends at Norwich in those days—Mr. Alexander, the Independent, one of the most lovable of men, Mr. Andrew Reed, and Mr. Brock. It used to be said that you could hardly find, in the three kingdoms, three men more attached to each other. "I remember the time well," says Dr. Stoughton "when I had the happiness of meeting them in their social hours, and very pleasant and profitable they were."

It was not the mere partiality of private friendship that inspired Sir Morton Peto with the desire to transplant his minister at Norwich to his new metropolitan sphere. He conscientiously believed that Mr. Brock was the man best fitted for the peculiar kind of work to be done, and the issue justified the choice. Writing not long after the settlement, one of the popular sketchers of the day said:—"Mr. Brock's debut in London was a decided success. The chapel, which can contain fifteen hundred hearers, is invariably crammed. If you are late, it is with difficulty you will get standing room. In the arena, at the extreme end on the right, you will see Sir Morton Peto and his family. Half-way down on your left, you will see the long head and spectacles of Dr. Price, editor of the *Eclectic Review*. Lance, the beautiful painter of fruit and flowers, also attends here, but I believe you will find him in the gallery. Other distinguished men were to be seen there as occasional or constant worshippers—Sir Henry Havelock, the Christian soldier; Dr. Benjamin Davies the learned Hebraist; Mr. S. Rowles Pattison, the geologist; Dr. Michael Foster, now the Professor of Biology in the University of Cambridge, and others. Strangers from the other side of the Atlantic often mingled with the Bloomsbury congregation; and many an occasional hearer carried away a blessing, as the pastor would learn in after days. By Mr. Brock's untiring zeal, and with the Divine blessing, the cause yearly gathered strength until it became one of the most extensive centres of religious influence which the metropolis contains. The membership rose to nearly a thousand; in some years upwards of a hundred were received into fellowship; to meet the convenience of the large membership the Lord's Supper was observed once a week; and there was the novelty of a morning service in the chapel every Thursday at eleven o'clock.

After a few days sickness he sank into a state of unconsciousness which continued till within a few hours of his death. The funeral was in accordance with Mr. B's previously expressed wish, strictly private at Abney Park Cemetery. The coffin had on it the simple inscription "WILLIAM BROCK, D. D., died November 13, 1875, aged sixty-eight years."

It appears that the immediate cause of Dr. B's last illness and death was a severe cold he took from being detained an hour on the pier at Cowes in the Isle of Wight. From this he suffered considerably and, in addition severe mental depression indicated failing vigor.