

MEMOIR OF JOHN MEREDITH, ESQ.

John Meredith, Esq., was born in the county of Hereford, in the year 1784. He was baptized at Woolwich, by the Rev. Mr. Freeman, on Oct. 1, 1811, in the 27th year of his age. Preparatory to his appearing before the church he was examined privately by the minister and deacons. We find the following entry in his diary respecting this interview : — " I proceeded trembling for fear that I should say anything that the blessed Spirit did not warrant me. The Lord was very good ; he enabled me to say much more than I thought I could. God grant it might be according to truth. Oh that I might not deceive myself; Thee I cannot deceive." After relating his experience to the church as a candidate for baptism, he makes the following brief entry : — " Gave in my experience before the church. A great trial, but a great mercy." After partaking of the Lord's Supper for the first time, he thus writes : — " I am joined unto God's church and people. Oh, for Christ's sake, that I may be of the Lord's planting ; and I would humbly pray for his Divine presence whilst here with his church militant ; and that afterwards I may be received to his church triumphant. Amen and amen."

The subject of our memoir first became a member of the church meeting in Lambeth about twenty-five years ago, being dismissed to fellowship here by letter from the Baptist church at Bessel's Green, Kent, August 3, 1834. It is about twenty-three years since our departed friend was first called to fill the office of deacon. He had a clear view of its duties, and a deep sense of the solemn obligations under which he was laid to fulfil them. Hence on retiring to his home that day, he penned in secret the following paragraph : — " To-day, after the ordinance, I was chosen, by ballot, one of three deacons to our little church. If I stand, let me not be content with merely serving tables, which too generally is understood to be all that is required, and means keeping a good table for the minister and the poor ; but seeking to be full of faith and the Holy Ghost, may it be my concern to assist the minister, as Stephen and Philip did the Apostles, viz., in teaching sinners the way to heaven, and the inquirer the way of God more perfectly. There being a large debt (about £600 or £700 on the chapel), and a debt on the expenditure, and the income not meeting the present expenditure, makes it doubtful whether it is my duty to stand, as the time this will occupy will necessarily be a great deduction from the more important work of teaching. Lord, teach me (I am but a child) what thou wouldst have me to do."

He was a devoted *labourer* in the cause of Christ, and his labours were not in vain in the Lord. Whilst in connection with the church at Woolwich, he became the Superintendent of the Sabbath School there, and must have laboured indefatigably, as he occasionally visited as many as seventy families a day, in inquiring after absentee scholars and in canvassing for new ones. At Bessel's Green, in Kent, he filled the office of superintendent for several years. A boy named Allen was by him invited to the Sabbath School, who became impressed with the need of salvation, and has now for many years been labouring as a useful servant of God in the ministry. In George Street School he also filled the office of superintendent for a time, and acted in the capacity of visitor for the school. During his superintendency a youth received divine impressions, who left the school and entered the army, but the impressions never left him, and though a soldier, he became united to a Christian church. He also superintended the Palace Yard School, Lambeth, for several years.

A large portion of his time was spent in visiting the members at their homes, praying with them and trying to encourage them in the good way. *Until within six months of his death he regarded himself as having neglected his duty if he did not call upon at least two or three sick or poor members every day.* If a person were

seriously ill, he would endeavour to see them at least once every twenty-four hours until a change took place. He was likewise very active and useful by epistolary correspondence.

According to a memorandum in his diary, he divided his correspondents into three general classes under the following heads, viz., 1. Careless ; 2. Inquirers ; 3. Decided; and used to address a letter to each of them on the return of their birthdays, giving counsel and advice as he thought each particular case required. He also enclosed a small book or tract to each of his correspondents.

He regarded a room as incompletely furnished without a copy of the Word of God. Hence, at least, one copy of the Bible was placed in every room in the house ; and should it by any mistake have been removed, he would have lost no time in taking it back to its place, or putting another in its stead. He sometimes called it " the Guard " or "Watchman" of the room.

Mr. Meredith was a man *eminent for prayer*. His diary contains one of the most remarkable and interesting memorials that, perhaps, was ever left by man ; it is the names of 460 persons for whom he was in the constant habit of making intercessory prayer. It comprehends the names not only of many of the leading ministers of the metropolis, but also the names of eminent ministers, laymen, and missionaries, in Australia, America, India, China, and other portions of the globe. For his own family he made daily special intercession, and his prayers were answered, as many years ago he was permitted to see each one of his sons and daughters united to Christian churches. Surely this is an encouragement for other Christian parents to pray for the conversion of their offspring.

His bodily health had been failing for six years, but more especially had it given way within the last six months. From the nature of the complaint under which he laboured, his sufferings must often have been intense and excruciating, but all was borne with much patience and resignation. On Friday evening, 21st inst., I saw him about nine o'clock. He knew that his departure was at hand. His mind was calm and serene. He rested, with unshaken confidence, for acceptance with God, on the finished work of Jesus. To him death had lost its sting. His last words were, " Come, Lord Jesus." At three the following morning he became unconscious ; and at six o'clock, on the evening of the same day, January 22nd, 1859, his disembodied and triumphant spirit entered, without a struggle or a groan, into its heavenly and eternal rest !

On Friday morning last, his mortal remains were interred in the Norwood Cemetery, amidst a large circle of mourning friends ; and whilst bending over his opened grave, in imagination " I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them."

Lambeth. L.

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