

Death and Burial of J. N. Darby.

Bournemouth Paper.

FUNERAL OF A MEMBER OF THE "BRETHREN."—The remains of the late Mr. John Nelson Darby, a prominent and beloved member of the Plymouth sect, known as the Plymouth Brethren, were interred on Tuesday last at the Cemetery, in the presence of nearly 1,500 persons. The deceased was born in the year 1800. Devoting himself, early in life, to the study of the law, he was admitted as a barrister when a very young man; but afterwards entered the Church of England and laboured for some years with great zeal and self-denial, in County Wicklow, Ireland. Subsequently, he became associated with the (Plymouth) Brethren, and during a long period of his later life worked with great devotion in Australia, New Zealand, America, and other parts of the world. He also distinguished himself as a translator. Though exposed, during a long and eventful life, to many changes and hardships, the deceased worked on to the end of his strength with unabated energy; but, about three months since, it became evident that the end was approaching, and after sojourning at the residence of Mr. Hammond, Sundridge House, Bournemouth, for about three months, he passed away calmly, and with true Christian resignation, on the 29th ult. The respect which was entertained for the deceased during his lifetime was illustrated by the scene around his grave; a special train, bringing Brethren from all parts of Great Britain, having arrived in the town during the morning. Mr. Hammond, Mr. McAdam, Mr. Clarence Snart, of Reading; and Dr. Wolston, of Edinburgh, took part in the burial service at the Cemetery. The undertaker was Mr. G. W. Melmoth, Old Christchurch-road. The body was deposited in a massive polished oak coffin; a brass shield bearing the simple inscription: "John N. Nelson Darby, born 1800, died April, 1882."—*Men of the Time* speaks as follows of the deceased:—Darby, John Nelson, youngest son of the late John Darby, Esq., of King's county, Ireland, was born in Westminster, in 1800, graduated in 1819 at Trinity College, Dublin, in high classical honours, and was called to the bar. He subsequently took orders, but not long after saw fit to abandon this position, only the more freely to exercise his ministry in Great Britain and Ireland, France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, &c., and at a later day also in North and South America and the West Indies, New Zealand, and Australia. He has translated the entire Bible into German, and the New Testament into French as well as English. Besides incessant preaching in these and other languages (chiefly among those commonly known as "Brethren," or "Plymouth Brethren"), he has written on Scriptural subjects so largely that his collected writings, now in course of re-publication, independent of, and uniform with his longest single work, "Synopsis of the Books of the Bible," five volumes, will exceed twenty-five thick volumes.

It has not escaped the notice of Mr. Boase* that, through a life of ceaseless controversy, devotional literature still remained Darby's favourite occupation. In connection with this fact let it be remembered that of all the hymns of the Brethren, of which no competent critic could deny the exceptional beauty, Darby's are unequalled (I had almost said unapproached) for depth, force, and grandeur. I make the statement unhesitatingly, and I do not think it would be for a moment disputed if Darby had not put himself at a serious disadvantage (especially in comparison with so exquisitely graceful a writer as Sir Edward Denny) by his involved and uncouth style of composition.

JOHN NELSON DARBY.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH WEEKLY.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad to have elicited so many interesting communications from your readers, and gratified that I have not, so far as I can see, been detected in any error. I feel it only just to myself to draw particular attention to this circumstance in connection with the letter of "H. W. P." who apparently sets out to correct my mistakes, and who actually, as it seems to me, corrects nothing. He plentifully confirms many of my statements, and supplements them in a very interesting manner; and he also, with perfect courtesy, puts the case from the point of view of an extreme Darbyite. But this surely is all. I must ask him to observe that I only spoke of A. N. Groves as the founder of the Brethren with great qualifications; and, so far as I went, H. W. P.'s own account seems to bear me out thoroughly.

H. W. P.'s sagacity is entirely at fault in his confident assumption that I am a sympathiser with Open Brethren. I am at issue with all sections of the Brethren in respect of their distinctive views as to ministry and Church order and discipline; and this will plainly (though I hope not offensively) appear in my subsequent articles. If I had a bias it would be more likely to favour the exclusive party, to which I was once sincerely attached; but so far as questions between Open and Close Brethren are concerned, I am not conscious of even requiring to make an effort in order to hold an even balance.

I will only add at present that another of your correspondents, Mr. Mayo, relies, in my judgment, far too much on the historical account of the late Andrew Miller. In reverence for the memory of that writer I yield to none; but no one that has carefully attended to both sides could doubt that his information with regard to the beginning of the movement was very defective.—Yours faithfully,

THE AUTHOR OF "DARBY AND DARBYISM."



Of Darby's personal appearance as a young man, I have never heard any account, but it must certainly have been impressive. In his old age, no one could fail to be struck by the strong, well-formed, rugged features, of a high and characteristically English type. His family had, I believe, attained some distinction in the navy, and to this circumstance he is said to have owed his second name; and he himself would have made a striking model for a fancy portrait of some great British admiral. His face gave more indication of courage and force of will than of the greed of arbitrary authority which unhappily equally belonged to him. In figure he must closely have resembled the Iron Duke, giving many people an impression that he was short, while in fact he was decidedly over the middle height, and massively built, though somewhat spare. His bodily powers were all that his frame would have suggested. He survived to his eighty-second year, through toils, privations, and anxieties that might well have worn out an ordinary man thirty years earlier.

The multitude of petty and carping divines who opened their mouths wide for his words were a cause of no small irritation to Darby. He once overheard a company of them discussing the recent death of Dr. Davis—a young coloured man, known as "the good black doctor," who after qualifying in London as a surgeon lost his life from smallpox while attending on the wounded in the Franco-Prussian war. The work for which he laid down his life was deemed a sadly worldly piece of philanthropy by the zealots of Darbyism, and the group was actually discussing whether it were not by a judgment mingled with mercy that the young surgeon had been called hence. Astounding as this may seem to outsiders, it will surprise no one who knew Darbyism at all intimately. Darby, however, broke in on the debate with an impatient "Well, well, God has accepted his service and taken him home." There are some people so small that all the heroism that there is in the world exists in vain for them. Darby was not of their number; and whatever narrow principles of seclusion from the common interests of mankind he may have taught, he was at least incapable of pronouncing so petty an elegy over the valiant dead. This simple incident contains some salutary instruction for those who think to do honour to Darby by observing the pettiest maxims that they have been able to wrest from the most dubious parts of his teaching.

EARLY BRETHRENISM.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH WEEKLY.

DEAR SIR,—The letters about Mr. Darby, and Brethrenism are full of interest. Some of your readers would be glad if your correspondent can give us further details of the early history of the movement, such as may better explain the deep hold it took of multitudes of spiritually-minded people.

In a recent pamphlet on "The Time of the End," the Rev. Graves Walker speaks of "that wonderful week at Plymouth"; and I remember hearing from the daughter of a Plymouth banker, how a series of meetings were held in that town in St. Andrew's Schoolroom. At the end of the week the vicar said (if I was rightly informed), "Would it not be nice to meet together around the table of the Lord?" "Yes," was the reply, "and you, as vicar of the parish, will preside." "No," he answered; "let us meet as brethren." The same informant told me that the theatre was shut at Plymouth that winter, in consequence of the deep solemnity produced by the meetings; also that her father had many contributions brought to his bank for "the poor saints."

I should like to know more about that wonderful time (as it evidently was), and also to understand why Plymouth was the scene of the movement, for Mr. Darby's curacy was in the county of Wicklow, at Enniskerry, I think, close to the home of the devout Lady Powerscourt. How came it that Devon and not Dublin became the centre?—I am, dear sir, yours truly,

J. B. FIGGIS.
Emmanuel Church, Brighton,
January 7th, 1901.