

## Obituary.

MR. JAMES WICKSON.

On Sunday, the 5th ult., in Zion Church, Toronto, the Pastor, Rev. J. G. Manly, delivered a sermon in relation to the recent decease of Mr. JAMES WICKSON, founded on these words—"For to me to live is Christ, to die is gain." After adverting, in the introduction, to the particularity of the Apostle's utterance, the preacher proceeded to show that the Christian's life is both from Christ and for Christ, and that his correspondent death is gainful; and then illustrated the whole subject by the following account of the deceased:—

Such a life and such a death belonged to our dear departed friend and brother, who was known among men as JAMES WICKSON. He was a member of this church from its commencement, in 1834, which was also the year of his arrival in Canada, till his decease, aged 76, on the 3rd day of last month (August), and a deacon till his growing infirmities compelled his retirement. His love for the church of his Canadian choice knew no abatement, and his character in it, as well as in England, was without spot or stain. During an eighteen months' vacancy in the Toronto practical pastorate, from the departure of the Rev. W. Merrifield, in 1836, till the Rev. John Roaf's arrival, in 1837, and in the occasional absence of a minister to occupy the pulpit, Mr. Wickson conducted the service and read a sermon. In various ways he proved himself an active, earnest, efficient Christian; particularly in his kind and wise regard to children and young persons. Both in England and in this country, he was a zealous and successful Sunday-school worker, not only in connection with his own church but otherwise, as in this very city and at Eglington and Yorkville. Soon after his arrival he established, and usually conducted a prayer meeting in his own house, in Yorkville, which was long remembered and cordially acknowledged by many as a means of great profit and enjoyment. In the promotion of the total disuse of alcoholic drinks, he was a foremost and effective labourer. His clear intellect, facility of expression, and power of apt and enlivening illustration, as well as his genuine sympathy with the wants and interests of his fellow men, qualified him for effective speech in the Sunday-school, the prayer meeting, and the Temperance assembly. His affection for the young was evinced in his sympathy with the students of the Congregational Theological Academy, whom he often invited to the refreshment of his pleasant country residence; and it was he who first sought to lead the present respected pastor of the Bond Street Congregational Church into the work of the ministry. Though strongly attached to his own free form of Christianity, from the commencement of his spiritual life, he evinced a noble absence of prejudice and sectarianism. Before the formation of this church, he worshipped by turns with the Presbyterians, under the ministry of the Rev. J. Harris; with the Baptists, under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Stewart; and occasionally with the coloured people, under the ministry of the Rev. Washington Christian. It deserves to be particularly noticed how he rose above the unworthy prejudice of colour, at a time when the slave power was so rampant, and prejudice of colour so rife. He took great interest in Mr. Christian, as an earnest Christian worker, and accorded him the hospitalities of his table.

Our departed brother's sympathies and activities took a different and wider range, aiding in the settlement of the Clergy Reserve question, and co-operating with the Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society. He appears to have acted on the principle of the old Roman, but hallowed and empowered by Heavenly influence—"I am a man, and I count nothing belonging to man foreign to me."

To read the truth at home, and to hear the truth abroad, as well as to communicate the truth to others, were eminently characteristic of our departed friend. He was, however, a man of one book. One who knew him well says—"The Bible was his chief delight, his constant companion. His reverence for the word of God was deep and abiding. He never would permit any article to be placed upon a copy of the Bible, and has been known to purchase a mutilated copy, that it might not be dishonoured as wrapping paper. Towards the close of his life, he read no other book; and when too weak to read himself, he was scrupulously exact in listening to his appointed portion, according to his own marginal marks, refusing to consent to any curtailment. He was a devourer of Scripture, meditating in the divine law, like the Psalmist, "day and night." "The Lord's day and the Sanctuary," says the same friend, "he regarded with peculiarly devout and reverential feeling. Once, when consulted about Sunday reading, he said—"The Bible is the Sunday-book;" and with this his own conduct and his household arrangements exactly agreed. Many well remember his venerable form in the house of God, as he sat with upturned face and fixed attention, hearing the message of salvation. He was very solicitous to train his family, by example and precept, in the fear of God, like Abraham of old, of whom the Lord said—"I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Indeed, it were difficult to find a better reproduction of the Abrahamic spirit and the Abrahamic blessedness. Blessed with a wife, likeminded with himself, he lived to see every one of his nine children walking in the Abrahamic faith, and adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour. Out of ten children, the highly-favoured parents were bereaved of only one, that God in infancy called home as they journeyed from the old world to the new; and in a long life together of 55 years, they never saw a death or corpse in their dwelling. To them, as to Abraham, God was a shield and an exceeding great reward. The very aspect of our departed friend, in his old age, was eminently patriarchal. One could scarcely see him without thinking of the father of the faithful; and one can scarcely hear how God preserved him and his, in Yonge Street, shortly after their arrival, while Asiatic cholera raged around them, and entered the very next house on either hand, without remembering how God took care of the patriarchs wherever they went.

The review of such a life would be utterly imperfect without reverting to its beginning. Whence came the excellence of such a character? It is not native to man; it is not general among men; it cannot be self-created; it stands out in such marked and thorough contrast with the course of the world as necessarily to imply a divine source and cause. In London, England, our departed friend was born in 1793, and born again in the first year of his married life; for in 1815 he joined the Congregational Church, in Camberwell, London, under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Innes. To this he was mainly led by the beloved partner of his long and happy married life. Both themselves and their parents had belonged to the Anglo-Episcopal Church, but till the year ending in 1815, he had not been led to decision for Christ, and to the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. How truly our venerable friend's heart was then subdued and sanctified by the grace of God appears from a consistent, earnest, useful Christian life of fifty-four years, 19 in England, 35 here. In him, as in all God's children, divine life at once

evinced itself in acknowledgment of Christ and in ardent activity for him. In London, on Sunday morning, he taught in the Sunday school, and led the children to public worship; in the afternoon, he taught again in one of the classes; and in the evening, he gathered together the poorest particularly, to make known to them the salvation that is in Christ Jesus; thus evincing that he lived by Christ and for Christ. It deserves to be noted as a lesson young Christians, and as a reproof to the indolent, that besides all this on the Lord's day, he found time for a Sunday teachers' prayer meeting, and for the visitation of the sick and destitute, and that all this was the labour of his wedded life, not his single. May his mantle fall on the young people of this church and congregation! From the outset of this church, Mr. Wickson appears to have been the guiding spirit, in Sunday-school instruction, tract distribution, arrangements for worship, and in securing a larger church edifice for the growing congregation, even in the absence of a settled minister. Dr. did he and his excellent fellow-workers labour in vain, as the history and propagation of this church prove; for not a few have been led to Christ and greatly aided in their progress to the skies. No place was dearer or sweeter to him than the prayer meeting; no work was more facile to him than that apt and attractive instruction of children; and no aspect of the Christian life was more distinctive of him than the hope of heaven, which often found utterance in the words—

"Father, I faint, I long to see  
The place of thine abode;  
I'd leave thine earthly courts and flee,  
Up to thy seat, my God."

His habitual communion with God was often indicated by unconscious audible ejaculations, as he walked by the way or engaged in business, and by the fact that in his own family few moments passed without his utterance of some passage of scripture, or some stanza of a hymn. His humility appeared in the expression of his wish that his epitaph should be the words of the Psalmist: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard, and delivered him out of all his troubles."

In suffering, as in action, God's grace was glorified in him. After acute pain, more or less, for many years of his life, he was, in the last year or two, unconscious of it, and he often expressed his sense of God's goodness to him in this exemption. He was accustomed to note his slowly failing strength, and say—"I am evidently lower, but it is all right;" and often added—"I surely cannot last long now." Though sometimes thinking himself dying, death had no terrors for him; though sometimes in heaviness, he held fast the beginning of his confidence steadfast to the end; and though abashed before God by a sense of his utter unworthiness and the divine perfection, he was not left comfortless or long depressed.

Who can contemplate unmoved the close of such a life! While the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day. The Father of mercies and the God of all grace knows how to refine his children's hearts, and perfect their preparation for heaven. Both consciously and unconsciously, the work goes on; sometimes in doing, sometimes in suffering; sometimes rapidly, sometimes slowly; sometimes in a short life, sometimes in a long life; sometimes without unharnessing in either battlefield or workshop, sometimes, apparently long unemployed; but always under the mysterious influence of that Spirit whose emblem is the wind, always by the grace of Christ, and always to the glory of God the Father. In the gathering shadows and greater weakness of life's last days, our beloved and honoured friend was made conformable to all his Christian antecedents. To a venerable friend he said—"I am going home." To a weeping relation he said—"Don't fret, we are all going to heaven." To the last, he was conscious of his surroundings, saying—"I see you all;" and one of his last utterances was—"I trust in Jesus," thus realizing the aspiration—

"Happy, if with my latest breath  
I may but gasp His name,  
Preach Him to all, and cry in death—  
Behold, behold the Lamb!"

Such a death is conquest, not subjection; such a death is home-going, not home-leaving; such a death is sunrise, not sunset.

"Mortals cry—'A man is dead!'  
Angels sing—'A child is born.'"

Who shall "point the moral" of such a consummation, or "adorn the tale" of such a career? It is itself vocal with instruction; it is itself pregnant with influence; it is itself radiant with light. "He, being dead, yet speaketh." The chief survivor and the kinship-circle and the friendship-circle need no studied condolence or comfort. Such a husband, such a father, such a friend and brother is a precious legacy. Such a name that Christ engraved on his own hands, and now emblazons on the tablets of immortality, casts contempt on all earthly honours and human eulogies, and abides in the heart like Eden's fragrance or heaven's own lingering harmony. A little while, and you shall rejoice him; for a little while follow him; he is now one of the great cloud of witnesses that surround and survey you; east away every incumbrance, and look steadfastly to the Author and Finisher of your faith, till he returns with his saints to finish redemption and open his final heaven.

In such a pulpit estimate as this, the bereaved church must not be forgotten. The church that could not appreciate such an accession and such a departure, would not be entitled to church name and rank. My brethren: the oldest brother on our roll is gone, the patriarch of our Israel is acceded. This church's primary deacon is with Christ in paradise. Let us thank the great source of our endowments and enjoyments that such a member and such an officer was so long ours; and let us prove ourselves worthy of our origin and progress and principles, by fidelity to our Head. I think myself honoured to have been the beloved pastor, the sixth and last pastor, of such a Christian; but I will not here detail my intercourse with him, or his demonstrations to myself. Let us pray and strive that we may be as he was in genuine piety, in humility and love, in spirituality and consistency, in activity and efficiency, in perseverance and progress. The grace of God that alone can make us such, and that alone we glorify in him, should be all our trust and strength, and wealth and joy.

My beloved young friends of this church and congregation: I entreat your earnest study of a life of such worth, that began in early manhood, so that yours may be a life like his; and since I cannot at present dilate upon the lessons to yourselves that are now suggested, I affectionately invite you to ponder them with me here, on next Lord's day morning.

To all that are unsaved, I commend this proof and illustration of the preciousness and power of true religion. Without this, James Wickson would have been nothing; with it, he is the honour of the church and the beloved of God. What could earth without God avail him now; and what can it avail you, if you postpone salvation, neglect Christ, and become the cast-away of Heaven? O come to Christ, who loved you and died for you, who reigns and pleads for you, who all day long spreads out his hands to receive you. Come to Christ, who casts no comer out; and come now, for only now he calls.