

JOHN NELSON DARBY.

(A MEMORIAL).

JOHN NELSON DARBY.

IT has been with no desire to eulogise the late Mr Darby that the following particulars have been compiled, but simply as a brief memorial of one to whom the Church of God owes so much. To attempt even a sketch of the life-work of our departed brother and servant of Christ might prove a snare, and lead to fulsome adulation. "He being dead yet speaketh."

John Nelson Darby was the youngest son of John Darby, of Leap Castle, King's County, Ireland, and a nephew of Admiral Sir Henry Darby, Commander of the *Bellerophon* in the battle of the Nile. He was educated at Westminster, and Trinity College, Dublin, where he was Gold Medallist in 1819; and was called to the Irish Bar, but subsequently took Orders in the Church. When about 27 years of age (1827), deploring the evils and divisions in Christendom, and discovering from God's Word the blessed and practical

truth that "there is One Body," and that every true believer on earth is a member thereof, and further, that Scripture recognises no other membership, he severed his connection with the National Church, and gathered with others to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ *alone* (Matt. xviii. 20). It was a movement, in its inception, and progress at home, in the colonies, and on the Continent for many years, distinctly marked of God—a movement even more spiritual in character, if not of such a public nature, as that under Luther in the sixteenth century. Mr Darby was, perhaps, the most voluminous theological writer of the nineteenth century.

The following from the pen of Francis Henry Newman, who openly avowed infidelity (brother of the late Cardinal Newman), may be read with interest, it is entitled :—

PORTRAIT OF THE IRISH CLERGYMAN.

(JOHN NELSON DARBY).

"This was a young relative of his, a most remarkable man, who rapidly gained an immense sway over me. I shall henceforth call him the 'Irish Clergyman.' His 'bodily presence' was indeed 'weak.' A fallen cheek, a bloodshot eye, crippled limbs resting on crutches, a seldom shaven beard, a shabby suit of clothes, and a generally

neglected person, drew at first pity, with wonder to see such a figure in a drawing room. It was currently reported that a person in Limerick offered him a halfpenny, mistaking him for a beggar; and if not true, the story was yet well invented. This young man had taken high honours at Dublin University, and had studied for the bar, where, under the auspices of his eminent kinsman, he had excellent prospects; but his conscience would not allow him to take a brief, lest he should be selling his talents to defeat justice. With keen logical powers, he had warm sympathy, solid judgment of character, thoughtful tenderness and total self-abandonment. He before long took holy orders, and became an indefatigable curate in the mountains of Wicklow. Every evening he sallied forth to teach in the cabins, and roving far and wide over mountains, and amid bogs, was seldom home before midnight. By such exertions his strength was undermined, and he so suffered in his limbs that not lameness only, but yet more serious results were feared. He did not fast on purpose (?), but his long walks through wild country and amongst indigent people, inflicted on him much severe deprivations; moreover, as he ate whatever food offered itself (food unpalatable and often indigestible to him), his whole frame might have vied in emaciation with a monk of *La Trappe*. . . .

I was at first offended by his apparent affectation of a careless exterior, but I soon understood that in no other way could he gain equal access to the lowest orders, and

that he was moved, not by asceticism, nor by ostentation, but by a self-abandonment fruitful of consequences. He had practically given up all reading but the Bible; and no small part of his movement soon took the form of dissuasion from all other voluntary study. In fact, I had myself more and more concentrated my religious reading on this one book; still I could not help feeling the value of a cultivated mind. Against this my new eccentric friend (having himself enjoyed no mean advantages of cultivation) directed his keenest attacks. I remember once saying to him: 'To desire to be rich is absurd; but if I were a father of children, I should wish to be rich enough to secure them a good education.' He replied: 'If I had children, I would as soon see them break stones on the road as do anything else, if only I could secure to them the gospel and the grace of God.' I was unable to say Amen; but I admired his unflinching consistency, for now, as always, all he said was based on texts aptly quoted and logically enforced. He made me more and more ashamed of political economy, and moral philosophy, and all science, all of which ought to be 'counted dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.' For the first time in my life, I saw a man earnestly turning into reality the principles which others professed with their lips only. . . . Never before had I seen a man so resolved that no word of it (the New Testament) should be a dead letter to him. I once said; 'But do you really think that no part of the New Testament may have been temporary in its object? For instance—What should

we have lost if St. Paul had never written, 'the cloke that I left at Troas bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments?' He answered with the greatest promptitude, 'I should have lost something, for it was exactly that verse which alone saved me from selling my little library. No! every word, depend upon it, is from the Spirit, and is for eternal service.' In spite of the strong revulsion which I felt against some of the peculiarities of this remarkable man, I, for the first time in my life found myself under the dominion of a superior. When I remember how even those bowed down before him who had been in the place of parents—accomplished and experienced minds—I cease to wonder in the retrospect that he rivetted me in such a bondage."

It has been the experience of most men brought into personal contact with Mr Darby, that the influence exercised over them has been almost overwhelming. His marvellous power in grappling with principles and tracing their application to their legitimate results; his simple and unaffected piety, combined with the ripest scholarship and unequalled ability in expounding the Word of God, accompanied by a generous appreciation of the good and excellent outside the ecclesiastical sphere in which he moved, fitted him to become, as he undoubtedly was, a recognised leader in the church of God.

Mr Darby's polemical writings in English, French, and German are numerous, cover a large field of enquiry, and

are characterised by an intimate and scholarly treatment of their respective subjects.

Mr Darby was a keen and able controversialist. His critical acumen in detecting principles where others, perhaps, would have dealt only with details, was truly marvellous. This character of mind led him on all controversial subjects treated of to lose sight of his opponent, and shun personalities, in order to present the subject on hand, in a broad, full, and comprehensive manner. The weakness of an opposed argument was soon apparent, and the truth got more firmly established. The strength of that mind consecrated to the defence and maintenance of Christianity is never more powerfully exhibited than in his "Examination of the Essays and Reviews" and in other works of a similar character. In private life he was kind and gracious and characterised by a simplicity which endeared him to the young, and especially to children. His habits were simple. He was an indefatigable worker and traveller, and bore in his spirit and ways the distinct mark of a stranger here. His personal love to Christ was intense. But no more need be said. His record is on high.

THE FUNERAL OF JOHN NELSON DARBY,
AT THE CEMETERY IN BOURNEMOUTH,
2nd MAY, 1882.

J. N. D. had been brought to Bournemouth some weeks before his death, to the house of Mr Hammond, an ex-Clergyman of the Church of England.

On the morning of the funeral there had been a prayer meeting at Sunbridge House (Mr Hammond's), at which a farewell letter of Mr Darby's to brethren was read, and which was subsequently copied for private circulation.

The time fixed for the interment was 3.30 p.m., and within about five minutes of that time the hearse was at the cemetery gate.

There the coffin was placed on a bier, under which, at either end, a long pole was placed transversely, so that, while a brother held the handles of the bier at each end,

other brethren took hold of the pole on either side; and as the distance from the gate to the grave was considerable, the bearers were changed several times, so as to give as many brethren as possible the privilege of carrying the body to the grave.

No regular procession was formed, but brethren—and there was a good sprinkling of sisters as well—followed the body *en masse*. The effect at this point was striking. Every voice was hushed; and nothing was heard but the tread of many feet, almost as regular as the measured tread at a military funeral.

Many friends had already congregated around the grave, whither the body was at once taken.

After about a minute's silence, Mr M'Adam gave out the Hymn 229 in "The Little Flock Hymn Book" ("O Happy Morn"), sung to *Praise*. Just as the last note of this hymn died away, a lark rose from the greensward close by, and poured forth its joyous notes. Perhaps many did not notice it—to the writer's ear it was quite in harmony with the scene.

Mr C. E. Stuart, of Reading, read from Matt. xxvii. 57-60, and in a few words pointed out the contrast between the burial of the Master and the burial of the servant. To the few around the Master's grave it seemed that all their hopes had been cut off. How different was it to us to-day in co-

mitting the servant's body to the grave, through the death of the Master. We were not there to eulogise the servant, but we could speak of the Master.

Mr Hammond prayed.

Dr. Wolston, of Edinburgh, then read from Gen. xlviii. part of verse 21: "Israel said unto Joseph, Behold I die but God shall be with you;" Phil. ii. 12-13; and Rev. i. 17-18, and said a few words suggested by the passages.

Mr Blyth gave out the one-verse hymn, 286, "Soon thou wilt come again," sung to *Indian*.

Mr C. Stanley (now with the Lord) read from John xiv. 1-3, and 1 Thess. iv. 14-17, "The Father's House and the Rapture of the Saints," and in a few words referred to our departed brother as having been the means of reviving the truth as to the Lord's coming.

"Lord Jesus Come," Hymn 324, was then given out by Dr. Christopher Wolston, and sung to *American*.

The coffin was lowered into the grave by brethren.

Mr Roberts, of Worcester, prayed.

"Brightness of Eternal Glory" was then sung to *Alma*, followed by the Doxology, "Glory, Honour, Praise, and Power," which closed the meeting.

The coffin was of polished oak, with a brass plate on which was engraved:—

JOHN NELSON DARBY,

BORN 18TH NOV., 1800.

DIED IN THE LORD

29TH APRIL, 1882.

There was a very large number of friends present from all parts of the country—from eight to ten hundred.

The S. W. Railway ran a “special” to London in the evening to take back those who had come from the city.

There has been erected a large plain stone to mark the resting place of the richly-gifted servant of the Lord, on which is carved an inscription of 11 lines as follows:—

JOHN NELSON DARBY,

“AS UNKNOWN AND WELL KNOWN.”

DEPARTED TO BE WITH CHRIST,

29TH APRIL, 1882.

AGED 81.

2 COR. V. 21.

Lord let me wait for Thee alone,
My life be only this,
To serve Thee here on earth unknown,
Then share Thy heavenly bliss.

J. N. D.

“Remember them which have the rule over you (our deceased guides), who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever” (Heb. xiii. 7-8.)

THE HOPE OF DAY.

(The First Five Verses.)

And is it so! I shall be like Thy Son!
 Is this the grace which He for me has won?
 Father of glory! Thought beyond all thought,
 In glory, to His Own blest likeness brought!

O Jesus, Lord! Who loved me like to Thee?
 Fruit of Thy work! With Thee too, there to see
 Thy glory, Lord, while endless ages roll,
 Myself the prize and travail of Thy Soul!

Yet it must be: Thy love had not its rest,
 Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest;
 That love that gives not as the world, but shares
 All it possesses with its loved co-heirs!

Nor I alone; Thy loved ones all complete
 In glory, round Thee there with joy shall meet!
 All like Thee: for Thy glory like Thee, Lord!
 Object supreme of all, by all adored!

And yet it must be so: a perfect state,
 To meet Christ's perfect love, what we await;
 The Spirit's hopes, desires, in us inwrought,
 Our present joy, with living blessings fraught.

Written by F. N. D., 1872.

THE "MAN OF SORROWS."

(The Last Four Verses.)

O Lord ! Thy wondrous story
 My inmost soul doth move ;
 I ponder o'er Thy glory,
 Thy lonely path of love.

But, O Divine sojourner
 'Midst man's unfathomed ill,
 Love, that made Thee a mourner.
 It is not man's to tell !

We worship, when we see Thee
 In all Thy sorrowing path ;
 We long soon to be with Thee
 Who bore for us the wrath !

Come then, expected Saviour,
 Thou Man of Sorrows, come !
 Almighty, blest Deliverer !
 And take us to Thee—home.

Written by F. N. D., 1867.