

THE
EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE
AND
MISSIONARY CHRONICLE.

MAY, 1826.

MEMOIR OF THE LATE REV. JOHN HYATT,
ONE OF THE PASTORS OF THE TABERNACLE AND TOTTENHAM COURT CHAPEL.

MANY are the venerable men whose departure from our world we have had to record since our Magazine first opened its pages as a depository of their memory. Of these, few Christian Ministers have filled a more ample field of labour, or have been more honoured with success in the conversion of immortal souls, than he whose memoir we now present to our readers.

We do not claim for Mr. Hyatt the kind of usefulness which attached to the character and labours of a Bogue, or of a Townsend; we are aware too, of the difficulty of estimating the extent of ministerial usefulness in any case; yet we venture to state it, as our calm and decided opinion, that as he was peculiarly fitted and eminently qualified for the congregations of immense magnitude, in which for the last twenty years of his life he has had to labour; so we believe he has been honoured with as large a measure of success as any Christian minister we have known in the same space of time.

Mr. Hyatt was born on the 21st of January, 1767, at Sherborne, in Dorsetshire; like the great Founder

of those chapels in which he finished his labours, his parents kept a public house, and, like him, was allied to parents of the Established Church, who, although of respectable character in society, contributed nothing, by their personal piety, or parental influence, to the future happiness and usefulness of their son. He was not, however, favoured, like Mr. Whitfield, with the advantages of a College education. Sherborne yet retains some monuments of its pristine episcopacy, and among others its royal Grammar School, founded by the Sixth Henry, but whether from the indifference of his parents, or their want of ability or influence, their son was never aided by the discipline of the Grammar School. He received such an education only "as a common school in the country could afford." In this he succeeded beyond most of his associates, and discovered talents of no common order.

It cannot be matter of surprise that a youth of commanding abilities and of ardent passions, left almost without either mental or moral discipline, should distinguish himself in the career of youthful follies. In

fact he even became a leader of this kind, and there may be persons yet living who accompanied him in the broad road that leadeth to destruction, who have not yet set out to follow him in the way that leads to life eternal.

At the age of fourteen years he was apprenticed to a Cabinet-maker, in his native town. In this station, "he soon obtained the approbation and confidence of his master, and, when but eighteen years of age, managed the business and kept the books of the trade." In the last year of his term, his master dying, he carried on the concern on his own account, and by his assiduity and attention to his business, not only secured, but greatly enlarged his connexion. There is, indeed, good reason to believe that, had he chosen to remain in business, his talents and industry, sustained by the esteem which he possessed in the town, would have led him to a comfortable, if not even an affluent condition.

At this period of his life, though a dutiful affectionate son, and an industrious tradesman, "he was without God and without Christ in the world," but an event took place which gave a change to his character, and a direction to his future pursuits, even to the close of his life.

He formed an attachment to Miss Westcomb, the niece of the Rev. Mr. Vardy, a Dissenting Minister, of that town, with whose aged widow she lived at that time. He was struck with her pious demeanour, and the kind attention with which she performed her duties to her aunt. He joined her in the worship of the chapel. "In this select and pious family, of which she was a member, he spent many of his evenings. Here he saw, embodied, and exemplified, pure and undefiled religion." On a Lord's day evening he happened to take up a small slip of paper, then lying on the mantel-piece, and unintentionally put it into his pocket. It

contained a short extract from a pious book. Reading it the next morning, he received from it an impression he had never felt before. From that moment the salvation of his soul, hitherto neglected, became to him the business of the greatest importance. By events so trivial, God's providence delights to produce the most important results. On a pivot so small as to escape the notice of the human eye, turn events which influence personal character, relative usefulness, and immortal felicity.

By the same providence of God it happened that the library of Mr. Vardy was yet in the possession of his widow. To that Mr. Hyatt had recourse amidst his doubts and anxieties, and, indeed, his ignorance of the great principles of the Gospel of Christ. What the Egyptians called a library, "the medicine of the soul," Mr. Hyatt actually found Mr. Vardy's to be to himself. The pages of Caryl, of Charnock, and Owen, and others, did not fail to point out to him the balm of Gilead and the physician there. He found help no doubt in the minister whom he heard in the chapel, but it is believed, by competent judges, yet living, that the departed worthies, with whose works he conversed in the study of Mr. Vardy, were the most efficient instruments in directing him to the great refuge, and in forming the elementary principles of his character, both as a Christian and as a Minister.

"From this time he felt it his duty to abandon his former connexions. This step brought upon him a violent opposition, not only from his former associates, but even from his own father."

The change produced, in a ring-leader of youthful follies, became the subject of general conversation, and occasioned a determined opposition from his parents. Mr. Hyatt's mind, however, was fixed. He had counted the cost. He was decidedly on the

Lord's side, and by his well-doing he put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and conciliated the esteem of the most respectable inhabitants as a man of business.

"About the same time he married the young lady before named, with whom for thirty-nine years he enjoyed as large a share of happiness as falls to the lot of most." He united himself to the same Christian church. Casting his eyes around him, he saw many wandering out of the way of life. He determined to use all the means in his power, "thinking it better that they should hear the gospel, though delivered by an uneducated man, than that they should perish in their sins," he determined to preach in the villages surrounding his native town. "In this humble but useful way he continued to go about doing good for more than two years."

In the neighbourhood of Sherborne this was a novel thing; the labours of the great man, whom he was destined eventually to follow in the ministry of the gospel, had been scarcely known in that county. The ministers among the Dissenters, although men of competent learning, and of respectable character, deemed it irregular to go out into the highways and hedges to invite the outcasts to come in that the house might be filled. At the first they looked upon the efforts of Mr. Hyatt with indifference, or something worse; but a more intimate acquaintance with his character gradually, and even speedily, removed the obstacles to their intercourse. Some of the oldest and most discreet ministers of the county, soon invited him to their pulpits, and expressed their sincere joy at the success of his ministrations.

Under their advice he relinquished his secular pursuits, and had his condition in life been much higher than it was; had he been born to affluence, or bred to a learned pro-

fession, with the most flattering prospects of success, no doubt can be entertained, by those who knew him, that he would have sacrificed all worldly gains, for the sake of devoting himself to the duties of the Christian ministry.

Perhaps it is to be regretted, at this period of his life, that no wise and competent minister of his county, took him under his instruction, at least so far as to point out to him the rich stores of his own language, in the various departments of Christian theology. It seems he was left, with a little cursory advice, to find his own way, as he could, by such assistants as the providence of God put into his hands.

"Among other invitations which he received, one was from Mere, in Wiltshire. In this town religion was in a low condition. To this people he constantly preached on the Sabbath, riding over from Sherborne, on the Saturday, and returning on the Monday, a distance of seventeen miles.

Here he was the instrument of a great revival, in consequence of which a small neat chapel was built. To this place he received an unanimous invitation to become the pastor of this little flock. With this he complied, and was ordained in July, 1798, by the most respectable ministers of the county.

"In looking back to this step, I can never reflect on it, (says his brother,) without thinking that he here displayed most of those traits of character which were afterwards so manifest in him. We here behold a young man, with an increasing family and a prosperous business, sacrificing every other consideration, and disregarding every flattering prospect of a worldly nature, to prosecute the one great object in which all the energies of his mind were bent. Here was no cold calculation of worldly interest—all was love to God and love to man. He entered most religiously into the sentiment that if he was called by the Great Head of the Church to labour in his vineyard, he, in some way or other, would provide for him. With these views he sacrificed his worldly prospects and entered upon the work of the Christian ministry, among a people who

could not at that time raise a stipend of forty pounds a-year."

Having disposed of his business to one who had served his apprenticeship to him, he left a considerable part of his property in his hands; but this person not succeeding in business, all, or nearly all the money was lost. The salary at Mere was too small, alone, to support his family—it became necessary for him to remove to a larger congregation.

The people parted with him with great regret, but with the most cordial feelings of friendship and affection, when he accepted a call to the pastoral office over the church at Zion Chapel, Frome, Somerset. To this place he removed in 1800.

At Frome he had a more numerous and intelligent congregation. It was here he more assiduously devoted himself to his appropriate studies. Here he adopted the plan, which he continued through life, of writing the whole of the sermons which he delivered to his people.

He read and studied some of the best English authors in Christian Theology with considerable application of mind, and with great advantage to himself.

It is probable that his studies, while at Frome, if not directed, were impelled by the talents of a Christian minister, who happened at that time to reside there, whose Essays, since published, rank justly among the most intellectual productions of the age. From the conversation of the highly-gifted, and original mind of Mr. Foster, there can be no doubt Mr. Hyatt would reap solid advantages. It is well remembered, that when these Essays were first published, Mr. Hyatt said, with his wonted ardour, "I have heard Mr. Foster talk over these subjects, and every topic, from *his talk*, is deeply fastened on my mind."

God's blessing accompanied his studies and his labours. The congregation soon increased—the pastor

and the people were happy—peace and prosperity attended them, and in the subsequent part of his life, he ever retained a most lively remembrance of the happy years he spent there, and cherished a most sincere affection towards the people, for the kindness they manifested to him and his family.

Mr. Hyatt, during his residence at Frome, statedly visited the Tabernacle at Bristol, at Haverfordwest, and other places. His labours were highly esteemed, and it appears by the testimony of a competent witness, that at these places, and especially the latter, by his ministry much people was added unto the Lord.

At this period he was invited as a supply to the Tabernacle in London. His talents arrested the attention of the congregations, and the declining health of the Rev. J. A. Knight, induced the managers to consider Mr. Hyatt as a suitable person to become a stated minister in their chapel.

This invitation was given to him with unanimity and accepted on his part with cordiality. On this immense field of labour he entered. It was here his ministerial character and endowments attained their full stature. Here for twenty years he laboured with great acceptance and success, and here he finished his course. We intend, therefore, in our next number, to present our readers with the last and most important part of his Memoir.

ON PUBLIC COLLECTIONS FOR BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS.

MR. EDITOR,

I HAVE long intended to communicate my thoughts, through the medium of your Magazine, on the above-mentioned subject; and as this is the time of the year when the Societies in question are accustomed to make an appeal to the religious public, and the present state of the commercial world is likely to throw some obstructions in the way