

**THE CHRISTIAN
PHILANTHROPIST. A
MEMORIAL OF JOHN
HOWARD**

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The Christian philanthropist. A memorial of John Howard by John Stoughton

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JOHN STOUGHTON

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P R E F A C E.

THE following Memorial was delivered at the Anniversary of Howard Chapel, Bedford, in the month of October, 1852. It was thought appropriate to mark the occasion by celebrating the memory of one who was so intimately connected with the Church assembling within the walls of the edifice now called after his name. I felt a pleasure in complying with the request of my friend, the Rev. W. Alliott, to undertake the service, both on account of my admiration of Howard's character, and from a desire to assist in the removal of the debt on Howard Chapel.

I trust that the exhibition of the Great Philanthropist's example may stimulate Christian friends to aid the Church at Bedford

in the endeavour to remove its present pecuniary encumbrance. Any profits arising from the sale of this publication will be appropriated to that desirable purpose.

THE
CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPIST.

RICHER than merchant's stores or banker's gold, fairer than green pastures and yellow corn-fields, are the histories of those whom God hath made great and good. I would not estimate the wealth of a town simply by the extent of its products and the amount of its revenues, nor its beauty by the architecture of its streets, and the scenery of its environs. The moral must not be forgotten; it must come before the material. Do I enter a place associated with the names of those whom the Father of Spirits endowed with wondrous gifts, and ennobled by appointment to some rare service in the great household of human souls, that place arrests my attention, excites my interest, inspires my reverence, beyond what another place, totally eclipsing it in displays of art and commerce, without associations of the other kind, could ever do.

I congratulate the inhabitants of Bedford upon the lustre they derive from two names, which shine on their historical escutcheon, far more than upon the advantages which flow from their pleasant situation and their industrial activity. Standing on the now graceful bridge which spans the Ouse, with its banks of water lilies, one sees the shadow of another bridge—timeworn—with a dark dungeon built into its massive middle pier, through whose iron bars there used, for twelve long years, to look up to the bright heavens the eyes of him who there met with an apocalypse of Christian life, glowing with colours of more unearthly hue, radiant with forms of diviner fashion, than had ever been revealed in dream or vision, since the days of the loved and last disciple in his prison Isle of Patmos. Sitting, on a quiet Sabbath morning, in Bunyan Chapel, while the fresh air, through the open window, fanning the cheek, comes but as the companion of fresher breezes of freedom fanning the heart, the worshipper must needs think of the man whose name the present edifice wisely commemorates, who, ere our liberties were secured, was wont, in a humble edifice which covered the same spot in unsettled times, when pauses in the storm of persecution gave uncertain repose, to throw out, with a skill which was God's special

gift to him, the loving lines of his holy genius, seeking to win wandering mortals to the ways of heavenly wisdom.

As we pass through the pleasant village of Cardington, with its lines of cottages so modest and so neat, with its clustering elms so shady and so green, with its Gothic church so ancient and so strong—a village that which, as Englishmen, we are glad to say may serve as the fair specimen of many such, another name occurs to us, whose sound has gone beyond the echo of that earlier one. We feel an irresistible desire to stay there and think of JOHN HOWARD, who lived in the old house behind the church, and the traces of whose beneficent care rest still on the place of his ancestral and chosen home. Entering to-night within the halls of this chapel, which he helped to rear; looking on the pew where he used to worship; standing in the pulpit to which, with reverent attention, he turned his eye and ear to catch the instructions and appeals of his friend and pastor; bending over the table, from which he delighted to receive the bread and the cup, which told of a love to imprisoned souls unspeakable and infinite—the fountain of his own; can we help imagining that we see the very man amongst us? In stature below the common standard; frail rather than robust in make;

complexion sallow, fading into paler hues at times ; features large and noble, with a nose grandly arched as might befit a conqueror, and with an eye sparkling and keen, but revealing the philanthropist to those who steadily looked into its deep fountain ; with a high and ample forehead, which, though it told not of genius, spoke of sagacity and intelligence ; with lips thin and compressible, which proclaimed beyond all mistake an iron will ; vivacious in matter ; alert in gait ; animated in gesture ; gentle in voice ; with a somewhat foreign air overspreading the whole. The very man seems present with us now, in the costume of the eighteenth century. We see John Howard here bending down before God in prayer, and asking strength for his wonderful mission. His eye brightens and his heart beats, as he is told of Him "who went about doing good:" a tear falls, as the preacher reads Christ's words, "sick and in prison, and ye visited Me." He is just come home from a long tour in distant lands, thinking little about the picturesque, but full of large thoughts about prisons, their discipline and their inmates ; he mingles pleadings for the captive with songs of praise for his own preservation. Again he is going from home for the last time ; he looks round this edifice for the last time ; Amen is pronounced by him

here for the last time. The voice of duty, to him ever the voice of God, calls him away once more from his native shores and it is for the last time. He has an inward premonition he shall see the familiar faces around him no more, but he is strong of heart, because strong in faith, strong in God.

We propose this evening to contemplate the character of this extraordinary man. It has been thought that the anniversary services of the chapel with which he was once connected personally, and still is connected by name, present a fit occasion for doing so.

The places where illustrious mortals have been born are rendered sacred to us by our knowledge of the fact. We also like to mark a red letter in the calendar over their birthday. Seven cities, we are told, claimed the honour of being Homer's birthplace: four localities have been mentioned as the scene of Howard's nativity; and, as in the case of the Greek poet, so in the case of the English philanthropist, different years are assigned as the era. We have not the gratification, then, within our reach of visiting some old house of the last century, or even of standing on its site, and saying, "Here first breathed those lips so full of kindness, here first throbbed that heart so full of manly love;" we have not the pleasure of