

**PETER BEDFORD,
THE SPITALFIELDS
PHILANTHROPIST**

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Peter Bedford, the Spitalfields Philanthropist by William Tallack

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WILLIAM TALLACK

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Peter Bedford conversing with Two Thieves.

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THE

SPITALFIELDS PHILANTHROPIST.

BY

WILLIAM TALLACK,

*Author of "Malta under the Phœnicians, Knights and English,"
&c., &c.*

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[P. T. O.]

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE late Peter Bedford was a gentleman who, for a long course of years, was most highly respected for his philanthropic labours, and greatly beloved by a wide circle of friends, on account of his peculiarly sympathizing and genial disposition.

Throughout his long life he pursued an active, but unostentatious career of beneficent usefulness, especially in the neighbourhood of his residence, first at Spitalfields and subsequently at Croydon.

It was his pleasure and privilege to be for many years intimately associated with several of the leading philanthropists of his time, as for instance with Mrs. Fry

and her two noble brothers Joseph John and Samuel Gurney, with Messrs. William Allen, Basil Montague, William Crawford, and William Forster, also with Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, Bart., Count Von der Recke, and the Right Hon. Dr. Lushington, the venerable Judge of the Ecclesiastical and Admiralty Courts.

Whilst gifted with a warmth of heart and an earnest devotedness to charity, equal to that of any of these more generally known excellent personages, Mr. Bedford was, on several accounts, precluded from appearing so prominently before the Christian public as it was their lot to do, inasmuch as his educational advantages had been, comparatively, very limited, and his social position, also, less favourable for so extensive an influence as theirs.

The Society of Friends (to which religious community he belonged) occupied, throughout his life, a considerable share in Mr. Bedford's interests and efforts. And, although not a public preacher in that body, he was very frequently engaged in various arrangements, journeys, and auxiliary undertakings, in aid of its ministers, especially of those whose labours partook of a missionary character in foreign lands.

The sufferings of the poor, the temptations of their ignorant and neglected children, the rescue and reformation of juvenile delinquents, and the amelioration of the treatment of criminals, were very prominent objects of Christian solicitude and effort with Mr. Bedford.

But his special and characteristic usefulness was effected by a remarkable endowment of the faculty of individual influence, especially in private conversation. Even many of his more public engagements were chiefly of service as affording extended opportunities for private labours of kindly sympathy. Great suavity and genial persuasiveness, together with a perpetual cheerfulness and a peculiarly gentle manner, rendered him a most agreeable companion. With these gifts of influence, as his instruments, and deep religious convictions, as their motive power, he was eminently successful in that sphere of Christian service, by means of conversational usefulness, described as "parlour preaching," by Dr. Watts, who, in one of his works, remarks:—"He that has the happy talent of parlour preaching, has sometimes done more for Christ and souls in the space of a few minutes, than by the labour of many hours and days in the usual course of preaching in the pulpit."

In his latter years, Mr. Bedford enjoyed entertaining his visitors with interesting reminiscences of his earlier and more vigorous time. The writer of the following pages has listened many an hour to the good man's narratives; and from the memory of those occasions a portion of the following pages has been drawn up. Other portions have been compiled from a variety of sources, and from the information of several intimate acquaintances of Mr. Bedford.

Another part of these sketches is copied from notes taken down in shorthand (with Mr. Bedford's permission), on the occasion of two evening visits, by T. B. Smithies. His visits were suggested by Mr. Samuel Gurney, M.P., who felt very desirous that, at least, a part of the instructive experiences of his venerable friend should be preserved for the interest and benefit of others.

Thus, the present little work does not assume the form of a regular biography, so much as of a collection of reminiscences, sketches, and brief researches into the chief scenes and associations of Mr. Bedford's benevolent and religious efforts.

