



## BRIEF MEMOIR

OF THE

*REV. W. BATES, D. D.*

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**O**N the utility of Biography or personal history, there is a general concurrence of opinion. Some there are, who, in point of utility, judge its claims to be superior to those of general history. Without presuming to decide those claims, it may be asserted without much hesitation, that to the generality of readers, Biography is a species of reading, the most instructive, interesting and amusing. Its legitimate object, is, in the faithful exhibition of particular characters, to rouse the mind to a noble emulation of the virtues of the good, and excite its abhorrence of vice, in all the Proteus forms it may assume. Hence the Biographer selects those characters, of whom the portraiture will be the best calculated to produce these important results. "They are," as an excellent living author observes, "by no means persons raised to the highest elevations, or distinguished by the most extraordinary achievements. For not to observe that such characters are rarely remarkable for goodness and worth, it is easy to see, that they fall not within the reach of common imitation—that they exhibit nothing that leads to self-reflection—~~nothing~~ that occasions moral comparison—nothing to stimulate, to encourage in the course *we* pursue. Neither are eccentric characters the best suited to instruct and impress. Eccentricity is sometimes found connected with genius, but it does not coalesce with true wisdom. For the purposes of Biography those lives are the most eligible, that are the most

imitable; and these are derived from characters that are found in the same relations and conditions with ourselves, whose attainments while they resulted from the divine blessing, appear not to have been preternatural, but were made under no greater advantages than our own: whose progress was not less owing to the stroke of the oar, than the favourable-ness of the wind; whose excellencies while they do not discourage us by their perfection, animate us by their degree; whose success teaches us, not how to be great, but how to be good and happy."

To produce the results contemplated by the Biographer, it is requisite that the imperfections of the character placed before the reader, should be impartially stated. And who are they that claim exemption, and say we have no imperfections, no shades in our character? The sun has spots on its disk. The most illustrious saints whose lives are recorded in scripture, exhibit moral blemishes, and the scriptures in recording them, manifest an impartiality that tends to remove every suspicion of a design to impose. They were men of like passions with ourselves, though men of distinguished piety. It is the peculiar character of good men in another and a better world—"Just men made perfect."

The writer of this biographical sketch, is convinced that his author, though one of the "excellent of the earth," was the subject of frailties and imperfections, and had they come to his knowledge, he would not have hesitated to record them; as they have not, he has the more grateful task of stating his excellencies only, as an example for others to imitate. Viewing his amiable character, the mind's eye is not dazzled with an overwhelming glare, but refreshed and delighted, with the softest, the mildest beams of light. Here is every thing to rouse to holy emulation; to quicken to the most vigorous exertion; to impress the mind with the peerless beauties, and incalculable worth of true religion.—And it will be to the advantage of the reader, to

keep in mind, that in what was the Doctor's brightest ornament, his spirituality of mind, he may reach the same eminence or even a yet higher; for though his piety was above the degree attained by the generality of christians, it may be exceeded. What christian can be satisfied with possessing ordinary, when super-eminant degrees of piety may be attained: or who is not fired with a holy ambition to equal, if not excel those holy men whose names are handed down to us with so much honour, and whose memories are so greatly blessed?

The following account of Dr. Bates claims no higher character than that of a *Biographical sketch*. The Rev. J. Howe, who of all others, was the most capable of producing a full and interesting life, both on account of his long and intimate acquaintance with him, and his own great abilities, has unaccountably omitted it, which omission is justly lamented by all who are attached to Dr. Bates' character and works. He has indeed, in a funeral sermon preached on the occasion of his death, in his own energetic style, given an admirable character of him, and which cannot be read without exciting admiration of the character, which combined so many excellencies; but he has given no memoir, a deficiency, which the present sketch, is a feeble attempt to supply.

Dr. W. Bates was born Nov. sixteen hundred and twenty-five, the year in which the unfortunate Charles the I. ascended the British throne. His family connexions appear to have been respectable; his father being an eminent physician, and author of a work entitled, "*Eleuchus motuum nuperrime.*" After a suitable school education he was sent to Cambridge, where he was admitted of Emanuel College, from which he removed to King's College, in sixteen hundred and forty-four. At the age of twenty-two he commenced Bachelor of Arts, and in sixteen hundred and sixty was admitted Doctor in Divinity, a theological distinction not often better deserved, and never better graded.

Amidst the ample acquisitions he was making to his mental store, theology was his favourite study. His progress in theological learning was hence unusually rapid, and at the same time in happy connexion with corresponding progress in personal religion.

He began to preach early, probably in the twenty-second year of his age, and soon became one of the most popular preachers of the day. Nor is it to be wondered at, since there was a happy and unusual combination of circumstances to render him so. His person was handsome and elegant—his countenance mild yet dignified, his voice peculiarly sweet—his style inimitably polite for the age in which he lived: his subjects were plain, pious, and practical, flowing from a heart glowing with ardour in the sacred cause of heaven, and tremblingly alive to the best interests of his fellow men—a fine vein of wit—considerable erudition—a ready elocution—all resting on the basis of an irreproachably holy life and conversation. But the breath of popular applause did not, as it too often does, inflate him with pride. Deep humility led him to lay all the honours he received at the feet of his Master, Jesus Christ. Amidst almost unbounded popularity, to find so much humility, how amiable, but how rare!

His distinguished talents and piety procured him the valuable living of St. Dunstan's in the West, of which he was made Vicar. Placed in so conspicuous a situation, in the centre of the Metropolis, he found full scope for his abilities, and every thing to call forth all the energies of his great mind; here he continued to shine as a star of the first magnitude, till the act of uniformity obliged him to resign his living, and all prospect of preferment in the established church.

Dr. Bates was among those ministers who took an active part in the restoration of Charles II. and was soon afterwards made one of his Majesty's chaplains in ordinary. The Deanery of Coventry and Litchfield was subsequently offered him, which from scru-

ples of conscience, he refused. So high did his character stand, that it is said, he might have had any Bishopric in the kingdom, would he have conformed to all the canons, rites and ceremonies of the establishment; but inviolably faithful to the principles he had embraced, he withstood temptations which would have borne down a man of principles less inflexible.

At the celebrated Savoy conference, Dr. Bates was a conspicuous character. This conference consisted of an equal number of bishops and their assistants; and presbyterian ministers; constituted commissioners by his Majesty's declaration of October twenty-fifth, sixteen hundred and sixty. Their object was "To review the book of common prayer, comparing it with the most ancient and purest liturgies; and to take into their serious and grave considerations the several directions and rules, forms of prayer, and things in the said book of common prayer contained, and to advise and consult upon the same, and the several objections and exceptions, which shall now be raised against the same; and if occasion be to make such reasonable and necessary alterations, corrections and amendments, as shall be agreed upon to be needful and expedient for giving satisfaction to tender consciences, and the restoring and continuance of peace and unity in the churches under his Majesty's government and direction."—They met at the Bishop of London's lodgings in the Savoy, hence it was called the Savoy conference. The result of the conference is too well known, to make it necessary to state it in this place.

When three of the commissioners, on each side were chosen from the rest to enter into some particular points of dispute—Dr. Bates, Mr. Baxter, and Dr. Jacomb, were chosen on the part of the Presbyterians; and Dr. Pearson, Dr. Gunning, and Dr. Sparrow (all afterwards made Bishops) on the part of the establishment. At one of these disputes Bishop Morley was present, and behaved very inde-

corously. He frequently interrupted Mr. Baxter, and appealed to Dr. Bates, saying—"what say you Dr. Bates, is this your opinion?" to which the Dr. replied—"I pray my Lord, give Mr. Baxter leave to speak." Dr. Gunning appeared to lean considerably towards a reconciliation of the church of England to Rome. He used, says Bishop Burnet, all the arts of sophistry in as confident a manner, as if they had been sound reasoning, and was very fond of Popish rituals and ceremonies. When Dr. Bates urged upon him, that on the same reasons as they imposed the cross and surplice, they might bring in holy water, and lights, and abundance of such ceremonies of Rome which had been cast out; Gunning replied, "Yes, and I think we ought to have more and not fewer." During the whole of this protracted, but fruitless debate, Dr. Bates conducted himself with great wisdom and moderation; whenever he spoke it was "very solidly, judiciously, and pertinently," and procured great respect from his brethren, who were of opinion that had the rest been of his mind, things had not come to so unsuccessful an issue.

The act of uniformity passed in the year sixteen hundred and sixty-two, when Dr. Bates was thirty-seven years of age, by which he was deprived of the valuable living of St. Dunstan's, in the West. On this trying occasion he displayed heroic firmness of mind in lovely union with that mildness and candour which breathe in his writings. Terms were imposed by this act, with which he could not conscientiously comply, though every thing in his nature strongly disposed to a compliance, and made him deeply lament the circumstances that imposed the absolute necessity of secession from the established church. Re-ordination of those who had not been episcopally ordained—A declaration of unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing prescribed and contained in the book of common prayer—Administration of sacraments, rites and ceremonies as



enjoined by the church of England—were among those terms which forced him from her communion with 2000 others who were among her brightest ornaments, both for learning and piety. This was a peculiarly trying time to him; the state of his mind, as well as the principles on which he acted, may be learned from the close of the farewell sermon he preached to his people at St. Dunstan's church, on this painful occasion, Aug. seventeenth, sixteen hundred and sixty-two, "I know you expect I should say something as to my non-conformity. I shall only say thus much: It is neither fancy, faction, nor humour that makes me not comply; but merely the fear of offending God. And if after the best means used for my illumination, as prayer to God, discourse, and study, I am not able to be satisfied concerning the lawfulness of what is required, it be my unhappiness to be in error, surely men will have no reason to be angry with me in this world, and I hope God will pardon me in the next."

Subsequently to this, some of the more moderate in the establishment, among whom were Lord Keeper Bridgman, Lord Chief Justice Hale, Bishops Wilkins and Reynolds, Drs. Tillotson and Stillingfleet, attempted a comprehension of such as could be brought into the church by a few abatements. Proposals were drawn up by Bishop Wilkins and Dr. Burton, and communicated to Drs. Bates, Manton and Mr. Baxter, and by them to their brethren. According to these proposals a bill was prepared for the parliament, but violent opposition being made to it by some of the Bishops it never passed.

In sixteen hundred and sixty-eight, we find Dr. Bates with Drs. Manton and Jacomb, presenting an address to the King, who received them graciously, and expressed himself well pleased with the address; how much he was persuaded of their peaceableness, that he had known them to be so ever since his return; and promised to do his utmost to get them compre-

hended within the national establishment. But his Majesty failed to fulfil his promise; while the work of persecution against the non-conformists proceeded with increased vigour.

Though he was never cast into prison, which was the lot of numbers of his brethren, he had once a very narrow escape. A Mrs. Beale being near death, several pious persons were solicited to meet in her room and pray for her, Dr. Bates and Mr. Baxter were to be of the number, of which information being given, two justices of peace with the parliament serjeant-at-arms, came at the appointed time to apprehend them and lay them in prison.— Providence preserved them, for they did not attend, though ignorant of the design of their persecutors. The justices and serjeant-at-arms rushed into the room, where the gentlewoman lay ready to die, but missing their prey returned greatly disappointed. “What a joy,” observes Mr. Baxter on this occasion, “would it have been to them that reproached us as Presbyterian seditious schismatics to have found but such an occasion as praying with a dying woman to have laid us up in prison !”

At this time Dr. Bates was pastor of a dissenting congregation at Hackney, near London, assembling in a large and ancient, but irregular edifice situated in Mare-street, where he exercised his ministry with great success; and at the same time was one of the Tuesday lecturers at Salter’s Hall, in London, where his popular talents as a preacher, drew immense crowds.

In sixteen hundred and seventy-five we find him again engaged in attempting pacific measures between the church and those who had seceded from it. Tillotson and Stillingfleet requested an interview with him and several other non-conforming ministers, to treat of an act of comprehension and union, stating that they were encouraged to it, by several lords, spiritual and temporal. They met privately, and terms of accommodation were agreed upon, but



several bishops raising a violent clamour, the business came to an end. Thus were all the endeavours of Dr. Bates, to promote union and concord frustrated. In Dr. Tillotson, he met with a man like-minded with himself, uniformly disposed to adopt pacific measures. "Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God." Between these amiable and excellent men, there subsisted a long and intimate friendship, which no difference of opinion could interrupt or destroy. The peaceableness of Dr. Bates' disposition, the excellence of his character, and his high connections, were no security to him against persecution. Warrants were issued out for distresses in Hackney to the amount of £1400, and among the rest the Dr. was distrained upon. Thus in addition to the blessedness of the peace-maker, he enjoyed that of the persecuted for righteousness sake.

The accession of James II. to the throne of England, produced no amelioration in the persecuted condition of the dissenters. The parliament presented an address to the King, desiring him to issue his royal proclamation, to cause the penal laws to be put in execution against dissenters from the church of England. This brought down the storm, and one of the first who felt its fury, was the pious Baxter, who had already endured no small degree of persecution. The following anecdote presents a pleasing view of Dr. Bates' fortitude and inviolable faithfulness to his friendships. Mr. Baxter was seized and committed to the King's Bench.—Labouring under a severe indisposition, he moved by his counsel for time, but Judge Jefferies of infamous celebrity, said he would not give him a minute's time, no, not to save his life, adding, "Yonder stands Oates in the pillory, and if Mr. Baxter stood on the other side, I would say, two of the greatest rogues in England stood there." When he was brought to his trial, Dr. Bates attended and stood by him at the bar, though fully aware of

the odium he should incur. Jefferies noticed it, and in his abusive, insolent manner, exclaimed, "Richard, Richard, don't thou think we will hear thee poison the court. Richard, thou art an old fellow, and an old knave; thou hast written books enough to load a cart, every one as full of sedition, I might say of treason, as an egg is full of meat: hadst thou been whipt out of thy writing trade forty years ago, it had been happy. Thou pretendest to be a preacher of the gospel of peace, and thou hast one foot in the grave, it is time for thee to begin to think, what account thou intendest to give; but leave thee to thyself, and I see thou wilt go on as thou hast begun; but by the grace of God I will look after thee. I know thou hast a mighty party, and I see a great many of the brotherhood in corners, waiting to see what will become of their Don, and a Doctor of the party, Dr. Bates at your elbow, but by the grace of Almighty God, I will crush you all."

Happier days for the dissenters were about to commence. James abdicated the throne, and William and Mary ascended it. On this happy occasion, the dissenting ministers in London and the neighbourhood, with Dr. Bates at their head, waited on their Majesties with an address of congratulation, when he made the following speech.

#### Dr. Bates' speech to the King.

May it please your Majesty,

The series of successful events that has attended your glorious enterprize for the saving these kingdoms from so imminent and destructive evils has been so eminent and extraordinary, that it may force an acknowledgment of the Divine Providence from those who deny it, and cause admiration in all who believe and reverence it. The beauty and speed of this happy work are the bright signatures of his hand, who creates deliverance for his people: the

less of human power, the more of divine wisdom and goodness has been conspicuous in it. If the deliverance had been obtained by fierce and bloody battles, victory itself had been dejected and sad, and our joy had been mixed with afflicting bitterness; but as the sun ascending the horizon dispels without noise the darkness of the night, so your serene presence has, without tumults and disorders, chased away the darkness that invaded us. In the sense of this astonishing deliverance, we desire with all possible ardency of affection, to magnify the glorious name of God, the author of it, by whose entire efficacy the means have been successful; and we cannot without a warm rapture of thankfulness recount our obligations to your Majesty; the happy instrument of it. Your illustrious greatness of mind, in an undertaking of such vast expence, your heroic zeal in exposing your most precious life in such an adventurous expedition, your wise conduct, and unshaken resolution in prosecuting your great ends, are above the loftiest flights of language and exceed all praise. We owe to your Majesty the two greatest and most valuable blessings, that we can enjoy:—*The preservation of the true religion, our most sacred treasure; and the recovery of the falling state, and the establishing it upon just foundations.* According to our duty, we promise unfeigned fidelity, and true allegiance to your Majesty's person and government. We are encouraged by your gracious promise upon our first address, humbly to desire and hope, that your Majesty will be pleased by your wisdom and authority, to establish a firm union of your protestant subjects in matters of religion, by making the rule of christianity to be the rule of conformity. Our blessed union in the purity and peace of the gospel will make this church a fair and lovely type of heaven, and terrible to our anti-christian enemies: this will make England the steady centre from whence a powerful influence will be derived for the support of reformed christianity

abroad. This will bring immortal honour to your name, above the trophies and triumphs of the most renowned conquerors. We do assure your Majesty, that we shall cordially embrace the terms of union which the ruling wisdom of our Saviour has prescribed in his word. We shall not trespass further on your royal patience, but shall offer up our fervent prayers to the King of kings that he will please to direct your Majesty by his unerring wisdom, and always incline your heart to his glory, and encompass your sacred person with his favour as with a shield, and make your government an universal blessing to these kingdoms."

To which his Majesty replied,

"I take kindly your good wishes, and whatever is in my power shall be employed for obtaining such an union among you. I do assure you of my protection and kindness."

Dr. Bates also addressed the Queen in a similar strain, and her Majesty returned this answer :

"I will use all endeavours for the obtaining an union that is necessary for the edifying of the church. I desire your prayers." The Dr. stood high in the estimation of both their Majesties, and the Queen often entertained herself in her closet with his writings, a circumstance equally honourable to her Majesty and our author. If interest could have induced him to conform, he wanted not the strongest temptation. But integrity of principle was to him too valuable to be sacrificed for worldly emolument: and he maintained his integrity to the end of his life.

It was another amiable trait in his character, that the interest he had with persons in elevated situations in life, was employed more in the behalf of others than in his own. When Dr. Tillotson was Archbishop he used his interest with him in procuring a pardon for Dr. N. Crew, Bishop of Durham, who for his conduct in the ecclesiastical com-



mission, had been excepted out of the act of indemnity, which passed in sixteen hundred and ninety.

On the death of the Queen, he preached a funeral sermon on the occasion, full of good sense and piety; and also presented to the bereaved Monarch the address of condolence from the dissenting ministers in London and its vicinity, which stands among his works as the production of his pen. The address will be found by the reader at the end of the funeral sermon, and is therefore not inserted in this place.

His being thus chosen on these great occasions to head his brethren, and be their spokesman, shows in how high estimation he was held by them.

The infirmities incident to advanced age, began now to multiply upon him; as did also the consolations of that gospel of which for so many years he had been so distinguished and successful a preacher. In an excellent funeral sermon, preached by him on the death of Dr. Jacomb, he thus expressed himself;—"If it so pleased the wise and sovereign disposer of all things how much rather would I be an attentive hearer of that blessed servant of God who is now above, than preach his funeral sermon at this time. That my sad voice should be reserved for this mournful service, is both contrary to my desire and expectation. O frail and faithless life of man! who would have thought that Dr. Jacomb whose natural vigour and firm complexion promised a longer continuance here, should have a period put to his days, and that *I should survive, whose life has been preserved for many years like the weak light of a lamp in the open air?*"

It had been his prayer, that he might not outlive his usefulness, and his prayer was answered, he finished his life and his work together. His growing heavenly-mindedness had been observed by all around him. The God of his salvation was maturing him for brighter scenes and higher enjoyments. On the fourteenth of July, sixteen hundred and ninety-



nine, at the good old age of seventy-four, he died happy in Christ, and is now reaping the faithful servant's reward. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

In his person he was handsome. His countenance was calm and dignified, indicative of the heavenly serenity that reigned in his mind. His natural and acquired endowments were much above the ordinary stamp. A quickness of apprehension was united with a solid judgment. His memory was remarkably tenacious, and is said never to have failed him, not even at the age of seventy-four. He was an unwearied reader, and read to purpose. A dignitary in the church once said, "Had I to collect a library I would as soon consult Dr. Bates as any man I know." He was himself a living library.—But all his fine talents—all his stores of learning, were made subservient to his great work as a minister of the gospel—all were consecrated to the service of Jesus Christ, his divine Master; and all the honours resulting from them were laid at his feet.—Great was his skill in the explication and application of the word of truth; and in the solution of cases of conscience, he was particularly expert and judicious. In his private conversation, he was interesting, entertaining and instructive, but never "The rattle or harlequin of the room." Into what transports of admiration and love of God—says the holy and excellent Howe, have I seen him break forth! when some things foreign, or not immediately relating to practical godliness had taken up a good part of our time. How easy a step did he make it from earth to heaven!

As a minister, he was a wise master-builder. His sermons were chiefly practical; always breathing a devotional spirit, enriched with happy and appropriate allusions. "His eloquence, which like that of the ancient classics, has not become antiquated by the lapse of more than a century, must to his contemporaries have been singularly fascinating."

His candour was great, too great for the bigots of his own denomination. It was engrained in his mind, and while others were ever uttering the war-whoop of a party, he was for peace and unity; and unmoved by the clamours of the illiberal and uncandid he vigorously pursued his design of promoting union among Christians, so long as there was any hope of accomplishing it. Amiable man! would to God the church of Christ abounded with ministers like-minded! Such may we be disposed to imitate, to emulate, and if possible to excel; and with such, after the toils and sorrows of this state shall come to a final close, may it be our felicity to spend the long and ever-lengthening ages of eternity.

Leeds, May 23d, 1815.

W. F.