

DEATH OF THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON COWPER

This venerable and universally respected gentleman died at half-past seven o'clock on the morning of the 5th inst., at the St. Philip's parsonage, where he had resided for the greater portion of his eminently useful career.

Although the melancholy event may take many by surprise, particularly those who have been wont to meet the esteemed dignitary in their daily perambulations, it could scarcely be regarded as unexpected, seeing that Dr. Cowper had attained more than the usual number of years allotted to man. His loss will be severely felt, not only by his own co-religionists, but by all who appreciate genuine worth and piety.

We understand that the Governor-General purposes making Dr. Cowper's funeral a public one. It is arranged to take place on Friday next, at half past one o'clock p.m... Prior to the remains being conveyed to their last resting place in the old Church of England burial ground, the procession will stop at St. Philip's Church, the latest scene of the lamented gentleman's ministerial labours.

The following are a few brief particulars of his long and well spent life :-

This venerable gentleman was born at Whittington, Lancashire, on the 28th of December, 1778, and was consequently in his eightieth year. He was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Winchester, in the Chapel Royal, St. James's (by letters dimissory from the Archbishop of Canterbury), early in the year 1808, and priest by the Bishop of Bristol in the same year. He was for a short time curate of Rawdon, near Leeds.* But having been solicited by the Rev. Samuel Marsden, during his visit to England at that period, to undertake the office of Colonial Assistant Chaplain, and having entered into this engagement, he proceeded hither with family, notwithstanding urgent entreaties and strong inducements to the contrary, and arrived in the colony on the 18th August 1809. His appointment to the office of Colonial Chaplain was, according to the arrangements then made, by a Civil Commission signed by his late Majesty King George the Third, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who was at that time Lord Castlereagh. The following anecdote has been related to us as connected with Mr. Cowper's appointment as Colonial Chaplain. Dr. Charles Hutton, F.R.S., Professor of Mathematics in the Royal Academy, Woolwich, had published a course of mathematics which had gone through four editions before Mr. Cowper read it. In the year 1805 having been led to examine some parts of the work, and to question the principles of prop. 45, he investigated them both mathematically and experimentally. In the January following he wrote Dr. Hutton, pointing out the fundamental error, at which Dr. Hutton was very indignant. Mr. Cowper, however, wrote again and again until Dr. Hutton acknowledged his error, and published the correction in a subsequent edition in 1807. After this the old gentleman and the young man became friends, and exchanged amicable visits. And when the Archbishop of Canterbury asked for references, previous to Mr. Cowper receiving his appointment, his friend, Dr. Hutton, was one of those whom Mr. Cowper mentioned.

On his arrival, Mr. Cowper was the only officiating clergyman in the colony, and indeed in all Australia. In the following year, the Rev. Samuel Marsden returned from England to Paramatta, accompanied by the Rev. R. Cartwright, for Windsor. Mr. Cowper continued in Sydney, and has ever since been the incumbent of St. Philip's Church, in which it is well known he till very recently continued to minister.

Shortly after his arrival in the colony in 1809, he took an active part in the origination of the Benevolent Society, although its operations were for some time carried on in a private and unostentatious manner. When it became a public institution, he was for many years actively engaged in carrying out its designs. He took a leading part, also, in the formation and management of the Bible and Religious

DEATH OF THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON COWPER

Tract Societies, and other moral and benevolent associations. At one period he was the secretary of six different institutions. When the Diocesan Committee of the Societies for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Propagation of the Gospel was formed in 1836, he became its secretary, as he had before been, for eight years, of the District Committee of the former of these societies. In the year 1842, in consequence of the failure of his eyesight, and the formation of cataract in both eyes, he was recommended by his medical advisers to take a voyage to England, that he might there avail himself of the eminent skill of the best oculists in London. On his departure from the colony his parishioners and friends presented him with a most affectionate address, expressible of their warm attachment, and deep concern for the affliction with which it had please Almighty God to visit him, and accompanied it with a purse of £780, to enable him to meet the expenses of his visit to England.

The object of his visit having been attained, he returned to the colony in 1843. Previously to the return, viz., in January 1843, the honorary degree of D.D. was conferred upon him by the Archbishop of Canterbury, as a distinguishing mark of his approval of the long and faithful services he (Mr. Cowper) had rendered to the Church.

In January, 1848, he was made Archdeacon of Cumberland and Camden by the late Bishop of Sydney; and on the 13th of August, 1852, when his lordship was about to leave his diocese, he constituted Dr. Cowper "his sole and special Commissary for the Diocese of Sydney during the bishop's absence or the vacancy of the see." The duties involved in such appointment, added to those connected with the church and parish of which he was minister, were performed with the archdeacon's characteristic energy, zeal, and faithfulness; and upon the present occupant of the see entering upon his Episcopal duties his lordship expressed his high approval of the manner in which Dr. Cowper had filled the office of commissary while he held it.

Though Dr. Cowper never permitted himself to be engaged in and secular understanding, nor his mind to be diverted, even for a moment, from the duties of his sacred profession, and consequently the opportunities which the colony offered in its earlier history for improving the temporal fortunes of those who were willing to avail themselves of them were allowed to pass by, he did not on that account abstain from contributing, in addition to the daily demands upon him for charity, from his limited means, towards objects of public utility. Among such donations it may be noticed that the first sum subscribed for the erection of the noble structure on Church-hill – the new St. Philip's Church – was £500 from Dr. Cowper, and it is more than probable that but for this spirited commencement, and the zeal with which the venerable gentleman devoted himself for some years to the arduous work of raising funds for completing it, the city would not now possess this splendid church, which, irrespective of its value as a house of prayer, is one of the great architectural ornament to Sydney.

Another instance of Dr. Cowper's munificence towards the spread of the Gospel may be given in the contribution of £300 towards providing a permanent endowment for the stipend of the minister of the parish of the Holy Trinity, which was created by the withdrawal of a portion of the north end of Sydney from the parish of St. Philip.

It would be an interesting statement to be informed of the thousands whom he christened, married, or buried. In these respects his labours must, we imagine, exceed that of any other living colonial clergyman, and with respect to one portion of his ministerial labours, and that the most painful of all, it is estimated that, irrespective of those who were reprieved or pardoned, he has attended about 300 criminals to the gallows. For their spiritual instruction and salvation, no minister ever laboured with

DEATH OF THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON COWPER

more earnestness or apostolic devotion. It has been remarked that to see him really to advantage he should be seen either in the condemned cell or at the bed side of the sick or of the dying.

Dr. Cowper was married three times; his first wife was the mother of one daughter and three sons, of whom Henry, the eldest, a surgeon by profession, died several years ago. His daughter married the late Mr. George Brooks, colonial surgeon, and still survives him. His second son, Mr. Thomas Cowper, settled in the northern districts of the colony; and third son, Mr Charles Cowper, is the present Principal Secretary and Premier, and one of the members of the Legislative Assembly for the city. The Rev. William Macquarie Cowper, M.A., of Oxford, is his only child by his second wife; and by his last marriage he has two children, a daughter, Elizabeth Anne, and a son, Sedgwick Spelman, who is a student of St. Paul's College, and an undergraduate in the University. Isabella, an infant, died a few days after birth.

In many respects Dr. Cowper was a remarkable man, in nothing more so than his solemn determination under all times and circumstances to maintain his character as a minister of the Gospel. Though repeatedly and strongly pressed by former governors of the colony, and by his clerical colleagues, to accept the office of a magistrate, he never would entertain the idea, considering that the duties of a magistrate were antagonistic to those which as a messenger of peace and of reconciliation he had undertaken. He never would undertake any secular or political movement, and invariably refused, even when urgently pressed, to attach his signature to any document having reference to such movements. His whole life appeared to be in his estimation consecrated to do the work of an evangelist; and life seemed too short for the duty he had to perform.

For mathematical science he had an ardent attachment, and when a young man before his ordination he was a regular and constant contributor to the English periodicals of a scientific character. Even to the latest period of his life he kept up an accurate knowledge of all the recent discoveries, and an acquaintance with the discussions of eminent men upon questions of astronomy, as well as others of a scientific nature. He was never idle, change of employment was his only recreation.

He now rests from his labours, and of him it may be truly said, his works do follow him.

Though he had during his last illness much suffering, he still retained his faculties to the end of his existence, and it was with some difficulty that the bystanders could ascertain whether he had ceased to breathe.

“His end was peace”

- *Sydney Empire*, July 10.

To this circumstance the Rev. John Waterhouse, who came to this colony as a general superintendent of Wesleyan missions, refers in his printed journal, 10th November, 1840:- “I reminded him (the Rev. Cowper, chaplain of St. Philip's Church) of the time when I sat under his ministry at Rawdon, in my native land.

“I availed myself of the opportunity of hearing him; and seldom have I heard a more faithful, heart-stirring sermon. It was a feast to hear a minister, venerable through age, preach with all the zeal and energy of a young man.”