

Clark, John Alonzo

1823

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1. Christian Experience as displayed in the Life and Writings of St. Paul. The Pastor's Testimony. 1835. no
2. The Young Disciple; or a memoir of Anzoinetta R. Peters. 12 mo. 1836. no
3. Gathered Fragments, 12 mo. 1836. no
4. A Walk about Zion, 12 mo. 1836. no
5. Glimpses of the Old World, 2 vols. 12 mo. 1838. All
6. Gleanings by the Way, 12 mo. 1842. no
7. Awake thou Sleeper (vol. of Sermons pub. after his death) 12 mo. no

he established meetings at private houses, gathering in the neighbours, and preaching to them the truth as it is in Jesus. These latter services were attended with a great outpouring of the Spirit, and it was remarked that wherever those meetings were held, salvation came to that house.

Intent only upon his Master's work, he was not aware that his ministry was watched and applauded far and near. But so it was that his reputation was going forth, as a man of power, and influence and grace, and such was the hold which it had taken of the large and intelligent congregation of St. Andrew's, Philadelphia, that when their beloved Rector, Dr. Bedell, was called to his rest, Mr. Clark was selected as his successor. This invitation was made to him in the year 1835; and, after due consideration, he accepted it, though much to the regret of his devoted people, and not without much sorrow of heart at leaving a field which had become so much endeared to him by manifold tokens of the Divine presence.

He entered upon his duties, as Rector of St. Andrew's, in August, 1835. So great, however, were the inroads which disease had made on his overtasked and overworked body, that, in two years, he was compelled to take a voyage to Europe, as the only probable means of arresting his disease. While abroad, he visited several of the most interesting countries, and on his return, after an absence of nine months, he published an account of his Travels in two volumes, entitled "Glimpses of the Old World." The benefit which he derived from this voyage soon passed away, under his exhausting labours, and in the spring of 1843, his health had so far declined that he felt constrained to resign his Rectorship. This was to him a severe trial, but he met the exigency with firmness, and bowed submissively to the will which removed him from the pulpit that he loved, to a chamber of sickness and a bed of death.

He was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity, from Kenyon College, in 1840.

He fell asleep in Jesus on the 27th of November, 1843. He offered himself a living sacrifice unto God. He was consumed by the fire which the love of Christ had kindled, and the love of souls had fanned into a devouring flame. Few men, it may safely be said, have performed, during an equally brief period, more or better service for the Redeemer's cause, or have gone down to their graves more deeply lamented.

The following is a list of Dr. Clark's publications:—Christian Experience as displayed in the Life and Writings of St. Paul. The Pastor's Testimony, 1835. The Young Disciple; or a Memoir of Anzoinetta R. Peters, 12mo., 1836. Gathered Fragments, 12mo., 1836. A Walk about Zion, 12mo., 1836. Glimpses of the Old World, 2 vols. 12mo., 1838. Gleanings by the way, 12mo., 1842. A volume of his Sermons was published after his death entitled "Awake thou Sleeper," 12mo.

He was married, in October, 1826, to Sarah Buell, of Fairfield, Herkimer County, N. Y.; by whom he had nine children, six of whom preceded him to the grave.

The personal character of Dr. Clark was made up of many interesting traits, such as a delicate sensibility, high moral sentiment, refinement of feeling, and warmth of emotion, largeness of heart and gentleness of demeanour, combined with firmness of purpose and general stability of mind.

strong terms of commendation in which I had heard him spoken of, had awakened both my curiosity and interest; and it was not long before I was to be gratified. The opening service of the series had been appointed for the evening, and Mr. Clark was to take part in it by following the preacher in a brief applicatory address. As the hour drew near, crowds from the village were seen approaching the house of God; but they were all the familiar faces of my parishioners, or of clerical brethren whom I well knew. At length a group came on who seemed absorbed in serious and earnest conversation, among whom there was one, and only one, who was a stranger to me. He was of slight figure, perfectly erect, and in his walk there was a firm, self-reliant bearing, which indicated a man of earnest mind and decided purpose. This proved to be no other than my expected and most welcome brother, the Rev. Mr. Clark. He greeted me with a whole-souled, Christian cordiality, which at once drew my heart towards him, and marked the beginning of an intimate and affectionate friendship that continued to his dying day.

The first sentiment which the appearance and manners of Mr. Clark naturally excited, was that of high respect for his official character. You felt yourself in the presence of a man, acting under a deep conviction of the solemnity and importance of the work to which he had consecrated his life. As you first looked upon his countenance, you saw nothing specially attractive in his dark complexion, and the rather irregular grouping of his features; but these were soon lost sight of in his general expression, which revealed a spirit that had evidently been touched and moulded by the Divine power of Christianity, and which withal was no stranger to the gracious chastening of our Heavenly Father. There was habitually an atmosphere of seriousness about him, which a stranger might scarcely distinguish from melancholy. Yet there were times when the cloud would rise and disappear, the settled and almost sad expression of his eyes change to that of sparkling pleasure, and the soul within beam out with a radiance all the more intense from its contrast with his ordinary aspect. I have heard his laugh ring for a few moments, among the loudest, in a happy group of friends, when some playful repartee or sudden burst of wit took him by surprise. But such departures from his usual gravity were like the variations of the needle from the pole: they might have furnished the true index to his constitutional temperament, but the more sedate habit which grace had introduced and established, was generally in the ascendant. Doubtless the sad expression of countenance to which I have referred, might have been caused in part by the exhaustion incident to excessive labour; but probably it was to be attributed still more to the hidden encroachments of that disease to which he ultimately fell a victim.

With him Death, Judgment, Eternity, were not only realities, but ever present realities; and in view of these, he formed his estimate of the worth of the soul, and of the duties and responsibilities of human life. Here indeed may be said to have been the key to his whole character—he lived habitually under the influence of the powers of the world to come.

Of few men could it be said more emphatically than of Dr. Clark that he redeemed time. He was prompt to the moment in meeting his engagements, and never seemed more delighted than when those engagements succeeded each other so rapidly as to crowd each day with the monuments of his beneficent activity. It was my privilege, for a considerable time, to be an inmate of his family. His labours had been greatly blessed; a spirit of revival rested on his congregation, and the harvest of souls demanded another reaper. Then it was that I saw him to the best advantage, in the midst of his work, and learned that ministerial success comes to the servant of God through a spiritual legitimacy as certain, nay, more certain than that providential arrangement in respect to temporal matters, which brings wealth in the train of persevering industry. The earliest dawn

found him at his toils, and that too, not unfrequently, after an hour had been previously spent in secret devotion and physical exercise. His morning hours were sacredly given to study and earnest mental effort. But I do not mean by this that he either was or aimed to be an eminent scholar. His studies were all conducted with a view to practical utility; and he attached little value to any intellectual attainments that could not in some way be rendered subservient to the higher interests of his fellow-men. It was a principle with him always to be occupied with present duty. No passing event of the day but seemed to furnish him a fresh subject of devout contemplation. Some dispensation of providence,—a distinguished mercy or awakening calamity of the week, often suggested the theme for the discourse of the ensuing Lord's day. And the sermon thus produced, instinct with living interest, secure of the sympathy of its auditors, and delivered with all the earnestness of thorough conviction, was no doubt often productive of results, which the records of eternity alone can fully declare.

Measured by the standard by which many judge of preaching, Dr. Clark could not be considered as having any claim to superiority. You heard no finely turned periods,—not a sentence which indicated the least thought, on the part of the preacher, of oratorical display. His sermons were always plain and direct,—consisting of Divine truth clearly conceived and forcibly stated; and the staple of his discourses consisted of those truths which are peculiarly evangelical. He dwelt—some might think too much—upon the more alarming truths of religion; but when he could see those truths taking effect in the awakening and conviction of his hearers, he never failed to direct them with the utmost tenderness to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.

Owing to his remarkable diligence as a pastor, he seemed always to be fully acquainted with the spiritual condition of his flock. His discourses in the pulpit often had their origin in private conversations with his people in their own dwellings. Did his eye on the Sabbath detect a newly awakened interest in any one before him,—that person was sure to be called upon at the earliest moment possible, his state of feeling carefully ascertained, and the requisite instruction and counsel given him. It is rare indeed that we find the Pastor and the Preacher so beautifully and perfectly combined as they were in the case of Dr. Clark. And, in addition to his manifold labours in both these departments, he redeemed time to send forth several works which have already done, and are destined still to do, good service to the cause of Christ. They present important truth invested with the charm of great simplicity, and naturalness, and familiar illustration, and breathing a spirit of Christian earnestness and affection that was evidently imbibed at the foot of the Cross.

Few men in our communion, or any other, have arisen, done their work, and passed away at the early age at which Dr. Clark was called to his reward, who deserve better to have their names embalmed in the grateful and affectionate remembrances of the Church. Many men we may find of superior natural endowments, and of broader and more finished scholarship, but rarely one who has made such full proof of his ministry. Even when disease had so far accomplished its work that the weak flesh refused to obey the willing spirit—yes, even then, was he about his Master's business,—faithful to the last.

Well do I remember—never can I forget—my last interview with him. The scene of his labours had been changed. As the successor of the lamented Bedell, he had accepted the Rectorship of St. Andrew's Church, Philadelphia. In that more ample field he pursued the same untiring course of labour, which had been crowned with such abundant success in Providence. The same results followed; but alas! the price which he paid for them was nothing short of his life. The restless energy of the man, the untiring devotedness of the Christian minister, were an overmatch for the amount of strength that remained to him. His ministry in Philadelphia was extended over a period, brief indeed, but embodying more

memorials of substantial Christian usefulness than we ordinarily expect to find in connection with the labours of many years.

The interview to which I have alluded took place a month or two before his death. My name was announced, and soon I heard a slow and feeble step descending the staircase. I arose and grasped the emaciated hand of my friend. Consumption had been silently but irresistibly doing its work. It was to myself a painful greeting; but I saw upon his countenance a smile that seemed to betoken the clustered blessings of a well-spent life—peace with himself, with the world, and with God. He felt that his work was done—most imperfectly indeed, in his own conception, but still acceptably, for the Redeemer's sake.

Thus he passed away, leaving blessed fruits of his labours here on earth, to enter upon the glorious rewards reserved for those who turn many to righteousness.

I am, dear Sir, with sincere regard,

Faithfully yours,

FRANCIS PECK.

JARVIS BARRY BUXTON.*

1827—1851.

JARVIS BARRY BUXTON was born at Newbern, N. C., on the 17th of January, 1792. His father, Jarvis Buxton, was a native of Mold, in the Principality of Wales, but had migrated to North Carolina sometime before the commencement of the War of the Revolution. His mother, whose maiden name was Ursula Barry, was born in Switzerland: her family had come to this country for the purpose of raising silk, but the attempt, not proving successful, was abandoned. His mother died when he was fifteen years old, and his father when he was eighteen. Both parents lie interred in the old grave-yard in Newbern, beneath the same tombstone.

He spent his early years at school in his native place, and was, for some time, under the instruction of the Rev. Mr. Irving,† at that time Rector of the Church in Newbern, and distinguished as a classical and mathematical teacher. Here he was attentive and docile, and made rapid improvement in his studies; but, after a while, his father sent him to the North, where he remained for some time. On his return, he settled at Newbern as a merchant. He was now a decidedly religious man; and, though educated in the Episcopal Church, yet, owing to various circumstances, especially the depressed state of the Church in North Carolina, he was, for some time, strongly inclined to join the Methodists, and actually became intimate with several prominent families of that communion. His attach-

* Memoir prefixed to his printed Sermons.—MS. from his son, Rev. J. Buxton.

† THOMAS BIRT IRVING was born on the Eastern shore of Maryland, and was graduated with high honour at the College of New Jersey in 1789. He was Preceptor of the Academy at Newbern, N. C., from 1790 or 1791, until 1811 or 1812, when he was called to the double service of presiding over the Academy, and officiating as Rector of the Church, at Hagerstown, Md. While residing at Newbern,—some time before the year 1797,—he went to Philadelphia, and received ordination from Bishop White, and afterwards acted as Rector of Christ Church, Newbern, as long as he remained there. He was much distinguished as a teacher, and was regarded as one of the best Greek scholars and Mathematicians of his day.

1823

A sketch of the life of JOHN A CLARK appears in the Annals of the American
Pulpit, Vol. 5

JOHN A. CLARK, 1823, of Manlius, N.Y., was a member of the Adelpic Society.
Adelpic Catalogue 1830 (Died: 1843)