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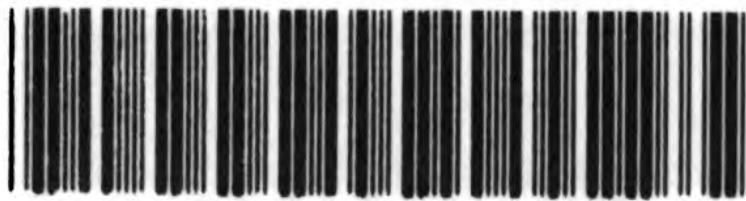
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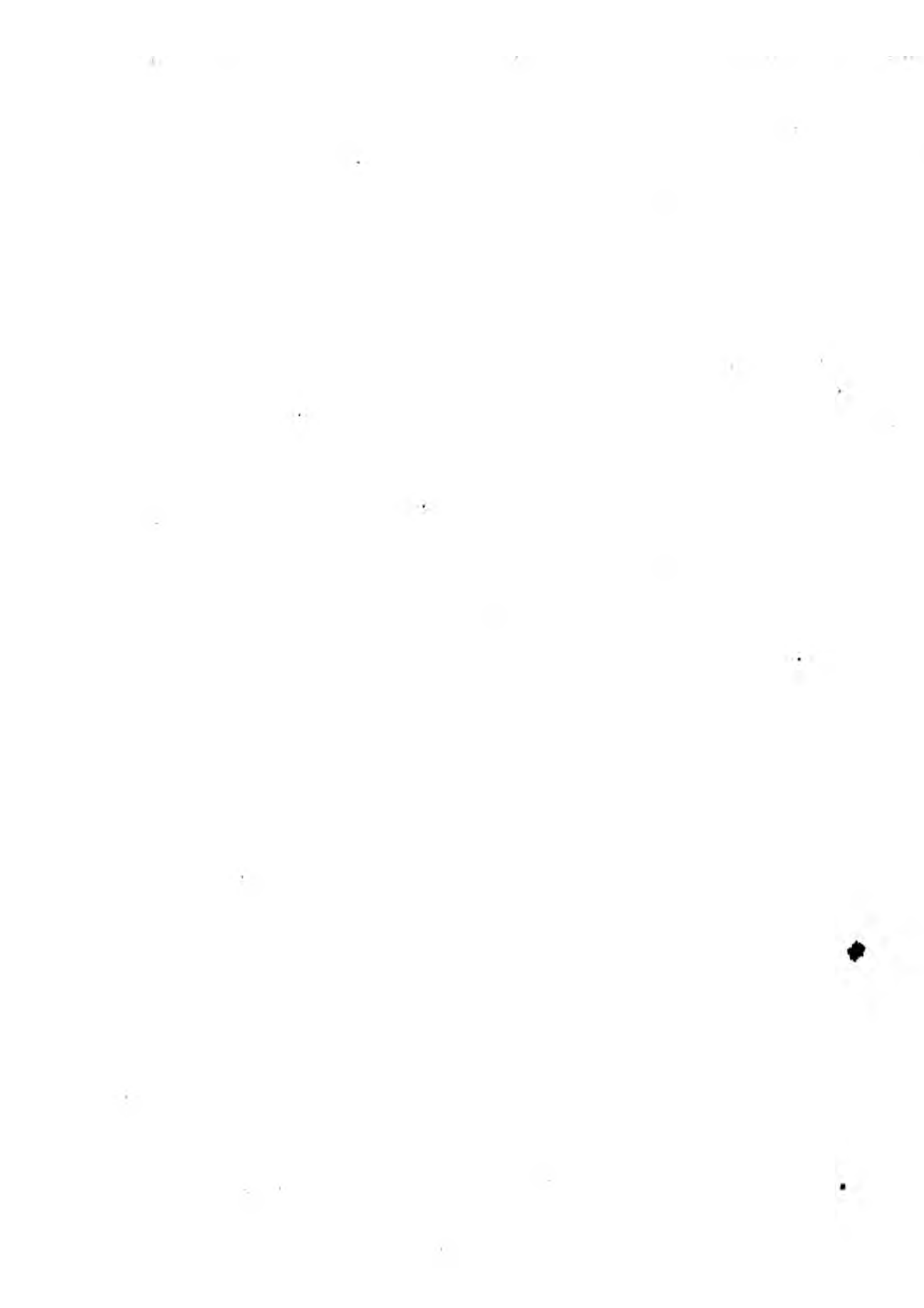
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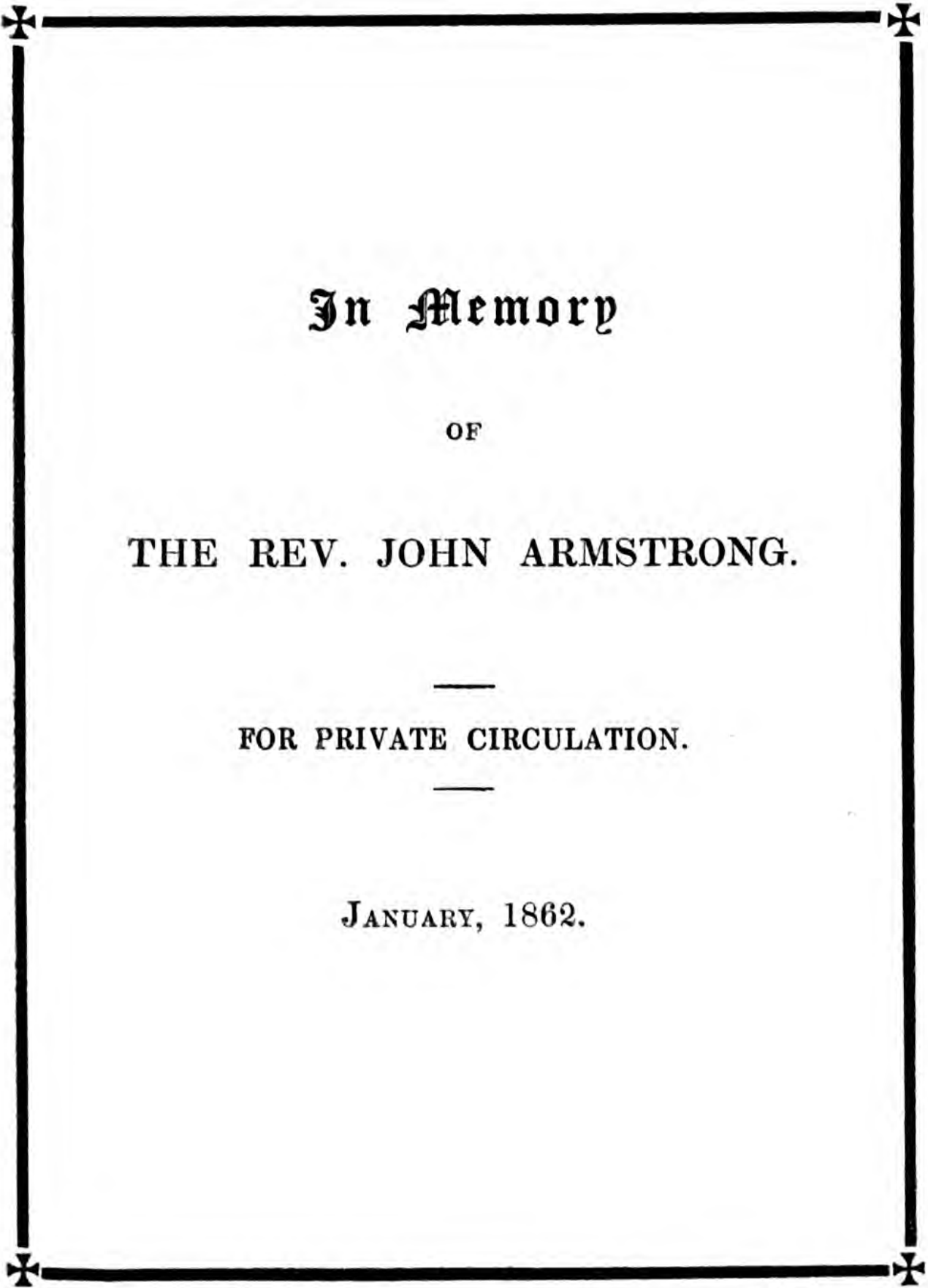


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In Memory

OF

THE REV. JOHN ARMSTRONG.

—
FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.
—

JANUARY, 1862.

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MEMOIR.

THE following pages are intended to meet a wish, which has been generally felt and strongly expressed, for some printed notice of the REV. JOHN ARMSTRONG, M.A. Rector of Dinder, and Prebendary of Wells, whose sudden removal by death from the scene of his Pastoral labours, and from a far wider field of beneficent exertion, has lately been deplored by his Parishioners and Friends.

The lamented subject of this Memoir was born on the 2nd of April, 1810, at Hazelgrove House, in the parish of Queen's Camel, Somersetshire. In early childhood, he was placed at a private School, from which he was, in due time, sent to Eton. After his School education had been completed, he was prepared, by a short residence under a Tutor at Brighton, for admission into Balliol College, Oxford. Both at Eton and at Oxford, he formed and cherished friendships, which he reckoned among the best

blessings of his future life ; and he has now left behind him some of the companions of his boyish days and of his opening manhood, who remember well what was then the charm of his lively spirits and warm-hearted affectionateness ; of his winning courtesy, and ready zeal to do for all within his reach any service that was in his power. It was the privilege of his School-fellows and College acquaintance to observe the first tendencies towards that excellence of character and conduct, which he soon afterwards began to display. They

saw the fair promise, given by the youthful disciple of CHRIST, of the virtues and graces, which, from the commencement of the real business of life to the close of his career of usefulness, distinguished and adorned him. Having deliberately chosen the Sacred Profession, he had no sooner taken the Degree of B.A. than he diligently applied himself to such pursuits and studies as seemed to him to be suitable to his position and prospects. The Master of his College afforded him a decisive proof of the high opinion,

which was entertained of his merits, by offering him a title for Holy Orders, through a nomination to the Curacy of his own Parish of Dinder. The offer was gladly and thankfully accepted. In the Autumn of 1835, he was ordained Deacon ; and forthwith entered, under a solemn sense of responsibility and in a serious spirit, upon the duties which he had undertaken. After the usual interval of a year, he was admitted to Priest's Orders. A little while afterwards, he became connected by marriage with the neighbour-

hood of Penzance, whither his own family some few years before had been led by the hope of restoring the health and prolonging the life of his only Brother, a youth of great promise; who however gradually sank under a disease, which the genial climate of Cornwall mitigated, and for a while relieved. Henceforward, he divided his interest between Somersetshire and Cornwall, finding to his delight, soon after his settlement in the former county, that his Mother and Sisters, the surviving representatives of that

dear domestic circle, which he had ever fondly loved, had fixed their home at a short distance from his own. His Parochial charge was his first and chief object; while the opportunities of absence from Dinder, which the Master's occasional residence there allowed, were for the most part spent in intercourse with his connections at the Land's End.

For nearly ten years, his relation of Curate to the Master of Balliol remained undisturbed. With the continuance of that relation, was connected a perpetual increase of

those feelings of regard and confidence on the part of the Incumbent, and of respectful deference and cordial gratitude on the part of the Curate, in which it had its origin. When, in 1845, the Crown publicly acknowledged the services, which Dr. Jenkyns had long and ably rendered to the University of Oxford and the Church of England, by appointing him to the Deanery of Wells, the Benefice of Dinder, together with the annexed Prebendal Stall in the Cathedral of that city, was vacated; and it was the earnest

desire of the Dean that the vacancy, thus caused by his promotion, should be filled by the Curate of his own choice, whom he had by this time thoroughly tried; whom he knew to be loved, respected, and trusted by the Parishioners; and whom he deemed, therefore, for the best reasons, and in the true sense of the words, a Pastor acceptable to them all. The influence of the Dean and of other friends was zealously exerted; and it happily prevailed. The result was, that Mr. Armstrong changed the place of Curate for that of

Incumbent; and was thus entrusted with the sole superintendence of the little flock, to which he had already endeared himself by a loving devotion of his powers of both mind and body, to the fulfilment of his Ordination VOWS.

During the sixteen years which have since passed, it may be truly said of him, that, in lowly imitation of his Divine Master's example, "he has gone about doing good^a." With the exception of an interval of three

^a Acts x. 38.

years, from September 1854 to September 1857, which, not without reluctance on his part, but with the full sanction of his Diocesan, his family spent on the Continent, he lived among his people, and strove to further, in every possible way, their temporal and eternal welfare. He could never bring himself to believe that he had done enough; and of all that he did, or attempted to do, he thought humbly, and therefore spoke little.

Frank, open, and generous, he was free from suspicion and dis-

trust of others. He was slow to think ill of any one; and it was with difficulty that he withdrew his regard and confidence from such as had once gained them. His time, for conference and counsel, and his purse, whether for gifts or for loans, were at the service of all, whom he thought in need and worthy of help. He laboured diligently to inform the ignorant. He firmly and courageously reprov'd and resisted sin. With meekness, patience, and charity, he consulted how he could best compose differences,

put an end to disputes and quarrels, and prove the peacemaker of his parish and neighbourhood. By day and by night he listened to the summons which interrupted his employments or his rest, and called him to the abodes of affliction and poverty; where he often prolonged his stay, to combine with his spiritual ministrations, offices of skill and kindness, which belonged rather to the medical attendant or the nurse.

His yearly visits to Cornwall served the valuable purpose of refreshment and comparative re-

pose for himself. To his Parishioners they supplied occasion for a juster estimate than might otherwise have been formed of those personal services, of which even a temporary suspension could not be endured without impatience; and of which the renewal, upon each return to his home after ever so short an absence, was hailed with a hearty and an universal welcome.

He was seen in his customary haunts and in the midst of his favourite occupations — in his Church, and in his Village School,

in the dwellings of the sick and aged, and by the bedside of the dying, up to the very close of the year which is just gone. No one, who noticed him, could for a moment have imagined that he was so soon to be removed out of the sight and reach of the numerous dependents on his aid and bounty.

In those few days, now dear to memory, of latest intercourse, whether public or private, with the objects of his tender solicitude, his quick and active step was such as it was ever wont to be on

errands of good-will and mercy ; the earnestness of his exhortation and advice was the same as it had always been ; the soothing influence of his manner and language was unchanged. On Sunday, Dec. 22, he preached twice in his Church ; his text being, in the morning, the Epistle of the day, that is, of the Fourth Sunday in Advent ; and in the afternoon, part of the 38th verse of the 10th chapter of Acts. The death of the Prince Consort, whose Funeral was to take place on the following day, was the subject, on which

his own feeling, and that of his congregation, led him to dwell in both Sermons. In a strain which, after the event, must have appeared almost to foreshew what was about to happen in his own Parsonage, and before the eyes of his own Parishioners, he described the Royal Widow and her fatherless children. Many readers of this brief Memoir will be thankful to find recalled to their recollection some of his own language, on the very last occasion of addressing his flock from the Pulpit :

“ The news of a short illness, of
“ an almost sudden death, of a great
“ sorrow to the survivors, has just
“ reached and touched us all. GOD
“ has been pleased to call away
“ from this earthly scene the Con-
“ sort of our beloved Sovereign.
“ All that man’s skill and most
“ earnest desire to save a precious
“ life could do was unavailing. All
“ that love and care could do was
“ vain. He who gave the spirit,
“ has recalled it to Himself; and
“ the dust has returned to the
“ earth. One of the first and fore-
“ most among the great has been

“ cut down as a flower of the field.
“ He, on whom our Queen has
“ leaned for guidance, for help,
“ and for encouragement, amidst
“ the cares inseparable from the
“ wearing of a Crown,—he, who
“ was one of the best of husbands
“ and of fathers,—has been, after
“ a few days’ suffering, snatched
“ away. And what can *we* do?
“ Our love—our hearts’ concern—
“ what can it do?

“ Is not JESUS, who, while He
“ dwelt on earth, *went about doing*
“ *good*, and is now seated on the
“ right hand of the Majesty on

“high, the Mediator between God
“and man; is not He maintaining
“our cause in Heaven? In His
“name then may we draw near to
“the Throne of grace, and ask,
“according to the fulness of our
“desires, all that can comfort and
“sustain our bereaved Queen and
“her sorrowing family.”

The Preacher was even then suffering from the first access of the malady, which hurried him to the grave. But he bravely bore up under pain, and, as yet, hardly complained of it. On Christmas day, he took part in the Morning

Service and celebration of Holy Communion, in his own Church ; and attended the Afternoon Service in the Chapel of Dulcot. On the next Saturday, he walked into Wells, to be present at a Committee Meeting of the Diocesan Association of the Curates' Aid Society. He so far struggled with the anguish which he could no longer conceal, as to go through the business of the Meeting. Upon his return to his house, he took to the bed, which he can scarcely be said to have quitted afterwards ; and on which he expired, at an early

hour of the morning of Friday, the 10th of January, 1862.

The sad intelligence of his departure was heard throughout the parish, in the surrounding villages, and in the neighbouring city, with consternation and bitter grief. The Bishop of the Diocese was among the foremost to express sympathy with the bereaved family and flock. He immediately intimated his desire to shew his respect for the deceased, and his condolence with the survivors, by performing the Burial Service, and addressing the sorrowful Parishioners on the Sunday

after the Funeral. Saturday, the 18th of January, was the day of interment; and the following day, that of the Sermon. In the latter instance, the space of the Church was first of all reserved for the Parishioners. After they had been accommodated, others were admitted. But of the crowd of Non-Parishioners, who pressed for entrance, many unfortunately were unable to find room.

In plain, simple, and touching words, which were uttered with evident emotion, and called forth many tears, the Bishop appealed

to the knowledge and experience of his hearers, and drew a sketch of their deceased Pastor, Benefactor, and Friend, of which none, high or low, rich or poor, old or young, could fail to acknowledge the exact accuracy and perfect truthfulness. For all who were present on the affecting occasion, and for many who would gladly have been present, a peculiar and lasting interest will be attached to this imperfect Record, by some extracts from the Sermon, which his Lordship has kindly permitted to be inserted here :

“ I firmly believe that your late
“ Pastor was to you all a pattern
“ of whatsoever things are true,
“ honest, just, lovely, and of good
“ report ; of meekness, patience,
“ and forgiveness ; of contentment,
“ temperance, hospitality, and in-
“ dustry ; of brotherly kindness,
“ and charity. It always appeared
“ to me, that it was his desire most
“ fully to perform the duties of the
“ private Christian as well as of the
“ Christian Pastor. I believe him to
“ have been a man of deep and un-
“ feigned piety. He laboured (none
“ can tell better than yourselves)

“ for the souls committed to his
“ care, having learned the value of
“ his own soul. The love of CHRIST
“ constrained him to go on, through
“ evil as well as good report, in the
“ discharge of duty. He was, my
“ brethren, as many of yourselves
“ can testify, with you in times of
“ trouble and sickness. And, when
“ heart and flesh were failing, when
“ earth was receding, and the awful
“ portals of eternity were opening,
“ he commended the dying Parish-
“ ioner to the SAVIOUR, whom he
“ loved, and pointed out the way to
“ Heaven. He visited the fatherless

“ and widows in their affliction.
“ He comforted the heavy mourner.
“ He bound up the wounds of his
“ flock. In his public ministrations
“ in the Church, he sought to en-
“ lighten and instruct the ignorant,
“ whilst he secured the respect and
“ confidence of the well-informed
“ and intelligent. In his Sermons,
“ he kept back no important truth;
“ he made no compromise with sin.
“ Whilst he rebuked the offence,
“ he strove to conciliate and gain
“ the offender. The object of his
“ Ministry was to feed CHRIST’S
“ sheep and lambs, and, if it were

“ possible, to bring back all those
“ that had strayed to His fold. In
“ intercourse with his people, he
“ was plain, affectionate, faithful,
“ serious. Among the poorest, at
“ their own habitations, he em-
“ ployed every means, and used
“ every argument, to reclaim the
“ vicious and improvident, whom
“ he laboured to bring to the Church
“ and to the cross of CHRIST.

“ In his family, our friend was
“ a loving husband and a faithful
“ parent. He gave to his children
“ good instruction and a good ex-
“ ample. May the precepts which

“ he inculcated, and the principles
“ which he instilled, ever remain
“ fixed in their memory and in
“ their hearts, to restrain and
“ guide them through their lives!
“ In social intercourse, we miss
“ his beautiful simplicity and uni-
“ formity of deportment, which
“ conciliated the regard of all who
“ knew him; and rendered him an
“ object of affection to those who
“ enjoyed his friendship.

“ And now the places which
“ have known this estimable man,
“ shall know him no more. You
“ will no more see his form in this

“ Pulpit, in which you have been
“ accustomed to see him in the
“ morning and afternoon of the
“ Sabbath. Never more will you
“ mingle your prayers and praises
“ with his in this House of God,
“ which he loved so well.

“ He has been cut off in the
“ midst of his usefulness. *But*
“ *honourable age is not that which*
“ *standeth in length of time, nor*
“ *that which is measured by number*
“ *of years. Wisdom is the gray hair*
“ *unto men ; and an unspotted life*
“ *is old age*^b.

^b Wisdom iv. 8—11.

“ May we not hope that *he pleased*
“ *God and was beloved of Him*, and
“ *so was speedily taken away?*

“ It is for us to bow with sub-
“ mission to the will of God, and
“ say : *Blessed are the dead, which*
“ *die in the Lord. Even so saith the*
“ *Spirit ; for they rest from their*
“ *labours, and their works do follow*
“ *them^c.*”

^c Rev. xiv. 13.

