

**MEN WORTHY TO LEAD; BEING
LIVES OF JOHN HOWARD,
WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, THOMAS
CHALMERS, THOMAS ARNOLD,
SAMUEL BUDGETT, JOHN FOSTER**

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Men Worthy to Lead; Being Lives of John Howard, William Wilberforce, Thomas Chalmers, Thomas Arnold, Samuel Budgett, John Foster by Peter Bayne

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JOHN HOWARD

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JOHN FOSTER

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JOHN HOWARD.

THERE is no fair and adequate, in one word, satisfactory, biography of Howard in the hands of his countrymen,—no estimate of his character and work which can or ought to be final. Aiken's work is mainly a lengthened mental analysis, by no means void of value, and written with clearness and spirit ; but it admits of doubt whether Howard was of that order of men in whose case such analysis can be considered useful or admissible. Brown's life contains a true image of Howard ; but it rests there in rude outline, too much as the statue lies in the half-cut block. The work wants unity, is fatally dull, and is not free from the generic taints of biography, exaggeration and daubing. Mr Dixon's book is in some respects the best, and in some the worst I have seen on Howard. The account it gives of his journeys is spirited and clear, and no charge of dullness can be brought against its general style. Yet it may be pronounced, as a whole, and in one word, wrong. It is set on a false key. It is brisk, sparkling, continually pointed ; if it does not directly share the characteristics of either, it seems to belong to a debateable region between flippancy and bombast ; in fatal measure, it wants chasteness and repose. No man can be named in whose delineation these characteristics are so totally out of

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place, and these wants so plainly irreparable, as in that of Howard. The main attribute of his nature, the universal aspect of his life, was calmness : he ever reminds one of a solemn hymn, sung with no instrumental accompaniment, with little musical power, but with the earnest melody of the heart, in an old Hebrew household. Mr Dixon gives his readers a wrong idea of the man : more profoundly wrong than could have arisen from any single mistake,—and such, of a serious nature, there are in his work,—for it results from the whole tone and manner of the work. A Madonna, in the pure colour and somewhat rigid grace of Francia, stuck round with gunflowers by a Belgian populace ; a Greek statue described by a young American fine writer ;—such are the anomalies suggested by this Life of Howard. There were one or two memoirs published in magazines at the time of his death, but these are now quite unknown. On the whole, the right estimate and proper representation of the founder of Modern Philanthropy have still to be looked for. And at the present moment such are specially required. Since the publication of Mr Carlyle's pamphlets, opinion regarding him has been of one of two sorts : either it is thought that his true place has at length been fixed, that Mr Carlyle's sneers are reasonable ; or unmeasured and undistinguishing indignation has been felt against that writer, and the old rapturous applause of Howard has been prolonged. Neither view of the case is correct. To submit that applause to a calm examination, and discover wherein, and how far, it is and has been just ; to estimate the power of Mr Carlyle's attack, and determine in how far it settles the deserts of its object ; and to offer a brief, yet essentially adequate representation of the life of Howard in its wholeness : such is the attempt made in the following paragraphs.

John Howard was born in London, or its vicinity, about the year 1727 ; the precise locality and the precise date

have been matter of dispute. His mother, of whom we have no information, died in his infancy. His father was a dealer in upholstery wares in London, and realized a considerable fortune. He had a character for parsimony. We are not, indeed, furnished with any instances of remarkable closeness or illiberality, and his conduct to his son affords no marks of such. That the allegation, however, had certain grounds in truth cannot be doubted ; and the circumstance is not a little singular in the father of one who must be allowed, whether with censure or applause, to have found, from the days of his boyhood, a keen delight in giving. But whatever the nature or force of this foible, the character of the elder Howard was, on the whole, worthy and substantial. He was a man of quiet, methodic habits, deeply imbued with religious sentiment ; his views were Calvinistic, and he was member of a denomination unconnected with the English establishment—probably the Independent. He was specially characterized by a rigid observance of the Sabbath. We find in him, indeed, unmistakeable traces of the devout earnestness of an earlier age ; and it admits of little doubt that his religion was a lingering ray of the light which burned so conspicuously in England in the preceding century. While the bacchanal rout of the Restoration made hideous the night of England's departed glory, there were a few, perhaps many, who retired into hidden places, to nurse on household altars the flame which seemed erewhile about to illumine the world ; and in the next century such could not have altogether died away. That deep godliness whose sacred influence, like a resting gleam of dewy light, was shed over the whole career of John Howard, accompanied him from his father's house. Were it not somewhat strange, if it proved to have been a dying ray of the old Puritanism which brightened into Modern Philanthropy !

The boy Howard made no figure in his classes. He was

beyond question, what is generally known as a dull boy. He never acquired a perfect grammatical knowledge, or a ready command, even of his native language. Yet he appears, in his early years, to have given indications of a character different from that of ordinary dull boys. His schoolfellows seem to have discerned him, despite his slowness, to possess qualities deserving honourable regard; they saw that he was unobtrusive, self-respecting, unostentatiously but warmly generous. Price, doubtless one of the quickest of boys, and Howard, slow as he was, were drawn towards each other at school, and formed a friendship broken only by death. He succeeded also, and with no conscious effort, in inspiring his older friends and relatives with a sense of the general worth, the substantial, reliable value, of his character. He was known to be sedate, serious, discreet; his word could be depended upon; his sagacity was true; above all, he was simple, quiet, modest.

It being manifest that he had no vocation to letters, his father very sensibly removed him from school, and bound him apprentice to Messrs Newnham & Shipley, grocers in the city of London. A premium of £700 was paid with him; he was furnished with separate apartments, and a couple of saddle-horses. There is no mark of parsimony here.

In 1742, his father died, leaving him heir to considerable property, and seven thousand pounds in money. By the provisions of the will, he was not to enter on his inheritance ere reaching his twenty-fourth year. But his guardians permitted him at once to undertake the principal management of his affairs. As he was still a mere boy, seventeen or eighteen at most, this must be regarded as a decisive proof of the high estimation in which he was held by those who had been in a position to form an estimate of his character. He speedily quitted the establishment in the city; his apprenticeship was never completed.

Not long after his father's death, he travelled for some time on the Continent, and, on his return, went into lodgings at Stoke-Newington. Here he continued for several years. His existence was quiet, even, in no way remarkable, broken only by visits to the west of England on account of his health. This last was quite unsettled. It is indeed to be borne in mind, in the contemplation of his whole career, that he had to sustain a life-long struggle with ill health, that all the influences, to sour the temper, to close the heart, to dim the intellect, to enfeeble the will, which are included in that one word, bore perpetually on Howard. His constitution was by no means sound, and had a strong determination towards consumption. In his unnoticed retirement at Stoke-Newington it is easy to picture him; his pale, tranquil countenance, marked, perhaps, with somewhat of the weary and oppressed look that comes of constant acquaintance with weakness and pain, but unclouded by any repining, and mildly lighted by modest self-respect, by inborn kindness, by deep, habitual piety. He derived some pleasure from a slight intermeddling with certain of the simplest parts of natural philosophy and medical science: of the latter he seems to have obtained a somewhat considerable knowledge.

This quiet existence was, after a time, rather interestingly and unexpectedly enlivened. Howard, in one set of apartments which he occupied, met with less attention than he deemed his due; probably it was thought his mild nature could be imposed upon with impunity: he quitted the place. Entering lodgings kept by a widow named Loidore, he found himself waited upon to his absolute satisfaction. In his new abode illness overtook him, or rather his perpetual ill health reached a crisis. Mrs Loidore tended him with all possible kindness; and the result on his part was not only gratitude, but, as we believe, sincere attachment. On his recovery, he offered her his hand. She was above fifty; he was now