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Aldine Tregastais

A SHORT
ACCOUNT
OF THE
DEATH
OF
SAMUEL HITCHENS,
AND
HIS BROTHER,
THOMAS HITCHENS,
Of Bisveal, near Redruth in Cornwall.

By JAMES HITCHENS, TINNER.

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1806.

A SHORT
ACCOUNT
OF
SAMUEL HITCHENS.

MY son, Samuel Hitchens, was born on the 23d of March 1725. He was brought up to read and write. But he had almost forgot that, and every thing which is good, until God sent his ministers into these parts also, to call sinners to repentance. He was soon very deeply convinced of sin: particularly, in the beginning of January 1744, while Mr. Reeves was praying in my house. In the middle of our prayer, he fell to the ground, and cried so hard, that it greatly surprised us all. We were met to take our leave of Mr. Reeves and John Daniel, who were going to Bristol. Mr. Reeves raised him up, and strove to comfort him. But he still cried out, "I am a lost, undone sinner." In the morning they set out before it was day. Samuel would needs go with them. He had not rode six miles, before God spoke peace to his soul. He rode about ten miles further, and then returned home rejoicing.

2. But it was not long before his faith was tried. The Devil first strove to reason him out of it. But

he could not prevail. Then he stirred up the world against him. They came in multitudes, threatening to kill us all, and broke down the door and all the windows of the house, where we used to meet. After we had repaired these, they came and tore down the house itself, swearing they would tear down the house also where he lived. And we were forced to stop up the chamber window as well as we could, or we should have been stoned as we lay in our beds.

3. When this did not move him, they got a warrant, and came to press him for a soldier, much about the time that they had pressed the Rev. Mr. Greaves, at St. Just, and carried him on board a man of war. And several of our neighbours who were quiet, industrious men, they did press, by virtue of that warrant, and carried them away from their work, and wives and families. But God suffered them not to touch him, though he was daily in his shop, and going up and down about his business.

4. But he was not so well aware of another snare which was laid for him: For soon after, having some thoughts of marriage, he gave way by little and little, till he found his heart was quite drawn away from God. Hereby he was quickly plunged into utter darkness of soul, and fell under stronger convictions than at first. He often told his brother, "he was in hell." He wandered about in the fields by night, *seeking rest but finding none*; and often threw himself on the earth, and beat his head against the ground. And once when his brother and several others were present, he cast himself on the ground, *roaring aloud for the disquietness of his heart*, and beat and cut himself in several places.

5. He was quite delivered in a moment, in Dec. last, and the Lord was with him as at the first. But

after this deliverance, he began more sensibly to feel his want of inward holiness. He had always walked very circumspectly, having a tender conscience, even in the smallest things, avoiding all light discourse, and finding constant power over anger, his bosom sin. But this did not make him shut his eyes against the light, which shewed him the corruptions of his heart. And this knowledge, in particular, he was willing to learn, even from the meanest instrument. Nor did it cost any one much trouble to teach him; for he was indeed a *man that feared always*; being so jealous of his own heart and conduct, that half a sentence, sometimes a single word, or even a look, would shew him what was amiss. And reproof, instead of falling short, would frequently strike much deeper than was intended.

6. He was very zealous for the Lord, and had great opportunities of shewing it in his daily business. For abundance of tinnors came to his shop (he being a smith by trade) both at morning and mid-day, and in the evening, to have their tools repaired. These he continually exhorted and reprov'd, with great boldness and plainness of speech: and yet so meekly, that few of them went away angry, and the greater part were quite in love with him.

7. His common hours of sleep, were between eleven and five. He was very diligent in his labour. Yet he could not refrain from breaking it off now and then, to go up into a little room, which he had purposely built just over his shop, and pour out his soul before God. But he soon made up the time he had thus employed, so that no necessary business was neglected.

8. He had frequently sore conflicts with the enemy of souls, who was permitted to sift him with divers temptations. One of the most dread-

fuli was, doubting the being of a God: but out of this also the Lord delivered him.

9. His love of souls cannot easily be described, especially those that were more immediately under his care. If any thing was amiss in his class or band, he often felt the weight, before he discovered the reason of it: and would lay it home to them with the greatest earnestness, till he had found out the accursed thing. But his love was by no means confined to these. He would lament over sinners of every kind, those especially who would not hear the call of God, with inexpressible grief and tenderness. The prophet Jeremiah was in this his particular favourite. He used to tell much concerning "The weeping prophet:" And was often saying to himself, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears! If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep for you in secret places."

10 By this eager love of souls, he was even constrained at the time we had no preacher among us, himself to exhort, first our own, and then other societies, *to continue in the grace of God*. But he had many sharp trials concerning this, fearing he should run before he was sent: Till one day in May last, being in deep distress, he went up into his room, threw himself down before God, and ceased not to wrestle with him in prayer, till all his doubts fled away, and he was fully convinced what was the will of God concerning him.

11. He often complained, that the world was a burden to him, and he wanted to be wholly sequestered from it. But God convinced him at length, this was not right. "I now, said he, see plainly, there is such a thing as going through any business, and taking all prudent care, yet so as it shall only pass through our hands, without, either troubling or entangling our hearts."

12. For some time he was under another mistake. He was, even to an extreme, negligent of his apparel, thinking it was below the character of a christian, to have any, the least concern about it. But afterwards he was clearly convinced, that in this also he had gone too far, and that a christian ought, even by his outward neatness, to shew forth the purity of his mind.

13. The last great temptation into which he fell, was that of denying to the body even what was necessary for its support. Though he worked hard at his own business, and spent his strength very much, in all the intervals of his work, in going up and down and exhorting the societies, he could not be prevailed on to take any cordial, or any thing for the preserving his lungs. For a considerable time before he was sick, he wholly abstained from flesh. And even other victuals he took at his father's table, as if he was stealing it; and it seemed by his manner, as if he seldom or never eat so as to satisfy nature. The error of this was not shewed him, till a day or two before he was taken ill: when he was fully convinced, that seeing the body as well as the soul is committed to our charge, we ought with prudence and moderation to use all proper means, for the preserving the one as well as the other.

14. This temptation, I believe, began and ended while he walked in the broad light of God's countenance: which he enjoyed with little intermission for two or three months before his last sickness. Indeed it increased very much towards the period of his life: he saw the corruption that remained in his heart. But though they were not destroyed, yet they were fast bound, so that they could not hurt him. The only shadow of doubt which he had was this: Whether the peace he had was not too great,

while sin remained? But this was but a few moments at a time. And "e'er he was aware (he said, his soul flew back and centered in God."

15. On Wednesday, Aug. 13. John Trembath, being ill of a malignant fever, and as it was believed both by himself and others, ready to depart, desired to take his leave of the family. Samuel stooped down to kiss him, and was immediately sensible he had caught the distemper. However, he met the society in the evening, and was unusually vehement in prayer. Thursday, the 14th, he continued working at his trade, till about four in the afternoon. Being then obliged to leave off, he came in to his parents, and said, he was not well. He talked of sickness and death with as much ease as of going to sleep, and mostly with a smiling countenance. Towards evening he took his bed: As he lay down, he said, "Once I laid on this bed, full of guilt and fears; but now they are all taken away. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for sending his messengers into these parts. Now is the harvest come. Now I shall reap the end of all my prayers."

16. About nine, his mother and I came to him, and he said, "Mother, you are troubled about many things. I know you have a great cross now; sickness is in the house, over and above the care of this large family. Father, you must bear your part. There is a want in you both. You are religious singly: but you are not free in confessing your faults and temptations one to another. It would be a great help, if you would set apart a time for this, for the family in general once a week. God has made you an instrument of keeping his little flock together in this place, I believe you do it with all your heart. Let us do it cheerfully, and he will greatly bless us all."

17. He passed the night without sleep; but continually praising God, and exhorting all that came in his sight. To one who stood by him he said, "I opened my Bible to day, on the cxii. Psalm. Take the prayer book and find it." She did so; and he took special notice of the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses. 'Tis sweet, said he, to speak those words experimentally: "He shall never be moved. He will not be afraid of any evil tidings; for his heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord. His heart is established, and will not shrink until he shall see his desire upon his enemies."

18. In the morning, Friday 15, He was full of the spirit of grace, and of supplication: always expressing an unshaken confidence in God, and making strong intercession for the church. "O, (said he,) could I but see the church of Christ in peace and unity! Of one heart, and of one mind! -then I should die rejoicing indeed!"

19. Three of the leaders of classes coming in, he said, "We have been neglectful in one thing, in not going more diligently after backsliders, and bringing back the sheep that were lost. O it is a great thing to bring one soul unto the Lord! Let me desire you to remember it for the time to come." One of them asked, "Shall I pray for you? He said, "Yes: but not pray for my recovery." After praying, he asked, "How do you find yourself now?" he said, "Clear of all doubt: full of God."

20. The man coming to him who used to work with him in the shop, he said, "John, how is the case between God and your soul? of late you have not been so earnest as you was. Why do you not join the society? I believe you are kept from outward sin. But that will not do." A few days after the man came to me, desiring to be admitted into the society, and saying, "He hoped the words would

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never go out of his mind and that he should never rest till he knew the Lord."

21. Speaking of some who were intangled with inordinate affection, and talked of their wanting to know the will of God, he said, "When we can give up our own wills, then we shall know the will of God, And when that is known and carefully followed, all temptations of this kind are at an end."

22. He asked one * who was much with him, "Are you willing to die?" And on her saying, "If I knew it was the will of God, I could lie down and not leave a wish behind:" he answered, "I think I am drawn two ways. I have a strong desire to *depart and to be with Christ*: but sometimes I am drawn a little backward, not knowing whether my *abiding a while in the flesh*, may not be for the glory of God. These are two opposite points. When they are brought to meet, my way will lie strait before me."

23. He often made her repeat those lines of Dr. Watts,

"Say, live for ever, glorious king,
Born to redeem, and strong to save!"

And caught the two next from her, repeating with triumph,

"Then ask the Monster, Where's his sting?
And where's thy victory, boasting grave?"

24. These three verses in one of the Funeral Hymns he was almost continually repeating.

"Thou know'st, in the spirit of prayer,
We groan thy appearing to see;
Resign'd to the burden we bear,
But longing to triumph with thee.

The same person who wrote part of this Relation.

"Tis good, at thy word, to be here,
 'Tis better in thee to be gone,
 And see thee in glory appear,
 And rise to a share of thy throne.

To mourn for thy coming is sweet,
 To weep at thy longer delay:
 But thou whom we hasten to meet
 Shall chase all our sorrows away.
 The tears shall be wip'd from our eyes,
 When thee we behold in the cloud,
 And echo the joys of the skies,
 And shout to the trumpet of God.

Come then to thy languishing bride,
 Who went'st to prepare us a place,
 Receive us with thee to abide,
 And rest in thy mercy's embrace.
 Our heaven of heavens be this,
 Thy fulness of mercy to prove,
 Implung'd in the glorious abyss,
 And lost in the ocean of love."

25. Elizabeth Thomas being with him on Friday night, he asked her to pray, and said, "I can pour out my whole heart, and soul and spirit, and life, in prayer." She asked, "Can you rejoice in God?" he replied, "Yes; I have not the least doubt of my salvation, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, that I shall stand before him in that day. I know my Saviour is now at the right-hand of God, and that he is praying for me. I see the gates of heaven stand open, and Jesus stands with open arms to receive me." Then he cried, "Let me go! I must be gone!" She asked him, "Whither he would go?" He said, "To my God;" and burst out, "Come, Lord Jesus! The harvest is ready, Come, Lord, and put in the sickle!"

26. The next morning, Saturday 16, his sweat stopped. All proper means were used to recover them. He said, "I believe they will not return. But I have left all to God. My heart is full of God. I know he will *appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.*"

After lying a short time, he broke out into vehement prayer, first for the church, and then for himself: crying out aloud. "Open the heavens, O my God, and come down into my soul! Come, Father, Son, and holy Ghost, and plunge me into God! Carry me, ye angels, to the bosom of my God. Bear me to the feet of Jesus!" Then with smiles of triumph, not to be exprest, he cried, "Jesus is coming! Now I shall see the unclouded face of Jesus! 'Tis finish'd! 'Tis finish'd! Jesus is come! Jesus is come!"

"For us is prepar'd
The angelical guard,
The convoy attends,
A ministring host of invisible friends!

"Ready-wing'd for their flight
To the regions of light,
The horses are come,
The chariots of Israel to carry me home!"

One called aloud to his mother to come. He said, "You may call; but God will not stop one moment." He spake no more, till he resigned his spirit into the hands of God.

A SHORT
A C C O U N T
OF
T H O M A S H I T C H E N S.

BISVEAL, near Redruth, Cornwall.

MY Son, Thomas Hitchens, was born April 14th, 1723. He went to school till he was about ten years old. From school he went to work at the Stamps, in dressing of tin-ore, in which employment he continued about six years. Afterwards he wrought in the tin-works under ground, till about a year before his death. Then he went to dress tin-leavings for me, having five or six boys under him. At the same time he ploughed, sowed, mowed, reaped, and managed all my husbandry; understanding every thing both as to the tin and the land, so that we had scarce one in the neighbourhood like him.

2. He was a child of a very sober and a very sweet behaviour, and remarkably dutiful to his parents. But, about nineteen he began to go to revellings and hurlings, and sometimes to be merry with his companions. Of this I now and then told him, but not sharply; for I counted both him and his brother mighty good young men: and was not a little proud, when people told me, "you have two likely sons, and as stout men as any in the parish." I thought it best therefore to let him have his liberty; especially as I then saw no great harm in these things.

3. But he had done with these, from the hour he first heard the gospel of the grace of God. He then "chose to suffer affliction with the people

of God, rather than to enjoy all the pleasures of sin." He had no fear, in the hottest of the persecution. While the mob were pulling down the house in which we used to meet, he stood at a small distance all the time, being nothing terrified: and encouraged his brother, and said, "God will deliver us: only let us trust in him." Nor was he at all moved, when the showers of stones obliged us to stop up our windows with whole deals. One night we heard a great tumult and noise as of much people, and many cries. And it was told us they were at the house of one of our brethren, who lived about a quarter of a mile off. Thomas did not take time to go the road way, (though it was exceeding dark,) but ran directly through the grounds and over the hedges, till he came to the house. The mob, hearing the sound of feet, ran away, not one being left behind. So, said Thomas, the scripture is fulfilled, "One of you shall chase a thousand." As he came into the house, the family too were preparing to run out of it. But he soon convinced them, they had no cause to fear, and they mightily rejoiced together, and praised God, who had delivered them out of the hands of unreasonable and cruel men. All the windows and doors were dashed in pieces; but none of the family hurt at all, notwithstanding the vast quantities of stones which had fallen on all sides of them. One very large stone they found in the cradle, close by a little child. But the child was not hurt. So that in all things they saw the hand of God was over them for good.

4. About eighteen months ago, while his brother William and he were working in the pit with another man, the earth calved in upon the man, who cried out for help, and Thomas ran towards the place where he was. In running his light went out; but he found the man by his voice, though not till he was almost covered in. Before he had

cleared him, the earth calved in again, and he was very near covered in himself. But that it stopped, they knew not how, in one minute more they must have both perished together. William hearing the noise, made up to the place, and in some time relieved them both. Of this Thomas often made mention, praising God for his wonderful deliverance.

5. Some Account of the manner wherein he found peace with God, (two or three months after his brother) I lately found in his pocket-book, The substance of it was this :

“ In reading the three first chapters of St. John, while I was in much trouble and heaviness of soul, the Lord gave me great comfort : especially from these words, “ To as many as believe in his name, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” But soon after I was stript of all, and thought God had left me, a final Cast away. Nevertheless I went into my closet, and with a heavy heart said, Lord, I praise thee, that thou hast not given me over unto death. But how shall I appear before thee? While I spoke, the Lord answered, and applied these words, “ I am thy righteousness;” which burst the cords that before kept my spirits down.”

6. He often complained, That when he found great joy, he was in the greatest danger both of pride and lightness ; and therefore said, He had much rather, if it were the will of God, be always in a mourning state. He likewise found great temptation to pride when he was most blest in speaking to the people. And this was the main reason of his not stirring up the gift of God which was in him.

7. He frequently repeated those words of St. Paul, “ It is good for a man not to touch a woman :” and those of Job, “ I have made a covenant with my eyes ; why then should I think upon a maid ?” He was very jealous over himself when he was in

company with those of a different sex: and if no man besides himself was there, he generally quitted the company as soon as he could.

8. In the latter part of his life he was much grown in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He sometimes saw, as he said, anger or pride in himself; but they had no power: neither had the love or desire of any creature; they were all in subjection under his feet: he was more and more dead to all earthly things, and filled with the fire of God's love. The work of God had a deeper root in his heart, and he was more settled and established in the grace of God.

9. After his brother's death, he declared he could not rest through the earnestness of his desire to follow him. However, in the mean time he put in practice what Samuel spoke of, namely meeting all the family once a week. He reprov'd me and his mother in several things; but we could not reprove him in any. I could not convince him or Samuel of sin, for two years or more.

10. On Wednesday, Sept. 10. In the evening he found himself out of order: he went to bed something earlier than usual, and soon appeared to be in a high fever. But his confidence in God was still the same, and all his words, both that night, and the next day, convinced all who came near him, that the peace of God continually ruled in his heart.

11. On Thursday evening, between nine and ten, his sister sitting by him, he said, "Lord, shall I call and wilt thou not answer? No; it cannot be: Thou hast promised, every one that asks in faith shall receive." Then he began praying for his father and mother; for his brothers and sisters, and in particular for her that sat by him. "O my God, marry her to thyself! Make her all glorious within. Give her an undivided heart." He then prayed for himself. "Now come, O my God,

and sanctify me wholly. Press me closer to thyself. Thou knowest, this is all my desire. Give me power to declare thy wondrous works before I go hence. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*"

12. As Mary Bisvine came to the bedside, he looked on her and said, "Now I am free. Now my heart is at liberty. I will praise my **GOD** as long as I have breath." After speaking much to the same effect, he lay still a small time, and then broke out into exceeding loud, vehement prayer, his voice being quite altered, and every sentence pronounced with uncommon emphasis. He prayed first for all estates and conditions of men; that the church of Christ might spread over all nations, and ten thousand times ten thousand might be converted to **GOD**, and all the people of the earth praise him. Then he prayed for all the ministers of the gospel; from the greatest even to the least; especially for those whom **GOD** had lately employed to seek and save those that were lost in Cornwall. Afterwards he prayed for John Trembath, that he might live for the glory of **GOD**, who had brought him back from the gates of death, and might be a means of saving many souls from the bitter pains of eternal death. He then prayed for the Society: "O Lord, unite them as the heart of one man. O Lord, give them eyes to see wherein soever they have departed from thee. O take from them the spirit of unthankfulness, and suffer them not to bite or devour one another. Heal thou their backslidings, and spread over them the banner of thy love!"

13. With prayer there was continual praise intermixed. Sometimes he was blessing **GOD** for what he had done; then praying, "O my **GOD**, finish thy work, and take me into thy kingdom. Is this the day, O my **GOD**, that I shall kiss my brother in Paradise? — O Lord, the angels have already praised thee at my conversion. Is this the day that I shall praise

thee with them? Yes, O my GOD, I am now going to join them, to sing praises to thee for ever."

Then he prayed with great earnestness for Mary Bisvine and his own sister, (both of whom he had in the beginning of the evening desired to stay with him till he was in eternity) that they might never grow weary or faint in their minds, that GOD would send down the spirit of sanctification into their hearts, and give them resigned wills to bear whatever his providence should lay upon them! adding, "They shall run and not be weary. I know we shall all meet together, and sing praises unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever."

He went on, "O how good is GOD to me, that he hath given me a tongue to praise: a little while, yet a little while, and I shall praise him in heaven! O the goodness of GOD, that I, a worm of the earth, shall stand there upon Zion, with the hundred forty and four thousand, which "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Here is a privilege; here is a wonder! that I am made a son of God! I am a son of God, and a joint heir with Christ, and I shall soon be where I shall behold him for ever! I, even I, who have been a backslider from God! But he has healed my backslidings and loved me freely."

14. Soon after, he said, "I love thee, O my GOD, thou knowest that I love thee, because thou hast first loved me. O what manner of love is this, that GOD should stoop to love me! And he is coming to carry me home. O! I see thousands, and ten thousands of angels! Do you not see them? O brother Trembath, do you see what a glorious place I am going to? I am going to join with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven. I am going to reign with GOD, among ten thousands of his saints, and to bask in the beams of his love for ever."

Then looking on Mary Bisvine, he said, "Canst you see Jesus Christ coming, with an innumerable company of angels, and the golden banner displayed! They are coming to carry me to the bosom of my God. Open their eyes, O God, that they may see them! O what a good God have I served! I am sanctified, soul, body, and spirit. I am whiter than snow. I am washed in the blood of my Redeemer. Why, I am all God. My heart is full of God! O let them who hear me now, praise thee for ever and ever."

"And yet I have been unfaithful to my God. For he gave me a gift and I improved it not. I thought I was not worthy to stand in the high-ways and call sinners to repentance. But, O God, thou hast forgiven me this also, and I will preach thee now as long as I have breath."

15. He ceased not thus praying and praising for an hour. His parents then coming in, (early on Friday morning) he said, "O my mother, you will not weep to see me going to such a loving God. My father and mother will not be backsliders. No; I know that God loves them, and that we shall all meet together in heaven, to praise him to all eternity." Then looking on his brother, about twelve years old, he said, "Stand off, for fear you catch the distemper: for I fear you are not prepared to die. You have played away the grace of God. The harvest may come before you are renewed in the image of God, and then how will you appear? Cry mightily to God. Strive with all your might. Call upon him, and God will hear."

He then said, "Right my feet, that I may lie straight, to resign my breath. When I am dead, do you sing me all the way, sing my body to the grave, lay me by my brother, and the same time my spirit shall be joined to his, and to ten thousand times ten thousand of angels and spirits, singing praise to God and the Lamb for ever."

16. Having spoken till he had no breath left, he paused; and in a short time began again;—"Hear now the words of a dying man—a living wonder—a Christian triumphing over death! O what a God do the Christians serve! What a God I have served! Praise him with me for ever. Behold the immense goodness of our God! O that all the world knew our God! He has now made my heart free, that I may praise him, and I cannot stop while I have breath. Go, tell all the world of this. O brethren! what a good God do we serve! Be not afraid to tell it abroad! Go, shew it to all people, that they may come and serve him too."

When he stopt speaking, the oppression on his breast returned. This he took notice of and said, "While I am praising God, my heart is free: but when I cease, I feel this load again. But I may well bear this; for this is all the hell I shall have." Then he broke out,

"See a soul escape to bliss,
Keep the Christian festival!"

"He hath washed me, and I am whiter than snow. God is mine, and I am God's. I shall soon be with him." Thus he continued 'till he could speak no more.