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MEMOIR OF THE LATE MR. PETER LEVESQUE.

Mr. Peter Levesque, son of John Levesque, of Bethnal Green, was born in the year 1758. His father dying when he was about eight years of age, and his mother being unable to provide for him, he was adopted by a distant relative, and sent to board with Mr. and Mrs. Monets. They, being of French extraction, were accustomed to converse in French, by which means he obtained some acquaintance with that language.

When Peter was thirteen years old, he became desirous of going to sea; and his uncle procured for him a birth on board the *Augusta*, Capt. Broughton, who was soon so pleased with the lad as to take him for his own servant. The captain instructed him in writing, and improved him in the English and French languages. This act of kindness was of essential service to him in future life. After some years, a war breaking out between England and America, a fleet was ordered to that coast, of which the *Augusta* was one. An engagement soon took place with the enemy off Long Island. During the action the *Augusta* caught fire. Poor Peter was then confined to his hammock with a fever. At first he could not be roused to exert himself to escape; but a young shipmate, greatly attached to him, and determined rather to perish with than leave him behind, got him to a port-hole. Every boat but one was filled, and the men in that, at great peril, waited to receive him. Had he continued in the *Augusta* two minutes longer, when she blew up, he had perished in his sins, as he was at that time a total stranger to God. After that alarming event he returned to England, and at Falmouth entered the *Antelope* packet as gunner. In the course of seven years, in this vessel he made fifteen voyages to the West Indies, and five to America. Twice was he made prisoner, and endured extreme hardships; but such was the depravity of his heart, that neither in painful trials nor providential escapes did he think of the arm of Mercy stretched out on his behalf; but even indulged sceptical notions concerning the being of a God.

At an interval between some of his last voyages, he married Susanna Murry, and in the year 1788 left the service and settled in London. Here, by his affectionate brother John, he was taught the art of silk weaving. This brother, though his knowledge of divine things was very imperfect, was convinced of the advantages of a religious life; and in the course of conversation he endeavoured to draw the attention of Peter to a consideration of his latter end. In process of time he was prevailed upon to attend a church once a day, and thought that a meritorious service. One Lord's Day evening, however, he and John went to hear the Rev. John Eyre, at Ram's Chapel, Homerton; and the ministry of that highly honoured servant of Jesus Christ became the power of God unto the salvation of both the brothers. Peter's heart was now effectually cured of sceptical opinions, and melted into the love of Christ. Christianity was not now with him a cunningly devised fable, but a reality which engrossed his supreme affections. In consequence of this change, the brothers joined Mr. Eyre's church communion, and for some years walked in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.

Mr. Peter Levesque was now called to endure a severe trial in the death of his beloved wife, - though while he sorrowed at her loss, it was not without hope; for the most satisfactory evidence had been given of the Lord's having previously revealed himself to her heart, as the rock of her salvation. After a proper season, he married Sarah Moor, an amiable and serious member of Mr. Eyre's chapel, who survives him. As his time was not fully occupied, he accepted a situation,

obtained for him by a friend, in the East India warehouse, which together with the loom, produced a comfortable subsistence.

From a private diary of his own it appears, that fearing to hide even one talent in the earth, and being anxious to be made useful to his fellow-creatures, he became desirous to engage himself in missionary work among the heathen. His wife, inspired with similar feelings, devoutly cherished the desire; and, after mature consideration and fervent prayer, they offered themselves to the London Missionary Society, and were accepted. Being appointed, on the second voyage of the ship *Duff*, Capt. Robson, to the Society and other islands of the South Seas, he embarked Nov. 27, 1798, and on the 19th of the following month was joined by the other missionaries and their families at Spithead; where, having being commended to God in a most affecting farewell by one of the Directors, they weighed on the 20th. Anchoring the next day in Portland roads, their native shores were yet in view; but on the 23rd they were again under sail, cheerfully anticipating, according to Mr. Levesque's diary, the consecration of his life to the missionary cause, until his earthly tabernacle should be dissolved on one of the islands of the South Seas.

The thoughts of God, however, are not always as the thoughts of his devoted servants. Sometimes he stays them even from the course of usefulness they had marked out; and sends them back, though with the approving acknowledgment, "It is well that it was in thine heart." The *Duff* crossed the equator on Jan. 23, 1799. On the 29th, the captain and the missionaries had a special meeting for the purpose of settling their respective destinations, and other arrangements connected with the mission. On February 11, they were rapidly proceeding with a fair wind and glowing expectations towards the desired stations. On the 18th the South American coast appeared; but who can tell what a day may bring forth! "On the 19th, a man at the mast head cried out, 'A sail at a distance.' By ten o'clock at night she approached within half a mile and fired a shot. A large boat full of armed Frenchmen shortly boarded us, and ordered our men to embark in the boat, whom they carried on board *Le Grande Buonaparte*. Now the husbands took leave of their wives and little ones, not knowing they should ever see them again."

On this awful crisis Mr. Levesque's diary contains the following remark: -

"I began to reflect, what can be the cause of the Lord's dealing thus with us. I know sin was the cause of Israel's captivity, This made me fear, there was an Achan in our camp, and my prayer was, Lord, is it I? My barrenness and stupidity were brought to my remembrance, and led me to cry, If I am the cause of this calamity, let me bear thy rebukes, O my God, and have mercy on these thy servants."

On the 3d of March they were landed at Monte Video, where the *Duff* was sold by the enemy; and though the missionaries and their wives were again united, still they were exercised with many difficulties and embarrassments. The Lord, however, gave them favour with some of the people, and a passage was granted to them to Rio in a Portuguese brig, which had also been taken by the same privateer. Captain Robson intended to purchase this brig at Rio, by bills on the Society, and proceed on the mission; but here they were again disappointed, for a Portuguese offered the amount in money, which was accepted. They then had no alternative, but to return to England in two Portuguese ships of war, which were convoying a fleet from Rio to Lisbon. On Sept. 21 they reached Lisbon, where they were politely received by the British ambassador, through whose good offices they received much kind attention from the clergyman of the British factory. On Sunday, Oct. 13, they arrived at Falmouth, and went in a body to the late Mr. Wildbore's chapel. One of the missionaries preached from Mark vii. 37. "He hath done all things well;" a sentiment to which Mr. Levesque cordially subscribed. For though a mysterious providence permitted that his wishes should not be fully realized, in reference to that voyage, yet when he saw how that disappointment had operated to improve the spirit of missionary institutions, by grounding them on a more settled dependance on God, and by drawing forth more ardently the prayers and offerings of his people, he

could still unite in the sentiment, "He hath done all things well." And when he lived to know that those islands, which had engaged so much of his interest and affection, had "stretched out their hands to God," and cordially received the gospel, his heart glowed with joy and gratitude on the occasion.

After Mr. Levesque arrived in England, he resumed his former occupation, in which he continued five years; when the Rev. Mr. Wilks hearing that a vacancy was likely to take place in the offices of Master and Matron to St. Bride's workhouse, Fleet Street, and being privately consulted by a leading parishioner as to suitable persons to occupy those important stations, he strongly recommended Mr. Levesque and his wife as every thing he could wish; and by his influence the situations were obtained.

A new scene of usefulness now opened before him. He found himself surrounded by circumstances which required all the amiable temper, as well as firm decision which so eminently centered in his character. Not only did the duties of the house over which he immediately presided demand his unwearied attention, but the interests of the poor throughout the parish, and other important matters connected with its pecuniary concerns, received material advantage by his wise and benevolent arrangements. As to the inmates of the establishment, he was constantly intent on promoting their temporal comfort and spiritual benefit. The habits of cleanliness, regularity and industry, he always enforced by his own example. The most deserving among them were often relieved from his own purse, in addition to parochial allowances. While the beneficial influence of his super-intendance in these respects was most sensibly felt, he did not fail to furnish them with the means of religious instruction and improvement. Early on Sunday mornings he explained the Word of God to them himself, and caused the voice of prayer and praise to be regularly heard among them. In addition to his personal services, the spiritual assistance of others was obtained, to impress upon the minds of those children of poverty the truths and blessings of the gospel of Christ.

This very weighty charge he sustained during sixteen years. The extensive influence which he acquired in the parish throughout that period, and the high respect with which he was uniformly treated by all classes, sufficiently attest the fidelity and efficiency of his services. At length, finding his strength on the decline, and being desirous of passing the close of his life in less labour and anxiety, his office of Master was resigned in June 1821; and he resided at Hackney, where most of his property lay.

Here, the sterling excellency which had marked his character under all the varying scenes through which he had passed, appears to have settled into an established intercourse of his mind with Christ; and a holy waiting for the summons which should call him to the fuller enjoyment of God, in the presence of his glory. Nor was he permitted long to wait. In the middle of January he was seized with an inflammatory disease on the lungs, which carried him off in nine days. The approach of death was not an alarming circumstance. At the beginning of his illness, a friend hoped he would be restored, and preserved for further usefulness. He replied, "I have no will of my own, the will of God be done." He often repeated the 46th Psalm, and many passages of scripture; the hymns beginning, "There is a land of pure delight;" and, "There is a fountain filled with blood," &c. Repeating the last line of the sixth verse, referring to the golden harp, he exclaimed, "*For me!* It is prepared for *me!*" Towards the close of life a difficulty of swallowing occurred. On being offered a little drink he refused it, adding "I shall drink no more until I partake of the new wine in my Father's kingdom." He exhorted his young friends and relatives to seek an interest in Christ, and to pray much for the influence of the Holy Spirit, to "guide them in the way everlasting." "I have," said he, "but one trouble, and that is to see my friends grieve, and particularly you, my dear wife." To her he repeated many precious promises; adding, "We part now, but we shall soon meet above." One of his nephews called on Mr. Wilks on Sunday morning, and informed him of his uncle's situation; and as soon as the morning service was closed he went over to see him. When he was retiring, he

said, "The Lord bless you, my dear friend;" he replied, "He has blessed me, he does bless me, and he will bless me." This firmness and serenity of mind never forsook him to the last moment, when he sweetly fell asleep in Jesus, January 21, 1822, aged 64 years.

"Mark the perfect, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

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