

BROWNLOW NORTH



HIS LIFE
AND WORK

K. Moody Stuart





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*He that cometh to God must believe that he is,
and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Hebrews 11:6



THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

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Frontispiece – Portrait of Brownlow North

Facing p. 318 – Brownlow North’s grave in the Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh. Copyright Stephen C. Dickson, used under attribution-sharealike 4.0 international. Image has been grayscaled.

CHAPTER I

BROWNLOW NORTH'S EARLIER YEARS

BROWNLOW NORTH is a name that has become a household word throughout the length and breadth of Scotland, and also in many of the cities and towns of England and Ireland.¹ It is a name which will be held in grateful remembrance and esteem as that of a man who has influenced by his preaching and teaching the spiritual life of our land more than most have done. It seems therefore unfitting that such a man's life should be allowed to become a thing of the past without some permanent record being preserved of those labours in which he was so unwearied, of that teaching which made such a deep impression upon multitudes, and of that evangelistic ministry which has formed one

¹ Sadly almost the opposite is true today. Is this just one of the inevitable results of the passing of time, or have other factors conspired to make men forget one of the greatest evangelists of the 19th century?
— *The Publishers.*

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of the most important factors of the religious, as distinguished from the ecclesiastical, history of Scotland in recent times.

Brownlow North was born on the 6th January, 1810. He was the only son of the Rev. Charles Augustus North, Rector of Alverstoke, Hants, and Prebendary of Winchester, and of Rachel, daughter of Thomas Jarvis, Esq., of Doddington Hall, Lincolnshire. His grandfather was the Hon. and Rev. Brownlow North, D.D., Prelate of the Noble Order of the Garter, who was successively the Bishop of the Sees of Lichfield, Worcester, and Winchester. Mr. North was thus a grand-nephew of Lord North, the celebrated prime minister of George III, not a little of whose characteristic ability and genius along with that of other members of the distinguished family to which he belonged, reappeared in him. It is a family which has produced members who have exercised an appreciable influence on the community both in Church and State.

His birth took place at Winchester House, Chelsea, the townhouse of his grandfather. His father was the Bishop's youngest son; but as his cousin, the Earl of Guilford, had no son, and his elder brother Francis had been long married, and was also childless, the infant boy was welcomed as heir to the earldom; and hearty were the cheers which greeted him, when his father's intimate companion and friend, Christian Schetky, the well-known marine painter,¹ receiving him from the nurse's

¹ Schetky when a young man in Rome received the blessing of Cardinal York, the brother of Prince Charles Stuart, and died within

arms at breakfast, presented him to the company as the future Earl of Guilford. It was these expectations which prevented his being trained for any of the professions, and which thus, as in many similar cases, eventually proved a serious disadvantage to him.

The little boy threw apace, and a story which is told of him when he was five years old, gives evidence of his natural quickness of mind. Walking with his aunt, Lady Lucy North, in the park where the deer were lying lazily basking and browsing, he said to her, after some minutes' silence, 'Aunt Lucy, why are you like that big stag there?' 'I'm sure I can't' replied his aunt. 'I don't think I'm a bit like. Tell me why.' 'Because, Aunt Lucy, you're a great dear.' To dive to the depths of a long pocket, and extract half-a-crown, was the quick rejoinder of his aunt to his *jeu de mot*; and afterwards with much praise of his cleverness and affection, she related the story as it has since been preserved in the family.

At the early age of nine he went to Eton, when Dr. Keate was headmaster, and remained there for six years in Dr. Hawtrey's house. He did not distinguish himself there by application to his books, but was known as a first-rate swimmer and general good fellow by the soubriquet of Gentleman Jack, in contradistinction to a bargee of his name, with whom the Eton boys of that

two years of Brownlow North's death, at the age of ninety-six. That interview was thus one between two men who were respectively contemporaries of the battle of Culloden and the death of David Livingstone.

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time were familiar. The prayers and pious training of his mother, who was a most godly woman, bore as yet no fruit in the wild and wayward character of her boy, who was strongly averse to all that was good, his influence upon his schoolfellows being exactly the reverse of what she would have desired. His father dying in 1825, young Brownlow was removed from Eton, and went out to Corfu with his cousin, Lord Guilford, who was Chancellor of the Ionian Islands, where he had founded a Theological College, in which it was hoped his young relative might be induced to continue his studies. Nothing, however, seemed able to subdue the wild, high spirits of the lad; and the old gentleman, after finding one day that the window of his classroom had been made the winning-post and last jump of an amateur steeplechase, which Brownlow had got up, regretfully sent him home again, as beyond his control. He was then sent abroad with a tutor, to make, as it was then termed, 'the grand tour;' but this experiment proved no more fortunate than the preceding, for meeting with his tutor in a gaming saloon the first night after their arrival in Paris, he insisted, under penalty of exposure, that all the books they had brought with them should be left behind in Paris, as unnecessary incumbrances, and afterwards, on the journey to Rome, he won from the miserable tutor at *écarté* all the money with which he had been entrusted to defray the expenses of the tour, so that their position became completely reversed; the

pupil was now master, and the tutor only tolerated as a useful and humble companion.¹

On returning from the Continent he joined his mother, who had gone to live at Cheltenham. Here for a time he thoroughly enjoyed himself; for he was at that age (seventeen) very fond of dancing and riding, and both pleasures were here to his hand in perfection. So great an impression did he make upon his fair partners, that he proposed to no less than nineteen in one winter, and was accepted by them all! His fond mother had at first considerable difficulty, and felt no little embarrassment in satisfying the expectant mothers-in-law of a future earl that her son was quite a boy, and that nothing serious could be entertained; but after the experience of a few similar situations her replies almost formulated themselves, and it was with difficulty at last that she could refrain from yielding to a strong desire to laugh at the extraordinary absurdity of the whole affair. His propensity for riding, which developed itself in racing up and down the promenade, a long straight boulevard, which those who know Cheltenham will recollect, had well-nigh brought him to his end, had not a merciful Providence watched over him and intervened to save his life. He was racing with one of his companions, and had

¹ It may be mentioned as not unworthy to rank along with other remarkable instances of Divine grace recorded in this volume, that this tutor, who must have had such a bad influence upon his pupil, at a later period gave every evidence of true penitence, and of being renewed in Christ Jesus.

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just been successful, when his rival challenged him again to another contest, but stipulated they should change sides of the road, owing to some fancied advantage the right side possessed over the left. It was agreed to, and they started at full speed, when, unfortunately, coming down the hill round the corner where now stands the Queen's Hotel, there appeared a travelling carriage and pair of posters. To avoid a collision was impossible, and the horse and rider on the right-hand side went straight into the body of the carriage. The rider was thrown over the top, and taken up senseless, and afterwards died; the horse was so injured that it had to be immediately destroyed. This melancholy event made Cheltenham no longer agreeable to young North; and as he had made the acquaintance during the winter of several Irish families who had come there for the season, and who had pressed him to go and see them in Ireland in the summer, and as he was intimate with some of the officers of the regiment then quartered at Galway, he determined to cross the Channel, and try the attractions of the Emerald Isle. These proved too much for him; for the daughter of a highly-esteemed Protestant clergyman so captivated him, that he induced her to give him her hand, and was married to Grace Anne, second daughter of the Rev. Thomas Coffey, D.D., of Galway, on the 12th of December, 1828, before he had completed his nineteenth year. On the 12th of December, 1878, Mr. North would have completed fifty years of wedded

life, and those who knew him may remember how he looked forward to celebrating his 'golden' wedding. The issue of his marriage was three sons, Charles Augustus, Brownlow who predeceased his father by a short interval, and Frederic who died in early childhood.

About this period, however, great, and to him most important, changes had taken place in the circle of his relations. His kind old friend and cousin had died, and had been succeeded in the earldom by his uncle Francis, his father's eldest brother. Naturally an austere man, he had no sympathy with the youthful extravagances of his nephew, and when the death of his wife took place, after nearly thirty years of wedded life, he told him he would marry again. He was as good as his word, and marrying a lady some twenty-five years his junior, he became the father of a family, and though his eldest son did not live to succeed him, his grandson Dudley Francis became 7th Earl of Guilford.

Mr. North's expectations being thus doomed to disappointment, and his young wife having borne him two sons, the question as to the maintenance of himself and them asserted itself persistently and painfully. His sole income was derived from his fees as registrar of the diocese of Winchester and Surrey, to which office he had been appointed when quite young by his grandfather, the Bishop. His work was done by two local solicitors, who paid him a yearly allowance, and retained the balance of the fees for their services. At that time he was in receipt

‘This arresting account of Brownlow North’s life and work recalls one of the greatest evangelists of the nineteenth century.’

—*Reformed Evangelical Review*

‘Biography is essential to the diet of the Christian reader and this is of the finest. Warmly written, it is refreshing to read, depicting afresh the power of the gospel in the life of a man whom God was to use powerfully.’

—*Australian Church Record*

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