

EXTRACT FROM THE RYDE VENTILATOR AUGUST 1880

The Ryde Ventilator

DEATH OF MR E. HARTNALL

When the compositors put into type the small slip announcing the illness of the editor of this paper, they little imagined that ere a fortnight had passed the fingers which penned the short announcement would stiffen in death; yet so it is, and an afflicted household has, with other troubles, to mourn the loss of one who was an affectionate and perhaps too indulgent parent. The deceased, as was evident to everyone who knew him, has been breaking very fast of late, and the worry, anxiety and expense of defending the action of Webber –v- Hartnall told severely upon him; interfered with his rest and took away his appetite. When the verdict went against him he was at first as one completely stunned. He might, however, have recovered from that shock, but when further proceedings were taken involving him in additional expense, the anxiety was too much for his enfeebled frame, and his constitution could not stand against a prevalent complaint, which usually yields to simple treatment. He refused all nourishment, only seeming to care to remain still in a fitful kind of slumber, disturbed, however, by an occasional whispered word or so which showed that his mind still turned to the trial. As time went on his sleep seemed to deepen into insensibility from which he was roused with more and more difficulty, till finally it became evident he could never rally, and he quietly sank to rest, without pain or suffering, on Thursday morning last. We give these few particulars because there have been many kind friends who have asked for information on the subject, and seemed under the impression that his death was a sudden one. As a journalist of forty years standing, and an old inhabitant who had watched the progress of the town almost from the commencement, we feel sure that a few particulars respecting the deceased will not be inappropriate or distasteful to our readers.

Mr Ebenezer Hartnall was the only son of the Rev. J Hartnall, for some years the pastor of Salem Chapel, Ipswich, and who is referred to in the "History of Ipswich", which we have in our possession, as an "extraordinary instance of successful study", and as "a man whose character and talents were held in the highest estimation". He was author of several published sermons, one on the death of George III, entitled the "Vanity of Human Life" being particularly admired, and published by subscription, as were also several other M.SS. after his death. The subject of our sketch, however, had the misfortune to lose both his parents before he was twelve years of age, and though he met with many kind friends he never had the advantage of parental care and guidance at a most critical time in life. After an apprenticeship to a bookseller and printer he came, shortly after he was of age, to Ryde, over forty years ago and started in business for himself as a printer, etc. first in the Arcade and subsequently in Cross Street. It was at this time in his life that he formed a friendship for Mr Herbert Baskett, a young man of literary ability far above the average. The two worked together harmoniously, and the deceased published a volume of sketches and poems by his friend, which was very favourably received. Mr Hartnall, with characteristic enterprise also published a number of other works of local interest. He edited an Island Magazine to which Mr Baskett contributed, and which contained a number of very readable and interesting articles relating to local events. He also published a "History of the Royal George", which was bound in thin pieces of the wood of the unfortunate ship, and as at that time the hillocks marking the graves of the unfortunate sailors on the Duvver were still to be traced, the book had a large sale. He also published a guide to the Island, and several other works of local interest, finishing by starting a

newspaper entitled the "Isle of Wight Observer." This paper, the first published in the Island, was not issued many months. It was, perhaps, started on too ambitious a scale, the stamp duty and tax on advertisements crippled newspaper proprietors, and he had to give up the paper after losing considerably by it. The late Mr George Butler, an apprentice to Mr Hartnall, after the lapse of some years revived the title in the well known paper which is still published by Mrs Hannah Butler, of the Colonnade. The deceased after this failure left the Island, and after a short connection with a Portsmouth journal, when to London and became secretary to the Hall of Commerce. Having resided several years in London deceased returned to the Island, and for over 20 years his pen has been uninterruptedly engaged upon local topics for the Ryde and County papers. Ten years ago, the town being in an excited state with respect to the enclosure of the foreshore, deceased issued a little sheet explanatory of the manner in which the complications then existing had arisen. That little sheet was called the *Ventilator*, and having a good sale deceased continued its publication up to the present time, with increasing difficulty, however, as failing health impaired the vigour of his mind. As a journalist the deceased is admitted to have a few compeers in the Island. He wrote in a style singularly terse and vigorous, and with admirable perspicuity and condensation of thought. In his best days he was fully equal either to light badinage, satire, or to arranging a ponderous array of arguments against an opponent. He was a pleasant companion, and from the store house of a really wonderful memory he could always produce some apt story or illustration to "point a moral or adorn a tale." He will certainly be missed ; there is no one who can adequately supply his place, or who understands town affairs so thoroughly as he. With regard to the personal character of the deceased, we can only say that he was good-natured to an extent injurious to himself, especially when a young man. In conclusion we ask our readers, in the language of quotation of which deceased was very fond

*"Be to his faults a little blind
And to his virtues rather kind"*

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"What is the first thing you do when you're going to write a libel?" inquired Gubs. "Burn my pen, and throw the ink out of the window," was the rejoinder. If our dear departed father had taken this advice he would doubtless have been alive now. We felt "libellish" this week on reading V.A.W's effusion in the "Ryde News," but happily overcame the tendency. It is some consolation, however, to know that Mr Webber, (and we believe it, because he says so) still retains the faculty of blushing. He must pardon us if we thought otherwise.