

Accident Investigators

The Birmingham Daily Post: Tuesday December 10, 1861 Memoir to Samuel Cook

BLACK COUNTRY
LIVING
MUSEUM

DEATH OF MR. SAMUEL COOK, SEN.—Death has just deprived this town of a most extraordinary, although eccentric character, well known to the public for many miles beyond his native county. The chequered life of the late Mr. Samuel Cook terminated on Sunday morning, at about five o'clock, after only twenty minutes apparent illness, in the 75th year of his age. The subject of this brief memoir was born at Trowbridge on the 15th of July, 1782, and was apprenticed as a draper, in Poole, Dorsetshire—in the same trade and town as the late lamented Rev. John Angell James, with whom Mr. Cook was very intimate. From Poole he went to Liverpool, where he commenced business, and from that town he removed, in 1818, to Dudley. Almost as soon as he arrived he began to take a great interest in the various local charities of the place, and the discussions he caused led to the revival of some which had been allowed to fall into disuse. In consequence of the active part he took in all religious, political, and philanthropic movements, he was thrown into connection with David Hume, William Cobbett, Carlisle, and other celebrities of the time. In 1827 Mr. Cook's activity in political affairs caused him a little trouble, as he was indicted at Worcester, before Mr. Justice Littledale, for having "falsely, seditiously, and maliciously" written and published a libel, which contained among other matters the following queries: "What was Pitt paid his salary for? What is Liverpool paid his salary for? What is Bathurst paid his salary for? What are Canning, Huskisson, Robison, Peel, and many others paid their salaries for? What? To bring starvation on the people! Oh! England, England, England. Thou who hast been the envy of surrounding nations and the admiration of the world, how art

then fallen and how is thy glory become dim? Oh! is there no impeachment awaits thy Ministers of State? Let a minister's head suffer upon Tower Hill for every man or woman that dies of starvation, and we shall soon have an improvement of trade." The libel complained of went on to make "fan" of the "divine right" of kings, of tithes, and episcopacy, and asked why "tax producers" should starve, while "tax eaters" were rioting in abundance. These statements were the gravamen of the charge, and Sergeant Russell with Mr. Whateley conducted the prosecution. Mr. Cook was ably defended by the late Lord Campbell, (then Mr. Campbell, King's Counsel,) and Mr. C. Phillips. After a long trial the defendant was found guilty; but owing, as the judge stated, to the tranquil state of the country, it was not considered necessary to do more than bind defendant over in £200, to receive sentence when called upon. In 1831-2, Mr. Cook was also very active in advocating the cause of the Reform Bill; and also showed his opposition to compulsory church rates, by allowing himself several times to be distrained upon. During the Chartist riots Mr. Cook again got into trouble for being at a "seditious" meeting, and making a "seditious" speech. For this he paid a similar penalty to Smith O'Brien, Arthur O'Neill, Thomas Cooper, and others, by suffering six months imprisonment at Worcester. On his release he was triumphantly escorted back to Dudley. From that time no particular public event marked Mr. Cook's life, but he was unceasingly active in all matters of public interest. Such is the brief and imperfect sketch of the career of a man who, although possessed of many idiosyncracies, doubtless did some good in his day and generation.

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Transcription



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