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DEATH OF CR. CLAXTON, J.P.

Seldom indeed does the death of a public man in any locality cause such a widespread feeling of regret throughout the community as was felt yesterday when it became known that Cr. F. M. Claxton, J.F., had ceased to breathe. The news was so unexpected, even to his friends, that it came with greater shock. During last week the deceased gentleman was suffering from diarrhoea, but no serious results were feared, and the thought that it would lead to his decease was furthest from the minds of those who knew him. His cheery and hearty manner were never more apparent. He was present during the greater part of each sitting of the Church of England Assembly last week, and joined in the debates on Friday night, after which he took tea with Archdeacon Julius at the vicarage. He was then suffering, but not to such an extent as to cause uneasiness in his own mind or the minds of his friends. On Saturday morning he was down the city attending to his business as usual, but that afternoon he was compelled to take to his bed. Dr Whitcombe was summoned, and pronounced the complaint from which Mr Claxton was suffering to be English cholera. On Sunday the symptoms became more alarming, and the services of Dr Bradford were called into requisition. It was soon apparent, however, that the disease had obtained too firm a hold, and that human aid was vain. At 2 o'clock yesterday morning inflammation set in, and at half-past 1 o'clock in the afternoon Mr Claxton peacefully breathed his last. All his family, with the exception of Mr F. W. Claxton (who arrived by the afternoon train from Melbourne, having been summoned by telegram) were present at the mournful event. The deceased, at the last, placed his arm

around his aged mother's neck, and died in that position. Seeing that Mr Claxton occupied such a prominent position in municipal and other public affairs, an outline of his life will, we are sure, be read with interest.

Frederick Moses Claxton was born at Norwich, County Norfolk, England, in September, 1532, so that he was, at the time of his death, in his 56th year. After receiving a liberal education at a public school, he underwent a thorough business training in Manchester. In the latter end of the year 1552 he set sail for Australia, where he arrived in the early part of the succeeding year. He first settled in Geelong, where he was for a time chief clerk to Mr Fred. Bigwood, an auctioneer and estate agent. In the year 1854, he being then 22 years of age, Mr Claxton married Miss D'Alton, sister of a subsequent business partner. The marriage was solemnised in Christ Church, Geelong. Two years subsequently Mr Claxton removed to Linton, and then to Ballarat, where he has resided continuously ever since. In this city he was book-keeper to the firm of M'Naught and Boyd, wholesale storekeepers and wine and spirit merchants. Gaining the confidence of his employers, and evincing admirable capacity for business, he was soon engaged as a traveller and ultimately as manager for the firm. He and his brother-in-law Mr (D'Alton), with another partner, then purchased the business, which they carried on for some time. In 1862, Mr Claxton was, in partnership with Mr D'Alton, in business as wine and spirit merchants in the premises in Armstrong street, now occupied by Mr Bromley. He ultimately commenced business on his own account as an auctioneer, which he continued up to his death, having established an extensive connection. In 1863 he was returned as a member of the then Borough (now City) Council, which seat he occupied until 1865, when he voluntarily

retired. In August, 1870, he was again elected to the Council, in which he has since sat continuously. In the municipal year 1872-3 he acted as mayor, which positions he also occupied in the years 1876-7 and 1882-3. In 1879 he was opposed for, we understand, the only time. Mr (now Cr) C. C. Shoppee and Mr Graber were his opponents, but Mr Claxton gained the seat by a majority of 53 votes over Mr Shoppee. In 1864 the two Ballarat Councils formed a Water Supply Committee. Of this body Mr Claxton was a member, until its incorporation, in 1872, as "The Ballarat and Ballarat East Water Commissioners." In the latter body Mr Claxton was a member continuously until (in 1880) it ultimately was constituted as it now is:—"The Ballarat Water Commissioners." In this corporation he represented the City Council until September, 1884, when he was appointed one of the government representatives, vice Mr R. Lewis, deceased. He was a prominent member of the Hospital Committee, and also at various times took an active part on the committee of the Benevolent and Orphan Asylums. Mr Claxton was also a past master of the Yarrowee Lodge, and a past officer of the Royal Arch Chapter. He was likewise one of the trustees of Christ Church, a member of the Anglican Cathedral Board, and generally a leading spirit among the laymen of the church. In fact, it was owing to the force of his arguments that the Cathedral Board decided to raze the present vicarage and build a new one. His voice was always listened to with attention and respect in all discussions concerning church matters. For 20 years Mr Claxton was chairman of the board of directors of the Magdala mine, at Stawell, in which venture he sank thousands of pounds. He was also identified with a number of the leading mines in the district, and was local manager of the Hepburn Estate, in which he was a large shareholder. He was essentially an investor, and consistently paid

calls under the most untoward circumstances, believing that this was the only way of developing the resources of goldfields. He was one of the foundation members and the second secretary of the City Fire Brigade, and was an honorary member at the time of his death. For some years he and Mr Henry Josephs managed the Alfred Hall on behalf of the two councils. In the face of great difficulties they have managed the hall to the great advantage of the public. Mr Claxton was one of the most assiduous workers in stocking the lake with fish and in beautifying the gardens and the lake. His object always was to so improve these features of the locality as to attract visitors to Ballarat from all parts of the colony, and thus benefit the city. To this end he considered that no money that could reasonably be spared for such, a purpose would be thrown away, and certainly events have justified the views beheld and the action he took. The same ideas governed him in his business relations with the Water Commissioners. Anything that would improve the reserves so as to attract visitors was certain of Mr Claxton's support, provided the money was forthcoming. He was a staunch supporter of the project for supplying the city with a complete system of tramways, and, when the dispute arose with the contractors, always spoke in favor of settling the points at issue in a friendly manner. Had he been present at the council meeting on Monday last, no one would have been better pleased at the termination of the affair. It savors of the irony of fate that Mr Claxton, who had taken such an interest in the beautification of the gardens should have died before the latest addition to the statuary had been unveiled, and before several other contemplated improvements on which he had set his mind had been made. It is certain, however, that he would have been always planning for further adornments. In short, Mr Claxton was connected with almost every public

movement that had for its object the advancement of Ballarat. Honest and straight forward in all his dealings; outspoken on all occasions, he yet tempered his remarks in such a way as to give the least offence to opponents; thoroughly versed in all matters pertaining to local government, he was one of the best representatives ever sat at the City Council table. He was frequently asked to contest Ballarat West for a seat in the Legislative Assembly, but he feared that his outspoken manner of expressing his opinions might give offence, and declined to stand. As a private citizen and friend he was staunch and true, and his cheery voice and hearty manner will be sorely missed by his numerous friends. He leaves a widow, who is in a very delicate state of health, and a grown up family of three sons and three daughters. On several occasions he acquired a competency, but his mining investments prevented him from retaining it. The flags at the City Hall, and at a number of public and private buildings were flying at half-mast yesterday afternoon as a token of respect. Mr J. Noble Wilson is, on behalf of the family, superintending the funeral arrangements, which have been placed in the hands of Mr C. Morris. At 1 p.m. on Thursday the funeral procession will leave the deceased gentleman's late residence and proceed to Christ Church, where a special service will be held. From thence the cortege will go to the Freemasons' Hall in Camp street, where an emergency meeting will be held at 2.30 p.m., and the service for the dead will be held at 3 o'clock. Members of the City and Town Councils, of the Water Commission, of the City Fire Brigade, the committees of the Hospital, and Benevolent and Orphan Asylums, will also follow the remains. The funeral, therefore, will be essentially a public one, as a fitting mark of tribute to one of the best of Ballarat's public men.