

THE LATE MR. CHARLES BARRY
From the Cape Argus – March 1878

The telegram to which we alluded in our issue of yesterday is corroborated. Charles Barry is dead. He died at Brighton on the night of Friday, the 15th of February.

If there is any man for whose death the whole of this country should go into mourning, that man is the late Charles Barry. In the Western Districts, at any rate, his name is everywhere. There was no one who had greater opportunity than he to do good for the country of his birth, and he was never neglectful of his responsibilities. His father was the founder of that firm, the ramifications of which extend almost throughout the length and breadth of the Western Province; his mother was of the Van Reenens of Darling and Constantia. Imbued with a progressive spirit, which he inherited, his opinions fell with more weight because the country people regarded him as a son of the soil. But he never pandered to their prejudices. He felt his mission was to stimulate and elevate. On his return from Europe when he could have hardly been twenty years of age, he was sent to manage the branch of the Barrys' firm at Bredasdorp, and there he at once gave proof of that power of organization and financial skill, which became remarkable in after life. He soon discovered a troublesome discrepancy which had puzzled all the financiers of the firm for many months, and the delinquent was brought to book. In the four years that he was at Bredasdorp he laid the foundation of a town on what was then a homestead, and nearly all the original title deeds to the township bear his signature. Having ascertained the wants of the country he was ordered to town, and with marvellous energy he threw himself into his work. It is attributable to him that reaping machinery was imported as early as it was; wherever he went he preached the advantages of such mechanical contrivances, but he was hot and energetic, and his countrymen were slow and unsympathetic. By degrees, however, he won his way, and so the farmers leant to believe that whatever Charles Barry proposed was for their good. His honour was unimpeachable, and those with whom he dealt found that he was neither niggardly in purse nor selfish in his advice. Thus it was that Charles Barry became a power in the Province. The amount of money he spent in endeavouring to improve stock and agricultural machinery will never be known. But those who know the Province are aware that the amount is very large – a handsome fortune. He was not speculator. He imported the stock which he thought best suited to South Africa. But before he sold he tested the stock on his farms so that all could see the results. He was a practical farmer and a patriotic one. It was impossible but that one who laboured so unselfishly and so well should have great influence in the country, and Mr. Barry never shirked his political duty any more than he did his other duties. It was complained by some partisans that the Barry influence was so overwhelming that it was disastrous to a country with free representative institutions, but the influence which Mr. Barry exercised was of the very best. We will not, however, say more of this. We are assured that the news that Charles Barry has died at the early age of forty-six will be received throughout this colony with profound regret and in most places with deep sorrow. His energy was stronger than his constitution, yet his constitution was of the strongest. Those who loved him best will remember how gallantly he bore himself in the struggle which took place only a year or two back. The wave suddenly recoiling after having submerged the land with immense prosperity, shook the old firm with its wide-spreading branches just as a tornado in the tropics shakes near to the ground a grand plantation of fruit yielding trees. When financiers stood aghast, Mr. Barry was firm of faith. He accomplished what all the banks would not do, and having steered his vessel safely through the cyclone he was ordered home a man shattered in health. On the eve of his leaving Sir Bartle Frere, cognisant of the great services he had rendered to this country, was most gracious to him, and in England he was

received by Lord Carnarvon as probably no other citizen, who has ever gone home from South Africa had been received. If Mr. Charles Barry had lived his name would have found its proper place in the colonial history; in his death, so young, he will live in the hearts of all who knew him, and there he will live for ever. Those who are proud of calling themselves Afrianders should take him for their model. He was an Afriander of the highest class and truest metal.