Dixon, William Hepworth (1821-1879).

Journalist, essayist, traveller, and historian. ‘One of the most conspicuous working men of letters in the nineteenth century’ according to the *Daily Telegraph* obituary, William Hepworth Dixon originally studied Law, but never practised. He began contributing articles, signed simply ‘W.H.D.’, to the *North of England Magazine* (1842-3), and wrote for Douglas Jerrold’s* Illuminated Magazine* (1843). In 1846 he became editor of the *Cheltenham Journal* and then moved to London where he started writing for the *Athenaeum* and the *Daily News*, two series of papers in the latter on ‘The Literature of the Lower Orders’ and ‘London Prisons’ bringing him a certain notoreity. In 1850 he published *John Howard, and the Prison World of Europe*. His daughter Ella*, who helped him with his last work, *Royal Windsor*, described him as a ‘knight of the inkstand’ since he often wrote to defend people and causes, such as his *Life of William Penn* (1851) in answer to Macaulay’s criticism, his *Life of Blake* (1851), and his *Personal History of Lord Bacon* (1861), followed by *The Story of Lord Bacon’s Life* (1862). He became editor of the *Athenaeum* in January 1853 and resigned in August 1869, and thereafter continued to travel widely and write books about his experiences in Palestine, America, and various parts of Europe. He also tried his hand at fiction without much success. In 1863 he helped to found the Palestine Exploration Fund, and later became chairman. He was invited to stand for Marylebone at the general election of 1868, but declined. In the following year he became a J.P. for Middlesex and Westminster, and was a member of the London Schools Board from 1870-72. ‘His life was laborious and he died in harness’ declared the above-mentioned *Daily Telegraph* obituary.

Two daughters, Ella and Marion, also pursued careers in journalism, the latter primarily as an art critic contributing articles to the *Magazine of Art* (1891-1991), the *Ladies’ Realm* (1899-1906) and *Studio* (1908-1913). She also contributed two short stories to the *Yellow Book* and wrote book reviews for her sister’s *Englishwoman* (1895).

VF (339 words)

AE Joanne Shattock

Sources: DNB; ODNB; *Athenaeum* 3 Jan. 1880; *Daily Telegraph* 29 Dec. 1879; Dixon (1930).
References