

Rev George and Mrs Mitchell

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by R.W.B. Whiteway

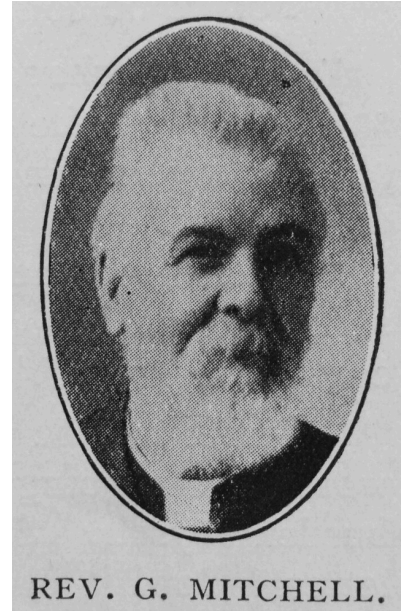
“Lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided.”

These words are strikingly true of the two saintly souls, a brief statement of whose life and death we are about to record. Mr. Mitchell was stricken with the hand of death as he returned from the grave of his wife, and within a few hours followed her into eternal rest. Geo. Mitchell was born at Thorner, in Yorkshire, in the year 1834. In a few autobiographical notes he has left behind, he tells us that as a boy he was very little inclined to religion. But at the age of sixteen, he attended a lovefeast in one of the chapels of his native village, which resulted in his conversion.

Five years after this, he entered the ministry, and for forty years he laboured with great zeal and acceptance. Never was a more devoted and loving service rendered to any church, than that of George Mitchell's in the ministry of Primitive Methodism. His first circuit was Bedford, to which he was appointed by the Conference of 1855. In the town of Bedford, he came into close contact with all the sacred and hallowed associations of John Bunyan. He was at this time barely twenty-one years of age, and therefore at a period of life when his mind would be most pliant to any formative influence. The very atmosphere was permeated with the spirit of Bunyan, and he breathed it. His coming to Bedford gave tone and character to his ministry. From first to last his strength, like that of Bunyan was the strength of a holy mysticism. The note that rang the loudest and clearest in his message was the note of evangelism. He spent one year at Bedford and then went to Gravesend.

It was here that he met with the saintly and loving soul, who eventually became the companion spirit of his life, and the sharer of his joys and sorrows, down to the last four days of his earthly career. Never did two hearts more lovingly share each other's lot, and never was a wife a truer helpmeet for a Christian minister than the one that George Mitchell found in Mary C. Paul. When he met her, she was connected with the Wesleyan church in the town, and engaged in various forms of Christian service. She was particularly interested in the young, and at this time was teacher of a class of boys in connection with the ragged-school which afterwards became famous by the work and influence of the late General Gordon.

Two years after this they were married, and were stationed at Alderney, one of the Channel Islands. Here, quoting from the “life” already referred to, they “found a large circle of kind friends, and had the pleasure of seeing a great many people converted.” But this year at Alderney was not without its



sorrows. It was here that the first child was born; and for several days the young mother lay in a perfectly unconscious state, hovering between life and death. For a day and a night she suffered paralysis of the right arm, the defective treatment of which left the arm partially disabled during the remainder of her life. But there is no word of murmur or complaint. Again and again, in the darkest days, and at times when life's burdens seemed almost beyond her strength, the tone and spirit of every prayer was not "Take away this load," nor even "Make it light." No! It was rather, "Give Thine handmaid strength to bear it. I will gladly bear it if by doing so I can glorify Thee." One case in particular: following on terrible sickness in the home, the death of children and friends in rapid succession, the wife herself again stricken down with serious illness, lying for days apparently at the gate of death, the husband, too, in a weak and delicate state of health and facing heavy circuit responsibilities; when the saintly soul was able to pen a few words we read, "O how blessedly I realized during that time that Jesus was able to make a dying bed feel soft as downy pillows are. I laid low, very low, at His feet. It is only when we are low that we can learn the lessons that He would teach us."

The first sixteen years were spent in the Southern counties, but in 1875 they moved North, travelling in the Manchester and Sheffield Districts. The last circuit was Otley, in the Leeds District, where our friend superannuated in 1895. He did not, however, completely retire from the work of the ministry, as he took the position of assistant minister in the Lymm and Altrincham circuit, where he remained in constant and successful service till 1906, when the circuit was able, largely through his work and influence, to call out, and pledge, an additional minister. During his eighteen years' residence at Altrincham, he frequently occupied the pulpits of other churches, and was always welcomed and appreciated by the congregations. He was a great reader, and therefore, acquainted with a wide field of literature. He possessed a catholic and brotherly spirit; narrowness and bigotry had no place in his nature.

His passing was extremely pathetic—almost tragic. When his dear wife, who was so much to him, passed away, after a short illness, it was as if the very fountains of his being had ceased their flow. The loss to him was utterly beyond expression. When the service at the grave was concluded he turned away towards his home and said, "I know not what I shall do now that my loved one has gone." He arrived at his own door, but while stepping from the coach he was seized with a paralytic stroke, and in a very few hours joined his dear one in the other world. The two that had been so much to each other were parted only four days. And could we have wished it otherwise? Can we not picture by the eye of faith, the glad and happy reunion within the veil of the eternal? They were both buried in the same grave. The one on March 1st, the other on March 5th, 1913.

Impressive services were held in our Oxford Road Church, Altrincham, which in both instances was full to the doors. Representatives from all the churches were present, indicating the high esteem in which both these saintly souls were held. Their sun has set, but it leaves a glow in the western sky, which sheds a light over the life and character of many who are left behind.

References

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