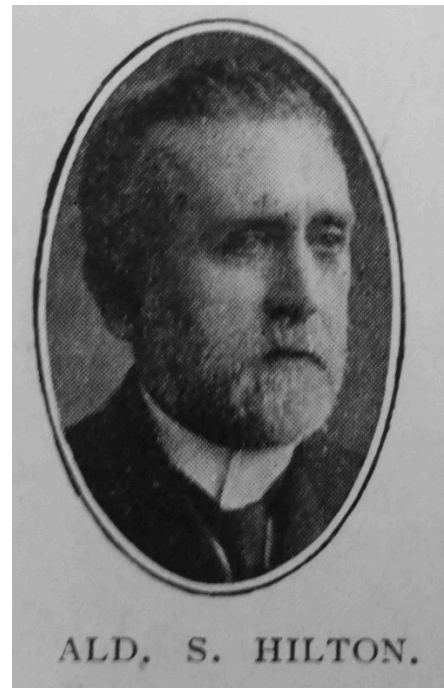


Stephen Hilton, J.P.

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by J.W.

The news of the sudden translation of Alderman S. Hilton, J.P., the senior lay preacher in the Leicester IV. Circuit, came to a large number with a keen sense of personal loss. Our Church and the town of Leicester is distinctly poorer through his departure. He was one of Leicester's most worthy and honoured leaders. He had occupied the position of Mayor of the borough. He was chairman of the Liberal Club, president of the Y.M.C.A., ex-president of the Free Church Council, to which he rendered yeoman service, and chairman of numerous social and benevolent institutions of the town. In masonic circles he was greatly honoured. He was one of the most distinguished laymen, one who had won his way to the front rank of our denominational life. In our Church he has filled every office open to a lay-man, having had the distinguished honour of being vice-president of Conference. The name of "Hilton of Leicester" had become a household word in our Connexion.



He will be much missed in the Nottingham District, where for twenty-five years he has served as orphanage treasurer. He frequently attended its meetings and deliberated with his brethren; his sound judgment was always respected, and his generous gifts to burdened chapels greatly appreciated.

What he was to his own circuit, and especially to Claremont Street Church, it is impossible to estimate. For many years he was teacher of a large men's class, he was deeply interested in the Sunday-school, and the school he built in memory of his daughter, Mrs. Hallam, one of the finest in the Connexion, is a monument of his generosity and the deep interest he took in the young. We cannot think of Claremont Street without him. We shall miss his generous gifts, his kind and genial presence, and his wise counsel. He was one of the most conscientious local preachers, as willing, even more willing, to serve the small village churches than the town church.

Mr. Hilton was a man of many sides. He was a successful business man, but not spoiled by business. He did not become hard in spirit. His great business was built up on righteous principles. One with whom he did business writes:— "I have known him for more than twenty years, and in all business transactions found him honourable and straightforward, his character was beyond suspicion, and where best known was the most revered." How catholic he was in his spirit! While he was a true Liberal and Free Churchman, and a most loyal Primitive Methodist, he regarded with warmest friendliness Christians of other churches. All sects found a friend and benefactor in him. He was a man of sound judgment and of keen and true perception. This made him a valued friend and counsellor. How generous he was! His kindness and love to the poor knew no bounds. For more than twenty years he and his good wife have invited all the aged people of Belgrave at Christmas to a sumptuous tea, and provided for them an excellent entertainment. But above everything else, he

was a religious man, a man to whom religion was everything. In our prayer meetings on Sunday evenings, which he nearly always attended, his prayers showed that he knew the way to the Holy Mount.

His end came with great suddenness. He went to Bournemouth with his daughter and son-in-law, the Rev. J. and Mrs. Gregory, on March 6th. On Sunday morning, March 15th, he was taken with sudden illness; it was found that an operation was necessary. A physician and one of the cleverest surgeons, and another doctor were present, but despite their skill the end was not averted. When he was informed of this he was wonderfully calm. After giving a message for his wife, he said to his devoted daughter and son-in-law, "I am quite ready; you will find all my affairs settled. I have just been thinking how sweet that hymn is— 'At even ere the sun had set.' " Early on Monday morning he caught the tone of a familiar voice, saying "Come," and he went into the joy of the presence of his Master.

The funeral, which took place at Belgrave Cemetery on March 19th, was a most impressive one. The first part of the service was held in our Claremont Street Church, the edifice being crowded. The Mayor, the members of the Town Council, the borough magistrates, and deputations from numerous associations with which the deceased was connected were present. All the Primitive Methodist churches in Leicester and many of the Nonconformist churches sent representatives. The Vicar of Belgrave also was present. Representatives from the General Committee, the General Chapel Fund Committee, the Connexional Orphanage Committee, and the Nottingham Committee were present. The service was conducted by the Rev. J. Whittle, assisted by Rev. W. Hughes, Rev. J.D. Thompson, Rev. R.W. Keightly, Mr. M. Bourne, and Rev. D. Sheen. The Rev. G. Windram, an old friend of the deceased, gave a most touching and impressive address. The large crowd that assembled in the cemetery and thronged the roads was an eloquent testimony to the esteem in which Mr. Hilton was held. It was said by many that so large a funeral had never before been witnessed in Belgrave Cemetery. "In Memoriam" services were held in our Claremont Street Church and in the Hilton Memorial School on March 22nd, conducted by the Rev. J. Whittle and the Rev. G. Windram, assisted by Mr. S. Brown and Mr. W. Rogers.

We thank God for the imperishable influence of his strong Christian character and his life of Christ-like service. May the mantle of the father fall on the children. Our hearts go out in deepest sympathy with the family, and especially to his widow, in whom he found such a true helpmeet. For in all the work he did for God, he has been nobly supported by her. And she has been called upon to suffer this great loss at the time of her own great physical weakness.

References

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