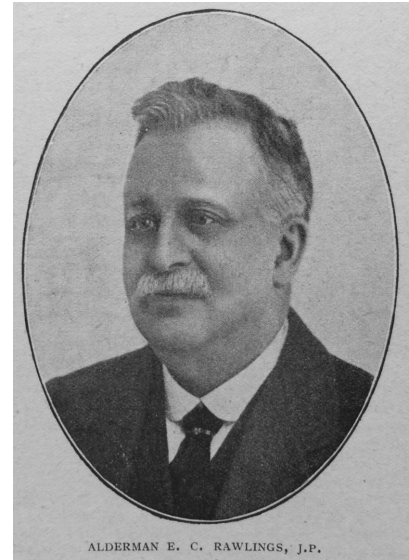


The Late Alderman E.C. Rawlings, J.P.

Transcription of article published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by John Holland

EDMUND Charles Rawlings was a son of the manse. He was born at Wallingford on December 11th, 1854, and died at Ealing Common on December 17th, 1917. His father was one of our most honoured and successful ministers, who laid broad and deep the foundations of many a cause which is now a vigorous Church. In the districts where he lived and laboured, the name of the Rev. Edmund Rawlings is still "as ointment poured forth." From his parents the son inherited many excellent qualities which came to full fruition in his own character and life. As a lad, he was studious and ambitious, and thoroughly devoted to the Church of his father. Early in life he made the great decision to serve Christ, and as the years passed by, his devotion to his Lord and the Kingdom of God grew in strength and purpose and achievement.



Articled to the law, he made rapid progress in his profession. The firm of which he was senior partner for many years—Rawlings and Butt—and for the last four years Rawlings, Butt and Bowyer—is well-known in the City, throughout our own denomination, and the wider circle of the Free Churches. A prominent business man in the City, when he heard of Mr. Rawlings's death, said: "He was a good man. In the City his name stood for integrity and uprightness." As Connexional solicitors, and also solicitors for the National Free Church Council, the firm has rendered magnificent service to the cause of Nonconformity, while the works our friend wrote on education and legal questions, have been widely read, and given guidance and help to hundreds of Free Church ministers. Dr. F.B. Meyer, and other leaders have borne splendid testimony to the value of his service as a member of the National Executive, and his deep interest in all questions affecting the life and work of the Free Churches.

On his marriage in 1879, Mr. Rawlings settled in Hammersmith, and he and his devoted wife—who pre-deceased him by three years—soon made their influence felt in Church and civic affairs. Of public work he took his full share. He served for nine years on the old Hammersmith Vestry, was elected a member of the first Borough Council, and appointed chairman of the Law and Parliamentary Committee. In 1906, he was unanimously chosen Mayor, and won golden opinions by his conduct in the chair, and the manner in which he represented the Borough at important functions. His courtesy, impartiality, tact and sound judgment won the admiration and confidence of his colleagues on the Council. At the close of his year of office mementoes were presented to both Mr. Rawlings and the Mayoress. He was made an Alderman in 1909, and in that capacity served his fellow-citizens to the end. A Liberal in politics, and thoroughly progressive in his sympathies and aims, he was one of the most trusted of our local leaders. As president of the Gladstone Club, and in many other capacities, he rendered great service to the cause of Liberalism in the Borough.

But it was amongst Primitive Methodists that Mr. Rawlings was best known, and it is by them his loss is most deeply felt. He was a prominent figure in our annual Conferences, and in the pulpit and on

the platform—as well as in committee—he did magnificent work. In 1905 he was elected Vice-President of Conference, and the greater part of the year was spent in visiting the Churches up and down the country. Again and again the preference was given to little village causes, and the workers therein were heartened and encouraged by his inspiring speech and generous gifts. He was a delegate to the Ecumenical Conference at Toronto in 1911, and presided with grace and dignity at one of its sessions. In a multitude of ways he served the Church he loved.

With Hammersmith Station, Mr. Rawlings had been associated for thirty-eight years. As local preacher and circuit steward, he worked for the prosperity of the station. He was a trustee of both Dalling Road and Bayonne Road Churches, and treasurer of Dalling Road Trust. The fine property we have at Dalling Road is largely owing to his initiative, enterprise and generosity.

Mr. Rawlings had a great regard for our ministers, and always made them welcome in his home. Many will have fragrant memories of happy hours spent there. His home life was ideal. He was never happier than when his children and grandchildren were gathered around him. After the death of his devoted wife, his younger daughter and her husband (Mr. and Mrs. H.H. Bowyer) with their children went to live with him, and when the Rev. T.B. Heward became an Army Chaplain, his elder daughter (Mrs. Heward) and her little son also went to reside there. It was a home of love and sunshine, where family worship was duly observed.

The end came suddenly. For months he had suffered acutely, but he struggled bravely, and made a great fight for life. We had hoped he would be spared a few years longer—we needed him so much. But it was not to be. On Sunday evening, December 16th, his little grandchildren gathered round his knee and said their prayers, and a little later he retired to rest. Just before midnight there was a change, and a few minutes after twelve he passed away to be with his Lord. It was a fitting close to a noble life.

The funeral service was in Dalling Road Church on December 21st. The church was filled with friends and representatives. The service was conducted by the writer, and the Revs. M.P. Davison, W. Thomas, Dr. F.B. Meyer, W.A. Hammond and Thos. Jackson took part. A finely-conceived address in every way worthy of the occasion, was given by the venerable Rev. G.E. Butt. At the graveside in Hammersmith Cemetery, the Rev. John Holland read the committal service, and the Rev. J.G. Bowran offered prayer. On Sunday morning, December 30th, a large and representative congregation gathered at Dalling Road for the memorial service, conducted by the writer.

References

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