

## Edmund Charles Rawlings of London

Transcription of article published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by A Man of Middlesex

WHEN you have knocked at the door of "Denehurst" and obtained admittance, you see, first of all, among the pictures upon the walls of its cosy hall a face which once struck terror into the heart of Europe. It is the face of Napoleon the First depicted as surveying the field of battle. A few moments later you will stand in the presence of the owner of this comfortable dwelling, and if you have an eye for resemblances, will get something of a shock. Imagine the little corporal dressed in the sober garb of a London lawyer, with an expression of countenance qualified by the convictions of a life-long Primitive Methodist, or, if you like, reverse the process and imagine the London lawyer and Primitive Methodist clothed in the uniform of a French field marshal, and bent upon the conquest of the world. Both fancies will be interesting and end in much the same way.



Some time ago one of our popular magazines ran a series of striking pictures of which the subjects were certain well known people represented in the dresses proper to stations of life vastly different from their own—Winston Churchill as a chimney sweep, Lloyd George as an engine driver, Arthur Balfour as a bricklayer's labourer—and the mind wandered off into speculations as to what would have happened to the men in question if their lives *had* been lived according to the humorous artist's amusing notions. Supposing, now, that Napoleon Buonaparte, instead of being born in Corsica and finding his way to France, had been born a hundred years later in the quiet home of a Primitive Methodist Travelling Preacher in a small town in Berkshire. Supposing that, instead of hearing with scarcely more than infant ears the clash of martial music, he had been taught as the songs of his childhood such compositions as "Turn to the Lord and seek salvation" or "Canaan, bright Canaan," assume that the first lessons he had learned in the school of life had been taught him by a man who had family prayer three times a day; assume all this, if you can, and express the probable result. One thing is more than likely: that it would have been a result better by far for Napoleon and certainly the history of the world would have been different. There would have been no fields drenched with blood, no Waterloo, and no St. Helena. Having begun in this way we might go on to imagine this man who bids us welcome to his hospitable fireside, born a hundred years earlier and in Corsica, but, friend, the *facts* of his life are so much pleasanter than the fancies to which his undoubted resemblance to the great but tragic figure portrayed upon his walls has given birth that we will restrain the fancies in favour of abiding with the facts. Spite of differences of time and environment and training, of blood and nationality, of faith



and purposes, our friend's life has also been one of battle and conquest. Thank God, the campaign has been of a nobler kind than that which convulsed the earth when our great-grand-sires were boys! Thank God, too, the end of the history will be different! "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war," but from the victories of peace come joy.

It is well nigh thirty years since the present writer first made the acquaintance of "young Rawlings" as he was then called, partly because he was actually a young man, though he looked older than his years, and partly because his father was still in the land of the living, and we cannot think a man old while his parents are with us to tell stories of his boyhood. A grand old man was Edmund Rawlings, gentle, saintly, loyal, devoted, and as full of the milk of natural human kindness and of Christlike pitifulness as a man can be. Well did he serve the Primitive Methodist Church in days when there was much to do and little to get. The agricultural counties of the South remember him still as adding to the triumphs won by Russell and Ryde, and love his memory as well as that of his devoted wife. Edmund Charles, only son of this saintly pair, has turned out well; all honour to him! But if, springing from such loins and spending his youth under such an example, he had not done so, what severity of judgment would he have deserved. In a moral and spiritual sense he had a glorious start.

Still, by the help of God he has carved his own way in life, for probably it should be recorded that the moral and spiritual send-off that the old man gave him was about the sum total of the parental help he received. Edmund Rawlings was neither wise with the wisdom of this world nor ambitious to gain its prizes either for himself or his only son. The latter was, according to his father's intention, to have been a printer. There came to Wallingford, however, a London solicitor full of political ambition. To his newly-opened office the boy who had a mind of his own as to his future applied, and as a result the Methodist preacher's son became, as has been remarkably often the case with Methodist preachers' sons, a man of law, and eventually, by dint of hard work, pluck and perseverance, a duly qualified solicitor. In 1879 a new brass plate was put up at 2, Walbrook Street, just behind the Mansion House, in the very busiest square mile in all the world, and the name that was upon it heads this page.

From that moment Edmund Charles Rawlings has "got on." He has "push," he knows how to work—even now when, in a sense, the world is under his feet, he puts in his twelve hours a day—but, above all, he could be trusted. His employers had found out *that* in the old days before he attempted

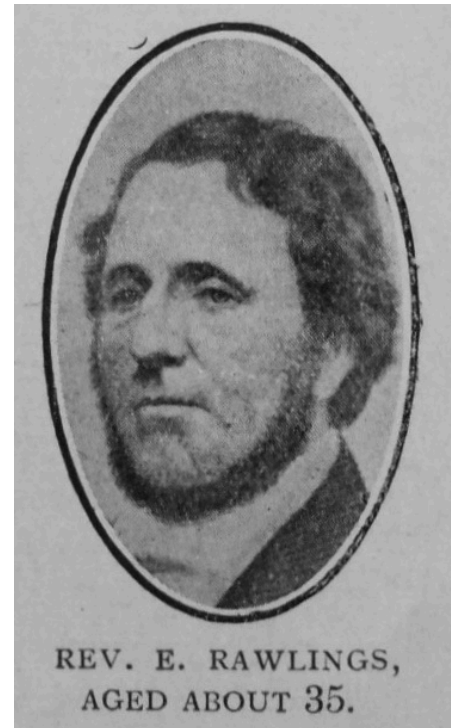


E. C. RAWLINGS,  
AGED 18.



SUSANNAH RAWLINGS,  
AGED ABOUT 32.

practice for himself. It is a far cry to the days of the Franco-Prussian war, and he was but a stripling then, but there are those who can still remember the Casper case tried at Lille, when a British merchant stood accused at the instance of the French Minister for War of supplying the army with paper-soled boots. Though not at that time "admitted," the would-be attorney had so far proved his metal that the firm he served put part of the work of the defence of Casper into the hands of their trusty clerk, and Casper won. From that day to this he has had his share of *causes célèbres*. There is a reliability about him and, withal, an audacity, a devotion to the interests of his client, and an enthusiasm for battle which make him an ideal adviser. Then he has a conscience, and will not encourage hopeless litigation for the "costs" to follow. From all this has come practice in ever increasing volume and of ever heightening importance. To-day the firm of E.C. Rawlings and Butt (another good Primitive Methodist name) occupies a position in the legal world of which its principals may well be proud. They are solicitors to the Conference; to the National Free Church Council, too, The minister's son refusing to be a country printer showed selfknowledge and judgment.

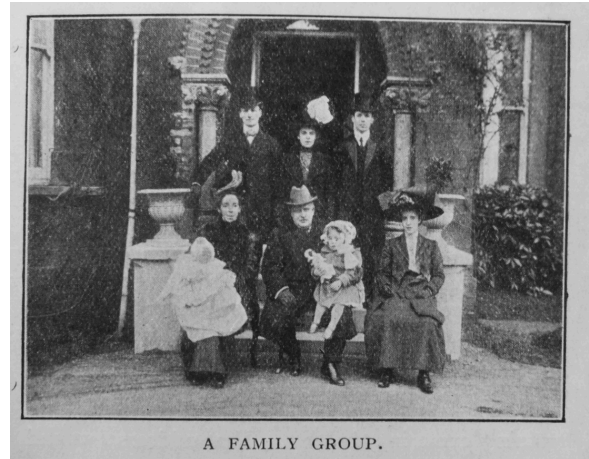


All this is gratifying biography to write if the penman be a friend of Edmund Charles Rawlings, but this article would never have been written if its subject had done nothing better in life than achieve professional success as a London lawyer. He has done *many* things that are better. He has been and is a stalwart in the faith and Church of the grand old travelling preacher whose name he bears. As for the time when he first joined that Church, tell us when he was out of it and we will tell you the date of his entrance thereto. The fact is that he was freeborn. Another fact is this: that all his life his connection with the Church has been an active connection. He has, from the first, and all the time, "put work into it."

It was at Stoke Newington that Mr. Rawlings' connection with our Church in the Metropolis began. At that very time he was reading for his qualification, and nineteen young students out of the first score you might meet in Chancery Lane would tell you that weeks such as he must have lived should not have had the added labour of Sunday School teaching on "the only day when a man had time to breathe." When the youth from Berks came to Stoke Newington a Sunday School of earlier days had given up the ghost. He set to work to restore



animation, and the dead came to life and has lived ever since. That splendid man Joseph Toulson, to whom London Primitive Methodism owes more than any historian can ever put down on paper, saw the young man from the country and sent him tramping round North London as Sunday School Visitor. It was almost an every Sunday business, and most folks would have objected to such a programme after a good Sunday's dinner. But it had to be done, and done it was, and plenty of other work, too. Joseph Toulson knew this man, but then Joseph Toulson DID know men as few knew them!



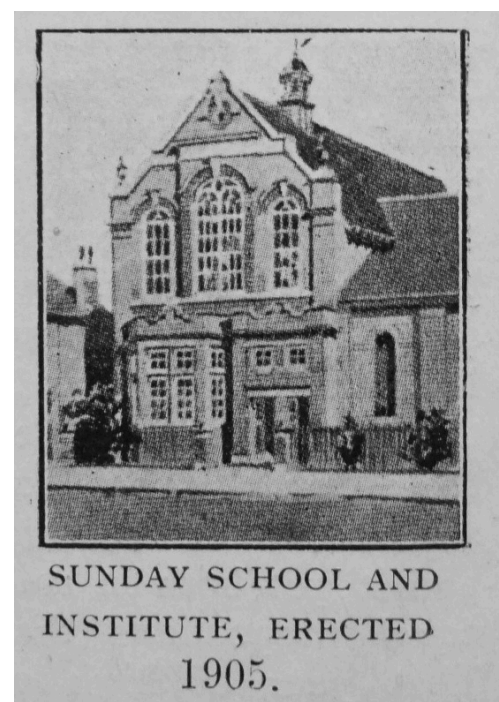
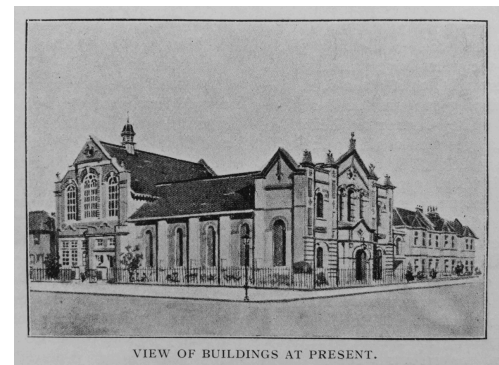
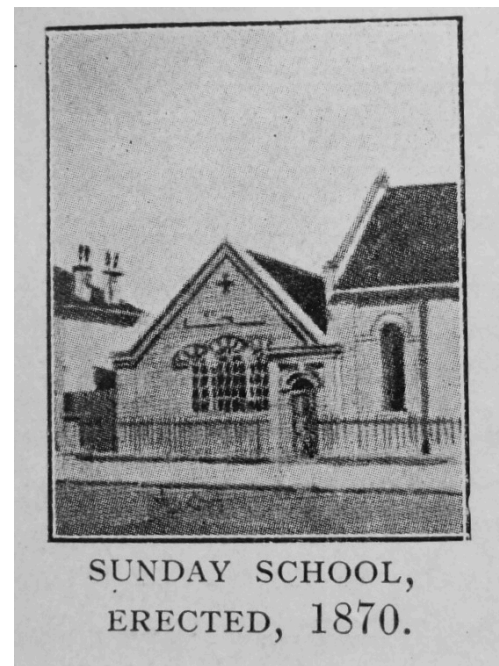
By and bye, about the time he began to practise, Mr. Rawlings removed with his father from Stoke Newington to Hammersmith, and the roll book of Dalling Road Church received the addition of his name. Some names mean little beyond the sound thereof. The name of Edmund Charles. Rawlings has meant much to Dalling Road Church and Sunday School. How many years has he been School Superintendent? How long has he been a Local Preacher? How long, again, has he been Circuit Steward? What good Primitive pie brought to table has he not had his finger in it? These questions ask for figures the deponent knoweth not, but, to him, it seems as if Rawlings has always been at Dalling Road and has had something to do with everything that has ever been attempted in connection with this well-doing little church. As the years have passed workfulness has brought, as it often does, the reward of widening opportunities for other workfulness. The Connexion heard of the London lawyer who could go into the city all the week and retain enough religion in his heart to pray in a Sunday night prayer meeting and exhort sinners to flee from the wrath to come. His influence grew. Conferences saw and heard him. He had his own views upon Connexional questions and knew how to express them. There was a spice of imperialism in his Primitive Methodism, and he liked a big thing better than a little one when forward movements were talked about, but he had a way of measuring the cloth before proceeding to buy trimmings for the coat. Hence he earned the reputation of being a "safe man," and one whom it would be prudent to follow. At Scarborough in 1905 the fathers and brethren elected him vice-president. He had the Rev. George E. Butt for chief, and between them they kept the sessions to their work. The Conference, as usual, needed law and gospel, and it got both in rather more equal proportions than usual. That year of high office left pleasant memories with the persons most concerned. As he rambled the highways and by-ways of the denomination he saw enough to make him love the Church of his fathers even more devotedly than before. Of some of his presidential experiences he speaks to this day. We are convinced that he is prouder of having been vice-president of the Primitive Methodist Conference than of any other honour that has come his way. Next in order of appreciation perhaps would rank the compliment of the other day when he was elected President of the Metropolitan Federation of Free Church Councils.

And other honours *have* come to him. He is Alderman of the Borough of Hammersmith, and has been Mayor of that great Metropolitan Municipality. He is a Justice of the Peace for the County of London. "It is not in mortals to command success but to deserve it," or else he had been a member of the London County Council. The forces of the Moderates have, however, been too strong for his

Progressive candidatures, of which there have been two as full of pluck as candidatures could be. | The same may be said of his attempt of some years ago to win the Parliamentary representation of North Islington. What his politics are we need not say, but they were not as popular in London then as since that time they have become. the Primitive Methodist lawyer was beaten, but not before he had made the other side feel very sick indeed. His turn will come. Meanwhile outside the House he served his party well. He will serve it better in the days before us.

The whole of this success, however, ought not in justice to be credited to Mr. Rawlings. Mrs. Rawlings has supported him in all his work of faith and labour of love, for, with all the strength of his attachment to our Church, Mr. Rawlings cannot claim to be a whit more devoted than his partner. Mrs. Rawlings has her own record of service to put alongside that of her spouse, and though different in nature as woman's work must be, it will bear comparison with the best of masculine achievements. A pet enterprise of hers is that of the training of sisters of the people, and it was out of a movement mainly started by an address she delivered at the City Temple in 1898 that the present provision for such training came into being. That address must have been a fruitful one, for it asked also for the establishment of a training home for girls in connection with our African missions, and we have such a home to-day. As might be imagined by all to whom Mrs. Rawlings is known, another of her favourite institutions is the Connexional Orphanage, which has had in her a constant and loyal friend. She is gentle, merciful, and kind, and her daughters are like unto her. One of these young ladies has followed her mother's example and married the law in the person of Mr. H.H. Bowyer, a member of her father's firm. The other daughter has gone further back for a matrimonial precedent, and taking copy from her grandmother has married the Gospel in the person of the Rev. T.B. Heward, of the Richmond Circuit.

To illustrate this article a picture portrait of its subject of course appears. Perhaps among those who will gaze upon it will be some who will speculate as to what manner of man the likeness represents so far as



disposition is concerned. If such there be they shall start with two or three hints for guidance. Edmund Charles Rawlings of London is quite human. He has the defects as well as the virtues of his qualities. Like all men who push their way to success he wants a good deal of his own way. He has a strain of the masterful about him. He can speak out strongly when he tries, and sometimes, we guess, when he doesn't try. A hard worker himself, he has no mercy for tired Tim, and it is a bad thing for Weary Willie to drift up against him. For the feather bed flattener he will be likely to make it hot, whether the bed be that of the sleepy business man or the sluggish Church member. Against all this write down that his heart is very kind and very true, that he stands firm for goodness and the work of saving man, and that his highest joy is to be able to serve his father's Church and his father's God!

There is little to add, but we *would* like it to be known, as providing a slice of comfort for ordinary men, that Lawyer Rawlings can play as well as work. He likes a game of billiards or of golf as well as here and there one. To what extent his language approximates to that sweet reasonableness and mildness consistent with Primitive Methodist membership when, in the course of play, he fozzles a shot or gets hopelessly bunkered we don't know, never having "done a round" with him. He has visited many of the countries of Europe, and has just returned from the United States of America and Canada where he and the Rev. William Mincher have had a great time together. Some of this trip, it should be said, was given to work, for "the Ecumenical" claimed him and he was one of the Presidents of that great assembly. Those who were there say that he did credit to his Church, to his father, and to good old England.

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#### References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1912/182