

## Samuel Finney M.P.

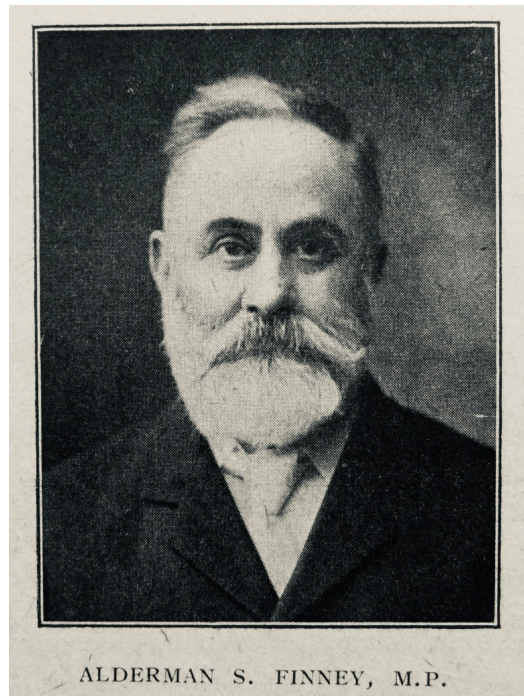
### Transcription of article published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Rev. James Griffin

THE writer has known Samuel Finney since he was twenty-four years of age. He and the late Enoch Edwards were most acceptable local preachers in the Talke Circuit. In those formative days Mr. Finney manifested a serious, genuine character, and gave promise of larger usefulness. Here we have a splendid example of self-culture, self-reliance, and plodding industry. He has gained his proud position through hard graft. While his companions slept, he toiled upward in the night. His big, wondering eyes were ever in search of things unseen by ordinary men. His laugh made you wonder what was behind it all.

He began life in obscurity. He was born at Coalpit Hill, North Staffordshire, on April 22nd, 1857. His parents and surroundings were poor. His early life was a struggle. He was educated at the Primitive Methodist Day school at Talke. The headmaster was Mr. George Shenton, a local preacher, for whom Mr. Finney had great esteem. But his days of tuition must have been few. We find him working at the coke ovens at the age of seven; on the pit-bank at ten; and down the pit at twelve. He is therefore largely self-educated; trained in the school of hard facts and experience. Knowledge has come to him through suffering. At the age of twenty he became a local preacher, being put on the plan by the Rev. Maurice Nicholas; that position he still holds. He fills the pulpit with efficiency and great acceptability. It was suggested that he should enter the ministry, but circumstances determined otherwise. There was a divinity shaping his ends, and preparing him for a sphere of service which he has filled with honour and success.

In 1881 he was appointed check-weighman at Jamage Colliery; and in 1884 married Miss Bagnall, of Ellesmere, Salop. Of this event he said: "Next to finding the Saviour this was the best thing I ever did. She must have the credit for whatever good I have achieved." In 1888 he was elected President of the North Staffordshire Miners' Federation, which office he held twenty-four years. This may be regarded as his first step into public life. It shows the high esteem, in which he was held, and the confidence reposed in him by his fellow-men. This confidence he has increasingly retained throughout his career. In 1893 he removed to Burslem and became the assistant to Mr. Enoch Edwards at the Miners' Hall. He was a member of the Stoke County Borough Council, and a magistrate on the Burslem Bench. After the death of Mr. Edwards, he succeeded him as the secretary and agent of the North Staffordshire Miners' Federation.

On the death of Mr. Albert Stanley, M.P., he was returned without opposition as Labour M.P. for North-West Staffordshire. After the re-distribution of seats, he was elected by a majority of one thousand one hundred and seventy-four in a three-cornered fight, as Labour Member for Burslem



and Tunstall. He is a Life Governor of the North Staffordshire Infirmary, and was last year re-elected Alderman for the County Borough of Stoke. Honours have come to him unsought, and he is worthy of them all. Great responsibilities have been laid upon him, but he has never shirked them. He is a conscientious and faithful servant of his fellows.

Having served for some years on the Executive of the Federation of Great Britain, he was in 1919 deputed to attend the yearly International Convention of the American Federation of Labour, which was held in Atlantic City under the presidency of Mr. Sam Gompers. Mrs. Finney accompanied him. Here he was presented with a gold watch suitably inscribed, and Mrs. Finney with a gold and pearl chain. They visited Philadelphia, Washington, Pittsburg and New York. At New York Mr. Finney attended the Pan-American Federated Labour Conference, which aims to link up all Labour Associations of America.



When Dr. Charlesworth, the minister of the Mother Church of Methodism in Pittsburg, and who, in his early days was a scholar in Mr. Finney's Sunday school class at Talke, heard of his arrival in America, he sent the following telegram: "Have learned with joy of your presence in America. Covet visit from you. Can you spend Sunday, July 6th, Pittsburg, and preach in Smithfield Street Church? The Mother of Pittsburg Methodism will give you large hearing. Dr. Marsh joins in request. I appeal to old Talke days. Wire reply.—THOMMAS CHARLESWORTH." Mr. Finney complied with the request. It would no doubt be a great time both for the congregation and the preacher!

Mr. and Mrs. Finney visited all the places of interest in each city, and learned much of American life and institutions. During this visit a memorable event took place. Mr. and Mrs. Finney were introduced to President Wilson, and joined in the reception given to him in Carnegie Hall on his return from Europe.

Here is a man who, in spite of early disadvantages has risen to great influence and honour in the Church and the nation. It testifies to the supreme value of high character, honest conviction, sincerity of purpose, and self-reliant enterprise. These are the men who have understanding of their times and can tell England what she ought to do. But let it be remembered that Mr. Finney's inspirations and ideals find their source in his relations to the Church, and in his experience of the Christian faith. He is proud to acknowledge this. He is the product of Primitive Methodism; so is Mrs. Finney. Both glory in the history and traditions of their Church. They love to serve it. They are generous in its support. Such is the esteem in which Mr. Finney is held that the Burslem Circuit in 1913 presented him with an illuminated address. He is not often heard either in the House of Commons or church official meetings, but when moved by a conviction of right he speaks. He has a tender soul behind his strong speech. He is a true and loyal friend, a lover of books, a strong debater. His home has the atmosphere of friendship and goodwill, and it is always a pleasure to spend an hour in its genial

influence. Long may Samuel Finney live to serve the Church and humanity, and his noble wife be spared to stand by him to the last.

---

#### References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1920/260