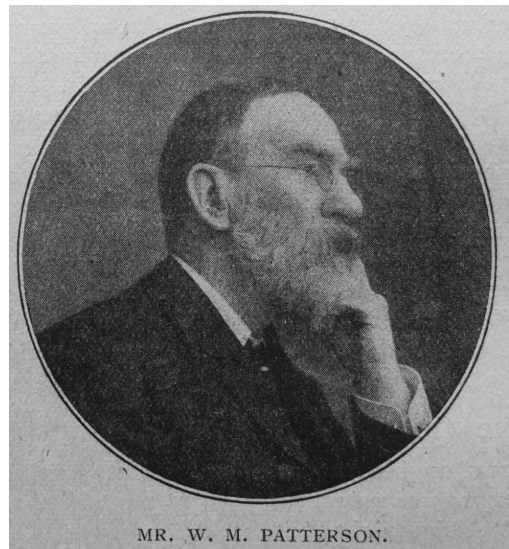


William Mossop Patterson - An Appreciation

Transcription of article published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Rev. Henry Yool

FIFTY-EIGHT years ago W.M. Patterson was one of a group of youths who were brought to God during a great revival which began in our church, College Place, Berwick-on-Tweed, and which swept through the town and over both sides of the border. The movement was marked by spontaneity, deep spirituality, and a sustained glow, and has had widely permanent results. It deeply affected other churches, as well as our own, and gave to Presbyterians and Baptists some of their best laymen and mission workers. The group of which young Patterson was a conspicuous leader, comprised some whose names are familiar to Primitive Methodists: Revs. D. Robb, G. Wood, G. Lewins—known to our ministry—and a great number of worthy local preachers, together with many excellent sisters, true helpers in the great work.



Patterson, like the rest of the many converts, had a good grounding in Christian doctrine. His parents were Presbyterians, and attended the church of the famous Dr. John Cairns, of Berwick. As a lad, our brother was a member of the Bible class of that wonderful divine, and never ceased to cherish his memory with reverence and affection. Indeed, the shaping touch of the great and good man never left Patterson to the end. It gave him an intellectual impulse, and formed the groove of his religious thinking. Fuel was thus stored in his soul, and it needed but the touch of the revival to kindle on the altar the incandescent flame. To this Patterson, like others, readily responded, and, while the links of tender, grateful memory of past early days were never to be broken, he found his place in the ranks of Primitive Methodism, and resolved to share its toils and spread its triumphs.

This resolve the record of his long and valuable life amply discloses. Never has our Church had a more loving son, or more loyal and zealous servant. He had a remarkable personality. His was a magnetic soul. Some one speaks of the "strong divinity of soul" that slumbers within men till it is awakened by the light and life of God. Nothing truer can be said of W.M. Patterson than this when he first entered the lists of spiritual knighthood in the good old border town. Dwight L. Moody used to say that "religion makes a common man uncommon; and an uncommon man a man of extraordinary power." Walt Whitman, in one of his luminous phrases, says, "Produce persons, and the rest follows." That is the sum of human history, and the pledge of its moral progress. It is the law of the effective Christian life, the secret of true service, and it found expression in our now sainted friend. He was not "in the ministry" as we conventionally term it, but of a truth the ministry was in him; and as a local preacher how distinctly he has shown it!

One's own juvenile recollections go back to those early days that never seem to die with the fleeting years, and we picture our friend in his early manhood putting on his armour. His wonderful fervour, always lit up with an intelligent faith; his prayers which were half battles; his love of the old hymns;

his gentleness of spirit; his genial humour; his readiness, yea, his passion to serve and save; his racy conversation, so seasoned with salt of grace; his abounding sympathy of heart; his eager outlook on the possibilities of his Church; and we could not help predicting for him, should he be spared, a notable Christian career. And we have seldom known anyone who preserved a spiritually juvenescent spirit so continuously to the end. Neither intellectually, despite inevitable limitations, nor spiritually, could it be said of him at the age of seventy-four that he had long "reached the dead line of fifty." He was like one of those trees of the Lord, full of sap, whose roots lay deep in the living waters, and who brought forth fruit down to old age. His spiritual zest never wore down.

He was a facile journalist. He held responsible positions on leading journals in the North. Removing to Consett and then to Jarrow, he had charge of their weekly paper, *The Guardian*. He was assistant to the Editor of *The Yorkshire Post*, who has penned in its columns a fine tribute to his memory. He became sub-editor to *The Newcastle Daily Leader*, and held that onerous post with great credit for many years. His racy pen has enriched our own connexional periodicals, *The Aldersgate*, *The Messenger*, and *The Leader*, with a constancy and a fullness that has never grown stale. His *Popular History of Northern Primitive Methodism* has made his name among us as a household word. His *Men of Fire* has vividly reproduced the evangelism he so deeply loved, in descriptive sketches of heroic toilers in some of our most notable periods as a denomination. In this gift of vivid portraiture he was *facile princeps*. The serial now running in *The Leader* is a type of that gift of romance which was no mere etching, but which was strong, broad, human, and above all, religious. Perhaps in his *Mills of God*, which some years ago ran in the columns of *Great Thoughts*, he reached high-water mark. It gained wide recognition for its true literary skill, fine imagination, and deep moral insight. It scents the borderland and its bracing air, but what is better it breathes a quickening moral ozone.

It was no surprise when he was called to fill the vice-presidency of our Conference. It was a graceful tribute to personal worth, which never sought its own. A constant figure at our conferences and committees, his presence was always looked for, and as heartily welcomed, Those who have ever heard his remarkable lecture on "Mow Cop and its Memories," can never forget it. How it pulsed and scintillated with spiritual light and power, how it throbbed with inspiring memories, recalling Ruskin's words that "in admiration is the chief joy and power of life; admiration for all that is gracious among the living, great among the dead, and marvellous in the powers that cannot die."

Mr. Patterson's wife predeceased him a few years ago. She was a noble Christian lady, a true helper of his faith and joy. Their joint influence among the churches where they have lived is still fragrant. A son and daughter-in-law and grandson remain, who are valued members with us, and lovingly ministered to their sire's latter years.

References

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