

George Gray

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

On May 24th, Mr. George Gray, of Whitby, passed to his eternal rest in his 74th year. A man of outstanding personality, of a rugged and breezy exterior, yet a kindly heart, he was a most faithful friend. His naturalness, humorous banter, and cheerfulness won him many friends. A native of Harome, near Helmsley, he commenced work when seven years of age. In 1858 he commenced business in Staithes, and in 1875 removed to Whitby, where he built up a successful business. For twelve years he sat on the Whitby Urban District Council, and for two years was its chairman. He also served on the old School Board for 15 years, for two years presided over its meetings, and for 17 years was a member of the Burial Board.

Converted in his youth, he was a member of our Church for 58 and a local preacher 50 years. At the time of his death he was Circuit Steward and Church Street Trust Treasurer. His genial presence and wise counsel were of great value in official meetings. His preaching, like himself, was quaint, strong and incisive, surcharged with spiritual fervour. Dr. J.H. Jowett heard him preach in our little chapel at Goathland a few years ago. The originality, freshness, and spiritual power of the sermon captivated the great preacher, who, after his return to Birmingham, sent Mr. Gray a letter of thanks, a recent book of his, and soon afterwards referred to the sermon in glowing terms from his own pulpit.

An ardent Temperance advocate, Mr. Gray was one of the strong men of the Darlington and Stockton District. Rev. John Hallam, a friend for 56 years, writes of him as "a man marked off from the rest by strong idiosyncracies. He thought for himself; very frequently differed in his views from others, and always dared to express them. His caustic criticisms, his sound knowledge of Connexional rules, his clear comprehension of the genius of our Church, his free use of real, strong, home-spun English made him a formidable debater." He was delegate 14 times to District Meeting and five times to Conference.

In his spiritual life he was very real, but not specially demonstrative. He suffered intensely towards the close of his life, but was ever patient and full of courage. He died, as he had lived, in the full faith of the Gospel. The interment took place in Whitby Cemetery, in the presence of a large company, the first portion of the service being in Church Street Church; Revs. W. Barker, J. Toyn, E.W. Challenger, M.P. Davison, A.J. Bull, and W. Robson taking part.

And so the familiar figures of the old Sunderland District, one after another, pass away. George Gray was among the stalwarts in personal character, in intelligence, in natural gifts of oratory, in service and devotion. A Circuit statesman, a born preacher and platform speaker, he filled a large place in the work of our Church. His memory will live and his influence abide.

References

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