

**Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Edward Kershaw**

THE written lives of men eminent for holiness and usefulness are very important and instructive. Herein we see how the subjects of the sketches discharged the duties which devolved upon them; how they endured their trials, how they were sustained by divine help, and how they were supported in a dying hour.

Some who have laboured long and successfully in the vineyard of the Lord leave behind them a journal of their lives and labours, from which, in writing their memoirs, striking incidents, remarkable deliverances, and an account of their success are brought before the reader.

It might justly be expected that a memoir of brother Hill would contain a great many such incidents, gathered from his writings during the forty-one years of his ministry; but both myself and the reader must submit to disappointment, as he has left no journal; the only account we have is from a scrap of paper, from which we gather a brief statement of the stations wherein he laboured, and how long in each. We must, therefore, rest contented with the following brief sketch:—

Robert Hill was born at Leominster, in the county of Hereford, on the 9th of October, 1800. At a very early age he removed with his parents to the city of Worcester, and as he spent his childhood and youth in this city, he ever afterwards regarded it with great affection.

His parents, though they made no profession of religion, were, notwithstanding, strictly moral, anxious enquirers after truth, diligent readers of the Holy Scriptures, and regular in their attendance at the Countess of Huntingdon's chapel, and of the church which assembled therein his eldest sister was a member. To the Sunday school connected with this church Robert Hill was sent, and while he attended it, a scholar died very triumphantly, and the pastor improved his death by a very solemn sermon. Under that sermon Robert Hill was deeply impressed, and resolved to give his heart to God; and though he did not do so then, yet he was firmly persuaded that he would have done, if some one had taught him to believe for a present salvation. The sermon, however, had such a powerful influence upon his mind that for years he was restrained from doing whatever he knew to be wrong. In his tenth year our departed brother had a pleurisy fever, and before he recovered from it he had a severe attack of typhus fever, and though the doctors despaired of his life, yet, by the blessing of God, he rallied, regained his strength, and returned to school again.

When he was just turned twelve years of age his father died, and he had to leave school. From about seven years of age up to this time he had gone to a seminary kept by a Mr. Hubbard, and from him he received what was then considered a very liberal commercial education. In his fourteenth year he arranged with Thomas Chambers, a friend of his late father's, to become an indoor apprentice to learn the business of ladies' shoemaker, to which he duly served seven years.

One Sunday morning in February, 1821, a circumstance occurred which led to his conversion to God. It was singing in the street. On going to the front door he saw the Rev. James Bonser at the head of a large procession, singing that good old hymn, "Come ye sinners poor and needy." That singing deeply affected him, for he thought he had never heard anything like it. That morning he heard Mr. Bonser preach, and under the sermon he was deeply convinced of his sins, and savingly brought to God.

That afternoon he began the work of an evangelist, for he prevailed upon his mother to go to hear Mr. Bonser preach; and under the sermon, she was convinced of her sins, sought an interest in the precious blood of Christ, and found it to her unspeakable joy.

During that revival many young men were brought to God. Most of these young men met in a class led by Mr. John Berrington, a well educated man, a deeply pious Christian, and a useful local preacher. This excellent man commenced a series of theological meetings in his own parlour, for the improvement of the young men, and these meetings were made a great blessing to many of them, for some of them became useful preachers, and two of them were taken out to travel—namely, Joseph Mole, and the subject of this memoir.

In 1823 Robert Hill went to work at Bridgenorth, and as there was no society in the town at that time he met in a class which had been formed at Hardington. During his residence here he was twice requested to go out as a travelling preacher, but he did not see his way clear to do so. At length his own circuit, Oakengates, which afterwards became Wrockwardine Wood circuit, gave him a pressing call, and as he dared no longer refuse, he came out to travel on the 17th of February, 1824, and he laboured in the home branch until the time of preachers changing. From that time he travelled forty-one years in the following circuits, namely:—Chester, 4 years; Tunstall, 1; Preston, 4; Hull, 2; Manchester, 5; Preston Brook, 4; Bradwell, 2; Keighley, 2; Bolton, 2; Burnley, 2; Oldham, 2; Douglas, 3; Stockport, 2; Rochdale, 3; Glossop, 2; and Lymm, 1. In these circuits the Lord made him a great blessing, for, with the exception of three circuits, he left them all in a better state, spiritually, numerically, and financially, than what he found them. His labours were made, in many instances a great blessing, and he was highly esteemed. His grand aim was the conversion of sinners and the prosperity of the church.

I greatly esteemed our departed brother while he was living, and the memory of him I cherish with feelings of profound respect. He was an old and valued superintendent of mine, for it was our lot to labour together in the same corner of the Lord's vineyard. I regarded him as a truly good man, a real friend, a devoted Christian, an ardent lover of Primitive Methodism, a sound disciplinarian, and an able minister of the New Testament.

He was an extensive reader, diligent student, and successful preacher. His sermons were distinguished by such clearness of thought, accuracy of arrangement, and strength of language, that they were very much prized by those who could appreciate intellectual worth. He was an efficient superintendent, an able counsellor, and a man who was unwearied in his efforts to advance the cause of God in the welfare of precious souls. He had a strong constitution, and for about thirty-eight years of his itinerancy he enjoyed very good health. But in the summer of 1863, as he was walking from his back door, he fell, and his nervous system then received a shock from which it never recovered.

In March, 1864, he sprained his right leg, and he was not able to walk afterwards more than two or three miles without suffering great pain. In the autumn of the same year he had several attacks of English cholera, after which he never fully recovered his strength. His sight, too, so failed him that it was with considerable difficulty and at great risk he was able to find his way in dark nights. In short, he became so debilitated by his numerous and increasing infirmities, that he was unable to perform his regular work and hence he was under the painful necessity of applying to the Conference of 1865 to be placed on the superannuation list. His application was at once granted, and he decided to locate at Preston, where he had been twice stationed, and from whence he married his wife.

But though our departed brother was freed from the cares and anxieties of the regular work of the ministry, he nevertheless preached the gospel and made himself useful in this station as long as he was able.

Nearly five years since his wife departed this life, and then his constitution received a, severe shock, for though he had a good hope of her final triumph, he felt the separation acutely. His friends soon perceived symptoms of the gradual decline of his powers both of body and mind. He was, however, a diligent attendant at the means of grace, and was evidently ripening for the inheritance of the saints in light. Amidst his declining health of body and vigour of mind, he continued cheerful, and was delighted to converse about the work of God, the prosperity of our connexion, and the welfare of our ministers, whom he loved dearly.

His last affliction, which was short, was borne with Christian patience and resignation. I visited him during his illness, and found him resting on the Rock of Ages, his confidence unshaken, his anchor cast within the vail, his prospect for heaven very bright, and Jesus Christ exceedingly precious to his soul. On the 9th of August, 1874, in the seventy-fourth year of his age, he sweetly fell asleep in Jesus, and passed away from earth to heaven. He was interred at Preston Cemetery on the 12th of August, by the writer, who also improved his death in Saul-street Chapel to a large, sorrowful and attentive congregation. May we meet him in heaven.

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#### References

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