

Thomas Lane

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by John William Waite

THOMAS LANE was born at Par, Cornwall, March 31, 1833. His parents were for many years inn-keepers of the village, but eventually left the business and entered into private life, largely dependent upon their children, especially upon Thomas, who was many years their principal support. Of his early training little is known, saving that, though inn-keepers, his parents were strictly moral, and highly respected, and sought to bring their children up accordingly. It would seem that from early days the hand of the Lord was upon him, singling him out, and shielding his young life for years of coming usefulness and blessing. Once when a boy, while helping the servant man to brew, he fell into the vat of boiling water, and was so dreadfully scalded, that his life was despaired of. Some years afterwards, when engaged in the copper mines, he fell down the shaft, and was so mangled that again his friends feared he would die, but they saw not the hand of God upon him, nor knew that God had important work for him yet to do, else they would not have despaired.

The beginning of his attendance on the services of in connection with our people, was through the kind, persuasive influence of the Rev. E. Powell, then travelling in the St. Austell Circuit, who, meeting with him and some other young men one Sunday morning as he was going to St. Blazey to preach for the day, spoke to them kindly, and, laying his hand on the head of our brother, besought him to go with him to the house of God, and give his heart to the Lord. Enquiring of his comrades after Mr. Powell had gone who he was, and learning that he was the Primitive Methodist minister, he resolved that he would go to St. Blazey and hear him at night, which he did, and, says Mr. Powell, 'The word reached his heart; he sought and found the Lord, afterwards joined our Society in St. Blazey, and became a useful local preacher, and was soon recommended for the ministry. I have watched his progress in grace and works with much pleasure, and a more conscientious, devoted, loyal minister the Connexion never had.' In 1859 he was appointed by the Conference to the Plymouth Station, under the kindly superintendence of the Rev. J. Rackham, who writes, 'We were stationed ether at Plymouth; I found him a faithful colleague, and one of the kindest of men I ever knew. He sought to do the will of God; he lived for His glory. He was in earnest for the salvation of souls, and it was our happiness to report more than 100 increase for the year. At the Conference of 1862, we were stationed together again, this time at Weymouth, and here our dear brother laboured very successfully, and I have no doubt but that he will, ere this, have joined some whom he was the honoured agent in leading to Jesus.'

After finishing his probation, and entering into married life, we find him superintending the following stations: Merthyr Tydvil, Newport (Mon.), Abergavenny, Liskeard, Dover, Redhill, Berkhamstead, and Marlborough, where success crowned his labours. It was his joy in the Lord always on all these stations to be able, after much earnest labour and expectancy, to report increases of members and of finances. Indeed, we are persuaded from what we knew and have heard of him from very many of his colleagues, that if such results had not followed his labours, he would have been of all men most miserable.

The Rev. T. Dinnick, once his colleague, says, 'I knew Mr. Lane for twenty years. He was a good man, a faithful preacher, and an indefatigable worker. I have heard him say that it was his consolation to be able to say, that though he had travelled on some of the hardest stations in the Connexion, he never, in one instance, had a decrease, and that souls had been converted to God on every station.'

Filled with a holy zeal for the glory of God, and a heart full of the deepest and tenderest sympathy for the souls of the perishing, no wonder that he succeeded in his heaven-appointed mission. The wonder would have been if he had failed. Failed! there is no such thing as failure attends the ministry of the man whose

soul is linked in holy fellowship with God, and whose very being beats and throbs again with those divine impulses which lead him with tears and outstretched hands to seek and save the lost. Such a man was our dear brother, the worthy son of the worthy sire that led him to God.

In 1880, on leaving Marlboro' Station, very much against the wish of the dear people there, he was appointed by the Conference to Maldon, one of the most extensive and laborious stations of the Connexion. He, however, entered upon his labours there full of hope, a strong, healthy, powerful man, apparently able to perform all the duties of his high vocation, but he had not long been there before the onerous labours of the station began to tell upon him. Previous to his appointment the station had been worked by three ministers, but with an idea of lessening expenses, the minister living at the extreme end of the station was taken away, and thus, what was considered sufficient work for three men, now fell to the lot of our good brother and his colleague; hence, with over-work and anxiety, and trouble at the work not succeeding as he hoped, his health gave way. Two medical gentlemen were called in to see him, and said, 'It was the result of over-work, and he must have complete rest.' After several weeks' rest, he resumed his work, but was again obliged to seek medical aid, and was this time told 'that his constitution was undermined.' Shortly after this he was seized with 'intermittent fever,' which very greatly prostrated him, and from which he never seemed to recover. He was now ordered 'a change of air,' and for five weeks went into Cornwall his native home. On returning it was thought that he was a little stronger, but anxiety and worrying business matters broke down his nervous system, from which he never recovered.

In the early part of February last, while attending missionary meetings on his station, I stayed all the week at his home, and found him in a very shattered and feeble condition, but most cheerful, and perfectly happy. His one theme was 'Christ and His salvation.' Often he expressed a desire to know the status of the Connexion; its whole interests seemed bound up in his life. 'I hope,' he said, 'we shall have a large Connexional increase this year.' Over his own station he mourned greatly because of its decrease of members, the first decrease there had ever been on a station where he travelled, but for the decrease he was not responsible, nor could he be; shattered and broken down as he long had been, it was not in his power to attend to matters any longer.

On March the 2nd, I visited him again, and stayed with him till he died. On this occasion I found him nigh unto death, but happy, with the light of heaven in his eyes. 'That gospel which I have so long preached to others, sustains me now,' he said. During the night he grew rapidly weaker, and nearer to the gates of death, giving all the while pleasing evidences of victory and of glory won. Death to him had died, or had been abolished by the life beyond, and was now but as the vestibule of heaven, through which he feared not to pass to the light and the glory beyond. About 12 o'clock on Saturday, March 3, he called his children to his bed, that he might bless them before he died, then urging them to live to God, and meet him in heaven, and take care of their mother when he was gone, he bade them each good-bye; turning to his sorrowing wife, and putting his withered arms around her neck, kissed and commended her to God, and then to me said, 'Good-bye, Mr. Waite, we'll meet in heaven.' A short time after this, on awakening from a state of unconsciousness, he asked for the Bible, and placing it upon his heart, laid both hands across it as his greatest treasure, the guide of his life in the past, and the lamp of God that only could give him light in the valley now. Then looking up as it were into heaven, said, "Can't you hear the music? They are coming for me. See, look! my sister is there." For a while afterwards he was unconscious, during which time he tried to preach a sermon, which we thought was founded upon the words, 'Upon this rock I will build My church,' these words being frequently heard, and which were his last, for at five minutes to three o'clock, he turned himself upon his pillows, smiled, slightly shuddered, and passed away to rest.

Thus terminated the earthly existence of one whose life was lived out and breathed out for the glory of God and the common good of men. His end was peace, nay more, it was and is heaven, with all its life, and joy, and bliss; for death, whatever that be, or may not be, is after all, the gate which opens into heaven, through which we know our brother passed. He is not dead, for he did not die; dying is going out of life without God, and without hope; our brother did neither, God was his portion, and hope filled his soul with an eternal brightness, so that if there be any darkness in death, he only saw the light and only heard the music of the city. On March 9, his mortal remains were interred in the cemetery at Maldon, the Revs. Mr. Hughes (Congregationalist), Mr. Chapman (Baptist), J.W. Normandale, W. Wardle, and J. W. Waite taking part in the service. On March 25, his death was improved by the writer at Maldon to a crowded congregation.

References

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