

REV. W. B. ann MRS. LUDDINGTON.

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine

(Warning: This historical document contains Colonial language that is not acceptable in modern society)

It is not often that we have to include both husband and wife in one obituary record; but such is the case in this notice of the active and devoted career of the Rev. WILLIAM BROADBENT LUDDINGTON, one of our earnest and successful missionaries. He was one of the small but noble and increasing band of Primitive Methodist ministers who have not only served the Connexion in the 'Home Circuits,' but also in the higher and more trying and perilous sphere of 'Foreign Missions.'

He was the son of the late Rev. W. Luddington, for thirty-three years a Primitive Methodist minister, who died about eight years ago, and whose active ministry rendered good service to the Connexion. He was born on March 9, 1843, at Brampton, near Gainsborough, in his grandfather's house, which for many years furnished the preaching room for our Connexion in that village. Among his earliest recollections were the prayers of his mother, and his visits to the place of his birth, upon which occasions he early indicated the tendency of his mind; for on the night for preaching he would make missionary excursions round the village informing the people of the preacher's arrival, and inviting them to the service. When but a child—about eight years of age—he realised the joy of God's forgiveness and favour. This occurred at a service, conducted by Mr. J. Chambers, of Hull, in a village near Patrington, East Riding of Yorkshire; and happily he never lost the witness of the Spirit to his adoption.

His education was chiefly obtained at Tadcaster, and during his term at school a gracious revival of religion occurred among the pupils. Many of the boys were converted, and among them the following, who became Wesleyan ministers: Rev. John A. Lyth, Rev. Jos. Rhodes, Rev. Albert Clayton, and Rev. John Mitchell, who went as a missionary to Ceylon, and died there. He distinctly remembered attending a missionary meeting amongst the pupils of the school, and giving an address. Removing to Tuxford, as there were no Primitive Methodists in that place, he joined the Wesleyans, was made a local preacher at seventeen years of age, and at his second service he had two cases of conversion. The seal of Divine approval so manifestly rested on his pulpit efforts as to determine his choice of the ministry of the Gospel as his vocation in life. He was pressed to enter the Wesleyan ministry, but removing to Barnsley in 1863, where his father had previously laboured, he at once united himself with our cause there.

Here he speedily attained a position of great usefulness and popularity, his services being largely in request for special sermons, temperance meetings, and other enterprises of a Christian and philanthropic character. In 1864 he commenced his ministry in the Malton circuit. The next year he removed to Leeds Third circuit, where, along with the late Rev. T. Dearlove, he had the joy of reporting an increase of over one hundred members in two years. At Colne, his next station, his superintendent emigrating to Canada soon after his appointment there, he was raised to the superintendency; and during his three years' term reported an increase of one hundred and thirty members.

Easingwold Branch of York circuit was his next appointment (1870); and here he resolutely set himself to make the station independent; which enterprise was happily carried out at the end of his second year. He inaugurated, and partly executed, a scheme for the removal of all chapel debts in the circuit; but, being called away to serve in Africa before his term there expired, the completion of the scheme was left to and successfully carried out by his energetic successor, Rev. H. Dalton.

From this time (1873), to the close of his life (Nov. 25th, 1888), his ministry was about equally divided between missionary work in Fernando Po, with missionary deputation appointments, and short periods of work in the Home Circuits, recruiting his strength after the prostration of residence in Africa. Leaving their only child in the care of Rev. T. and Mrs. Mitchell (Mr. Mitchell

being Mrs. Luddington's brother) he, with his devoted wife, laboured with characteristic energy and self-sacrifice to promote the social, mental, and spiritual well-being of the Bubi of Fernando Po. The George's Bay Mission was then in its infancy, having just been opened by the Rev. D.T. Maylott. Much toilsome pioneer-work was thus necessary to be done.

A church was built, and it speaks something for the vigour of the missionary that this, the first Primitive Methodist church in a purely heathen station, should be opened free of debt. During his stay of two years here, he organised the Sunday-school, and other missionary agencies, baptized two converts from heathenism, and paid frequent visits to the native towns; and when it is remembered that the mission premises were on the beach, that the native towns were miles up the mountain sides, and that the climate is excessively hot, as Fernando Po is near the equator, the exhaustive character of this work will be apparent.

Returning home to recruit, he spent the following year in missionary deputation work, travelling over 9,000 miles in visiting different parts of the Connexion for this object. The next two years he laboured with great diligence and acceptability in Hull Fourth circuit, at the close of which he offered himself again for service in Africa, as the Conference had some difficulty in finding a man for the post; but as his health failed before the time for setting sail arrived, he was compelled to remain in England, and the late and lamented Rev. R.S. Blackburn took his place. In the following year, by the sudden death of Rev. R.S. Blackburn, and the banishment of Rev. W. Holland from the island, the Fernando Po stations were left entirely without ministerial oversight; and at the request of the Missionary Committee and the Conference (1879) Mr. Luddington returned to the scene of his former labours in Africa, With the experience gained during his previous term, he gave himself with fresh energy to the work; and along with the Rev. W.N. Barleycorn, had the satisfaction of baptising eleven converts before his term closed and he returned to England.

His third term in Fernando Po commenced about two years ago, after about five years' ministry in Lancaster and Leeds Fifth circuits. In the spring of 1888 both Mr. and Mrs. Luddington suffered severely from malignant African fever, and were compelled in utterly shattered health to return to England. Those who saw them on their arrival at the end of July were convinced that they had not returned home a day too soon, and some feared that they had but returned home to die. Such fears have been completely realised.

Mrs. Luddington passed away, calmly, resignedly, with settled conviction that her work was done, and anxious for rest, three weeks after they landed. On three successive occasions she accompanied her husband for a term of missionary service in Fernando Po, on the first and second appointments residing at George's Bay station, and on the last at Santa Isabel. And in Africa, as in each home station where she was called to live and labour, she proved herself a true helpmate to her husband in his great work. She has everywhere left behind fragrant memories of saintly character, kindly disposition, and fervent and active interest in the concerns of the church, and the well-being of its humblest members.

She was born at Low Moor, near Bradford, Yorkshire, where, by her own request, her remains now lie, surrounded by the sacred dust of many pious members of the family of several generations. She had the priceless advantage in early years of the example, prayers, and training of a mother of a singularly noble nature, and fully devoted to God; and she inherited and cultivated, in a large degree, the qualities which shone so brightly in her mother. She lost her mother when about fifteen years of age, but not before she had herself sought and found peace in the Saviour's love and forgiveness; and, to the closing moments of life, the sweetest and most potent of all life's memories were those which gathered around the holy character and loving ministries of that sainted mother. She inherited much, also, of the genial, affable disposition of her father; and was thus admirably fitted for that position in life to which Divine Providence called her.

Every interest in the circuits in which her husband laboured, spiritual and temporal alike, had her deepest sympathy and most ready help. She had no ambition for the more public positions and duties of church life, and much preferred to work quietly and unobtrusively in the Master's vineyard. Yet she had considerable gifts of utterance; and having received a good education in early life, and enjoying a rich spiritual experience, her presence and exercises in the prayer-meeting, class-meeting, and other means of grace were highly esteemed by those associated with her in such services. She had special aptitude for, and great delight in, teaching Biblical truth

to the young women in the select classes in the Sunday-school. Here she found a congenial and most promising sphere of Christian work; and she had no greater joy than to expound the teachings of the Saviour's life and words to the eagerly attentive classes of young women which she successively taught. At Barrowford, Colne, Lancaster, Bramley, and, most of all, at Santa Isabel, Fernando Po, her loving labours in this field will not soon be forgotten.

On reaching England at the end of July, 1888, though exceedingly feeble from repeated attacks of fever in Africa, and five attacks of ague on the voyage home, her friends confidently hoped that, as she had been permitted to reach her native land, rest and nourishment would bring about her usual health; and for several days this hope seemed likely to be realised. Early in August, however, while staying with her husband and daughter at the residence of Mrs. Luddington, sennr., Sileby, Leicestershire, she gradually declined in strength; and on Friday, August 10th, she had a relapse in its severe form of the fever from which she had suffered so much in Africa. Everything that the medical skill of a gentleman who had had considerable experience of malarial fevers in the East, and the loving and constant care of her husband and friends could do to arrest the disease and prolong her life was done, but in vain. In fact, from the first symptoms of the attack she had no expectations of recovery; and she calmly told her friends that 'she had come home to die.' She even prohibited them from praying for her restoration to health, as she felt that her work was done, and she longed for 'rest.' She did not share rapturous joy in her closing days, but had a calm and unshaken trust in her Saviour; and she contemplated and conversed about her approaching 'departure' with the most perfect composure. She expressed fervent gratitude to God that she was permitted to greet her only child, and her friends in England once more; she referred to former periods of sickness in Africa, when she had seemed to be at the point of death, and when the Lord had so faithfully heard her prayer, and raised her again as from the grave; and she added that she had now no wish ungratified, and was 'ready to depart,' calmly waiting the Lord's time. Thus she met her end. From a large number of letters of condolence to the bereaved husband the following selections are made:—

Dr. S. Antliff writes, 'Mrs. Luddington was an excellent woman, sensible, generous, devoted. Those who knew her could not fail to esteem her. She was the sort of woman for a missionary's wife. Would that the church had more such! You may well thank God upon every remembrance of her.'

Rev. S. Griffiths, a former colleague of Mr. Luddington's in missionary work in Fernando Po, says, 'You will be upheld by the prayers of tens of thousands throughout the Connexion; but especially by those of your brethren who have had the privilege of knowing something of Mrs. Luddington's uncommon worth as exemplified on the foreign field. Dignified and yet considerate, earnest and devout without the slightest cant or affectation, she was most respected where best known. You have the melancholy satisfaction of knowing that your dear departed one was esteemed and beloved at home and abroad, by missionaries and merchants, by civilised and savage.'

Rev. R. Culley, Wesleyan minister (Mrs. Luddington having been Mrs. Culley's personal friend from early girlhood), writes:— 'My wife has lost her oldest, truest, best friend on earth. You have lost the noblest of wives. She is a martyr to the missionary enterprise. She has freely given her life, and her record is on high.'

Rev. W. Smith, Hull, so long and honourably known as the secretary of our 'Young Men's African Missionary Association,' writes:— 'Our dear sister has a bright crown. Her noble life and your labours have done much for Africa. Our missions there will henceforth take a much firmer hold of the sympathies of large numbers because of the loss of her who was an angel of light to the poor Africans. She was admired and loved by all the friends of our African missions.'

Mr. Luddington survived his wife but three months. The shock of her loss seemed more than his already enfeebled, shattered system could bear. He said that 'the best part of him was now in heaven,' Still he sought to fill up his life with active service for Christ. He accepted an invitation to labour in the Hull Fifth circuit after the Conference of 1889, and in the meantime to fill up the vacancy at Normanton circuit, caused by the death of Rev. W. Bennett, for the remainder of the Connexional year. Such hopes of service on earth were, however, speedily doomed to disappointment.

Heart disease of long standing, with enlarged liver and spleen occasioned by residence in Africa, brought on the end. When told that full recovery was impossible, and that prolonged life meant permanent superannuation, he promptly replied, 'Then I want to be superannuated in heaven.' Life without service for Christ was a thought he could not bear. After enduring intense suffering for about three weeks, he quietly fell asleep at Craigland's Hydropathic Establishment, Ilkley, Yorkshire, whither he had gone in the hope of recruiting his health, his closing days being soothed by the kind and assiduous attention of Mrs. Kellett, Mrs. Luddington's cousin, resident in Ilkley, Mrs. Wade, his sister, and his daughter. His remains were laid by the side of his wife's in the burial-ground of the Wesleyan chapel, Low Moor, Bradford, amid the sympathetic presence and expressions of a large circle of ministers and friends. Thus closed the career of one of the most earnest ministers our church has had. In person he was tall and slim, but sinewy, and capable of considerable endurance. He had a good, clear, ringing voice, and could easily make himself heard in our largest chapels.

He was a life-long abstainer, and an enthusiastic temperance advocate, and during his ministry founded fourteen Bands of Hope in England and Africa. His sermons were forcible and impressive expositions of Holy Scripture, appealing powerfully to the emotions of his hearers, and often followed by conversions. There was a large revivalistic element in him. He was an earnest and effective advocate of the claims of missions, and could impart something of his own enthusiasm to his audiences. His business training was of considerable service to him as a superintendent. He was a careful and diligent administrator, and had a large inventive faculty, so that no enterprise to which he was committed was likely to fail either for want of ingenuity of method or energy of purpose. He had a highly devotional nature; and this with a fluent utterance, a fervid spirit, and great energy and industry made his services a blessing to any circuit to which he was appointed. He did not enter the ministry for a piece of bread. He heard the Lord's call, and responded to it. It may be doubted whether any church is more indebted to the self-sacrifice of its ministers than Primitive Methodism; and assuredly his talents would have secured in business a much larger financial return than the ministry could ever offer him. But he had no regrets on this question. His highest ambition was to serve his generation according to the will of God.

Rev. W. Welford, returned missionary from Fernando Po, writes:—'No one who saw him on his return could resist the painful conviction that he, and his wife also, should have come home ere he did.'

'Exhausted, stricken down, sustained only by his own force of will and courage, he looked like one who had stuck to his post while his strength held out, and had then come home to die. So it has come to pass by the permission of our all-wise and all-good Father. I saw him and his now sainted wife ere they set out for Spain and Africa. They were bright, cheerful, hopeful, going in the name of God to do duty in that distant and difficult post of duty for a third time. I admired their heroism. I saw them on their return. My heart bled. I was filled with sorrow at their sufferings. Yet they repined not. Their work was done—a good work well and truly done. Fernando Po, George's Bay especially, is rich to-day with the blessing of their lives and labours. They have gone to their reward.'

The minute of the General Missionary Committee in respect of his lamented death may fittingly close this memoir:—'The General Missionary Committee, while trustfully acknowledging the will of the wise and merciful Disposer of all things in the death of the Rev. W. B. Luddington, at the same time record their profound sorrow that so devoted and successful a worker for the glory of God in the salvation of men should have been taken from the field of earthly toil so early. Their sorrow is, however, greatly relieved by the remembrance of the life he lived, the work he did, and the sacrifices he made for the heathen in Fernando Po upon which island he, with his sainted wife, fulfilled seven years of arduous and anxious labour. He truly lived for others, and gave his life with cheerful readiness in the service of man.'

His last sojourn in Fernando Po, begun in 1887, resulted in physical prostration from which after his return to England he never recovered, but in a few short months passed from the work he loved to the home for which for years he had been gaining meetness, and to which he looked forward with holy joy.'

References

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