

**Rev. Frederick W. Norris**

**Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Joseph Pearce**

Although my friend, Fred Norris, passed hence Aug. 5th, 1916, not easy is it even now to write of him whose so unexpected translation struck one as a blow, for he was one of those lovable personalities to lose whom is to lose a priceless possession indeed. When our Church opened its door to him, when he felt he could better serve the Kingdom of God with us than with the Wesleyans, it showed great wisdom, for whilst our brother was no aspirant for Connexional honours and offices, he brought uncommon gifts to the altar, and served our Church for a quarter of a century with singular abandon, prodigious energy and splendid success.

The surface facts of his life may soon be told. He was born of Christian parents — Wesleyan Methodists — in the little village of Scruton, near Bedale in Yorkshire, though he subsequently with his family lived in diverse places. In his teens in a Reading Church he heard God's whisper, and made glad response, and almost immediately began to preach. In, 1886 he married Miss Rennie North, of High Wycombe, an accomplished lady, who shared the intellectual and religious aspirations which so distinguished his post-conversion days. For some years he was in an accountant's office, but the preaching passion was too insistent to permit of his continuing in a profession in which he would have done so well, and when our Church in 1891 offered the opportunity, he leaped at that for which his soul was burning. From the first and until the last, "like a living coal his heart was," a spiritual passion consumed him, and in beautiful Hove, industrial Leeds, the Black Country, and in the Metropolis he wrought exploits because he knew his God, and was strong.

Highly-strung, sensitive to an unusual degree, built on frail lines, a sufferer from more than one bad breakdown, and with domestic troubles galore, we simply marvel at his achievements. "The utmost for the Highest" might have been his motto as well as that of G.F. Watts, who was one of his favourites. His life in its every aspect certainly illustrated it. Up to date was he in his reading, his preaching—loyal ever to the evangel—had the modern accent and touch, he was anointed with fresh oil, administrative and pastoral work commanded his fullest powers—with all his heart he wrought for God.

His record on Leeds II. was a mighty triumph. Not only were huge debts liquidated, but the churches generally under his ministry were replenished with new life. The choicest souls on all his stations were attracted to him, and no wonder, for here was a man who did a big business on earth because he did a bigger business with heaven. Sincerity shone in his crown like a jewel, love flowed in his life like a diamond, his fidelity was a gem of the first water, hope sang like a sweet minstrel, and peace was God's angel that made him welcome in all the Gethsemanes where his people needed strengthening.

Privileged was I, thank God, to share his innermost secrets. I know that his dwelling was "in the inner court of the sanctuary, whereof the walls are not built with hands." I saw the happy consequences of his consorting with the Highest — the sheen on his face, the peace in his heart, the strength in his will, the power in his life, the triumph in his career.

" 'Tis human fortune's happiest height to be  
A spirit saintly, lucid, poised and whole;  
Second in order of felicity,  
I hold it to have walked with such a soul."

The best assets of a Church are those holy men who dwell on the heights with God, and who, even when they descend to the plains, bring with them the God-light and the God-charm.

Our brother's home life was not less pleasing than his church and public life. His second marriage took place in 1910, some years subsequent to his first wife's translation, the lady being Miss Kate Mason, of Burnt Tree, Tipton. Once again he found a helpmeet who joyfully seconded all his good offices, and earnestly desired not only the best welfare of the home, but the Church. No common love was that which our beloved friend lavished on all the six dear children with which God enriched them, and joy unspeakable was it to him to find his eldest son earnestly taking up the work of preaching with fine promise, and his eldest daughter also interested in Church work. Deeply do we sympathise with the stricken widow and the small children left in her keeping. May the God of all consolation comfort them!

The passing of our friend was a great shock to the people at Sunderland and hosts of old friends. At his burial, Rev. T. Robson paid a fine tribute to his life and ministry, as did also Alderman E.H. Brown, J.P., at a memorial service held later. Oft and oft again has my soul longed in my days of blackest sorrow for one to whom I could freely unbosom myself, and with whom I could exchange confidences. I found that one in the noble-souled subject of this brief memoir. We thank God for such a life—sweet, sunny, strong. In its presence we shall rejoice yet again, for

“There is a future, oh! thank God!  
Of life, this is so small a part!  
Tis dust to dust beneath the sod,  
But there— up there—'tis heart to heart!”

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References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1917/586