

## Rev. Jesse Spooner

### Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by W.L. Spooner

On March 6, 1878, at the comparatively early age of thirty-one, the Rev. JESSE SPOONER bade farewell to earth, and ascended the skies. Rheumatic fever seized him, and in three or four days he died. Through affliction for some weeks in his family, in conjunction with his circuit and pulpit labours, his brain had been overtaxed, and was therefore unprepared for resisting the fever's attack. But if the remark of the Rev. W. Braden, of the Weigh House Chapel, be correct, 'that God knows when the harvest of a man's life is ripe, and when to gather it in,' and that 'premature death can never happen to God's faithful servants,' and if 'a man is immortal till his work is done,' then the true account of the matter is this, that it was at a Divine command, the subject of our sketch went higher.

At Lynn, Norfolk, on June 27, 1846, my brother first saw the light. The circumstances of his birth were humble, but favourable to his growth in goodness. Our father, a local preacher, and mother a member of the Connexion, and both evincing 'their faith by their works,' shed around their children an influence which drew them Godwards. In his twelfth year, at revival services during the ministry of the Rev. T. Hadfield, in the East Dereham Circuit, my brother commenced the Christian life. The purpose formed at so early an age was sustained to the end. Not—as he would have been first to acknowledge—that every step was steady, and every act in perfect harmony with his life aim; but as a whole, his walk was nobly consistent, and proved his moral earnestness. With him there was no religious parade, no claiming of perfection, but a quiet, humble, and persistent pursuit of 'the mark of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' As, at his funeral service, in relation to his general Christian work, the Rev. J. P. Langham correctly and beautifully said of him, 'He did more than he promised to do,' so, in his whole spiritual service, his actions spoke louder than his words.

His early mental advantages were few. Three years at an ordinary village school, were his chief scholastic opportunity. But even this poor privilege was utilised by him to good purpose. Though as a mere child compelled to work, he did not neglect self-improvement. In self-culture his success was not brilliant, but it was real, as his after life gave proof.

When about sixteen years old, his circuit authorities gave him permission to go with a local preacher, as a means of testing his pulpit abilities. As a local preacher he soon won a respectable position. In course of time he was called to the regular ministry, and entered upon it after spending a term at the Sunderland Institute. Prior to this he had spent some weeks, both in Norwich, for Rev. T. Lowe, and in his native circuit for the late Rev. W. Wainwright, as hired local preacher. Rev. T. Lowe was almost the first to stimulate him in the direction of the ministry. I remember hearing him one evening, by our native village chapel door, say to brother, 'Cram your head full, Jesse.' Also to the Rev. T. Swindill he was indebted for words of encouragement and help.

His first station was High Wycombe. Here he spent two happy and successful years. His next three years were spent in the Saffron Walden circuit, and while traversing this 'young continent,' as he called it, he witnessed much encouraging prosperity. At Haverhill, the place of his residence, a new chapel was opened, and the society realised much growth. Also, steps were taken for forming Haverhill branch. His next remove was to Reading. The nearly three years of his labour in this station testify to his ministerial ability and usefulness. The writer has felt a brother's pleasure in learning from various sources, of the respect and esteem he won by his noble Christian carriage. As a valuable and valued layman of Reading said to me, 'I

never took to a minister before, as I took to your brother. He was so genuine. His death is a great blow to me and my family.'

He had received from the December Quarterly Meeting of the London 4th Station, an invitation to travel there during the next Connexional year, He accepted the invitation, and was hoping much from the special opportunities London affords. But no, he was to go elsewhere to serve. Not to London, but to the Eternal City.

The third day before he died, he said had a presentiment he should not recover, but he maintained his confidence in the Lord his God, spoke assuredly of Divine succour, and spent much time in subdued and reverent Praise. While in health, his work was his joy. words written in his diary, 'God save the people. Amen,' express the solicitude he felt for the good of those to whom he ministered; and during his unconscious periods, his work seemed foremost in his mind, for he made repeated attempts to rise to go to his appointments. The last distinct utterance his loving wife caught from his lips, was, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.' The last text on which he had commenced to prepare a sermon was, 'Friend, go up higher,' a himself was among the first to obey the injunction.

On Friday, March 8, we took him to his cemetery resting-place. Rev. S. Penrose conducted a service at 4 p.m., in our Reading Cumberland-road chapel, assembled at which were many members, local preachers, office-bearers, and friends. The Rev. J.P. Langham, the respected superintendent of the circuit, gave a most suitable and touching address. Rev. G. Warner offered prayer. There were present also, all the Nonconformist ministers of the town. We afterwards went in procession to the grave, where, with many heart-pangs, we deposited the remains of him we loved so dearly. On one side it seemed cruel to have to leave his body there, but on the other side we were assured that it was not him we had committed to the ground, but only his dust; he was elsewhere, above, walking in the Eternal Light. The thought was as music amid the mourning sounds—a star of joy in the night of our sorrow.

My brother's domestic life had been happy. In his wife he had a true helpmeet. And though afflictions came, they only welded husband and wife more closely. The separation, therefore, has been all the harder for the poor widow. The chasm made by his departure is deep; but a great hope bridges it; and the widow, his parents, four sisters, and brother, commune with him on the other side.

The younger of the two dear boys he left behind him has since followed his father, 'another attraction in the skies,' says his sorrowful, yet rejoicing mother. Heaven does seem to come nearer, as one by one our loved ones go up.

The Rev. R.H. Horrocks, of Baldock, thus speaks of him:—

'I ever found him a trustworthy and faithful helper. We never misunderstood each other in a single matter. He was ever ready to work for the Master— instant in season and out of season.' I never heard him complain at long journeys or small audiences. His preaching was thoroughly and generally appreciated, and was blessed to the people. He evidently understood the happy art of winning souls. He was never absent from his post, except hindered by indisposition,—which was seldom—for he enjoyed almost uninterrupted health.

'He was one of the best colleagues I ever travelled with. When the news of his death reached me, I seemed "like them that dream."' He was useful, and bid fair to be of great service to the Connexion. I am deeply sorry at his premature death, but hope all is for the best.

Thus writes the Rev. S.J. Wallis, of Ramsgate:—Your brother was my colleague at Reading for two years, and a better I never had. In friendship he was as true as steel. His piety was deep-toned, so that his life was *visible rhetoric*. As a preacher, his sermons were thoughtful, pithy, pointed, practical, and as full of Christ as the stars with light. Nor will his crown be starless; for he won souls for Christ. May we meet him in heaven.'

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References

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