

MEMOIR OF ELIZABETH RUSSELL,

(Formerly Elizabeth Smith.)

(Continued from page 222.)

July 6, 1832, she commenced her labours in Darlaston circuit by preaching the charity sermons for our Darlaston Sunday school. About this time the Cholera broke out in that part, and carried hundreds into eternity.

To Shefford circuit she writes:

Bilston, August 21, 1832.

DEAR FRIENDS,—With a mind deeply impressed with what I see and hear, I begin to write. When I came on this circuit, July 6, the societies were in a depressed state, and the congregations small. But we have since had a quick and awful change. At my arrival, there were some cases of cholera at Tipton; and on the second Monday after I came, I and others held a prayer meeting in the street, at nine o'clock. Seriousness sat on every countenance; tears ran down many faces; and our local preachers and members have since laboured unceasingly, and many have been added to the society at Tipton.

In the course of a week, the cholera reached Wednesbury. In this town it had been distressing to preach in so large a chapel, to about twenty people. But the number in the classes will half fill the chapel. I preached there last Sunday, and led a lovefeast at night. The chapel was filled, and the season was glorious. I cannot say how many were converted; but there were a good number. And there was such a cry for sanctification as I had never before heard.

There have not so many died at Wednesbury as at some other places. But at Tipton there have died from ten to eighteen a-day, for some weeks. And at Lea Brook, there is scarcely a house but one or more have died.

The cholera reached Darlaston last week, and some have died. In this place the work of the Lord is moving on.

Last Sunday fortnight I came to Bilston. The dreadful disease had arrived the day before; and since then, three hundred have gone out of the world. They died by thirty or forty a-day. The cart is just passed by with four corpses in it. They are taken, and are dead and buried in a few hours. One woman was taken with it; and, as no one would wait on her, she was taken to the hospital; and her husband went into Shropshire, with her two children, to fetch her mother. He returned the next day, but she was in her grave.

We may preach and pray all day long, and the people will gladly receive the word. The most profane cry for mercy; the oldest backsliders are reclaimed; and the places of worship crowded.

Last Monday week, a young man at Gold's Green, being taken with the cholera, ran out of the house, and entreated the people to pray with him, saying, "I am dying! I shall be damned!" Our members did pray with him; and his cries and prayers brought out many more. They were soon obliged to get out of doors there were so many; and the cry of the distress was great. The Lord heard their prayers, set the young man's soul at liberty, and delivered him from the cholera; so that before the doctor could arrive, he was healed both soul and body.

They continued the meeting all day, and many more found pardon. But some mocked at sin and death.

A stout-hearted sinner at Horsley Heath, went home, and finding that his family were gone to meeting, he cursed both them and the cholera. He was soon seized with it, and the cramp drew his legs over his head, and he writhed in an agony. A pious person exhorted him to pray, but he said, "I see hell is ready for me. Dont you see the devils? There are legions waiting for me!" We may truly say, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger, thou righteous Judge of all?"

It has been remarked that very few pious persons have died; and yet they labour abundantly with the sick and dying. I have visited many where they were dying, yet my health is wonderful; though I think I never laboured more in my life.

When the cholera first broke out, I thought if I am to be useful I shall live, though they die all around.

I am perfectly satisfied with my circuit, and I should not like to leave the country while the cholera is in it. It is quite plain that those who labour most with souls enjoy the best health. Praise the Lord, I feel death has no terror, no sting.

“My life is in his mighty hand,
And he shall keep me still;
And you and I shall surely stand
With Christ on Zion’s hill.”

My love to you all. I should like to know how you all are.

Yours sincerely and affectionately, ELIZABETH SMITH.

In connexion with what others wrote of the work of God during the dreadful malady, she wrote the following remarks.

Tuesday, July 23, 1832.—I preached in the street at Toll-end. Hundreds gathered round, and listened with great attention. Amongst them was a man who had been drinking for some days, whilst his family at home were suffering the want of necessary food.. He was evidently intoxicated when he first stopped to hear; but the power of God so arrested him, that it made him sober. He went home sorrowing for his sins. He is now converted; and he and his wife are now members of our Connexion.

After preaching in the street, we held a prayer meeting in our usual preaching room; and several persons have since told me of the good they received.

The room being too small, and there being a chapel vacant in the neighbourhood, our people thought right to take it. And, on Sunday, August 17, Bro. B. and I preached in it. There was a gracious feeling amongst the people; and a number of souls have been converted. We have increased thirty in number, and are likely to do well.

The cholera morbus first appeared in Bilston August 4, 1832, and increased in violence for five weeks; and carried into eternity nearly one thousand. I preached there several times whilst it raged, and they were awakening times.

it carried off nine of our members. Some of them were seized so dreadfully, and died so suddenly, that we were not able to gather their dying testimonies.

Robert and Rachel Russell were both ill at the same time. They had been brought to the Lord nearly three years, and had walked consistent with the word of God. Robert, when dying, said to his class leader, “Christ is my captain, and I am happy.” Rachel waved her hand in token of victory, and faintly said, “Glory, glory,” and expired.

Ann Sutton had been a steady member with us eight years; and had maintained her Christian courage in the midst of heavier trials than many are exercised with. When seized with the dreadful disease, she was taken to the hospital; and her language was so exulting, and her death so triumphant, that the doctor said he had not seen one die like her, amongst the hundreds he had visited.

ELIZABETH SMITH.

In January, 1833, she was seized with the scarlet fever, and lay dangerously ill three weeks. But God had yet more work for her to do; so by the good hand of God " she recovered, and was enabled to take her appointments again, and said she was afterwards better in health than before the fever.

(To be continued.)

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1837/258