

George Tallents

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Mr. G. TALLENTS was born April 26th, 1847, at Hickleton, in the county of York. He was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. G. Tallents, now of Retford, who are well known as very earnest and liberal supporters of Primitive Methodism. During his childhood he showed great sweetness of disposition, and was remarkable for his activity. At a proper age his education was commenced, but only being privileged to attend a common day school, it was not of a very high type; yet, being quick in learning, and persevering in his efforts, he became somewhat proficient in reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic, and being favoured, too, with Sabbath-school instruction, he secured for himself a fair knowledge of scriptural truth, and eventually became a teacher, and the secretary of the school; which office he held till he left home to enter the Ministry.

When he had reached a proper age he was apprenticed to a cabinet maker in the town of Retford, and according to the statement of his master, had he stayed a little longer at his business he would have been a very efficient hand.

But God had a nobler work for him to do, although he only had a short time to do it in, but he made use of the time he had, and did the work with all his heart. He held the work of the ministry in very high esteem, and entered upon it thoughtfully, continued in it with much prayer, and when he was laid low by affliction the doctor gave hopes of his recovery, but none of his ever being able to preach again, which had a depressing effect upon his mind. He said to his mother afterward, "It will be hard work to give up the ministry;" such was his love for the work.

Before his conversion, his conduct was distinguished by excellent moral qualities. He was never known to utter an irreverent word, nor "go with the multitude to do evil." He abhorred sin, and hurried away from it. He was never affected by drink, being a total abstainer from all intoxicating liquors from an early period of his life, and through his short life he conscientiously kept his pledge. But he was deeply conscious that morality could not save him, though good in itself; feeling repeatedly the conviction of sin, and impressed with the necessity of becoming a partaker of "the grace of God that bringeth salvation." Under a sermon preached in Retford Chapel by the Rev. H. Knowles, he was powerfully affected, and in the subsequent prayer meeting he obtained the blessing of salvation. But while the sermon referred to was made a blessing to him, he himself attributed his conversion principally to the pious influence of his parents.

This happy event took place on the 15th of March, 1863, when he was in the sixteenth year of his age. He had not been long in Society before he gave signs of usefulness by the attention he paid to the cultivation of his mind, and his fixed determination to do good and honour his Saviour.

The Rev. E. Dixon, who had become the Superintendent of the circuit, writes :— "I was much affected when I heard of the Rev. G. Tallents' death. I had hoped he would have become a very popular and successful minister; he had something prepossessing in his appearance, and a very good address. He was very studious as a youth, and when I travelled at Retford he was a member of the Mutual Improvement Society. He gave some very neat addresses, and prepared some beautiful essays on different subjects. He bid fair to be a useful preacher."

He improved himself in various branches of learning, but especially in Biblical knowledge, so essential to a minister of the Gospel. At this time the authorities of the Retford circuit, having ample knowledge of his Christian character and his intellectual attainments, decided to place his name on the circuit plan. This

proved a step in the right direction, as he was made a great blessing to many. In 1866, having passed the examination of the authorities of his own circuit for the itinerancy, he was sent to Hull to be examined by the District Examining Committee, by whom he was recommended for the York School, where he spent a happy year, and was much respected by the Governor, his family, and the candidates for the ministry then at York.

The Conference held at Luton, 1867, to his great satisfaction, appointed him to Alford station, where he was warmly received by the friends. He entered heartily upon his labours in July; God blessed him abundantly. He had the honour of seeing many souls converted to God. The circuit rose from 251 members in September, to 327 in March following. He states in his journals, that during those nine months he was strong to labour, and he had seen 55 souls converted, which greatly rejoiced him, and for which he gave God thanks. But while he was deeply interested in the welfare of others, and sought most earnestly for their salvation, he did not neglect to cultivate an inward nearness to God, a full conformity in heart and life to the divine will which was his grand aim—the secret of his success. Again and again does he express his desire to live increasingly nearer to God. He writes, “How false and full of sin is human nature! How I long to be holy! O for a closer walk with God! My heart pants for personal holiness, O for a heart full of the Holy Ghost! I greatly long for the blessing of entire sanctification. From this time, by the help of God, will I seek it by prayer and faith. O for more grace! For this I sigh, for this I pant.” After labouring nine months with his heart fully in the work, he took, in April, a severe cold. An attack of pleurisy resulted which brought him very low. He was laid aside until the following July. Being stationed by the Conference of 1868 for Mexboro’, he entered with fully restored health afresh upon his work, with the late Rev. M. Coulson for his colleague and superintendent. But that brother was taken ill, and died: thus the cares and anxieties of a newly formed circuit devolved upon him. His labours were arduous, his trials at times very keen; however, he had the joy of reporting an increase of 20 members for the year on the station. His piety here as when in Alford circuit was not simply official, nor yet of a superficial character; his temper, conversation, habits, and life, shewed him to be a sincere, humble, devout Christian, striving earnestly to obtain the blessings of the higher life of our religion. Here he writes:— “Feeling that I have not lived as near to God in the past as I ought, I am from this time determined by God’s help to love him more, and to try to honour him by living well. May God help me to treasure up every moment, and to work while it is called day. I fear I do not preach for souls. May this be my only object, the salvation of men. May God be my keeper, and his Spirit my guide.”

Mr. Henry Liversidge, of Mexboro’, says, “My first acquaintance with the late Rev. G. Tallents was in the month of July, 1868; on his arrival in this station (Mexboro’) he came to my house, at which he abode twelve months. During that period, I had the opportunity of seeing much of him, both in his manner of living as a Christian minister and student. As a Christian his piety was uniform, his walk circumspect; he followed the Saviour closely, and, he often said, endeavoured to tread in the footsteps of his Master, to work in his vine-yard, to better the world, and to bring souls to Christ, which was his chief delight. Although at times he had difficulties to grapple with, trials to encounter, yet he bore them all with patience and Christian fortitude. As a preacher he was well received, and his labours were not in vain, and many are the friends who regret that so promising a young man is taken away. He was kind, benevolent, and disinterested; he was ever ready to relieve the necessitous, the poor, the needy; the widow and the orphan had in him a friend, as far as his limited means would allow. He would minister to the wants of the sick whom he visited, and nothing distressed him more than not to have sufficient to relieve their wants, and mitigate their sorrow. The following circumstance may be stated as illustrative. While out visiting on one occasion, he came to a house in which was a poor man lying dangerously ill on a bed of straw, and, to all human appearance, dying. This, to him, was heartrending; he talked and prayed with the poor man, and left him; but he did not forget him, he had soon the happiness of sending him a bedstead and other articles of use: such was his sympathy for the poor. As a student, he was most laborious; he would sit up often whole

nights, and we have known him never to leave his study for thirty-five hours, save for dinner, tea, and supper: such was his thirst for knowledge and mental culture. His rule was to rise at four in the morning; for this purpose he had an alarum clock. We have often remonstrated with him for it, but he would tell us of Wesley, Barnes, and others.”

He subsequently travelled two years in Selby circuit, where he saw some fruit for his labour. The circuit reported prosperity in every department. In the midst of his toil he writes, “The last moments of the old year and the first of the new I spent upon my knees, thanking God for past favours, and supplicating him for renewed mercies, so that the future of my life may show forth his praise. The Lord make me holy and useful, and may I watch and pray.” Thus, through the whole of his probation, to the hour of his death, he lived under the solemn impression that religion is binding, practicable, urgent, and all important. He knew well that a minister’s success principally depended on the purity of his life, and his intimate union with, and faith in, Christ. Living under these impressions he endeavoured to spend no time whatever upon trifles, but to treasure up every moment as one who must give an account of his trust to God. He, with earnest faith and prayer, waged ceaseless war against every form of vice. He was inclined to religion as very young, and during his religious career he was like Caleb, who followed the Lord fully.

The Rev. J. Calvin, with whom he travelled three years of his probation, says, “He was a man of peace, and cultivated this fruit of the Spirit. I have often known him suffer for the conduct of others rather than cause them any suffering. He was honourable and upright in all his transactions with men. He would think for himself, but allow to others the same privilege without censoriousness. He was punctual in all his engagements; in his ministerial work he always attended his appointments on the plan in all weathers, never allowing a flimsy excuse to keep him from his work; nor did he leave any circuit business for others to do that he could do himself. I could always depend on his attention to it. He was a man of order. In one of his books I find the following arrangements: ‘a column devoted to each heading, date, place, time, text, occasion, congregation, weather, converts, and remarks,’ ”

In his examinations, too, he gained an honourable character. The first year he had to do with the Derby committee, he being in the third year of his probation, the minimum was 50, the maximum 90, The marks he obtained were 84. His last year, the minimum 60, the maximum 100, he gained 74, and at the District Meeting held at Scarborough last May, after all his documents had been examined, and himself personally, he was cordially received into the full ministry. The following extract from a letter sets forth the high esteem in which he was held on the above occasion by those who well knew him: “ How little probable it seemed when I gave to you together what was called the ordination charge that your companion on that occasion would so soon finish his work. Young ministers of such promise can hardly be spared the Church, and the world has great need of them. The death of the Rev. G. Tallents will be heard of by his brethren in the ministry with deep regret. His natural amiability, his uprightness, his intelligence, his delight in, and attention to, the duties of the ministerial office, together with a Christian manliness that must have secured to him the respect of all right-minded Christians; more especially apparent to his brethren who had anything to do with him. I was brought into intimacy with him at the time of his labouring at Mexboro’, and ever since I have cherished a great respect for him, and I greatly sympathise with the family in their bereavement.—DAVID INGHAM.”

His next and last station was Gainsboro’. The Conference of 1871 appointed him for this circuit. He married on the 6th of July the daughter of Mr. Wetherill, of Cliff Cottage, in the Selby circuit, a very respectable family. On the 18th of July he entered his new station, but was not able to take an appointment, feeling weak and poorly. The doctor was called in, but nothing of a very dangerous character was pronounced. He had but little pain, except in his head, which at times was most acute. But, while thus afflicted, the

continued presence of his Master was vouchsafed. On one occasion he had a very extraordinary manifestation of the Divine presence. One day, while his wife was out on business, he was meditating on the goodness of God, when He graciously visited him, and blessed him in a manner that he said "he never felt anything like it; no! not even when he was converted." He was filled with joy and peace; so much so, that it was visible to his wife when she returned, and he could say with a vigorous faith, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." At this time the symptoms of his disease abated awhile, so that he could walk out, and, thinking a change of air would do him good, he came home to his parents, where every needful help was rendered him, and hopes were entertained of his recovery; but on one of the doctors stating that one of his lungs was affected, and his system exhausted, fear was excited. From this time he grew rapidly worse. I often visited him, but in my visits I always found him the same,—trusting in Jesus. A few days before his death, I asked him if he felt the Saviour was always with him, to which question he answered "So far!" I then said, Christ is precious; he answered with great confidence, "Yes!"

On the Saturday before he died, he received his kind and affectionate wife, father, mother, brothers, and sisters, but not being able to speak, they had to be satisfied with his earnest look as a last farewell. After this he lay insensible, but now and then awoke to consciousness, when he took the occasion of testifying his victory by waving the hand that was not paralysed. Inflammation on the brain having taken place, paralysis fully set in, and death terminated his sufferings on Sunday morning, October 15th, at twenty minutes past seven, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, and fifth of his ministry. His mortal remains were interred in the Retford Cemetery by the Revs. J.R. Parkinson and R. Cheesman. The Rev. J. Calvin addressed the crowd around the grave, and deep sympathy was expressed on every hand with the bereaved. A letter from a friend in his first circuit says:— "We deeply sympathise with you all in your great affliction for the loss of one in every way so good. We loved him as a true friend, and Christian minister. He preached for souls, and many were brought to God here through his ministry. We never had a young man so highly and universally respected as dear George Tallents. His memory will be blessed. It would have done your dear hearts good if you could have been in my class when I told the members of his death; the sobs and tears that were shed by almost every one." His death was improved at the following places: Retford, Selby, Gainsboro', &c.

The question of early deaths is one about which no little mystery hangs, and we are compelled to wait in patience for those grand revelations which will explain the hidden meaning of all our sorrow, and show a Divine order, and purpose, and love, working through the most terrible of human griefs. But though an inscrutable darkness broods upon such graves as our dear departed brother, yet we bow with reverence to the decisions of divine providence, and say,—God is wise and good. Our beloved has gone in the blossoming of his powers, as bloom blighted in an untimely hour. But he is gathered by the Father's hand. It is enough. We will mourn no more; and though our families grow less in number on this side the grave, they increase on the other, and heaven is becoming very much like home. Wherefore, brethren; comfort one another with these words, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, Yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours: and their works do follow them."

References

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