

**MEMOIR OF MRS. HANNAH SHIMWELL, WIFE OF BENJAMIN
SHIMWELL PRIMITIVE METHODIST ITINERANT PREACHER.**

Dear Brethren,

The following is the Memoir of a Dearly Beloved Wife whom it has pleased God to take from earth to Heaven at an early period. Should you think it in any wise calculated to magnify the grace of God, to benefit his people, and enrich the pages of our Magazine, its insertion will greatly oblige her surviving Partner and your servant for Christ's sake.

Benjamin Shimwell.

My Dear Partner was the daughter of John and Sarah Panting. She was born at Hailey, a Village near Witney in the County of Oxford, October 22. 1808.

From a child she was remarkable for the meekness of her disposition and the steadiness of her deportment. She never manifested any particular inclination for those sinful pleasures and amusements which so frequently mark the career of the youthful part of mankind. Since my acquaintance with her, I have frequently heard the neighbours, who had been observant of her conduct from her childhood, say that they had never seen any thing exceptionable in it. Yet notwithstanding this, she had in common with her fellow creatures, a depraved heart, which, tho' it was not outwardly manifested, yet it operated inwardly; for I have heard her remark that when a child she has sometimes tried to think of all the wicked expressions she possibly could; thus verifying the assertion of the Wise Man that "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child."

At an early period of her life her parents removed into the neighbourhood of Witney, where she afterwards became a teacher in the Wesleyan Sunday school, and consequently was favoured with the privilege of sitting under the ministry of the preachers of that denomination. She was, during that time, the subject of many convictions, and saw the necessity of having her heart renewed by Divine grace. But still she continued a stranger to the pardoning love of God.

In July 1824, Leicester circuit sent out a missionary to labour where he could find the best opening. Divine Providence directed his feet to Witney where he began to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. From that time she manifested a strong attachment and became in heart a Primitive Methodist. Being stationed in the Leicester Circuit, the same year, I was sent thither in the month of December, and found her still a hearer though not brought to the enjoyment of gospel liberty. She shortly after this became the happy partaker of the saving grace of God, and was enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable. She then cast in her lot with the people of God, and from that time was an ornament to her profession, her life was a practical comment on I Pet. iii. 3,4, for her adorning was the hidden man of the heart, even a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

It was about six months after my entrance upon that mission, that we formed our acquaintance, which continued until June 20th, 1828, when we formed that union which death only has been able to dissolve. I pass over this part of her life with briefly observing that it was one continued course of piety and devotedness to God,

"Mild, sweet, serene, and tender was her mood,
Not grave with sternness nor with lightness free."

At the time of our marriage, I was stationed a second year for the Balderton Circuit; but they being unwilling to receive a married man, I was under the necessity of being separated from her until Divine Providence should open us a way; and did not see her again during the space of five months.

This, as may be expected, was a severe trial, but she bore it with the greatest firmness of mind. The Letters I received from her during that time, manifested a truly christian spirit, a thirsting after God, and an earnest and continual desire to do and suffer all the Divine will with cheerfulness and resignation.

On the 10th of December we entered upon the Belper Circuit. Here she soon gained the esteem and affections of all who became acquainted with her; for though her religion did not display itself by a course of public labours, in the church of Christ, it was manifested by her being a lover of the children of God, and continually striving to promote peace; for she would neither speak nor hear evil of any one if she could by any means avoid it; and often has she expressed her grief, when hearing that others making a profession of Religion, have been guilty of any misconduct as her desire and determination was if she could do no good, to do no harm, It were greatly to be wished that her conduct might be more generally imitated.

Shortly after our entrance upon this circuit she became the subject of affliction, from which she was never afterwards fully free, until the day of her Death. I have often heard her express her belief that she should not long be on inhabitant of this world. At Midsummer 1829 we removed to Malton.

During the time of our continuance there, she was very heavily afflicted. On the 4th of October she was delivered of a Daughter; this with her previous afflictions left her in a state of great weakness, and in about six months afterwards, she became subject to a Spasmodic affection of the stomach, the attacks of which were at times so violent as nearly to deprive her of her senses the time they continued. This, as may be imagined, brought her very low, yet during this time, amidst her most severe afflictions, I never heard one repining expression drop from her lips.. Her greatest fear was that she was not thankful enough for the intervals of ease she enjoyed and many times in the night season, have I been awoke by her breaking forth into exclamations of praise; and many times she declared that the severer her afflictions were, the more she loved the Lord. Her afflictions necessarily prevented her attending the means of grace, so that for the last three months of our being at Malton, she never once got to the house of God.

This was at times a source of uneasiness to her mind, for her soul longed yea even fainted for the courts of the Lord. Her afflictions were the means of involving us in difficulties of a temporal nature; and many times when may unbelieving fears have suggested that we never should surmount them she has expressed her confidence that the Lord would help us through; for, says she, he knows that our expences have been unavoidable, and not incurred by our extravagance or misconduct; therefore he will make away for us. The event proved that her confidence was well grounded; the Lord raised us up kind friends in Malton and we were delivered.

At the Conference held at Hull, the present year, I was appointed for Bradford; and on the 25th of June we took our leave of the kind Friends at Malton. She was enabled to undertake the journey, which was about 50 Miles, and got through much better than was expected, For a fortnight afterwards she appeared much better, so that I began to entertain hopes of her recovering; but, alas ! my hopes were only delusive ; for on the 9th of July, she was taken much worse. Application was made to a Physician, but he gave no encouragement; and on his third visit, pronounced her past recovery. This was no more than she expected, consequently she received the intelligence without being in the least surprised. But now it was that the enemy took his advantage: he suggested to her mind that after all her profession of Religion she would perish at last. This was the hour and power of darkness. She appeared to have lost all hope; she prayed and wept, but all-appeared in vain.

The language of the Poet now became hers,

"In vain I cry, in vain I mourn,
In vain I seek for rest!
I fear the Dove will ne'er return
To my poor troubled breast."

I frequently endeavoured to encourage her by applying the exceeding great and precious promises of the word of God; and likewise poured out my soul in her behalf before the throne of grace. But all appeared of no avail. Still, however, she felt determined not to give up, but if she perished to perish at his feet; for notwithstanding the hiding of his face, she loved the Lord, and had no other hope but in the Saviour's blood.

The morning of the day on which she died, (August 4,) I, was called up between 5 and 6 o’Clock, by one of the women in waiting. I found her much worse and evidently labouring under the cold hand of death. I asked her if she felt happy, she replied she did not, but that all was still dark. This, however, was not the case long, for while I was musing by her bedside, and lifting up my heart to God, the cloud in a moment vanished, the snare of the tempter was broken, and she immediately broke forth in such loud exclamations of Praise as surprised all present; as we did not think she could have exerted herself in the manner she did: her language was, “Praise the Lord ! Glory to God! The Lord has set a mark upon me, he tells me so, bless the Lord, O my soul. — My soul shall praise him!” and more to the same purpose.

She was afterwards, at times, insensible; but always expressed her assurance of happiness. In this state she continued till about three o’clock in the afternoon, when without a groan or a struggle, she breathed her soul into the hands of her Redeemer, having been an inhabitant of this vale of tears, 21 years 9 months and 2 weeks; the wife of him who has now to lament her loss, a little more than 2 years 5 and the mother of a lovely infant just 10 months.

Her remains are interred in our chapel burying ground, in a grave kindly reserved by the trustees for the purpose. My worthy colleague and superintendant, Mr. J. Thompson, preached a sermon on the occasion of her death, in Bradford chapel, to a crowded audience. It was an affecting time and a time I trust long to be remembered,

“Her flesh shall slumber in the ground
Till the last trumpet’s joyful sound,
Then burst the ehains with sweet surprise
And in her Saviour’s image rise ”

Reader, that you and I may meet her at God’s right hand, is the prayer of her surviving partner and your soul’s well wisher,

BENJAMIN SHIMWELL.

Bradford, October 2, 1830.

Signed in behalf of the C, Committee.

J. THOMPSON, President.
C. VILLORS, Secretary.

References

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