

Jane Amelia Worth (nee Smith)

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine By John George Smith

JANE AMELIA WORTH.—Thirty-two years ago, on the 26th of March, 1841, there was born in the city of Norwich, to the late Rev. John Smith, of Primitive Methodist renown, and Jane Smith, his surviving widow, their youngest daughter, Jane Amelia, who departed this life, April 30th, 1872, and whose mortal remains were interred in Histon Road cemetery, Cambridge, the 3rd day of May following. This said, the chief is not said that can be said of her, She not only humanly lived and died, but made life noble and fragrant by earnest, womanly, and Christian work; thus realising and bestowing much of pleasure and profit during the period of her earthly sojourn. Her life was at once eventful, laborious, and fruitful; and if

“We live in deeds not years, in thoughts not breaths,

In feelings, not in figures on a dial,”

then her life was not unprotracted, though hence removed at the comparatively early age of thirty-one.

In her infancy, while at play as supposed, she sustained a physical injury—a curvature of the spine—which despite great parental care and expense to obviate, developed itself into a permanent physical deformity, thus preventing that commanding presence which otherwise we think she would have had. This was a great affliction to her loving anxious mother, but it proved irremediable, and was doubtless permitted to continue as amongst “the all things that worked together for the good” of those immediately concerned. We cannot tell what would have been had this not been. In her very early childhood she discovered an amiableness and kindliness of disposition, with surprising natural quickness and power of understanding which with her affliction made her the “Pet”—not the spoiled pet—of the family, and of the friends of the family.

She was early in life very susceptible to religious impressions, as she was also very observant of religious deportment and attentive to religious conversation. She was, as years rolled on, a most studious reader, and possessing a very retentive memory, with other strong mental powers, she became a very interesting and profitable companion. She wrote for her own amusement, as it also proved for ours, a history of the members of her own family, with critiques of their separate characters, that very well described facts, and portrayed in many instances very faithfully the traits of the characters she delineated. She was a most affectionate and obedient child. The training and example of her parents were doubtless under God very promotive of this. Our parents were exemplary for “shewing piety at home.” With strong pleadings, and cries, and tears, they would sometimes pray for us. Whenever by ministerial duty father was absent from home, mother kept up the “family altar,” and enforced by holy precept and constant religious action, that high respect and love for Christian truth and life that made religion a felt power in our midst. Without doubt we were highly favoured, and certainly in my youngest sister there were early and marked fruits of such parental exemplary life.

I never remember her telling a lie, or even being deliberately and wilfully disobedient. I have heard mother say, “Amelia never caused me a moment's distressing uneasiness.” Though youngest of the four, she was not unfrequently first in the manifestation of loving obedience, as in other qualities of goodness. Her affectionate, thoughtful sorrow and action at the decease of our father in the December of 1851, I shall never, while conscious, forget. She was one of her mother's most efficient comforters, and as though she apprehended intuitively the position of the family, she gave herself to study, acquiring also rapidly and efficiently varied and refining accomplishments. Her tutoresses loved her for her own moral worth, and respected her for the rapid and thorough progress she made in her studies. She gave such satisfaction to her last instructress in music that a warm feeling of friendship, begotten of admiration, was proven in the many kind acts of her tutoress' after life.

Up to the May of 1856, my dear sister lacked the "one thing." I never remember seeing an unconverted person more nearly what she ought to be than was my deceased sister, but she well knew she was not what she should be, was not saved by grace, and therefore a sinner exposed to the wrath of God. She was not born again. It was during the holding of the Norwich District meeting in Great Yarmouth, in the year already mentioned, that one evening, after public religious services, in our own home, while waiting together before God, that she obtained mercy. Of this "new birth" in after life she lengthily and gratefully writes; but I must not here transcribe, only to observe that she remarks, "I know the work was and is his, and sweet too it is to contemplate my brother is the instrument." Adoringly I thank my God that he saw fit to use me as the immediate human agent in pointing her to Jesus, and certainly I still feel the sweetness of that fact whenever with its blessed results I contemplate it. Her heart had opened to the Lord under the influences of the Holy Spirit, as the bud, ready for bursting forth, opens in its floral beauty to the summer sun, and resting and rejoicing in the light of her Saviour's countenance, the Sun of Righteousness, her life thenceforth proclaimed her spiritual satisfaction and gratitude. In previous union with the Sabbath school, she now became a teacher in it; united in Church fellowship with us in the Great Yarmouth society, meeting in the large class led by her mother; and sought in all things to adorn the doctrine of her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Her quiet, varied, constant, Christian deportment and work was as a steady shining light, that attracted many to glorify her Father who is in heaven.

About this time also she decided, of her own accord, upon the keeping of a small select school. The daughters of several of our ministers in the Norwich district, the daughters of Mr. John Riches, of Catfield, and the eldest daughters of several of our friends in Sheffield, with others, were cared for, tutored, and spiritually benefited, as their parents and they themselves in many instances still voluntarily and joyously testify. It was a principle with her to communicate religious truth as she taught secular knowledge. Many of those referred to were boarders with her, and her numerous opportunities of spiritually benefiting them were prized and used, frequently with manifest cheering tokens of success. Miss Agnes Riches, a child of uncommon loveliness of character and person, and whose life is embalmed in the Rev. T. Lowe's charming little work entitled "The Folded Lamb and the Gathered Lily," was wont to regard and speak of her instructress as her spiritual parent. In connection with this, her influence over her young friends, numerous from her urbanity of manner and readiness to charm and thrill by the way she could and used to sing and play our lively tunes, and also difficult pieces of music, was employed for Jesus; and many of those friends still witness how their thoughts and lives were elevated by her quiet and powerful influence. How pleasant for one to think of many such instances as they rush upon the memory now that she has left us. As I think of her course, it seems to me a pathway of light, from which in the lives of others light, holy light, still goes forth. Truly "the memory of the just is blessed."

In the November of 1867 she was united in matrimony to the Rev Henry Worth, of Cambridge (1872), who feels he has sustained an irreparable loss in the gain she has been called to enter upon and enjoy. She declined the wooings of others because not decidedly religious. It was the permission and injunction of heaven— "At liberty to marry, only in the Lord,"—and this was enough for her. It regulated and decided her course. She did not enter upon this estate thoughtlessly, but seriously, and in the fear of God. Her few letters to her lover prior to their marriage, still in existence, surprise me. I expected to find them sensible and religious in their spirit, but not such outbreathings of a soul longing to be fully given up to, and taken up of God, as they certainly are. Her first letter to her husband, a week or so after marriage, consequent upon his being at a round of missionary meetings, is a fine specimen of a devoted consecrated soul, determined to be, that she might do. I would that space permitted me to copy it.

They remained on the Yarmouth circuit from the November of 1867 to the following July. My dear sister was not without honour amongst her own people. No, they knew her to be worthy and fitted for her position,

and willingly, affectionately, they accorded her the courtesies and honours of her position. The parting was a mutually regretful parting.

In the July of 1868 they removed to Lynn, whither they had been appointed. On this station, and in the town especially, the deceased laid herself out increasingly for usefulness. This she did by covenanting with her husband and God for souls, which they speedily saw converted. She manifested herself a kind, efficient visitor of the sick and a willing, systematic contributor to God's cause, discovered herself eminently possessed of the spirit of faith and power to aid others in believing, and wearied not in work she felt herself called to and put her hand unto. The friends of that society held her in high esteem for her work's sake.

By the District Meeting of 1870 my sister with her husband was removed to Cambridge. On their removal thence, her chief anxiety, next to the performance of her family duties, was to see Zion in full prosperity, and though here her family duties increased, she nevertheless found and made opportunities for actively serving her Master's cause. In the special effort to reduce the debt on Panton Street chapel she was discreetly zealous in personally, and by letter, soliciting donations, countenancing also and encouraging all who could and would contribute or work for that result. In this town, however, her main idea and work was spiritually to assist in blessing and saving others. During the last six months of her life she became particularly anxious about the conversion of sinners. In this period some eight persons were by their own testimony brought to God through her. Others were greatly helped in their religious life by her spiritual intercourse, amongst whom were notably Mr. Gallyon and Mr. Swindill; the former friend remarking to me at the funeral with great emotion, "I never was in her company but I felt the better for it. She seemed to have such an abiding communion with God." Many I doubt not will be the crown of her rejoicing.

In her position as a minister's wife she was truly kind, sympathetic, and helpful. Her deep, pure conjugal Christian love was well reciprocated and continued by her sorrowing bereaved husband. He writes:— "Her counsel, her prayers, her sympathy, her active Christian help and love were invaluable to me. Her intuitiveness of character was scarcely ever at fault. Her love to her children was, I used to think, at times unnecessarily anxious, causing her physical harm. For them she could willingly have been a martyr. There was too such heroism, yet such gentleness, such deep, tender emotions, such a clinging to those she loved, that is to all her own, that sooner than hastily conclude them in fault she suspected herself of uncharitableness. Such too was her womanly excellence and Christian virtue, and so attractive was her character, that she quickly and deeply impressed anyone who made her acquaintance, or with whom she was brought into close conversation. She could not employ her time in idle talk, could not be one with those who exercise themselves about the faults, failings, or crotchets of others, or about general matters of an unprofitable kind; and yet she would so conduct herself towards such, and so hold them, that they could find no occasion of complaint in her. She would administer rebuke in such a manner and spirit as to make a deep impression on those needing it without exciting their anger or causing them to feel unpleasantly towards her. You know, dear brother, of her power to lay hold of, to enchain, and enrapture persons of not very sensitive nature by the use of music. What feeling, what life, what power, what pathos, were in the words and tones as they came from her heart, her fingers, and her lips! You will easily remember too what an ardent admirer of nature she was, and how soon from the admiration of nature she was led up to adore the God of nature, and her own God." Here I must stay, though this lengthy, loving, just testimony is not a third given.

On the 26th of April my dear sister wrote her mother of her expectant maternal condition, alia saying, "Dear mother, I want to be better, holier. I am not what I want to be. I have given myself afresh to God. I desire to be a Christian, and to be ready." On the 27th she wrote a letter of encouragement to her dear sister Jenny, and urged her, despite sorrow and trouble, to trust in Jesus. On the 28th she felt herself very

unwell, and only able to attend divine service in the evening of that Lord's day. As was her custom, she stayed behind to the prayer-meeting, so anxious was she in witnessing glorious results from the word preached, but she was obliged to leave. On the Monday, though she strove to perform her family duties, and took her loved ones for an airing, she felt herself somewhat worse, and very weary. On her return she sat herself down to pen a few lines again to her eldest sister, expressing herself very ominously, saying, amongst other things, "I sometimes feel very low, very desponding, as though my end was nigh. Oh, I do wish I could lay my head on my mother's bosom, as I used to do, and weeping, tell her all my troubles; but that cannot be. I hope I shall feel better to-morrow." And then followed expressions of determination to trust and praise him, the Author of her salvation, to the end. Ah! how near that end! Premature and serious pains of parturition set in, and continued till the delivery of a still-born child. Shortly after, however, a favourable report was given by her medical attendant, but as Tuesday morning advanced a decided change was observed, and the worst was feared. She wished her husband to be called; embracing him, she said "You know the way to the throne, ask if it be the Lord's will that I may be restored," and appealing to those who waited upon her, she repeated that request, and as they unitedly responded "they did pray," she impressively said, "If it be the Lord's will." Sometime after, leave being given by her doctor, a letter from her dear mother, which arrived that morning, April 30th, was read. The first page of it was listened to and enjoyed, as it related purely to things spiritual, but before it was finished she sank into a state of semi-consciousness, from which she never fully recovered. She gradually became weaker and weaker, until somewhat after 6 p.m. her spirit took its flight to be with God.

She was an affectionate daughter, a loving sister, a devoted wife, a fond mother, a true friend, and withal, which made her what she was besides, an eminent Christian. The late John Oscroft, when speaking to me of her at Grimsby Conference, said, "Your sister is a noble little woman, and a pattern as a minister's wife."

What greatly promoted the noble qualities of mind which she fully cultivated ie developed, and which we have referred to as we have sketched her life, was her great and increasing love to God's Word. It was her delight to read it, to write her own thoughts upon it, and to meditate thereon. She marked, learned, and inwardly digested God's truth. Another thing was unswerving, abiding confidence in God's love and care, as culminating in the gift of his own Son. She sought not so much aid from others as she sought it from him. She had learned and practised the happy art of going at once to God through Christ; indeed, in Christ. She would wait before God with his own promises for their fulfilment, for his Son's sake; and she frequently came away from communion with God clothed with moral might, and her very countenance irradiated with supernal light. Then again, she had strong faith in the personality and activity of the Holy Spirit. She believed this was the especial dispensation of the Spirit. "Did not," she said, "Christ himself say, 'I go away that He may come? If I go not away he cannot come unto you; and when he is come, he will guide you into all truth. And again, 'He will abide with you for ever.' " And then, in a subdued tone of voice and a manner all appropriate to her sex, yet most confidently, she would say, "I believe that." Ah ! and truly he abode with her. Many times have we known her take such hold of God in prayer, as she pleaded for copious effusions of the Spirit, that saints rejoiced, the lukewarm felt ashamed, and sinners have trembled, or cried for mercy.

Her mortal remains were interred by the Rev. T. Rous, of Cambridge; and her funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. H. Gunns, of Lynn, to a crowded congregation in Fitzroy Street chapel, many being unable to obtain admittance. The text was "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." And now, farewell, my sister, thy spirit seems to me to have been as pure as any that ever tenanted clay. Thou art gone to rest—gone to Christ. Thou art lifted above our gaze, and we mourn that we shall see thee no more as we used to do; and hear thee no more sing and speak as thou wert wont to do when with us; but God be thanked we can follow after. Oh! hallowed, blessed Christianity, that gives us such a hope, such an

assurance of rejoining our sainted ones. While we sorrow, we rejoice ; and rejoicing, we pray, "May we be wise to follow after; and finally together dwell with God for ever in heaven."
Amen.

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1873/684