

IMPOSTORS.

“Be not deceived.” Gal. vi. 7.

In my last communication to the press, I hinted a little about those awful characters named above, and I think I said, ‘If the preachers and other official characters in the church, were to use proper exertions, we should soon have no more occasion of warning against them.’ By this assertion some think I lay the stress upon the preachers. Truly I lay, (at least) the principal part of it upon them. But what will my dear brethren in the ministry say, if I tell them that while I was doing business at the Preachers’ Meeting at Hull, an Arrant Impostor was in my appointments nearly all the time! Probably some will wonder.

This impostor is a young woman from Darlington. Some time ago, she got into our society and attempted to speak in public, but was quickly prohibited for some cause, which at present, I cannot recollect, during our brother T. Nelson’s superintendency of this circuit, (then a branch of Huil Circuit.) Some how or other she got to speak at Offerton Camp Meeting, at which place many in the circuit got to know her; of course, it served to open her way afterwards. However, she shortly made her way to Monk Wearmouth, and by her diabolical schemes, broke the peace of our flourishing society in that place. She got banished from Monk Wearmouth by some means or other. But after my arrival in the branch, and when I was gone to Hull with the accounts, she made her way into the very best part of the work, and immediately with her false tongue, gained the affection of many of our people. She had her packet of lies ready for opening out. She told them, she was a preacher and a member of our society at Darlington;—that she had proper credentials, and a regular ticket which would overtake her in two or three days;— that she was a married woman, and her husband was a local preacher; -and to confirm it, produced a fictitious letter, wrote in a remarkably loving manner, as though it had just come from her husband. She had her information so well arranged, as to give them answers to all their questions, and told them of all our concerns (as preachers) while at Hull. Also gave them to understand that we were about to make a Preachers’ Fund, and so masked herself over with a vail of lies, as if possible to keep away the least suspicion of deceit.

The people, hearing her fair story, and many of them having seen her at Ollerton Camp Meeting, of course, believed her, and gave her liberty to preach in my appointments until my return. Although many of them had their doubts; and their doubts were very soon increased, so that the leaders got together, and suspended her labours until they should hear from me. Almost as soon as I got from Hull, I received an account from the Leaders’ Meeting of Colliery Row, of her proceedings. As soon as I could, I hastened to the place, but the fox was gone. After I had learned the particulars, I wrote to Darlington for her character, and a proof of what she had stated to the people, to which received the following answer —

Darlington, Sept. 24.1823.

Dear Brother West,

“We are sorry to inform you that _____ (for such was-her name) is neither a preacher nor a member of our society;— that she is not married, consequently her husband is not a preacher. (The person she said she was married to is a carnal young man;)—that we did not authorise her to go into your appointments when you were at Hull; and that instead of granting her proper credentials, we ordered her not to go: as we intended to send a letter after her, which we did.* Her character, in almost every respect, is not as becometh the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are sorry that she has found her way into any of your places. May the Lord heal the breach. Witness our hands.

John Hewson, T. Preacher
William Richardson, Steward
John Brownless, L. Preacher”

By this time it is plain what amass of lies and deceit she is guilty of; as well as the many things she hath got and borrowed from our friends and carried away with her. She also told some of our sisters that she was with child, ** which is generally believed to be true. This might have passed had she been married! Oh what incalculable mischief such wretches do to the church of God. I have also heard that she means to pay a visit to other circuits, which no doubt she will when

opportunity serves. Well, in order to keep our people on their guard I will give them a kind of hue-and-cry description of her:—She is of the middle stature; (among women) ruddy complexion, brown hair, and blue eyes. Her outward appearance, plain and neat, and no doubt, plenty of feigned humility, to finer her shameless countenance with. I hope all our dear friends will, for the future, be more than ever on their guard, not only against her, but every other person who is in any respect the least suspicious; for there are such characters abroad in the earth at this time as would, (if possible) by fair “speeches, deceive the very elect.” Matt. xxiv. 24.

N. West.

Sunderland, Nov. 27, 1823.

* The above-named letter was sent before my time, had the preachers read it to all our societies in the branch it would, doubtless, have kept the people on their guard against her.

** This was at Rainton Pit Lane, and Wapping, at the latter place, she had the impudence to scruple the victuals which sister Curry set before her, stating, for her defence, that she was in the family way. This looks like Jezebel indeed! !

Reference

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1824/35