

## George Holland

### Transcription of Sketch in the Christian Messenger by Wm. Bowran

DURING the past twenty years Tatham-street church, Sunderland, has had the services of many efficient and loyal laymen, but few of them have displayed such varied gifts and at the same time so much enthusiasm as the gentleman who now holds the position of Society Steward. Mr. George Holland came to Sunderland from Castleford, in Yorkshire, where for many years he had been a tower of strength to that circuit, and especially to Bradley-street society.

Mr. Holland was born at Norton, near Doncaster, forty years ago, and has been connected with Primitive Methodism from his youth up. He is a nephew, on his mother's side, of the late Rev. William Saul. The only education he received was at a village school and he was early sent to work; but he has never ceased learning in the school of experience, and being naturally a great lover of books and especially of religious and devotional works, he has gained a considerable degree of knowledge on various subjects.



At the age of eighteen he became a local preacher, and all his reading has tended to the development of his gifts in that direction. His library is large and carefully stocked, and what is more, it is well used.

Mr. Holland has filled almost every position it is possible for a layman to hold in connection with our church. At Bradley-street, Castleford he was Society Steward for ten years and circuit steward for five years. He also held in turn the following offices:- Superintendent and Secretary of Sunday school, Secretary of Circuit Sunday School Union, Secretary of Circuit Quarterly Meeting, Secretary to the Trustees, Seat-rent Collector, Class Leader, Bible Class Teacher, etc. For two years he was a member of the General Committee of the denomination, and as at that time, business called him frequently to London, he regularly attended the meetings. Twice he has been delegate to District Meeting - at Halifax and Barnsley.

Perhaps the best work Mr. Holland did in Yorkshire was as teacher of the young men's Bible class. For four years he served in this capacity, and the class was not advertised as a P.S.A. in order to attract young men, but was designated a Bible class, pure and simple. The regular attendance was 120, and so highly did the young men appreciate Mr. Holland's efforts to instruct them in the Word of God that they presented him with an illuminated address, and also seventeen volumes of Dr. Parker's People's Bible - on the books of the Old Testament.

For nine years he was a member of the Castleford School Board, and for three years officiated as chairman. At the first election he was second on the poll, and at the two subsequent contests was returned at the head of the list.

Such in brief is an account of the various offices held by our friend at Castleford. Since his removal to Sunderland, four years ago, Mr. Holland has taken a prominent position in our Tatham-street Church. He is now Society Steward, Sunday School Superintendent, seat-rent collector and Treasurer of the P.S.A. Society, and as a local preacher his services are in great demand. For the purpose of this sketch, however, we must confine our attention to his work as a Society Steward. That office he fills to perfection. The duties of a Society Steward are, according to the Consolidated Minutes, summed up as follows:- 'Each Society Steward must supply written notices of all services to be held and collections to be made at his place of worship, must take charge of the society's revenue and attend to its general interests.'

All this, and much more, Mr. Holland does in discharging his official duties. Our friend magnifies his office, and the man who follows him will have a hard task to perform. He is a sort of 'aide-de-camp' to the minister, and loyally stands by him. The notices at Tatham street, which are duly entered in a book kept for the purpose, are read at the various services by Mr. Holland, and as he is in close touch with all the agencies which are in operation there, he can discharge this duty with the required emphasis.

In the Leaders' Meeting he excels. Being a skilful Accountant, he is able to present the financial report with precision, and unless prevented by a delinquent leader, he can also submit a complete account of the finances for the quarter at the Preparatory Leaders' Meeting. His Minute book and Account book are models of what these records should be. I wish I could have reproduced for the purpose of this article a specimen page of each for the guidance of Society Stewards throughout the Connexion. I have often heard our ministers remark that they never saw such a beautifully kept Minute book as the one at Tatham Street.

As an example of his versatility it may be mentioned that some years ago, whilst at Castleford, he, for seven months, took the official work of the minister who was ill, and not only made the plans, but attended all the business meetings in the circuit. Besides, he got supplies for all the Sunday and week-day appointments and preached at many of the services himself. All this he did in addition to his responsible duties as Manager of a large glass bottle manufactory.

Mr. Holland looks after the general interests of the society with eagerness and enthusiasm; and this notwithstanding the fact that he has been in indifferent health for two years. 'He does not seek to discover limitations to his office, but continually exercises a holy ingenuity and devotion in discovering how much he can do for God and His church.'

Our friend is most liberal in his gifts to the church, and is an advocate of systematic giving. For many years he has given ten per cent., and more, of his income for religious and charitable objects. In short he finds his chief joy in Christian service, and Tatham-street church is exceedingly fortunate in having such a genial, enthusiastic and capable steward as Mr. Holland has proved himself to be. It is a great pleasure to us to have the opportunity of thus recognising his devoted labours.

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#### **References**

*Christian Messenger* 1899/19