

Rev G Clark

Transcription of Obituary In the Primitive Methodist Magazine by W. Reed

With the decease of the Rev. G. Clark the Connexion has lost a devoted servant. A son of Yorkshire soil he always retained a strong regard for his native county. He was born at Baildon, Bradford, December 12, 1832. He attended the Wesleyan Sunday School, and was converted to God at the age of thirteen in the old Primitive Methodist Chapel, Shipley, together with a number of other lads. Being anxious to avail himself of all the help he could get in the culture of his spiritual life, he attended four class meetings a week, and a band meeting. The family removed to Wilsden, where at the age of seventeen he was made superintendent of the Sunday School and assistant class-leader. His first attempt to preach was in a cottage, when between fourteen and fifteen years of age. At the age of twenty-three he was sent for to go to Ripon as a hired local preacher to supply the place of the Rev. Selfe, who had broken down in health. He remained at Ripon eighteen months, the G.M.C. then sent him to Chatham as a regular minister. Here he saw success, a large number of soldiers were won for Christ, thirty of whom were sent to the Indian Mutiny. From thence he moved to Maidstone, then to Settle, in Yorkshire. He married Miss Whitnall in 1861. From Settle he was removed to Gateshead, where he witnessed an increase of 125 in five quarters; thence to Kendal. After terms of service at New Shorham, Alderney, and Great Bardfield, he went to Buriton Circuit; from this circuit, Fishbourne, Chichester, and Bognor were missioned; this involved much labour and sacrifice, the ground covering a distance of about thirty miles from north to south. After four years here the circuit was divided, he becoming superintendent of the new Chichester Station in 1874. Great and sore trials awaited our brother in the prosecution of his work on this station. Having but one chapel and few members, the one hope of extending the interests of the Connexion in that highly Conservative neighbourhood, where Church influences and the brewing interests were very great, was in vigorous mission work. God's servant was not to be deterred; with his devoted wife he faced the streets of Chichester week after week. Crowds gathered, men listened, the Spirit worked, an evil spirit of persecution soon became evident. Policemen ordered the devoted band to desist, threats were numerous, the interference of policemen attracted the baser sort, culminating on one Monday night in September, 1874, in a great gathering of undisciplined citizens – men, women, boys, girls and many policemen bent on terminating our efforts to spread the knowledge of Christ amongst the needy populace. Finding no attention and order could be secured in the presence of such an unsympathetic crowd, the plans of operation were at once altered, and the piece of land which had been bought for a chapel was taken possession of to continue the work. This land was enclosed by two high walls, which soon became lined with young men. The night was dark. Here for two hours the meeting went on. While the missionary of the cross was speaking some heavy missile fell on the shoulder of Mrs. Clark, who was standing beside the writer, causing her to exclaim aloud in great agony. On the following Wednesday Mr. Clark and his colleague received summonses to appear at the court on the Friday of the same week to answer the charge of obstruction of thoroughfare. The charge not being proved, the case was dismissed, and a magisterial order given to discontinue all such open-air efforts-. On the evening of the same day Mrs. Clark passed to her reward In the skies, suffering to the last from the effects of the blow received on the previous Monday night.

Left a widower with four children, the eldest being, but twelve years of age, he still rose to the call of God, and continued his mission work. He remained here four years; during that time many were saved and added to the Church, and three chapels built, including the one at Chichester, which was erected on the spot where the stoning had taken place. The Connexion, to manifest its sympathy with Mr. Clark in his trouble and work, subscribed hundreds of pounds towards the erection of this chapel, the money coming from all parts of the country.

While on this station he married his second wife, Miss Pratt, of Bognor, who became a real mother to the motherless ones, and a true helpmeet to her husband in his arduous work for the Master. In 1878 he removed to Pillowell, and afterwards laboured successively at Aldershot, Yeovil, Plymouth, Belfast, Redruth, Peaton Strand and North Sunderland.

We have known him after he was sixty years of age accomplish a journey of twenty miles on foot on a Sabbath day. Amongst the records kept it is found his net increases on the various stations amounted to nearly 700. Most of this was accomplished in sparsely populated districts, and often in neighbourhoods not congenial to Methodism. Many are the testimonies to his worth received since his decrease.

The Rev. James Pickett, who was for two years his colleague, writes: "I have all along cherished the most grateful and pleasing recollections of those enjoyable though difficult times. My admiration for him then was great and enthusiastic, and I am glad to say it has lived and remained with me all the days. Again and again memories of the old days have come up and have been a real refreshment. He has gone, and life is the poorer to us. His work, however, stops, and in the 'great day' 'twill be seen as we do not now know it, what was the full value of the tremendous toil he gave to the Connexion and to the Kingdom; of God."

The Rev. T. Baron in a letter says: "Years ago I heard Alderman Linfield, of Worthing, say how he was led when a boy by Mr. Clark's kindness to play the harmonium, and ultimately to become a member of our society at Worthing. I had not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance until he came to Thurmaston, Leicester First; after that I met with him a few times, and was impressed with his humility, kindness, and devotion."

The Nottingham District Committee, through its secretary, communicated to the Rev. G. Fawcett its warm sympathy to Mrs. Clark and family. "Several spoke in terms of warm appreciation of the devotion and sacrifices of your late father-in-law, particularly referring to his work at Chichester, the brutal treatment, the terrible consequences to the late Mrs. Clark, and the overruling of Divine Providence for the prosperity of our cause though at so great a cost to Mr. Clark and the family."

The Rev. J.C. Wenn also writes: "I have quite a distinct remembrance of an evening spent with Mr. Clark, and I can recall the appearance of strength, courage, and devotion to the Master's work which his presence and conversation gave."

Writing him» on the clay of his death, another says: "Those days of trial and struggle with blessing and victory when you came to us at Yeovil were days of preparation for the life and work now committed to us. We have much to be grateful for, specially for spiritual help and blessing which

came to us through you when we needed them most. You cannot, dear friend, gather up the extent of results of the seeds sown in those days long ago, those midday prayer meetings live in power to-day."

Others have written in the same spirit; but enough has been quoted to reveal the character and worth of our departed brother.

His zeal in home mission work, and indomitable persistence in carrying out the purpose formed in his soul after consideration and prayer will ever stand out before us worthy of commendation. He was born a missionary. He grew strong in opposition, and was not overwhelmed by failure. We have seen him stand for two hours in the presence of a village fair, singing, praying, talking the Gospel as few could under such circumstances, and returning from the scene with a glad heart, though bearing all the marks of persecution – clothes besmeared, hat bulged, bones sore, but this was the work he enjoyed more than anything else. Though the fire of the missionary burned in his soul yet there were inner soul qualities which much impressed those who came near him. One of the correspondents has referred to his humility. This was always a prominent characteristic in his life. No seeking for place or prominence, he was ever happy in second place if only the work of the Lord progressed. He was no stickler in claiming what was his due, he claimed only the right to suffer and serve. He was often pressed by untoward circumstances, but no complaint or yearning for the ease and retirement that fell to many. His soul was ever athirst for richer experiences. He never made any claim to special piety, but he claimed the reward of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. His prayerfulness and devoutness of spirit drew the writer much into his company. We carry with us many glorious memories of days and hours spent in Bible reading, prayer, and mighty intercession. During Chichester days, after a long, hard winter's work, we retired one April to South Down Hills for three days with God. What days those were! The holy communion, prostration before God, waiting in prayer, and the triumph of faith as we waited are clear to my recollection. How great was the privilege of having such a superintendent, specially in the vestibule of one's life work! How much this blessed association influenced all after years! We were twice his colleague, besides visiting him on special work on most of the circuits on which he laboured. For twenty-six years it was the joy of the writer to share constantly his fellowship, hundreds of letters passing between us. His kindness, geniality, his almost more than brotherly love, constitute an inheritance more valued than gold or precious pearls. His interest in the Connexion, and zeal in God's work followed him to the end. We spent two days with him at Derby, the first week of last October; though he was then superannuated his old-time zeal was still manifest - giving himself up to attend the week-night services and to family visitation, and seldom was he unemployed on Sabbath days.

He superannuated in July, 1899, having suffered seriously from asthma during some of the previous winters. On his superannuation he entered into a twelve months' engagement with Leicester First Circuit to take the pastoral oversight of two village churches. He removed to Derby last July, and died after a brief but severely painful illness on Feb. 11. His closing days on earth amidst much suffering were marked by resignation, joyful anticipation of the change home, and abiding trust in the Saviour he had loved so long.

His interment took place at the New Cemetery, Derby, preceded by a deeply impressive service in Mount Street Chapel, conducted by the Rev. J.T. Gooderidge, assisted by Rev. John Wenn, ex-President, representing the General Committee, Rev. G. Windram representing the Nottingham District and Revs. G. Jones and Isaac Brentnall of Derby. The address was given by Rev. H. Jones, of Bradford, who thirty years ago became associated with Mr. Clark as colleague. The speaker paid a high tribute to his sincerity, unselfishness, courage, burning zeal, and untiring devotion, and testifying to the great success which crowned his earnest endeavours, in many places to help to extend and establish the Kingdom of heaven amongst men, through the ministries of Primitive Methodism, especially making mention of his labours and successes in spheres of greatest difficulty on our home mission stations. We had wished to retain him a little while longer, but "the Lord hath need of him." The homeland of love will henceforth be more our home for having received so noble a spirit and true a friend.

References

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