

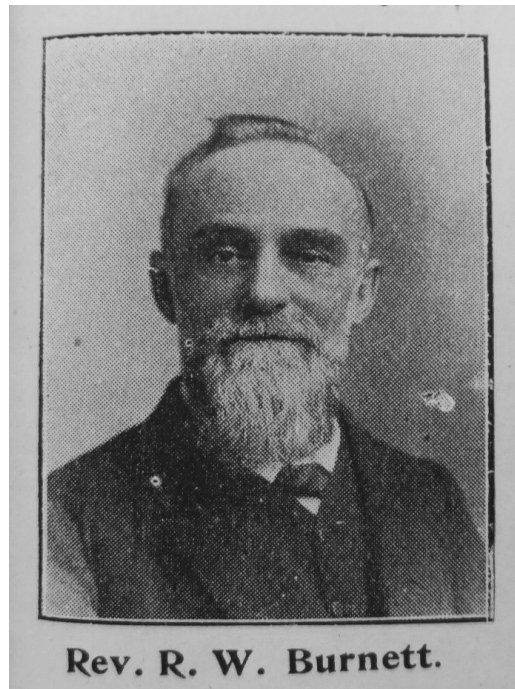
Rev Richard W. Burnett

Transcription of Obituary In the Primitive Methodist Magazine by R. W. Burnett

Richard William Burnett was born at Holbeach, St. John's, Lincolnshire, upon June 12th, 1842. His parents, Thomas and Frances Burnett, were members of the Wesleyan Church, and by them he was trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When but a boy the family moved to Lancashire, and, pressed by circumstances that were none too affluent, the subject of this memoir soon found a place in the stirring business life of that county.

He was converted when about 16 years of age, and soon after joined the Primitive Methodist Church.

He was recommended for the ministry by the Dukinfield Circuit, and placed on probation by the Conference of 1862. His early circuits were Reading and Peterborough.



Before entering the ministry he had been inwardly drawn towards foreign mission work by a sermon from Isaiah vi., 8: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us," and during his probation this interest in missions and inclination to such service grew upon him. At Peterborough it showed itself by increased attention to the ordinary circuit revenue. At London I. (Cooper's Gardens), where he was stationed after marriage to Miss E. Long, of Reading, this missionary fervour showed itself in a paper, read at East Street Chapel, Walworth, at the first meeting of the London District Ministers' Association, the subject being "Missions to the Heathen."

When at Guernsey came the call to Fernando Po, and in January, 1870, the pioneer party, consisting of Messrs. Burnett and Roe, with their wives, set sail for Primitive Methodism's first heathen mission field.

Mr. Burnett soon experienced the sorrows inseparable from West African Work, for after only eight months' stay he was compelled to bring home wife and child to save their lives. He received a vote of sympathy from the General Missionary Committee on account of the sicknesses he and his had suffered, and a vote of censure for returning without official sanction, and after a stay of a week in this country, went back again to his beloved field of labour.

Three other terms of service in Fernando Po followed, the last time as successor to the Rev. W. Welford, whose banishment by the Spanish Government had rendered the position of our missions on the island somewhat critical. During this term cocoa planting on a considerable scale was inaugurated at San Carlos Bay and the site of the mission changed.

Between the periods of foreign service Mr. Burnett travelled at Gloucester, Belfast (twice), Leeds III. and Darwen, and subsequent to his last foreign sojourn, at Horsham (where he had the lengthy stay of eight years), West Bromwich and Guildford.

He also, as Missionary Deputation at different periods, preached and gave addresses throughout the length and breadth of the Connexion. To the children of the Orphan Home, to hundreds of rural congregations on our country circuits, and to our large united meetings at Hull, Sheffield, or London, he gave alike, copiously and fervidly of his stores of experience and heartfelt missionary enthusiasm. From Guildford he passed to the post of General Missionary Secretary, which he was compelled to resign through failing health in April of this year.

His three years as Missionary Secretary were marked by a sanctified boldness in matters of general policy, and by a cordial brotherliness of relationship to the individual workers on the mission stations.

My father was ever a strenuous worker. Looking backward, I see him, now conducting the simple service at San Carlos Bay, now in shirtsleeves in the new clearing in the forest, placing the first post of a mission house; now at the lane ends singing and preaching the Gospel in rural Sussex; now in the midst of a debt reduction effort, letter writing, bazaar, organising, etc.; and last of all in extreme weakness, arranging the work and drafting his minutes for the April meeting of the Quarterly Committee; and his work always was with definite and unmixed purpose "for Christ and His Church."

May I also say my father was pre-eminently a saintly man. The testimony of Rev. J. Travis to this all-pervading quality of his personality is a true one. He was ever very sure of God, and of His presence with him. Replying sometimes to those who reminded him of self-sacrifices and losses, he would say, "Yes, but God has made it up to us in so many ways." He felt that he enjoyed the hundredfold and the life everlasting.

Malignant disease, the seeds of which had been sown by residence in West Africa, gradually sapped his strength, and he passed away on Saturday evening, June 21st, 1902, securely resting on the atonement of Jesus Christ.

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1902/939