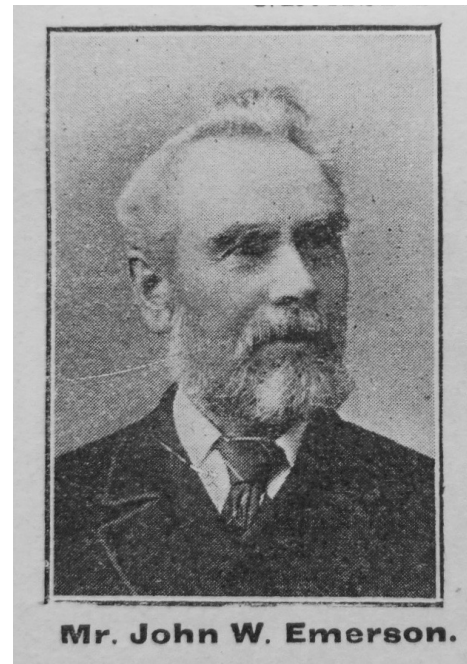


John William Emerson

Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Robert W. Keightley

At the age of sixty-five years Mr. John William Emerson passed suddenly to the skies on October 2nd, 1902. No individual name was better known in Grimsby than his, and no business name was more familiar than that of Messrs. Robinson and Emerson. A long and happy business partnership was severed by the removal of the younger partner, while the elder, in saintliness of spirit, and feebleness of body, still abides with us. Our beloved brother began life with the unspeakable advantage of a godly father and mother. His mother being possessed of more than average natural gifts, and endowed with much Divine grace, became one of the great and strong characters in the early history of Primitive Methodism in Grimsby. Her power in prayer was uncommon, and her devotion to God's work was a constant passion. These traits pre-eminently characterized her son.



He came into the experience of conscious salvation while young, and quickly developed capacity and enthusiasm for Christian service. Under the efficient training of his mother he became her assistant class leader, and as a feeder of the flock of Christ he excelled to the last. As local preacher, when journeys were long and discomforts many, he rendered ungrudging and successful service. In work among the young he took a great delight. As Sunday schoolteacher and superintendent, and Band of Hope and temperance worker, he laboured with intense and untiring zeal. All the positions of trust and responsibility our Church can offer its laity he filled with exemplary fidelity and efficiency. For mere prominence he cared little. More honours he might have had, but his modesty declined them.

Mr. Emerson's devotion to all the interests of his circuit and denomination was whole-hearted, while his attachment to the Victoria Street Church, through sunshine and shadow, was beyond praise. Only God knows the measure of financial support and spiritual help it derived from his generous hand and large heart. He had seen it, now on the crest of great waves of prosperity, and now in the very trough of weakness and depression, but his zeal never flagged, nor did his prayers and toils ever cease or even abate. His joyful interest in the renovation of the church premises, only completed shortly before his decease, few can imagine. Of dear old Victoria Street Church he could and did often sing:—

“For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayer ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given
Till toils and cares shall end.”

How rich and deep was his experience! The secret of his practical devotion lay in the depths of his spiritual life. He lived in constant communion with God. He was at home in conversing about the

“things of the spirit.” His delights were in the mountain where good men and God hold close converse. He was one of the most intelligent and practical mystics we have ever known. His influence for good was inestimable. Our friend spent his whole life within a few yards of the house in which he was born. This small area was his kingdom of moral power. When neighbours were in trouble, or death stared them in the face, Mr. Emerson’s help was sought. To him young men and baffled men went for counsel in the great needs and crises of their life. The godless spoke of him with reverence and gratitude, and the poor uttered his name with tears. His life affords conclusive proof that a man can be immersed in the concerns of business, and yet, not only be a righteous man, but a good man, gentle, Christlike. The multiplication of such lives would give religion a large and speedy victory over an evil world.

The home of our friend was sweetly Christian. Sickness and sorrow have invaded it from time to time. Thirty years ago Mr. Emerson lost the wife of his youth and the mother of his children. Since then care and anxiety have not always been absent. But amid all there has been a radiant hopefulness, a cheerful trust in the “Higher Will,” and an atmosphere of unrepining goodness. What a refreshing retreat it was for a minister, at the close of the Sabbath, exhausted in body and brain, with the work of the day! How many have found in it “a quiet resting place.” That home was a miniature church. God had His dwelling in the tent of our brother beloved.

The end came suddenly. A fall from a building but a few feet high, a few hours of unconsciousness, and then the sanctified spirit was “present with the Lord.” She, who for twenty-eight years, had been the devoted helpmeet of our glorified friend is widowed, and his sons and daughters have lost one of the very best of fathers.

At the burial of the mortal part of our brother a large company assembled. The ministers of Grimsby, and many others who had previously laboured in the town were present, and took part in the service, and a very appropriate address was delivered by Rev. R. Harrison. It was painfully felt that Grimsby had lost one of its best citizens, and every good cause a staunch friend, while our own Church had been deprived of a valiant leader, a wise counsellor, and a choice saint.

Many most glowing tributes have been paid to the character and the worth of the departed by ministers and friends, far and near. Space will not permit more than a very brief extract from a few of them.

Rev. W. Jones Davies:- “Goodness and faithfulness were pivotal qualities in his life, and revealed themselves in his business, home, and the Church. They were manifest in his kindness of heart towards friends, little children, and especially towards the poor; in humility of soul, always willing for others to take the first place; in a peaceable disposition, ever seeking to preserve ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.’ He was one of the few men for whom I had an unqualified admiration.”

Rev. B. Fell:- “I frankly say that John William Emerson, as we loved to speak of him, was one of the most elect spirits it was ever my privilege to meet. His presence, whether in the sanctuary, the home, the social circle - anywhere, everywhere - was an inspiration to all that was highest and best in life.”

Rev. J.P. Bellingham:- “I have known many godly men, but very few who won my esteem and affection as did your husband. His holy life, his consecration to God were such as I have rarely met with. Such men are few and far between.”

Rev. J. P. Langham:- “Very few men I have met with have been so deeply and truly religious as your dear husband. His devotion to Christ was the controlling force in his life, and was visible in all his actions. Victoria Street Church owes far more to his devotion and persistent plodding than she can ever realise. The memory of his saintly life will be one of my prized possessions.”

Rev. H.G. Button:- “I always admired his genial spirit, his generous disposition, and his deep devotion in the service of Christ. He has left a bright and noble example.”

Rev. J. Pearce:- “I thank God it has been my privilege to know him intimately. I have looked into his soul and found it to be wholly gold.”

On Sunday evening, October 12th, an “In Memoriam” service was held at Victoria Street, when the spacious building was filled by a deeply sorrowing congregation. The writer conducted the service, and based his discourse on the text, “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” The saintliness of our friend’s character, and the suddenness of his translation rendered the text singularly applicable. We hopefully await reunion with our glorified brother. And meanwhile we pray that his widow and family, and all to whom his departure has brought impoverishment and grief, may live as usefully, and die as safely as he did.

References

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