

John Butler

Transcription of Sketch in the Christian Messenger by "West Yorke"

SCOTTER Circuit has long been noted for the loyal and devoted officials that it has produced. Through a long series of years this famous old station has been fortunate in having in its official positions men of intelligence, sterling piety, and real grit. A purely village Circuit, it has preserved its position and maintained its membership; even amid the difficulties and losses occasioned by agricultural depression and the migration of population to the towns. How much of this prosperity is due to the subject of our sketch will never be fully known, but for over 20 years the name and influence of John Butler, of Scotter, has undoubtedly been a potent factor in the life of the station.



Born at Garthorpe, a small village in the "Isle of Axholme." on the outermost verge of North Lincolnshire, our brother has lived through 52 years of strenuous and not unsuccessful toil. His parents were members of the Wesleyan church and remained to the close of their lives attached to the "old body" though living in the centre of the Circuit of which their son has been for many years the honoured steward. It is a fact of no little significance that Mr. John Butler is the eldest of three brothers, all Primitive Methodist local preachers, each influential and respected, who were secured for our church and its service through the instrumentality of a village Sunday School.

In early manhood our friend left his native village to enter the offices of Messrs. Wilson, Sons, and Co., the great Hull shipping firm. Whilst in this town he came under the influence of the Rev. Chas. Garrett, who was then stationed in Hull. Mr. Butler says: "Mr. Garrett was the most *winning* preacher I ever heard. And, as a youth, I was much attracted by his loving words and manner. I followed him from chapel to chapel, being willing to stand in the crowds that gathered on Sunday evening to hear him." Afterwards Dr. Mackay (the author of "Grace and Truth") exercised a powerful influence over the opening mind of our subject, and greatly helped to fix the religious convictions which had formed in his mind. Health failing, owing to excessively long business hours, a year's rest in the country at Garthorpe prepared for another year in Messrs. Wilson's London office; but again, a serious breakdown compelled a return to his native village. Here he began life afresh, and commenced the trade in potatoes and agricultural produce which has since grown to such great proportions. The circumstances of his coming to Scotter are most instructive, and furnish another of the many examples of Divine leading through dark and devious ways, with which Christian biography abounds. After some time spent at Garthorpe, during which he was drawn to work in our Sunday School and afterwards placed on the plan, an opportunity offered to acquire a small grocery and drapery business in Scotter. Here Mr. Butler settled and found his work for the best years of his life. All the way through he has been a man diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Whilst to many, a small village remote from railways, industrially stagnant, and apparently doomed to decay would have proved the grave of all wider ambitions, to this man they offered fit opportunity

for bolder and more aggressive enterprise. He soon found other outlets for his energy and business capacity than a village shop affords. Commencing as commission agent and merchant in a small way, the growing importance of potato culture soon claimed his attention, and, securing a small farm and selling a few tons he has gradually increased his business until now his farms cover an area of nearly 2,000 acres, whilst his fame as a potato grower and produce merchant has gone out through all the trade. At present he is at the head of an immense business, and has recently secured a great success by the introduction of a new potato named "King Edward the VII.," for which experts predict a great future. Whilst thus diligent in business, the higher things of life have not been neglected. Outwardly the calmest and most imperturbable of men, Mr. Butler is "fervent in spirit serving the Lord." Nothing is allowed to interfere with the due observance of religious duty. As a local preacher he is held in high esteem throughout the Scotter Circuit, and considerations of health alone prevent him being found more frequently expounding to interested congregations that Gospel of the grace of God in which he so fervently believes. But he is not inactive. As Circuit Steward, Society Steward, etc., he attends carefully to the interests of his church; but perhaps the work most congenial to his mind and not least useful to his church, is that which he accomplishes as president of a young people's Bible Class, which he founded at Scotter some ten years ago, and which not only claims a large share of his interest, but has been of great value in preserving the youths and maidens for Christ and Primitive Methodism.

In public life Mr. Butler has taken but little share; he was the first chairman of the Parish Council, but retired in order that others might serve who were not able to do so much for the village in other ways. His influence as a great and highly esteemed employer of labour, is no less real because quiet and unostentatious. Mr. Butler has been singularly blessed in his domestic life. His home has ever been open to the servants of Christ, and in Mrs. Butler he has had an ever wise and willing helpmate, whilst his family – when one asks how many children he has, the reply given, with a quiet smile, is: "Better than a dozen" - of whom there are eleven sons and daughters, are loyally and devotedly attached to their parents, and their parents' church.

We have no fear for village Primitive Methodism, so long as it can produce men of the type of John Butler of Scotter; and we rejoice to know that he is but one amongst a number who are serving God and their generation on the consecrated soil of the famous old Scotter Circuit.

References

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