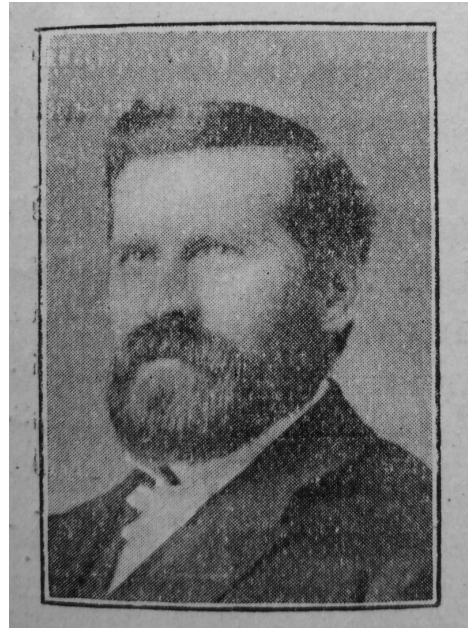


Rev. John Gair

Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by George Windram

John Gair was born May 24th, 1844, at the village inn, Bargate, near Durham. His father was a blacksmith by trade. Fortunately for the family, the father was converted under the ministry of the Wesleyans, and he at once gave up the public house and removed to Darlington, where he obtained employment under the North Eastern Railway Company, at the Bank Top Works.



The family, on their arrival at Darlington, at once joined the Wesleyan Church at Bondgate; but in the year 1850, during the agitation of the "Reform Movement," Mr. Gair, senior, left the Wesleyans, and joined the Primitive Methodist Church in Queen Street. Here the family found a welcome and a sphere for active service. The Sunday School was a great centre of interest, and here the subject of this sketch found a stimulus for his mental powers, and an inspiration to his heart. The home was a bright and beautiful place, for the head of it had declared "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" and everything was made congenial to the growth of his children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. The ministers of the church were always made welcome to their hospitality; and their visits, with intelligent conversations on the work of God and Bible subjects, had a wonderful influence on the mind and heart of the ardent and enquiring youth, who was open and responsive to all that was highest and best. That under such influences and in such a religious atmosphere, he should make a solemn and intelligent decision for Christ, was only natural. He at once joined the Church, and the Rev. Joseph Spoor gave him his first Class ticket of membership.

From his earliest days, while but a youth, he had the assurance that he would, one day, become a minister of the Gospel in the church of his choice; and that conviction deepened as the time passed on. He received much help and encouragement from the ministers who visited his home. They directed his studies, and also the cultivation of his spiritual life and character.

At the age of seventeen he received a note from the Quarterly Meeting to accompany a local preacher to his appointments, and to take some part in the services.

After a short probation and a "Trial" sermon, he was placed on full Plan, in the year 1865, during the superintendence of the Rev. J. Jackson. Shortly after, he was recommended for the ministry, and was ultimately examined by the Revs. T. Southron and T. Greenfield. In the September of the same year, he was sent to the Sheffield First Circuit, to labour with the Rev. John Dickenson, and he preached his first sermon in the Bethel Chapel. In 1868 he removed to Rotherham, where a gracious revival was realised, and great numbers were added to the Church. Here he married Miss Row of Masborough, and though they were only permitted to live together for three and a half years, when

the Father called her to the higher service, she proved herself a true help-meet and a real minister's wife.

In 1871 he removed to Derby, as the colleague of the Rev. John Wenn, and in 1873, on the removal of Mr. Wenn, he became the superintendent of the Circuit. In 1874 he was appointed to the Chesterfield Circuit, as the colleague of the Rev. J. Barfoot, and in 1875 he became superintendent of this Circuit. While at Chesterfield he married Miss Dickenson, the daughter of Rev. John Dickenson, who now survives him. This was a union of souls and proved to be a happy marriage. Mrs. Gair was a true help-meet to her husband, and a model minister's wife. She has ever taken a deep interest in all that pertained to the prosperity of the church in which her husband laboured.

In 1877 Mr. Gair removed to the Leicester 3rd Circuit, where he laboured for four years, and witnessed great prosperity. Here he erected the Humberstone Road Mission Chapel, and established a prosperous church. In 1881 he accepted an invitation to the Leicester 1st Circuit, where for four years he laboured with great earnestness and success. He followed some of the most saintly and gifted men in our ministry, and he did a wonderful work, indeed it seems herculean. He built new chapels at Belgrave Gate, Thurmaston, Barkby, Syston, and Catherine St. Ansty, and also secured land for other chapels and schools. These were great undertakings, involving not only the expenditure of thousands of pounds, but immense labour, and mental anxiety. These churches are monuments of his strenuous toil, and faith in God. He also laboured with great acceptance and success on the Sheffield 5th Circuit, where he witnessed a large number of conversions, and an addition of fifty members each year to the circuit during his stay. He also travelled in Sheffield 2nd, and Mexborough, where his ministry was fruitful in blessing. He especially endeared himself to the miners during the long and terrible strike, and he had the joy of seeing many of them saved and united to the church. He subsequently travelled in Nottingham 1st; and in 1896 he took up the duties of Governor of Elmfield College, York, and for five years thus served his church, gaining the love of the boys, and the esteem of the masters there. By his wise and careful ministry he lifted this college to a position of great efficiency. In 1901 he removed to Forest Hill Circuit, where it was seen that some secret disease, which baffled the skill of the most eminent doctors, was undermining his strong constitution. All that medical aid and tender human love could do was in vain, and he gradually became worse. It was pathetic to see this once energetic, alert, bright-souled, servant of God slowly succumb to the fell disease which had fastened upon him.

Mr. Gair was a Christian gentleman, that is, he was gentle, tender, kind, chivalrous, and yet firm, outspoken, brave, and equal to any emergency when duty called, or his church demanded of him.

He was an intelligent, earnest, evangelical preacher of the glorious Gospel; and in this he was most acceptable and successful.

He read widely and deeply in past and current literature to keep himself abreast with the times, and he was beloved and honoured by the members of our own and other churches.

As a friend he was true and reliable, in his home he was tenderly beloved; a rare and beautiful spirit, breathing a benediction upon those who were dear and sacred to him.

When the Divine call came, he was like a tired traveller longing to be at home. And on May 4th, 1904, it was said of John Gair “he was not, for God took him, after he had served his generation by the will of God.”

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1905/745