

A Dedicated Life* Sketch of Mrs J.B. Horton

The record of Mrs. Horton's life reads like a romance. Some of her experiences recall the strong simplicity of those - a dedicated company - who have cared always more for the things of God, than for themselves. By following the leadership of the Spirit of God she has been the means of bringing blessing to those whom Society would count as hopeless outcasts. Yet, on the whole, the events recorded in her *Life Story* reveal what God can do with life when it is utterly given up to His will. This is a story of dedication, co-operation and triumph.

Josephine Bellamy was born into a Methodist home where zeal for the Kingdom of God marched with strong views concerning the limitation of women's service for that Kingdom. It is true that her mother, recovering from her disappointment that the boy, whom she had dedicated to the ministry, was a girl, had registered her desire that Josephine should be used for the salvation of souls in the Methodist Church. But when at the age of eighteen she was converted at a service conducted by her father, and on the following day told him of her intention to be a preacher, he was exceedingly angry. There was at this time a strong feeling in the Wesleyan Church against women preachers and this Mr. Bellamy shared to the full.

It will be well to give the story as Miss Drew sets it down. At the chapel there had been great joy when Josephine with many others knelt at the Communion rail. Her father's voice was the loudest, he cried: "Bless God for my elder daughter!" Then turning to her he said softly; "Your mother will rejoice with the angels at this sight!" It was a very wet night, and Mr. Bellamy drove home amid the darkness and the storm, the young convert silent and preoccupied with thoughts which would have surprised her father had he known then. As she knelt at the Communion rail something had happened which was a secret between God and herself.

"Soon after breakfast the next morning Josephine went to her father and told him that just when God gave her the blessed assurance that she was accepted through the precious blood of Jesus, she had felt a touch on her shoulder and had heard a Voice in her heart: 'You are Mine; I want you to be a soul-winner and a preacher.' To this she had instantly responded: 'I will be, Lord ...'"



It was long before her father was reconciled to his daughter's work as an evangelist. And even when he did confess publicly his joy in her work he forgot to renew the financial assistance which had been stopped when she had determined that the work must be continued. Yet complete reconciliation did come.

There was something of the nature of premonition in the days of childhood leading on to the career of an evangelist. At a school kept by the daughters of a Wesleyan Minister at Alford it was "in the natural order of things that the little pupil should attend the class meeting, where she sat between her grandmother and her senior governess. When it came to Mrs. Bellamy's turn to give her testimony, she generally commenced with thanksgiving to Him who had led her "these many years through this waste howling wilderness." On one occasion the leader . . . addressed the child at her side. "And now what has our little sister to say?" The "little sister" wriggled off her chair and began at once: "I bless the Lord Who has led me these many years through this waste howling wilderness . . ." It speaks volumes for the soberness of those Lincolnshire Methodists that nobody smiled.

A more definite intention finds expression when on the way to the Wesleyan Chapel, the child saw a crowd of people pressing into the Primitive Methodist Chapel. Repeated enquiries won from the governess the reply that the attraction was a woman preacher.

"A woman! How funny—" exclaimed the child.

"It is worse than funny," corrected the governess. "It is wrong: but then they are Ranters. Yes, it is very wrong."

But presently the child said: "When I am grown up I shall be a preacher, and I shall be a Ranter too!" These predictions were both fulfilled. At a later day she preached in the Alford Primitive Methodist Chapel, and her old governess was only sorry that she could not, through infirmity, get to the services.

The obstacles to participation in Christian service remained. Her father was determined that his daughter should not become a preacher and after weary waiting she lost hope. Presently she married. In less than eighteen months she lost both husband and son, and again her future had to be faced. While on a visit to a friend in Yorkshire the door was opened for visitation in a neglected district. Then, a preacher at the Sunday School Anniversary service having been taken ill, she was asked to preach. This service proved to be a benediction to many. She was led on: first to become a local preacher on Heckmondwike Primitive Methodist Circuit and then to conduct evangelistic services in various parts of the country.

There are many who will remember the missions conducted by Mrs. Horton, first in company with Miss M.E. Parker, and afterwards with Kate Drew, who also was led into fellowship with our Church and gave practical evidence of her interest by her liberal legacies to its funds. Many instances are given of the salvaging of

churches and of men and women. Her determination, courage, and unconventional methods led on to many successes. There are some judgments on methods recorded in these pages which will not be accepted by all. Here is one, however, on which there will be general agreement: "Primitive Methodism would be the better to-day if the class meeting were still the accepted institution it then was; the testimonies as clear and each member's assurance of present acceptance with God through Christ as emphatic as it used to be." Methodism flourishes in fellowship. Yet it is well to recognize that the class meeting has flagged because those who have attended it have not grown in the expression of experience.

As an addition to usefulness Mrs. Horton entered upon the ministry of literature. Her stories had a large vogue and exercised a gracious ministry. This venture vexed her father almost as much as her preaching, yet when he had lectured her for condescending to "penny stories," he revealed pride in her for the good she had done by this means. She was told by a mill owner that the girls would rather miss their dinner than they would miss the current number of *Penny Stories*. Miss Drew tells of a minister who in calling attention to these stories said: "You see, friends, by circulating Mrs. Horton's books you save the people from reading anything worse." And of a minister's wife who had asked the evangelist to tea. She excused her appearance: "I am really sorry not to be dressed, but to be honest I must say that I have spent the whole afternoon wasting my time in reading your stories, dear Mrs. Horton."

The reader of this book can be promised much that will encourage in prosecuting the work of God. It is to be hoped that its circulation will be such as to inspire Mrs. Horton to write the promised life of her friend and helper, Kate Drew.

* "The Life Story of Mrs. J. Bellamy Horton." By Kate Drew. (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 5s. net.)

Reference

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