

So said the Greatest of all Workers. “My meat,” that which sustains and nourishes Me, “is to do,” not to put up with, not to endure, not to submit to, but expressly and emphatically “to do the will of Him that sent Me.”

William Lift, whose portrait is given below, was a fair example of this Divine principle. He did not belong to the class in whom the intellect predominates, nor to that in which emotion holds sway, but distinctly and pre-eminently to that class of Christian men who live in and by service. True, he was a man of keen observation and quick feeling, but he was before all things a worker, and a worker who was nourished and ennobled by active thought and active work. Few men have served the Primitive Methodist Church so well and for so long a period as he did. From the time of his conversion in 1828, when he was only a lad twelve years old, to his death on 26th November, 1893, his motto was, “I serve.” He began work early in the day, and he did a long day’s work. He became a member of our church in Kings Lynn when it was in its infancy, being only seven years old, and he remained a member in unbroken fellowship through all the chills and changes of sixty-five years, never besmirching its reputation, nor soiling its character. Just four years after his conversion, whilst yet a strong, ruddy stripling of only sixteen summers, his name was placed upon the preachers’ plan, and he was sent forth into the villages of East Anglia to tell “the old, old story of Jesus and His love.” Thus for sixty-one long years, in all sorts of weathers, on all sorts of roads, in the heat of summer and frost of winter, in sunshine and cloud, whether the church grew or declined, whether the congregations were large or small, attentive or listless, he went boldly and nobly forth to do his Master’s will, never neglecting an appointment, never being late for service, and never stopping to gossip when his work was done. He was just as punctual in returning to his home as in beginning and closing Divine worship.



His position in the King’s Lynn station was simply unique. He grew up with it, he lived through two generations of members and hearers, he helped to nourish and to make it what it is, and in turn he was nourished and sustained by it. In truth, we may say that he was in turn both the child and the father of the station. He gave thought, and time, and strength to promote its spiritual growth, and his wealth to aid its material expansion and financial prosperity. The evidence of this is found in the fact that his name is cut into the foundation stones of twenty-one chapels or schools, and what is surpassingly better, his name is cut into tables, “not of stone,” but in tables that are hearts of flesh. Hundreds revere his memory, and hold his name and work in undying remembrance. Having grown

up with the station, and become inseparably associated with all its interests and movements, it was but natural for the Quarterly Meeting in 1853 to appoint Mr. Lift as its Steward, and to renew that appointment no less than one-hundred-and-sixty times, for his name was only removed from the office after the Supreme Master had promoted him to be a “ruler over many things.”

To enumerate all the ways in which he served the Church of his choice through all those long and changeful years, would require more space than is available for this tribute to his character and service. In the sphere of business as well as in the service of the church, his religious principles were confessed and honoured. In his capacity as treasurer of the Lynn Chapel as well as steward of the station, it was a point of conscience with him never to keep a tradesman waiting for his money. As a result the name of our church with all the business men of the town was a synonym of honour, and honesty, and punctuality in the payment of accounts. May it never stand for less! Money is character, the test that reveals character; money is temptation, for it proves the weakness or the strength of character. Many Christian men who can abide all sorts of other tests, fail before this, but Mr. Lift stood where so many have fallen. He had all the defects of the type of the class to which he belonged, but his fidelity and piety were always above suspicion. Social and civic positions and distinctions were fairly within his reach, but in preference to these he deliberately chose to devote his time and energies to the welfare and progress of the church. No one ever doubted his loyalty to his church, and consequently never thought of inviting him to join another religious community.

“ Primitive,” was branded so deeply in to his life as to be ineffaceable, and the characters were so large and legible as to be read and known of all men. In short, his whole being was rooted in the teaching and worship and work of his church. And the service he rendered to the church was not confined within the limits of his own station. His name was connected with the District Committee for more than forty years, and through all those years he was rarely absent from the District Meeting, which he was chosen to represent in a dozen Conferences. He was a member of the First Ecumenical Methodist Conference held in London in 1881. He was always busy, and yet pursued his work in a trustful and reposeful spirit. He worked with intense delight and ease, and grew by his manifold activities into something like the roundness and ripeness of Christian manhood. The life of William Lift did not come to an early fruition to be followed by a long and painful decline. The eventide of his long day was brief, and, happily for him, it was gladdened by the tender ministries of one of the most devoted and affectionate of wives. The gradual wasting of his physical and mental strength was premonitory of the approaching end, but that end came at last with startling suddenness; At the early dawn of that grey November morning he became somewhat restless, and whilst preparations were being made by loving hands to kindle a fire with a view to warm his room, he, without a pang, a struggle, or a sign even, passed away, “a ransomed soul,” into the presence of his glorified Lord. The last words he was heard to soliloquise were in perfect accord with the prevailing spirit of his lifelong service, “May I endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

As a good soldier,
“ He with the King of Glory
Shall reign eternally.”

J. SMITH