

Phebe Bristow

Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by C Kendall

PHEBE BRISTOW, the much loved wife of Richard Stemp Bristow, of Mumby, Alford, was born at Cumberworth, county of Lincoln, July 16, 1831. Her maiden name was Kirk. She was surrounded with Primitive Methodistic influences from childhood. Very early in life she was awakened to her need of Christ, and was brought to God under the ministry of the Rev. J. Wright, when stationed in the Louth Circuit. Her first ticket of membership was received about the year 1846. She was early deprived of an afflicted and pious mother, but the Divine Father safely guided her youthful footsteps. From the first she was devoted to her class meeting, and the other means of grace. She would often exclaim, 'I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.' On July 10, 1853, she became the wife of one who now deeply mourns his severe loss. After marriage Mr. and Mrs. Bristow resided in Louth; here they spent seven happy years. The departed having the gift of singing and being fond of the exercise, entered the choir. This service was with her a reality. She furthermore laboured zealously in the Sunday school. In the year 1860 God in His providence removed our friends to Huttoft, near Alford. At that time we had no cause in the village, and as our friends were in the grocery and drapery business they had many temptations and invitations to make their religious home with one or other of the two churches in the place. They, however, proved true to their own people. They invited their own ministers, and in Christ's name unfurled the Primitive Methodistic banner. A wide field of usefulness opened. Soon two classes were formed, Mrs. Bristow taking one and her husband the other. Many persons have been brought to God, and a considerable number have died in Christ. Our friend threw her whole soul into the work of class-leading. To this great work she cheerfully consecrated her time and strength. Nor did she labour in vain. She had a special aptitude for visiting the sick and the poor; her deep sympathetic nature found a genuine delight in ministering to the bodily and spiritual wants of her neighbours. With her, to know of a case of need was enough. Her generous nature soon devised some means of relief. She possessed a large degree of public-spiritedness; this was seen in the getting up of bazaars for new chapels, or for the station fund; or arranging for tea meetings and many other agencies to aid the funds of the station or of the Connexion. For many years she was a diligent collector for the missionary cause; this work was performed the last time when she was in a very prostrate condition, and she said to the friends with a smile, 'It is my last visit.' She was the musician in the sanctuary; she was accustomed to sing as well as play, and the friends knew from the mode of the service that it was one in which the heart was fully absorbed. She had a strong love for good people of every name but her best service was given to the church which had been the means of her conversion, and whose interests she had espoused. She was a lover of peace and pursued this steadily. Her tact, her unselfishness, her manifest study and labour to do good, gave her great influence amongst the inhabitants. She highly esteemed the heralds of the cross; all the ministers, and most of the local labourers in the Word of God, found a cheerful and hospitable welcome to her sweet and attractive home. She will be seriously missed in the various works of Christian usefulness. Her affliction was severe and protracted, continuing with more or less of intensity for about two years. She was submissive to God's will. She often exclaimed, 'I bless the Lord for every pain.' Her confidence in God was unshaken. She would say, 'How happy I feel! Jesus is so very precious to my soul. Bless His name! How I love Him! I hope God will spare my life to see brother Kendall once more. I went to tell him how happy I am.' 'Not a cloud does arise to darken the skies.' At one time she sheared her husband her wasted arms, and then broke forth singing the whole of the hymn beginning with,

'What is this that steals upon my frame?

Is it death?' &c.

She had much delight in the friends singing -

'Jerusalem, my happy home.

Name ever dear to me,' &c

She was calm and rational to the last. She said to her medical adviser on his last visit, 'Shall I see you again?' and the doctor stood with tear-dimmed eye admiring the grace of God displayed in such an eminent degree. Her remains were deposited in the chapel-yard, the service being performed by the Rev. D Kendall. Many neighbours and friends gathered to the graveside, evidencing their high appreciation of the noble Christian life which had closed in their midst. Her bereaved husband left all alone, for there are no children, could feeling write, -

'She is gone whose smiles I delighted to see,

She is gone whose affection was ardent to me;

Her pulse is not beating, her breast does not heave,

Her spirit departed with Jesus to live.'

Mrs. Bristow was no ordinary Christian woman; indeed, she was a princess amongst her sex. Her many Christian works praise her. How tranquil her final period! When liberated from her suffering earthly house, with sanctified delight the angels would companion her to the celestial home. Her death was improved at Huttoft, Friday, March 18, 1881, three weeks after her death, to a large and deeply interested congregation, by the Rev. C. Kendall, and at Alford, on the 20th, by the Rev. D. Kendall.

'The memory of the just is blessed.'

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1883/494