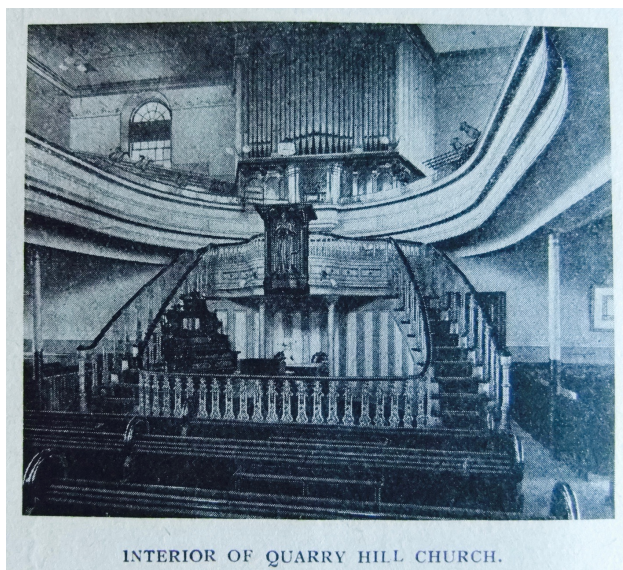


Quarry Hill P.M. Church, Leeds – A Centenary Sketch

Transcription of Article In the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Rev. H. Ross

ALONE, as we believe, among the famous sanctuaries of Primitive Methodism, "Quarry Hill" stands to-day upon the site selected a hundred years ago, and incorporates the very bricks and mortar which formed part of the original structure. Through all the intervening years it has stood as the head of Leeds I. Circuit. Around it has gathered a history of usefulness and influence that reaches to the ends of the earth. Evidence of this fact is seen in connection with the Centenary Celebrations recently held. In his "Book of Remembrance," the late Wm. Beckworth, Esq. quotes some interesting reminiscences of



Mr. George Allen, who was a boy at the time the chapel was built. He says "In the same year (1822) the Chapel Street Chapel was built, the street being thus called because of the chapel being there. There were very few buildings near to it at the time; but when buildings surrounded it the name was changed to Quarry Hill Chapel." Mr. Beckworth writes: "The Chapel was a small, plain brick building, much less attractive or commodious than it is now after the numerous transformations through which it has since passed. But from what we know of the hardness of those times, and the limited resources of the people, its erection must have brought many anxieties to its promoters, for this was the first effort of its kind, and the cause was young and everywhere spoken against." But though poor in this world's goods, the people were rich in faith, and possessed of a courage that seems reckless to our more sophisticated days. The first Quarterly Meeting held in their own chapel seems to have been a time of wonderful influence - reports of marvellous success were given, the work was extending on every hand - new members were being added daily, and, most wonderful of all - a small surplus of money remained after meeting all current demands. It was decided to open a mission in London, and before the Doxology was sung, Paul Sugden, a young man of twenty-three, and William Watson, a young local preacher, were selected as missionaries. They duly arrived in London, and after paying the expenses of the journey, found themselves the joint possessors of exactly one shilling. This they gave to the coachman, and, penniless, turned to the task of evangelising the Metropolis. But that belongs to another story. It was, however, in this spirit of heroic daring that the work was done. Very soon a room was rented in Shannon Street for use as a Sunday school. In 1825 they were ejected, and it was not until 1831 that a small room taken from the chapel-keeper's house, and entered by steps outside, was made to serve as a schoolroom. Various alterations and enlargements were necessitated by the growing success of the cause. In addition to Quarry Hill, forty-five other preaching-places had been opened by the year 1839, and the circuit extended from Methley and Seacroft on the east to Otley on the west, and Heckmondwike to the south. Six "travelling preachers" and ninety-five "local preachers" were employed in sustaining the services. The amount of walking entailed made the work very laborious, and it was decided that Otley should become the head of another circuit. And so began a gradual reorganisation of the

Church, which has resulted in sixteen independent circuits being organised, "Quarry" being left as head of Leeds I. Circuit, with four others in association with her. About the year 1846 further enlargements took place, and the chapel - so far as its size and outward appearance go - has remained much the same to this day. In 1870 the present schools and class-rooms were built, and the old schoolroom became part of the enlarged sanctuary. Space will not permit any detailed reference to the various changes which have taken place in the neighbourhood; from an open, almost rural, locality it gradually became a congested and insanitary area, until the City Council, in carrying out a great street improvement scheme, swept away most of the slum property, and left a wide space fronting the New York Road.

Many are the stories and legends that gather round the old sanctuary, and one ventures to affirm that no place of worship in the city, has been sustained by a more loyal and devoted people. In a very marked degree "Quarry" has appealed to the affection of her children. At the present day there are to be found representatives of the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh generation of "Quarryites." It would be invidious to mention names of individuals or families who regard the old sanctuary with feelings of veneration. It has been a great spiritual home for hosts of men and women who have served their day and generation faithfully and well. Among the ministers who from time to time have served its interests, the names of the Revs. E. Dalton, D.D., J. Scruton, W.R. Bird, M.P. Davison and S.S. Henshaw stand out by reason of the personal distinction, and varied gifts they possessed. .

Quarry Hill has also contributed of her children to the wider life of the Church and nation. What the future may hold of development or decay it is impossible to foresee. Long ago it was felt by many that the changes in the character of the people inhabiting the locality were making the work increasingly difficult. The migration of families to the suburbs, and the need for further development, led to the building of the fine premises in Harehills Avenue in 1902. For some time it was feared that the old church could scarcely survive the ordeal of losing so much of her vital power. But the love and loyalty, the devotion and generosity, of those who remained have triumphed; and to-day Quarry Hill remains a monument of daring faith, of unswerving loyalty, and of gracious tradition which inspires the confidence, that whatever the changing circumstances of the future may hold, they cannot destroy or permanently weaken the influence of a Church that for a hundred years has stood foursquare to all the winds that blow, and borne its witness in faith believing.

References

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