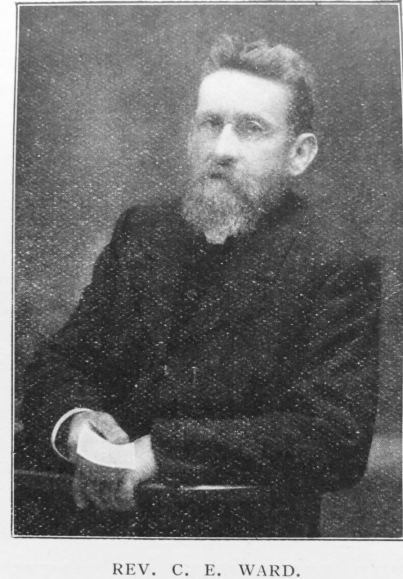


A Notable New Zealand Minister

Transcription of an article in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Rev. W.S. Potter

New Zealand Primitive Methodism has been more prolific in supplying the Church of Jesus Christ with ministers than many people suppose. Of those engaged in active service in the Dominion at the present time, more than half have been locally called and trained. Some of our most successful ministers have been brought up in this Dominion. Amongst these no one is more honoured than the Rev. C.E. Ward. He is a son of the first Primitive Methodist minister to cross the Equator, and the first Primitive Methodist Minister's son born in New Zealand. His father was a man greatly beloved, and although it is thirty-four years since he died, his name is still revered by many who remember him.



Charles Ebenezer Ward was born in New Plymouth on January 24th, 1846. The Colony was young, and the times unsettled. The Maories were getting restless, and the future of the Colony and the Church seemed uncertain. Hence one of the names (Ebenezer) given to Mr. Ward by his parents. When quite a boy he removed with his family to Auckland, where he was educated. Shortly before the Taranaki War broke out, Rev. R. Ward and family returned to New Plymouth, where they remained during the ten years that the war lasted.

Three of Mr. Ward's sons took an active part in the war, viz., John, who was wounded in battle, Frederick William, now Dr. Ward, editor of the "Sydney Daily Telegraph," and Charles Ebenezer, the subject of this sketch. All three received New Zealand war medals - "Virtutis Honour." These were only given to those who had taken active part in the war and had been under the enemy's fire. Fred and Charles were members of 'The Bushrangers and Colonial Scouts,' and hence were in frequent conflict with Maories.

As a boy Charles had manifested self-will, courage and determination. In all disputes with school-fellows he was well able to defend his own cause. During the war he once left a fever bed to take part in a fight, and in the relapse which followed, he almost lost his life. His comrades said that he never knew fear, and such was his courage and daring that his commanding officer, the late Sir Harry Atkinson, offered him a commission, which, however, he did not accept, for it was in quite another field of battle that he was to distinguish himself.

At a blessed revival that took place in 1861, under the ministry of their father, Fred, Josiah, and Charles were converted, and all three ultimately became ministers in our Church. Fred after ably serving the church for three or four years in Australia, became a distinguished journalist, and is now one of Australia's leading writers. Josiah, after several years of successful ministry joined the Wesleyans.

It was at the close of the year 1869, when young men were greatly needed in New South Wales that, acting on the advice of his father, Charles offered himself for the work of the ministry. The same fearless spirit that marked him as a schoolboy and volunteer, characterised him as a preacher. On his

way over to Sydney there was much card playing and gambling. On the Sunday, the Captain asked him to conduct service. He attacked the gamblers boldly in an impromptu sermon based on the action of those who cast lots for Christ's seamless garment. For his courage, the Captain and others thanked him. Some of his exploits and reminiscences in New South Wales would rival those of Peter Cartwright. Very rarely, however, can he be got to speak of them. He remained seven years in Australia, travelling on the Goulbourn, Woollongong, Newcastle, Peel River Goldfields, and Morpeth Stations. He did excellent work, especially in visiting outlying settlers and non-Churchgoers. One of his brother ministers wrote: "He is the most desperate visitor in the Colony." While in Australia he gave considerable time to the study of the natives, and those who have heard his lecture on "The Australian Black-fellows" know that he studied them to advantage.

In 1877 he returned to New Zealand in company with his wife, a lady who has proved herself a true and faithful wife and mother. During his 33 years' ministry in New Zealand, he has travelled on the Timaru, Invercargill, Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch Stations. On some of these stations new districts were missioned with great success. In Auckland, the Eden Terrace and Mount Roskill Churches are tangible evidences of his foresight and zeal. The same is true of the Sydenham and Edgeware Road Churches in Christchurch. While at Invercargill he built the Bluff, then the most southern church in the world, free of debt.

All through life he has been a diligent student, and some of his contrivances to secure an early awakening, when he was a young man, are told with amusement to-day. One of them is so original that we cannot refrain from telling it here. Close to his bedroom window in New Plymouth there grew a "Nihou" tree, in the branches of which a rooster took his nightly rest. Before retiring, the ardent student used to fasten a string to the leg of the bird which he passed through a hole in the wall and tied to his finger, so that when the bird jumped from his perch in the morning the sudden jerk of the string served the purpose of an alarum. Mr. Ward has read widely, as his lectures on "Astronomy," "Out Life," "Natural History," "Shakespeare," etc., abundantly prove. He possesses considerable humour, and his speeches and lectures sparkle with spontaneous wit.

As a preacher, he makes thorough preparation, and is remarkable for his originality. He argues, illustrates, examines, penetrates, and fearlessly commends the truth to every man's conscience. His denunciations of evil render him a terror to evil doers, yet he is most sympathetic towards the penitent and the victims of misfortune. He is a distinguished writer, and for many years successfully edited "The New Zealand Primitive Methodist." As an administrator he is shrewd and far-seeing, and has taken no small part in the affairs of the church. He has been president twice, and he would be sorely missed from a N.Z. Conference.

His sons are young men of ability, two of them being solicitors; and too much cannot be said of Miss Ward's gifts and graces, by which her father has been greatly helped in the later years of his ministry. In a recent letter to the writer, Mr. Ward said: "I owe much to the upbringing of my parents - the noble example of my father and the splendid womanhood of my mother." We pray for him many years of successful service, and an eventide full of peace and blessing.

References

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