

[Clark, Albert G.]

LIFE-SKETCH OF REV. A. G. CLARK

By R. O. [Rev. Rufus O.] Williams

The death of Rev. A. G. Clark, already announced,¹ was a sudden and severe shock to his friends and relatives in this part of the State. It was so unexpected that they could hardly realize their great bereavement, or apply to themselves the words of the Master: "A little while, and ye shall not see me." He had been in vigorous health for several months, able to endure the toils and burdens of his numerous engagements, and ready to put his hand to any work which might promote the cause of his Master. His last service at East Smithville is said to have been very earnest and impressive, but gave no indication of his approaching dissolution. He was confiding and cheerful, as usual, looking always on the bright side of passing events, and taking a hopeful view of life and its surroundings. On his return home he appeared as well as usual. He took dinner with a friend in South Otselic, and ate but little supper. Before the next morning he was taken with violent and excruciating pains. Medical aid was soon called, and appropriate remedies promptly applied, yet with very little alleviation of his pain. When it did subside he seemed to have lost consciousness, and died without realizing his condition.

Rev. Albert G. Clark was born in Preston, Chenango Co., N .Y., Sept. 21, 1811. His early years were spent with his parents on a farm in that town. His opportunities for an education appear to have been limited—confined at first to the common schools in the town of his birth. Subsequently he attended a "select school" in South Otselic, conducted by Dr. Bela Beardsley, then a very rigid Presbyterian, but now an old citizen of liberal views living in the town of Willett, adjoining this place. Afterwards he spent some time in the academy at Oxford. During the winter following his seventeenth birthday he taught school - his first effort in that direction - in the town of McDonough, Baldwin District. Several winters thereafter he spent in teaching, the last of which was in Upper Lisle, to complete the term of a teacher who had been dismissed.

What first called his attention to the work of the ministry is not known. But the latter part of the year 1835 found him, at the age of twenty-four, a resident of Upper Lisle, and a student of theology under the care of Rev. Charles S. Brown, then pastor of the Universalist church in that place. While in this position, he improved his opportunities to the best advantage his means would allow, and soon became expert in all matters of polemic theology then prevailing. His first sermon was delivered in the Universalist church in that place, and there he also received the rite of ordination, Dec. 28, 1837. Before that time, in connection with three other candidates, he had received the fellowship of the Chenango Association, at its session held in Oxford the last of August, 1836. Of the four candidates who then started together, he alone continued in the active duties of the ministry to the day of his death. Rev. Everett E. Guild, one of the four, is the only one who now retains his standing in the denomination.

Shortly before his ordination he was joined in wedlock with Miss Mary L. Guigette,² an amiable and intelligent lady, then a resident of Upper Lisle, whose aged father has

¹ Died, in De Ruyter, on 28 Nov 1874, Rev. A. [Albert] G. Clark, age 62. (From the *Christian Leader*, Utica NY, 20 Dec 1874)

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but recently passed to his rest. He remained a resident of this place for many years, engaged in study and doing the work of a Christian missionary, traveling and preaching in various places, as opportunity presented.

Rev. E. E. Guild, at the time he received the fellowship of the Chenango Association, appears as a resident of Walton, Delaware Co. At that time there was a prosperous society of Universalists in that town, sustained chiefly by the zeal and activity of Samuel Eells, Esq., one of the earliest Universalist Christians in that part of the country. In 1836 Mr. Clark effected a long exchange of services with Mr. Guild, in the performance of the duties of which he took a sort of missionary tour into Delaware County, traveling and preaching in different places, on Sundays and other days, until his engagement was completed. He returned home exhausted in physical force and depleted in "purse and scrip."

Undismayed by the toils and deprivations of that journey, he still continued his labors with unabated zeal, preaching in Smithville, McDonough, Triangle, and other places, occupying school-houses, barns, churches, and the open air, as chance or the spirit of the age might require. His first engagement was made at Speedsville, Schuyler Co., where he was employed a fourth or half of the time for several years. In the early part of his regular service he was taken sick in that place, and continued prostrate for several days. As soon as he began to recover he was taken home, about twenty-five miles, on a bed.

In 1840 he was invited to the pastoral charge of the Society in McLean, Tompkins Co., and during the same year removed his family from Upper Lisle to that place. Employed half the time, he labored here with great zeal and success for several years, and the Church and Society were prosperous under his charge. The remaining portion of his time was occupied in other places for the advancement of the religious doctrines so dear to his heart.

He removed in 1851 to a place called Beaver Dams, in Schuyler Co., a few miles from Havana. Here he bought a house, and became for the first time an occupant of his own premises. By his active and assiduous labors, the Society was raised to such a condition of prosperity as enabled the earnest friends to build a church - a neat little edifice, which the writer of this about fifteen years ago had the opportunity to occupy at a religious conference.

At the time of that conference, Mr. Clark had made his arrangements to move to Branchport, Yates Co., and take the pastoral charge of the Society in that place - a parish sustained in great measure by the faithful efforts of that excellent and zealous layman, Peter H. Bitley, Esq. The labors and duties of his ministry were continued half the time in this place for four years. The remaining part was spent in preaching in different places through the whole length and breadth of the Steuben Association. During the ten years of his residence within its limits he never failed to attend every annual session of that Association, and all the conferences held within its limits, unless absolute sickness of himself or family prevented.

² Married, in Upper Lisle, on 21 Dec 1837, Rev. Albert G. Clark and Mary Giguet[te], both of Upper Lisle. (From the *Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate*, Utica NY, 12 Jan 1838)

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Worn and exhausted by his excessive labors in the field before him, in the spring of 1861 he resigned his pastoral charge at Branchport, and sought repose and recuperation among his earlier friends. His wife's father had removed to McLean; thither he proceeded and spent a short time, thinking to return to the scenes of his childhood, and perhaps might find permanent rest on "the old home farm" But so it might not be. In October following, pressed by the earnest invitation of many excellent friends, he deemed it expedient to take up his abode in De Ruyter, Madison Co., where the little he had saved from the scanty reward of his past service was invested in the purchase of a house, which had furnished a home for himself and family to the present time. Shortly before his removal, Oct. 7th, Mrs. [Clarinda] Giguette, his wife's mother, passed away. And scarcely had he found himself settled in his new home when his only daughter, a girl of thirteen,³ was attacked with diphtheria, and died Nov. 5th. He spent several years preaching in De Ruyter, his service occupying, as usual, half the time, until death and removal had torn away so many active members, and reduced his small company of friends so greatly as to render it impossible for them to retain his services. Meanwhile he was employed in other places to fill the remaining part of his time.

In 1867 he made an arrangement to supply the desk in this place (Upper Lisle), a part of the time. But having received, soon after, a pressing invitation to take the missionary field in the Steuben Association, the scene of his former labors, he obtained release, and forthwith repaired to this new field, where he labored with his accustomed zeal and energy for two years, his family meantime remaining at De Ruyter. On his return from that field, he organized a private missionary enterprise in the Chenango Association, in the prosecution of which he continued until the day of his death.

It must not be overlooked that he was one of the most active and efficient agents for the circulation of the denominational papers, books, and other publications, in all Western New York. He was long a faithful agent for the [*Christian*] *Ambassador*, and afterwards for the *Christian Leader*, which sprang, Phoenix-like, from its ashes.

In private life he was one of the most genial and companionable of men, free and social in his intercourse, yet cautious of giving offense; always cheerful, hopeful and kind-hearted. He was prompt to assist the needy, gentle in his efforts to reclaim the wicked, and ready to support the falling, visit and encourage the sick, and administer consolation to the bereaved and afflicted. He was often summoned to the house of mourning in the capacity of a comforter. His record of funerals, extending over a period of thirty-six years, covers a great host - 365! He had always a kind word and a helping hand for all - not even passing a child, especially a child [?], without a smile, a kind look, or a pleasant recognizing nod. For these and other qualities he was greatly beloved by all who enjoyed his acquaintance.

As a preacher he was strong, terse, earnest and pointed both in language and thought. If he failed in the grace and oratorical polish of more favored preachers, no one ever excelled him in depth of devotion and fervency of heart. He felt and meant all

³ Died, in De Ruyter, on 5 Nov 1861, Mary Amanda Clark, age 12 years and 11 months. Only daughter of Rev. A. G. and Mary L. Clark. (From the *Christian Ambassador*, Auburn NY, 16 Nov 1861)

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he said. His discourses were usually extemporaneous, which left him more freedom to adapt the current thought to the exigencies of his congregation, but probably did not improve the literary character of his efforts. Still his pulpit services were generally well adapted to the tone and current of thought in the places where he preached. And especially effective were the off-hand missionary labors in which he was so considerably engaged. He never had a settlement which permitted him to devote his labors to a single parish. But the long continuance of his pastoral relations fully indicate the usefulness and acceptableness of his pulpit labors. His great object was to lead men from sin to holiness, and give them the "bread of life." In fact, he entered his profession with a faith, a purpose and devotedness which were both a herald and a helper to the success which followed.

All will feel that a true man, a good Christian, and a faithful servant of the Lord has been taken away, and the church at large will realize that an efficient co-worker in the clerical profession has gone home! Farewell, beloved brother, farewell!

Christian Leader, Utica NY, 17 Jan 1874

Died, in Preston on 4 Dec 1837, Susan Amanda Clark, age 5. Daughter of Alford and Susan Clark and sister of Rev. A. G. Clark. (*Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate*, Utica NY, 12 Jan 1838)

Died, in Preston on 4 Oct 1840, William Clark, age 86 years and 9 months. Grandfather of Rev. A. G. Clark. (*Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate*, Utica NY, 29 Jan 1841)

Died, in Preston on 25 Oct 1856, Unis Ford Clark, age 98. Grandmother of Rev. A. G. Clark. (*Christian Ambassador*, Auburn NY, 17 Jan 1857)

Died, in Preston on 17 Dec 1862, Mrs. Susan Clark, age 72 years, 3 months, and 19 days. Mother of Rev. A. G. Clark of De Ruyter. (*Christian Ambassador*, New York NY, 3 Jan 1863)

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