

[Mott, Edward Mott]

Death of Rev. E. M. Woolley

We know it will carry sadness to many a heart when we announce the departure of another herald of the cross—our beloved brother in Christ, Rev. E. M. Woolley. He died at Birmingham, Mich., on the 4th inst. As the sun was sinking beneath the horizon, his wearied spirit left its frail tenement of clay, and went up to its endless rest and its crown in heaven. Br. Woolley was well known in this State, where he labored during most of his ministerial life. And none knew him but to love him. We are confident we express the feelings of the entire circle of his acquaintance when we say that for kindness of heart, purity of life, devotion to the duties of his calling, and all the graces which adorn the true christian, there were few who excelled him. He was an able and successful preacher, and many a soul now enjoying the rich hopes and consolations of the Gospel of the world's redemption, owe their conversion, under God, to his faithful and eloquent ministries. His decease is a loss to the denomination which will not easily be repaired. May the Great Head of the church grant, that as one after another of our ministry are thus removed by death, those of us who remain, may seek to be more devoted to our work, more faithful to duty, and more determined to consecrate ourselves with all our gifts and capacities, to our high calling in Christ Jesus.

We have received the following touching note from a daughter of Br. Woolley, announcing the death of her father. We implore the Divine blessing to rest upon the family of the deceased, and impart to them the soothing consolations and hopes of the Gospel which they so greatly need.

BIRMINGHAM, Mich., May 6, 1853

REV. J. M. AUSTIN—I take the liberty to send you these few lines, with a request that you will publish them in the *Ambassador*. For by the love which yet lingers fresh and warm in our own hearts for the dear ones we left in the valleys and on the green hills of the Empire State, do we know that there are hearts there that will throb with anguish, and eyes that will dim with tears to know that our father—Rev. E. M. Woolley *has gone to his final rest!* And they will learn it, perhaps, only through your paper. It pleased God to call him, after a lingering illness, at sunset, on the 4th of the present month. Like a little child he leaned upon the arms of his Father, who tenderly led him home. Thus may we whom he nurtured and cherished, feel that the love of our own dear father is still ours; and that he, having gone away, will send the comforter unto us.

Mrs. FIDELIA WOOLLEY GILLETT

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, Sat. 21 May 1853

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Rev. E. M. Woolley

It was with no ordinary emotions of grief and sorrow that we received tidings a few days since, of the death of this worthy, zealous and faithful fellow laborer in the Gospel vineyard. We had known Br. Woolley, as a true man and faithful minister, for nearly twenty years, though for four years past we have held not direct correspondence with him, and knew not but he was in his *usual* health, (though that was poor,) till about two weeks before we received news of his death, when a ministering brother in Michigan wrote us he was evidently sinking with consumption, although the last news he had from his family was that he was improving. The next news was by a letter from his daughter, announcing his departure to the spirit land!

In the death of Rev. E. M. Woolley, our Universalist brethren of Michigan, and the denomination at large, have lost one of the ablest, most earnest and clear headed of our ministry, one who honored his profession by a pure and upright life, and a conversation such as became the Gospel of Christ. We are not familiar with the early life and history of Br. W., previously to his entering the ministry. We believe Madison co., N.Y., (near Cazenovia,) if not his native place, was the place of his residence in youth and early manhood; and that it was under the ministry and eloquent preaching of our lamented Br. John Freeman, of Hamilton, that he was first convinced of the truth and concerted to the faith of the great doctrine of the Restitution; and that it was by the long and earnest persuasion of those two departed and lamented worthies, S. R. [Stephen Rensselaer] Smith and J. Freeman, a short time before the death of the latter, in 1833, that he was induced to enter the ministry of reconciliation, and devote himself to the responsible and arduous labors of that holy calling.

Of the precise time and place of his first preaching we cannot speak confidently; but from the very commencement his labors were acceptable to the public, and useful to the cause of truth. In his style of preaching he was terse and sententious, yet earnest, warm hearted and faithful, apt to teach, adapting both his subject and manner to the time, place and circumstances attending. We never heard him when we did not admire him; but we have been told by others who heard him more frequently, that he was sometimes unequal to himself, and fell short of the expectations of his hearers. This is the case, at times, with most men and eminent preachers; and we should certainly expect it in Br. W., from his nervous temperament, and the peculiar circumstances in which he was often placed. On the whole, he was decidedly a successful and popular preacher, endeared to thousands of hearts in Central New-York, and wherever he was known.—Very soon after the death of Br. Freeman, he was employed as his successor, to supply the Societies in Hamilton Centre and Lebanon, and was ordained to the work of the ministry at the former place, on the 21st of August, 1834, Br. S. R. Smith preaching the sermon and delivering the Scriptures and Charge at his ordination. He continued [as] the successful and esteemed pastor of these two Societies for a number of years, when he removed to Bridgewater, N.Y., to take the pastoral charge of the Society in that place, preaching a part of the time in Litchfield, Winfield, and other adjacent places.

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During several years of this period he was severely afflicted with bronchitis, (the minister's disease, or throat complaint,) insomuch that he was obliged for a time to suspend his public labors. Temporarily and partially recovering from this severe affliction, he removed to Michigan, we believe about six years since, and though in feeble health, he continued, as long as his strength lasted, to proclaim the great salvation, and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ in that new State, making many of its hardy pioneers rich in the possession of that glorious faith that embraces an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for a ransomed world.

An intimate friend of his, now residing in Herkimer county, says of him, in a letter just received, "Very few have performed so much mental labor, and preached so many sermons in the same time. Always punctual to his appointments, regardless alike of poor health, or rain or storms. He once remarked to me, after wallowing ten miles through snow drifts, that he *"never failed in but one engagement to preach."*

He died as he had long lived, and as every christian would wish to die, resigned, triumphant and happy, and in the full assurance of that hope that maketh not ashamed, and that is the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil. May the God of mercy and peace be with and bless and console his deeply afflicted family and friends, with whom we sincerely and deeply sympathize, being fellow mourners with them, for not his loss, but ours. We close this notice with a few extracts from the letter of his eldest daughter, Mrs. Fidelia Woolley Gillett, whom many of our former readers (of the Magazine & Advocate) will recognize as our old correspondent for that paper, over the signature of "Lyra."

D. S. [Dolphus Skinner]

BIRMINGHAM, Mich., May 8th, 1853.

BR. SKINNER,—*Dear Sir*—I take the liberty to write you on this Sabbath morning, and say that my dear father hath gone home to the glad welcome of his father, his mother, his child and brothers. He left us (as human language will have it) last Wednesday, the 4th of May, at sunset. He has failed gradually in health for nearly four years past. Since he wrote you and received your very kind letter in return, he has scarcely been like himself, either in mind or body. And if ever in life he erred, or committed one act contrary to the will of the Master, it was because his heart was racked with woe, and his brain torn with a grief too great to be borne.****Of the trials through which my father passed, and of those things which finally broke his great good heart, I would not wish to speak to the world, nor even to you whom he loved so much. They are known here—may they be known no farther.****Br. Mayo has said: "It is by imitating the virtues of the good, not by avoiding their errors, that we reach heaven."

The 8th of last January my father was taken down with bronchitis, and kept his bed constantly with the exception of a few moments each day. He was patient and cheerful during his sickness, and willing—yes, even very anxious, to go. He suffered a great deal and wasted to a shadow. To console his children, he would frequently say, "It is God's own good time—be willing to let me go."

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As I stood by his side, a few moments before his death, with my three sisters, he prayed for us and his two absent sons, with his feeble voice, and commended us to the protecting care of God. Then he said, "Good-bye girls." And soon he asked—"Delia, is it almost morning?" And when I answered—almost morning, he replied, "I am glad—I am going!"

He had wished to go in the spring-time and at sunset. And in early May, as the evening folded her wing above earth, God called him home. And though the damp earth lies upon the green leaves and beautiful buds in which we arrayed him, we do not feel him gone. He was so firm and cheerful in belief of the future—so satisfied in the thought that he should [would] never be separated from those he loved, that even in the last struggle I could not feel that he was going from us. Oh, no! will not he, upon whom his children relied with such unshaken trust—will not he be now the more loving father, the more faithful guide, the truer friend, and the safer counsellor? I will believe it; for could I feel him *gone*, the whole universe would be nothing to me now. * * *

I sincerely ask your pardon for thus intruding upon your time. But with yourself and Br. [Aaron Bort] Grosh, and, the dear departed S. R. Smith, my father labored so long, I thought the calm peace and triumph of his departure might be interesting to you.

Respectfully,
FIDELIA WOOLLY GILLETT

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, Sat. 21 May 1853

Transcribed on 18 Nov 2012 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY

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Rev. E. M. Woolley
[excerpts]

Like some others who have already publicly noticed his death, I do not design to write his history, most of which reaches back beyond my memory.—

...

The first time the name of E. M. Woolley came to my ear was one of unusual interest. In the town of Salisbury, Herkimer co., N.Y., a man professing to be a Universalist, in consequence of the sudden death of his wife, was taken insane and committed suicide. In those days, more than now, it was a great wonder what a preacher of our order could say on such an occasion—since it was a common remark, and generally thought [but not proved] to be Scripture, that “No self-murderer shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven;” consequently a great number, more than a thousand people came together from the surrounding region, at the funeral, as much as anything to gratify their curiosity in relation to the preaching. The writer of this was young, but distinctly remembers the immense excitement. Br. Woolley happened at Salisbury at this time on an exchange with Br. [Jacob] Whitney, and as he had not been long in the ministry and was little known in that region, there was some trembling, on the part of the Universalists, as he ascended the pulpit, for fear that his efforts would fall short of their wishes, and fail to satisfy so many prejudiced hearers. He took his text from the Lord’s Prayer—“Thy kingdom come;” and he had not proceeded far in his sermon when he secured the undivided attention of his immense auditory and satisfied his friends that he was a workman that needeth not be ashamed. His tall majestic form, his piercing eye radiant with Gospel fire, his strong pathetic voice [e.g. with pathos], his powerful reasoning, captivated all before him; his premises were broad, strong, consistent, and as he advanced step by step to his conclusions and finished with an appeal to the sympathies; as he expatiated upon the strength of human love, and the sad consequences which follow often when its cherished object is removed—as seen in the case of the deceased; as he depicted the happy meeting of the husband and wife in the spirit world where they should [would] never again be subject to separation nor pangs of disappointed affection, as all this was vividly described and brought home to the mind, every sectarian prejudice seemed to give way; lips of the most determined bigots quivered with emotion; eyes unused to weeping were filled with tears, and all was one sea of mingled sympathy. Unexpectedly to his hearers he no sooner ended his sermon than he commenced singing—he was a most beautiful singer—the familiar Hymn:

“Low down, down in yon beautiful valley Where love crowns the meek and the lowly.”

This was too much. The effect produced was beyond all description. His fame as a preacher was established in that town, and to this day the memory of that occasion is fresh in the minds of all who were present.

At my ordination in Richfield, Otsego co., Br. Woolley was selected to give the “Right hand of Fellowship;” and I never shall forget how kindly he addressed me, and how he made me feel the importance of the duties opening before me. “If,” said he, “you have entered the ministry expecting to travel in a smooth, easy path,

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for pecuniary or ambitious ends, I advise you to stop here, for you will surely be disappointed."

Some allowance must be made of course for my early enthusiasm, for the eagerness with which I devoured every thing which fell from the lips of a Universalist clergyman, but Br. Woolley, from the beginning, was one of my favorite preachers. There was something in his pulpit appearance, in the tone of his voice, the style of his sermons that captivated me and almost invariably made me weep; it seemed to me as though all the angels in Heaven came near and looked on his pulpit efforts with silent approbation, and aided him to scatter a sacred influence over the anxious audience. He was not an educated man, in the popular sense of that word, but he possessed a remarkable show of common sense, and was one of the most thorough reasoners in our order. As a sort of climax to his argument, he had a way of uttering the following words, which often produced a striking effect, "*You know, and I know, and God knows, that this is the truth!*" None but those who have heard him can form any conception of the mightiness of his eye, significant expression of his whole face, and the magic of his voice when these words came from the bottom of his very soul. His sword of wit was two edged and keen; but he wielded it so masterly that there was seldom a "heart stain" left on it, and his opposers in argument when vanquished, found him ready to close the wound he had necessarily made. He held several public discussions, and his clerical antagonists will doubtless bear me witness that his were the powers of a giant mind.

During the later years of our acquaintance with the deceased, his mind was often depressed, and there was a plaintiveness in his voice and look which made him seem like one "Whom unmerciful disaster Followed fast and followed faster, Until his song one burden bore."

He tried to be cheerful, and at times was so, but now and then a word would escape his lips which told plainly that some heavy sorrow lay upon his too sensitive heart, and which often brought to our mind the remark of Robert Burns: "What is done we may partly compute, But know not what's resisted."

Well, he is gone—gone to that "beautiful valley" he so often sung of [sic], and his name is now with the angels. Far, Far from here they have made his grave and the vanished hope of meeting him on earth again is succeeded by the wish that I may some day wander that way to refresh my memory of a noble christian man by gazing on the green grass and the sweet flowers that grow above his dust.

J. H. T. [James Harvey Tuttle]

Fulton, N.Y., 1853

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, Sat. 25 Jun 1853

Transcribed on 18 Nov 2012 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY

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Biography of Rev. E. M. Woolley
[abridged]

We give below an extract from the prospectus of the Memoir of Rev. E. M. Woolley—now in the course of publication, by Br. A. Tompkins, of Boston—also an extract from some advance sheets which we have seen. The work will be ably edited by his daughter, Mrs. F. W. Gillett—assisted by Br. A. B. Grosh of this State.

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Below we present our readers with the extract that attracted our attention—it relates to one of Br. Woolley's settlements in this State.

"In the spring of 1834, my father removed his family to East Hamilton—so called because it is situated five miles east of the village of the same name. The day of our removal was as early as the third of April; but the snow was all gone, the grass was getting green, the trees were putting forth their leaf-buds, the roads were quite dusty, and strange as it may seem for Central New-York, the sun's rays were so burning as to scorch one's face to a blister.

It was late in the afternoon when we reached our new residence. It was in the wing of a dwelling owned and inhabited by Mr. Robert Usher, his wife, and two youngest children—a son and daughter already grown to youth. They received their pastor and his family with pleasant smiles and kind words, and, what they needed just *then* quite as much, a hearty, refreshing supper.

My father was a "great help in-doors;" and while the wife and baby (a little girl of three years) were comfortably at rest in "Aunt Lucy's" pleasant parlor, he was assisting my aunt in "getting settled." He unloaded and laid away; unpacked and put down; and kept all in good heart by his good-nature, and enlivened his own labor with snatches of sweet, merry songs.

As he was busily engaged, a little flaxen-haired girl, with great antelope eyes, put her face through the door, and looked about until she saw him; and then she ran up to the spot where he was, and said, "How do you do, Mr. Woolley?" My father caught her in his arms and kissed her, while we three urchins put our heads together and asked, "Who is she?" We did not wonder long, for our father led her towards us, and said, "My children this is Brother Freeman's daughter." Then the mystery was all explained. The children of his departed friend were almost as near to him as his own. We took her by the hand, and were dancing out of doors, when little John (whom my father called a "perfect likeness of Br. Freeman") glided shyly by us, going to my father, watched his labor a few moments, as though he did not know what to make of it. At last he asked, "Mr. Woolley, are you going to live here?"

"I am going to live here a while, if nothing happens to prevent it, Johnny."

"The little fellow looked disappointed, and after a few minutes, asked again, "Then you're going to live here, be you?"

"Certainly. Have you any objections, my little friend?"

"Yes—no, but I heard 'em say you was coming here, and I thought they meant you was coming to *our house*. O, Mr. Woolley, I wish you'd come there and live! It's so lonesome, since my pa died! Did you know my pa was dead, Mr. Woolley?"

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"Is your father dead, Johnny?" asked my father, in trembling tones, as he laid his hand upon the child's soft, light hair.

"Yes, yes, he's dead! And they put him in the ground, away off; and yesterday, Fanny was going to get him up with the shovel. But mother wouldn't let her go; she said she couldn't do it. Do you think she could, Mr. Woolley?" and he crept nearer to him, as though he thought he might get help. And he did get help—the help which his little throbbing heart needed to cure its sorrow. My father's feelings were sorely touched, and he answered his young friend:

"It was only your father's *body* they put in the ground, Johnny. Let it lie there; you could not stir it; it is down too deep. And it could not speak to you, my little boy, if you were to get it out. It would not know you. But your *father*, Johnny, your good, smiling, loving father, is not there. He is with God, in heaven. And he will some time receive you, and talk to you, and love you, as much as he did when he lived in your house. You will go to him, by and by. You have not lost him. Look up to heaven for your father; not in the grave, for he is not there. He sees you every day, and loves you, too."

"Do you think so?" asked the child, as he raised his great blue eyes, enveloped in mist, to my father's face. "Do you think so, Mr. Woolley?"

"I *know* so, Johnny," was the comforting reply; and a bright, hopeful smile broke over his young face as he continued, "Won't you come over to our house, Mr. Woolley? It's some lonesome there!"

As soon as published, every Universalist should procure a copy of this book. Judging from the proof-sheets that we have seen, it will be one of the most interesting books ever published in our denomination.

For sale at the offices of the Ambassador in New-York and Auburn.

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, Sat. 5 May 1855

Transcribed on 2 Feb 2013 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY