

Canadian Missionary Link

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MRS. JOHN FIRSTBROOK. (Frances Crawford Firstbrook.)

Address given by Dr. Farmer at Mrs. Firstbrook's Funeral Service.

There are some persons whom it is very difficult to associate with the thought of death, they are so brimful of life and energy. Such an one was Mrs. Firstbrook. The announcement of her decease, therefore, came with special shock.

My earliest knowledge of her came when I was a student in Toronto University in the seventies through fellow-students of hers in the Canadian Literary Institute, and through crisp and racy articles by her in "The Tyro," the student publication of the Institute at that time. The impression received was that Fannie Crawford was a young woman of unusually forceful personality, in whom wealth of wit and humor, befitting her birth in Ireland, blended with real worth of character and seriousness of purpose as befitted her Christian profession.

She came by this honestly. Her father, Professor Crawford, was a man of original genius, of big, unselfish, merry heart and heroic soul, a learned theologian and a stalwart and loyal defender of the faith. Her mother was a woman of rare insight, refined feeling, literary tastes and practical Christian judgment. This meant for the three sisters and the brother a stimulating atmosphere and a mental, moral and religious discipline that became almost second nature.

She had also in Woodstock the advantage of being a student in the Canadian Literary Institute in its palmy days when it was the centre of our denominational life and when its spirit was dominated by Dr. B. A. Fyfe, with his remarkable combination of rugged strength and fine Christian courtesy, and enriched by the literary gift of the scholarly Professor Wells, whose gentleness made him great. These college influences still further promoted breadth of outlook, worthy ideals, and nobility of character.

In early life she had crossed the great divide and put her trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as her personal Saviour and Lord, and had been baptized into the fellowship of the First Baptist Church by her pastor, who has all these years been affectionately spoken of as Father Bates, the real founder of our Foreign Mission work, in which she was destined to render such distinguished service. As the years passed she became an active church worker and a very efficient Sunday School teacher.

When later she became Mrs. John Firstbrook and came to Toronto to found a new home with a husband of like tastes, outlook and interests, she was equipped to enter upon a course of great and ever-growing usefulness and influence. She had become through native endowment and generous training a woman quite beyond the ordinary in intellectual strength, social gifts, moral vigor, force of character and Christian purposefulness.

She became a leader in the Church, active in various departments of its work. She rose also to a position of leadership in the denomination. Her outstanding service was rendered in connection with Foreign Missions. For the last thirty years she has been a member of the Women's Baptist Foreign Missionary Board of