

G. V. W. on the loss of his Wife. 1867

See pp. 76-72, 46
for notes on G.V.W.

In June 1867 Mr. Wigram went to Canada, and in August his wife went out to join him there; but a fortnight after her arrival in Montreal she passed away. Her letter dated Sept. 1867, Mr. Wigram writes: "Forty years have I known her; 37 years have I seen the motto of her life to have been: 'It is right for me to devote myself to God, and to His saints while here on earth.' Thirty-two years of that time it has been mine to seek to shelter her as my companion. ... We are poor things, poor vessels, to have such treasure as we carry in us; but 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' She fell asleep at 10.10 p.m., Sept 12th 1867. Heaven is not changed, nor has her admission into the presence of my God cast a spot nor any dimness or shade there. He who chose to reveal Himself to her, who forced her to own His death, and Himself, alive in Heaven, coming again to fetch us, had a right to take her there; and He comforts my heart with the truth of her being there, let into His presence. Our prayer was, that 'Christ might be magnified' in her body, in mine whether by life or by death'. She was selected for the one; may I find grace for the other; saints keeping me by prayer. The last two Lord's-days, wishing neither to despise the rod, nor to faint under it, I abstained from preaching, dear B— being here; but now I would be like David, and spoke last night at the room on 'God, the Father of mercies; and the God of all comfort.' The interment takes place (D.V.) Monday (the undertaker having this morning changed the time). Dear J. N. D. had settled to come for it on Tuesday, the day first appointed, but now he cannot be here (as we have exchanged telegrams.) All this is well—his proposing to come, and the preventing cause too. It will prevent his exhausting himself by a three day's journey too. — My salutation, G. V. W.

(The following letter written by Mr. Wigram is copied in full, and gives fuller details of his wife's last days — of her passing away — and of her exercises of mind; and shows how ready he was to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done.")

Montreal, October 1st, 1867.

My Dear _____,

A line will, I am sure, be welcome to you; and so far as that line treats of tender mercy and loving-kindness shown from God, through Jesus Christ and by His Spirit, to one whom I loved, to write it is praise to God, a rendering to Him the acknowledgment of the mercy and grace which He has shown.

She rests, absent from the body and present with the Lord; and His manner of loosing the cords that bind, in this life, body and soul together, and of His gathering up to His own presence, was a master-work of gentleness and tenderness.

Seeing how, as our pilgrim course lengthened out, her sense of weakness and littleness grew upon her, and strengthened her timidity and retiredness, I had each summer of late proposed to her to accompany me alone in my work — Southampton one year, Aberdeen another, &c.; and when dear Mr. Darby's illness was heard of this

year, at first she hesitated to accompany me, next day accepted the thought, and then declined, her own feebleness and the need of preparation to accompany me this September to Barbadoes (D.V.) her plea; but most heartily did she urge my coming. Soon after my arrival, I found that Mr D — intended going to Barbadoes in December. This, after prayer, led me to postpone my going thither, and to my proposing to stay and work in America till December, & then to my writing to say that, as Lady Robinson was returning hither in August, she might, as saints here so much wished it, come out. I said I would not come to fetch her, only because I feared that my doing so might induce her to come while her inclination might be against so doing. When my letter reached her, she was very ill from liver and some mucous membrane attack; but the worst symptoms yielded to rest, diet, and exercise, or seemed to do so, though her judgment seemed formed that her days were now markedly numbered. She decided to come, per 'Belgian', 15th August, and reached Quebec on the 27th. She had but one thought about the coming, and that was that it was the counsel of God for her, & His most tender mercy to herself. Pitiful was He in the ship, and in a thousand unheard of ways. The little sea-sickness proved, I think, how out of order the system was. I met her, daughter, and maid at Quebec, and we came on in the same boat hither. The kind B —'s had prepared airy rooms in the college for us, and we were cared for in love. Two weeks and four hours after her being carried up into her room from the ship she passed away as if falling asleep, after twenty-four hours of watchfulness. To me she was communicative in this fortnight as to what God had wrought for her in Christ, and in her in enabling her to bow to God as the reconciler. (2 Cor. V. 20, 21, as to Psalm 32, Rev. I. 5, 6, as to 1 Thess. II. 15, 17.) "That is mine; God has given it to me", she said when I spoke of it — as to the unchangeableness of God and Christ, as to her own self having been forced out of the world and self-righteousness, &c., as to how much He had blessed and taught her between June 15th and Aug. 27th; shown her too that He had in love, to judge her ways, the discovery too of the daughter being a far better prop to her than her husband in things of this world, and turning from Him to her in all cases, her self-judgment, occupation with all whom she loved, and urging her husband to write for her to this and to that one, and her care about her poor, were remarkable. Not long after her arrival there was, during a day and a half, an attack of inflammation, and from that she rallied not, save in measure; it was not acute pain but distress. My being here, and not in routine work, left me free to be much with her; and my feeling that the Lord's rod was stretched out upon me, made me decline preaching on both Sunday 12th, she had had no sleep during the night, but was moved at noon to another bed; no suffering, but exhaustion and weakness, and a frequent asking for beef-tea, and brandy and water in a tea-spoon, as she sat up. At 7.30 p.m. I took my papers to her room, and prayed by her several times that Christ might be magnified in her body and mine, whether by life or death. Faintness came on as once before, but yielded to ordinary reliefs, and she fell asleep, dozing at first, then into deeper sleep; and

about 10, while I and Mrs B — were beside her, she breathed heavily, I fetched the daughter, who had gone to rest, so as to relieve me at 1; and she ceased to breathe at 10.10.

From the peculiarity of her mind, and my knowledge of it, I went through an agony, lest Satan should be permitted to make an inroad; but thank God, the agony and the wrestling, the fear and the watching, and the strong crying in prayer, fell to me as my portion, and not in the least to her. She is one who will be better known in heaven than on earth — a woman of a meek and lowly spirit. Forty years I knew her; about thirty-two been the one that tried to shelter her, as she tried to help me by prayer. I expect no one to be able to estimate her grace, Christ's grace in her; but she is with Him who loved her, gave Himself for her and to her, fought with her until she bowed to His being all in all, and He now makes her happy. He will bring her again, for we are to be together there where "we are ever with the Lord" can be said. It is right for me to be wholly and altogether devoted to God and to His people on earth. If that was the characteristic of anyone, you could understand how, after 37 years' life, when the thought of leaving domestic quietness, and going with a husband to West Indies, and then going out to Canada to join a husband there, got upon the mind, she passed through all sorts of exercises as to domestic retirement not having been devotedness to God; and how, as the mind got formed for new work, it got a new energy. This was of God, a ripening up at the close. The great love of saints in England; the visits of a Mary L —, Mrs C —, &c.; the many kind letters; the prayers for the work of J. N. D., for her husband, for the going forth of a wife and daughter and maid; the interest in the voyage which J. N. D. and saints far and wide in the Canadas and United States took in it; the godly reception at Quebec and Montreal — everything done as unto the Lord — all put the soul into a state in which were tasted afresh the sweets of the pilgrim missionary work in earlier days of her youth in Ireland, &c. The mind too, expanded, and many a private habit of thought dropped. "I used to think that in myself; but God in His circle where I am thinks this."

Her age, 55 all but a few days.

G. V. W.