

DAVID FLETCHER TARR

The following is the record of the family of Thomas Henry Tarr, who with his large family of sons and daughters, landed at Algoa Bay, South Africa, in the year 1820; together with a large party of other persons, known as the "Nottingham Party." Advantages offered had lured these settlers so far afield in hope of betterment.



David Fletcher Tarr

I, David Fletcher Tarr, was born on my father's farm in Clumber, District of Bathurst, Cape Province, January 21, 1861. My father was the leader of the congregational singing in the Methodist Church until the introduction of organs in the country churches.

Mother was the Class Leader in the same church for more than fifty years. From childhood I attended the Methodist Sunday School, and when about fifteen years of age, became a Sunday School teacher. Later I became a Local Preacher and a member of the Church Board.

Very fond of sport I was considered the best rifle shot and cricketer in the district. I continued on the farm in partnership with my father until 1886.

I was in the Basuto War of 1880, and had some very narrow escapes from being killed.

Before the railways were introduced I occasionally took merchandise from Port Alfred and Port Elizabeth to some of the inland towns.

In 1887, Albert Davies, his wife and I decided to go to the gold fields in the Transvaal. Both Albert Davies and his wife were my cousins. We took merchandise as far as Kimberley. Our means of transport was by ox-wagon. Although there were supposed to be a chartered "Government Road," we certainly had our share of ups and downs.

At a farewell meeting in connection with the Good Templars, I recollect saying that I had no valid reason for leaving the District, but the Holy Spirit seemed to be drawing me to the North; and at the Church farewell I remember stating in regard to my relationship to the Methodist Church, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."

The day before reaching Kimberley, my cousin, having brought a horse, saddle and bridle with him, went on ahead to see the firm to which the goods were consigned, and to secure grazing for our oxen. Providentially he was directed to the home of Mr.

Peter Wessels. While there Mr. Wessels gave him (Albert Davies) a Bible Reading on the Truth for this time, stressing the Sabbath Question. On returning to the wagon my cousin told me of this and added that he believed Mr. Wessels was right. I, being a staunch Methodist said that of course, the Jews kept the Seventh day as the Sabbath, but we as Christians, honor the first in memory of the resurrection.

While manifesting a friendly spirit towards Mr. Wessels the next morning, I had no desire to discuss the Sabbath question, being prejudiced against it. But I consented to accompany him to a Salvation Army meeting in Beaconsfield where I was asked to preach to a large audience. The following morning, a young man called on me, asking me to help him, as he was troubled over the Sabbath Question. He wished me to present evidence from the New Testament that the Sabbath had been changed from the 7th to the 1st day of the week. In full confidence, I at once took my Bible and turned to those familiar verses, mentioning the first day of the week; but after talking with that young man for three or four hours, trying to convince him that he should keep the first day as the Sabbath, I felt that there was not sufficient evidence to prove it. So felt deeply impressed to study the question. First I read the tract, "Elihu on the Sabbath," and then the "History of the Sabbath and the first day of the Week," by J. N. Andrews. These I read very carefully and prayerfully, part of the time on my knees asking for God's guidance, with the result that I was fully convinced that there was but one Sabbath in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation - the 7th day of the week!

Literature on other points of the Present Truth was loaned me by Brother Wessels, which after carefully studying and comparing with the Bible, I fully accepted the Third Angel's Message. The last point I studied was that of the Spirit of Prophecy. This I took up with prejudice, believing that it does not apply in our time. But I had read only a few passages until I felt that Mrs. White's writings are inspired, and perhaps I should add that I have never since questioned it - or any other point of Present Truth. About four months after I embraced the truth Elder C. A. Boyd, and D. A. Robinson, and four young workers arrived in South Africa. Elder Boyd held a series of meetings in Wesselton (near Beaconsfield), in a school-room, after which, Albert Davies, his wife and I were baptized in Brother Wessel's dam. Soon after this, I visited my old home in Clumber, where I did some Bible work and made many visits among my relatives and friends.

When I returned to Kimberley Elder Boyd asked me to connect with the work and asked me to join him in a public effort which he held in Kimberley. This effort was held in a large tent on a vacant space on du Tuit's Pan Road. I also took subscriptions for "Present Truth," the periodical then published in London. In doing this I made some good contacts, among them that of the Congregational minister who afterwards told me that he usually based his Sunday morning sermon on the leading article in that periodical written by Mrs. E. G. White. Another was the wife of the ex-Mayor of Beaconsfield, Mrs. Austin, who with all her family, later accepted the truth and became charter members of the Beaconsfield Church. At the same time I planned to hold Bible studies with Mrs. Lang, a widow of a church of England clergyman. Her daughter, Mrs. Blaine, with her family, attended these meetings. After we had been studying together for a few weeks Mrs. Lang expressed a desire for me to meet the rector of her church. I replied that I would be pleased to do so, and requested her to ask him to give me a Bible study on the authenticity of Sunday in the New Testament, and for me to review the subject. To this he consented. Now when I closed, he said it was very interesting. The result of this study was that Mrs. Lang and her daughter Mrs. Blaine, with her family, all kept the next Sabbath.

In 1910 we moved to the Free State, working in Bloemfontein and Kroonstad. Some were added to the Bloemfontein Church, among whom were Brother and Sister S. J. Hiten, and Brother and Sister F. W. H. Jeffreys and their families. Brother and Sister Hiten's oldest son, George, died in harness as a missionary in Central Africa. The second son, Stephen, is an evangelist in the Natal Transvaal Conference. The two younger sons are in America, training for service. Brother and Sister Jeffrey's daughter, Violet, is well known as the wife of Brother Percy Willmore, Secretary-Treasurer of the Zambesi Union.

A small company was raised up in Kroonstad during the eight months we were stationed there.

In 1914 we were transferred to Port Elizabeth. My family remained there while I went with Elder Hankins to conduct an effort in Adelaide. Among those who accepted the Truth there were Miss Midgley, and Mrs. and Miss Kemp who became faithful Sabbath keepers. Later, with Brother Barrend de Beer assisting, a strong church was organized in Langkloof, between Port Elizabeth and Capetown. In the first baptismal service, 27 persons followed their Lord in this sacred rite, and a few weeks later the total number was increased to 44. I understand that that church is still strong and flourishing.

After spending one year in Pretoria, while Mrs. Tarr was on furlough in the U. S. A. we were sent to Johannesburg where I served as Pastor of the church, and was then transferred to Durban (1925-1928). Then we were asked to connect with the East London Church (1929) where we continued to labor for some years. While there. Elder W. H. Hurlow conducted an effort in one of the large halls, resulting in a goodly number accepting the Truth among whom were the Chilton family, who have proved a great strength to that church; Brother Chilton as Elder and Treasurer and Sister Chilton as Sabbath School Superintendent.

In all of these places of our labor, Mrs. Tarr was more than a help-mate; she was a co-laborer, carrying heavy responsibilities as leader of the Young People, Superintendent of the Sabbath School, and conducting Sabbath morning services in my absence. She now sweetly sleeps in Jesus, awaiting the call of the Great Life-Giver on the Resurrection morning to a glorious, immortal life, in the Kingdom of our Redeemer, where partings shall be no more. "Hasten on Glad Day!"

"Sunset and evening star!" I know I am in life's eventide! I know that no more for me are repetitions of the hazards, the heavy burdens, the shortages, the exposures of the years I have recorded above. But before my God I stand to declare: NEVER WAS MY HOPE SO BRIGHT - NEVER MY COURAGE SO UNSHAKEN - NEVER WAS MY HEART SO FULL OF DESIRE FOR THE COMING OF THE DAWN.

"Has it been worth it?" a friend asked me this day. Worth it! I glory in the part my God has given me in this work. With eyes of longing and utter faith, I look up at this sunset hour, and say, COME, LORD JESUS, COME QUICKLY!

By D Fletcher Tarr