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Biographical Sketch

of

Alice Taylor Steele

by Laura Steele

Railroad Pioneer 1869

Born: 22 Mar 1844, Liverpool, England

Married: George Taylor, 7 Nov 1870, Endowment House

Died: 23 Sep 1917, Salt Lake City

In the city of Liverpool, England, lived John Chadwick and his wife, Elizabeth. They were honest, industrious people, keeping their several shops and by honest dealing, prospering. Their first child, a daughter, was christened Alice and died as an infant. The second, a girl, was christened Elizabeth. On March 22, 1844, the third child, also a daughter, was born and was christened, according to the custom of the Episcopalian church and named Alice. Later, four sons were born to this family. Being devout and god-fearing people, when the message of Mormonism was carried to England by the missionaries, they listened, their hearts were touched, they felt the message was for them so they were all baptized and became members of the L.D.S. Church. Alice, who was then ten years of age, was baptized Aug. 27, 1854, and confirmed by Elder Wheelock.

Then began the persecutions that followed those who believed in those days. And, through dishonest help, their business fell away. Alice commenced her school life at three years of age and early showed a liking for medicine and surgery. Also, she was skilled in fine needlework. When finances made it necessary for the children to help their parents Alice went as governess to the children of lord Bennett.

She became very attached to this family, especially a little crippled boy, Richard, fondly called Dickey. After a few years here Lady Bennett and little Dickey were taken to a hospital and Alice who had become companion and nurse went along. It was here she received her first hospital training, being asked to help Dr. Brierly in removing a cancerous breast, and was highly complimented on her nerve. Alice remained with the Bennett's for some time and at Lady Bennett's death took charge of the home and family of eight children. A year or so later little Dickey was taken. So great was her love for this child she often said:

"If he had lived I don't think I would have left England."

But, the spirit of gathering had entered the hearts of the family and on August 29, 1869, they left Liverpool for Utah on the steamer Minnesota. Eighteen days after sailing they arrived at Ogden which was as far as the railroad came. The family was met here by George

Taylor, a dear friend of theirs who had come to Utah six years earlier. Spending one night in Salt Lake City at the Murdock home, they travelled to American Fork where, with one exception, they have all made their home. The family home was where Mrs. Geo. Summerville now reside.

Alice entered into active church work by being made a teacher in Sunday school two weeks after her arrival. The courtship which began in England years before lead to her marriage to George Taylor in the Endowment House on Nov. 7, 1870. Although it must have seemed primitive after coming from homes of wealth, she began her homemaking in a one-room log house. Her cheerful disposition helped in making the best of everything, and when children came to them many dainty little clothes were fashioned from bits of finery brought from England. Her first babe was a boy, George, then came Mary, who lived less than a year.

At first, they did not seem to proposer in American Fork and Mr. Taylor, who had served his apprenticeship in the railroad shops of England, was qualified as an engineer and got work with the railroad running up Alta to Bingham Junction, now called Midvale, and the family moved to the Junction. Here a very strong friendship was formed between Alice and Mrs. Hannah Lapish due to the help given Alice at the birth of her daughter, Laura. Both mother and babe's lives being saved by Mrs. Lapish's knowledge of drugs and of what to do in an emergency. After two years spent here they returned to American Fork, built them a new home and tried farming. A son was born and died at one day old; another was taken at one year old. Each time she was alone, her husband being away, having returned to his work as an engineer. A week following the burial of one of her babes she received news of her husband's death by suffocation. After this hard trial she found it very difficult to say, "Father, Thy Will Be Done," but she did and again took up Sunday school work. Being an efficient sewer she began to make her livelihood and to pay the little debt left on the home and care for the two remaining children. This required long hours of tedious work and often she needed her faith in God's help to keep on.

One morning a dear friend of hers, Sister Annie Duncan, came to her home and said she felt led to come and speak to her about taking up nursing with obstetrics. This she made a matter of prayer and was answered by the following dream related in her own words, as it had so much to do with her later life:

“I dreamed I was walking up the main carriage way of the “Blue Coat” school, when I looked ahead. I saw Brother Orson Pratt coming down the walk. I stepped to one side to let him pass but he crossed over to me until I had to step on the grass and on doing so I cried out, ‘OH!’ for I came near to stepping into a hole about six feet long by four feet wide, with solid white walls and it was three-fourths full of water. I drew back when Brother Pratt said, ‘Look into it.’ I did so and beheld the bottom was filled with little baby boys. He then said: ‘Follow me.’ We crossed over to the other side of the drive where I beheld another hole just like the first one but filled with baby girls. I exclaimed, ‘Oh, how cruel to put them in there, let me try to take them out.’ Then he laid his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Sister, live in the future as you have in the past and the day will come when you will take every one out of the water.’

This dream decided her course. After being set apart of Midwifery by Bishop L. E. Harrington who went to Salt Lake City, Nov. 1, 1882, accompanied by Sister Hannah Wild, rented a room and began her studies under Dr. Romania B. Pratt and later passed a successful examination and received her certificate. April 2, 1883, she was set apart for the labor before her by Apostle Wilford Woodruff. She returned to her home, free from debt, having worked her way by sewing and the little she had previously saved and by the help of her son, George, only eleven years old.

Arriving home she began her labors at once and was greatly rewarded, as a great number can testify, who have been comforted by her sweet voice and loving hand, having assisted in bringing into the world more than two thousand babies, whose names she recorded, before discontinuing her count.

On her fortieth birthday, March 22, 1884, she was set apart as president of the East Primary with Elizabeth Durrant and Sarah Ann

Shelley, counselors. This position she held for eleven years then her practice required all her time and she was honorably released. In March, 1885, she was married to Thomas G. Steele. This was also a happy but short married life of only seven years. He died March 12, 1892, and again she was a widow. She carried on her chosen work, never complaining, and found great comfort in providing for her son, George, who was called on a mission to the Southern States, leaving on July 14, 1893.

When the fight for women's suffrage was made she was right in line and helped to get the franchise. In 1902, with Mrs. Emmeline Wells, Hannah Lapish and others, Alice was appointed as delegate to the women's national council held at Washington, D.C. Mrs. Susan B. Anthony presided at this council. There were delegates from foreign countries. They were banqueted at the home of Mrs. August Belmont, a very wealthy woman of Washington. While here they were introduced to Mrs. Roosevelt by Senator Kearns. They visited Congress and great enjoyed the trip, going on to New York before coming home.

July 1901 Alice was set apart as President of the Fourth ward Relief Society with Melissa Greenwood and Minnie Webb as counselors. This position she held for nine years. In 1904, in company with her daughter, she visited the World's fair at St. Louis, then Chicago and places between, and spent an enjoyable hour at the site of the Kirtland Temple, Nauvoo, Mo. Always having desired to see the Pacific ocean she also made a trip to Los Angeles in her later years.

Her heavy labors and being out in all kinds of weather had left her in rather ill health and she felt the need of a rest; desiring to finish the temple work for her father's family she spent a great deal of time and means to gather genealogy and to have the work completed which was done on Nov. 1, 1910.

She was very independent and while her children would have willingly made her welcome, she preferred to keep her own home and live among her old friends and neighbors and enjoyed their visits in her later years. In her last illness, not to be a burden to anyone, she

insisted on going to her daughter's instead of having them come to her. She passed away September 23, 1917, at Salt Lake City, at the age of seventy-three years, leaving two children and ten grandchildren and a host who called her blessed.

In word and deed she may be called "Madonna of the Coverlets," as Robt. T. Coffin so beautifully describes:

No sooner were the stars come out,  
No sooner fell the dew,  
Than she was going like repose  
Her darkening chambers through.

Babies were to be covered up,  
Babies sprawled like bloom  
Of careless brier roses strewn  
Through every fragrant room.

Babies to be covered up  
At the gates of dream;  
Her tender-taken breathings seemed  
Summer's far-off streams.

Babies always. Years could not  
Take her hour away;  
Years brought her children's children forth  
To draw her where they lay.

This was worship, this was peace,  
Her very breath and prayer,  
Until the aureoles of age  
Lay shining on her hair.

God will now be kind to her,  
Whatever place she keeps,  
And give her little naked babes  
To tend before she sleeps.