

ADVENTIST REVIEW

Weekly News and Inspiration for Seventh-day Adventists

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PROMOTION IN THE CHURCH

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Is there a better way?

A Punny for Christmas?

A Stenmother in Israel



ANNIE SMITH: PIONEER POET

BY JAMES R. NIX

Throughout its 137 years the *Adventist Review* has had many women on its staff. The first to serve the church paper was the talented Annie R. Smith, older sister of the famous editor, Uriah Smith.

Born in 1828, Annie, along with other Millerite Adventists, awaited the Lord's return in 1844. After the Disappointment, she alternated between studying and teaching. Her special interests included writing and oil painting. While painting the skyline of Boston and Charlestown, she so strained her eyes that for the next eight months she could hardly see.

During this period of Annie's life, her interest in Adventism waned, and she looked forward to a literary and artistic career. However, a remarkable series of events in 1851 changed the course of her life.

Sometime during that year Adventist pioneer Joseph Bates held meetings in a suburb of Boston, not too far from where Annie lived. Her mother, concerned at her daughter's loss of interest in spiritual things, asked her to attend Bates's meetings.

The night before the meeting Annie dreamed that she arrived late and so had to sit in the back row in the only vacant seat, and that the speaker preached on the sanctuary. That same night Joseph Bates had a similar dream. He dreamed that he was already speaking when a young girl came in late and sat in the back row, and that he would speak on the sanctuary doctrine. To their mutual surprise, the following night both Annie Smith and Joseph Bates found their dreams coming true.

Within three weeks Annie accepted the Sabbath.

A few days later Annie wrote her first poem for the *Review and Herald* (Sept. 16, 1851), entitled "Fear Not Little Flock." Impressed by her talent, James White invited her to join the editorial staff of the *Review*, then published in Saratoga Springs, New York. Annie declined at first because of eye trouble but eventually accepted and joined the Whites. After prayer for healing, her eyesight improved. When the *Review* moved to Rochester, New York, in 1852, Annie went along and continued to work as proofreader and copy editor.

During the three years that she worked with the *Review*, 45 of her poems appeared in that journal and the *Youth's Instructor*. Three of these survive in our present *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*.

Several workers at the *Review* office in Rochester died of tuberculo-

sis. Annie Smith wrote poems in tribute to each one. Eventually, late in 1854, Annie herself came down with the illness. She returned to her home in West Wilton, New Hampshire, where her mother took care of her. Treatments at a nearby water cure health resort did not seem to alleviate her worsening condition.

Annie wanted to compile a book of her poems, and as death approached she worked diligently to complete the volume. Only days before her death, her brother Uriah came from Rochester to help her prepare it for publication. Also an artist, he made a woodcut of a peony, Annie's favorite flower, which appeared on the title page—a tribute of love from a brother to his sister.

Annie died on July 26, 1855, at the age of 27. Unfortunately, she did not live to see her book published. Two days before her death she expressed her faith in the last poem that she wrote:

Oh! Shed not a tear o'er the spot where I sleep;
For the living and not for the dead ye may weep;
They mourn for the weary who sweetly repose,
Free in the grave from life's burden and woes?

I long now to rest in the lone, quiet tomb,
For the footsteps of Jesus have lightened the gloom;
I die in the hope of soon meeting again
The friends that I love, with Him ever to reign.