Feisty, Feminist and Fearless: Jane Elizabeth Waterston, Inverness's Pioneering Missionary

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In a letter to a friend, Dr Neil Macvicar, superintendent of the Victoria Hospital, at Alice, in the former Cape Province of South Africa (now the Eastern Cape), told how in the late 1920s he was shopping in Adderley Street in Cape Town when he felt a hand laid lightly on his arm.

> I turned round and there was Dr Waterston. I had not seen her for some years and I was shocked to see how old she looked. Her tall vigorous figure had become frail and bent and she was leaning upon a stick. After a short conversation she went out, and, to my horror, without looking to the right or left, she walked straight into the traffic. There a wonderful thing happened. The traffic pulled sharply up, on both sides, including a tram-car which was coming down the street, and a broad lane was left in which the old lady slowly made her way across. She was known and revered by the whole city.[1]

Who was this frail old lady before whom the busy Cape Town traffic parted like the Red Sea under Moses' uplifted rod? The short answer is that she was Dr Jane Waterston (1843–1932), a former Free Church of Scotland missionary who overcame great difficulties to become South Africa's first female doctor, making a significant contribution to the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of black and white, during a time of great transition in the history of her adopted homeland. Pending a complete biography, a somewhat longer answer is offered in following pages.

INVERNESS, THE EARLY YEARS (1843–1866)

Jane Elizabeth Waterston was born into a family of entrepreneurial flair and enterprise, possessing sparks of genius tending to eccentricity. Her great-grandfather, George Waterston, founded in Edinburgh a business making sealing wax manufacturers and selling stationery which developed into the prosperous banknote printing firm of George Waterston

[1] R. H. W. Shepherd, *A South African Medical Pioneer: The Life of Neil Macvicar*, M.D., D.P.H., LL.D. (Lovedale, South Africa: The Lovedale Press, 1953), p. 173.

and Sons of Warriston Works, Edinburgh and 8 St Bride Street, London. The company survived until 2004. George married Catherine, a Sandeman whose immediate family gave its name to a well known wine shipping company, as well as the religious sect founded by John Glas, but known as Sandemanians.

Jane's father Charles was born 1808. After school he entered the world of banking and in 1838 was made the first general manager of the Caledonian Banking Company in Inverness.[2] In 1840 he married his first cousin, Agnes Webster, an unfortunate liaison with a branch of the family beset by mental problems. All Charles and Agnes' children, except Jane and her brother William, suffered from mental illness.[3] This in all probability explains Jane's professional interest in psychiatric medicine, her decision not to marry, and why she advised to her siblings to remain single.

Jane was born in Inverness on 17th February 1843, and baptised on 8th March in the Old High Church, Inverness, where her father rented a family pew. She was brought up in prosperity. At first the family occupied a spacious apartment over the newly built offices of the Caledonian Bank at 6 High Street, before moving to 'Oakland', a substantial 'gentleman's residence' on Drummond Road, in the suburbs of Inverness.

Little is recorded of Jane Waterston's early years. We know she was cared for by a nurse and educated at home by a governess, both from the village of Kiltarlity and that she completed secondary education at Inverness Royal Academy.

In appearance she was described as 'of slight physique, with handsome face, firm mouth, fine blue eyes, fair hair and complexion, with beautiful hands.'[4] A photograph in the Am Baile collection shows an attractive young woman appearing both determined and intelligent, anticipating the strength of character seen in a Cape Town portrait of the mature woman.

The Free Church of Scotland came into being in 1843, the year of Jane's birth, and by the time she was in her teens the denomination had established four congregations in Inverness.[5] Although her father was

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2 National Library of Scotland (NLS), Edinburgh, Waterston Family Papers, 444, Acc 12235.

3 Robert Pitcairn Robertson, 1962 biographical note, National Library of Scotland, Waterston Family Papers, 446, Acc 12235. Robertson's informants were his aunt and uncle (second cousin of Jane Waterston), then aged 92 and 81 respectively.

4 Robertson, op. cit.

5 The North Church (now Church of God, Pentecostal, North Church Place), the West or Greig Street Free Church (Huntly Place); the East Church in Academy Street, and the Free High Church or St Columba's.

totally unsympathetic to the denomination, and kept up the family pew at the Old High Church, Jane, not for the last time, defied his wishes, followed her conscience, and joined the Free Church.[6] It is unclear to which of the four congregations she belonged as contemporary communion rolls and Kirk Session records are either incomplete or have become mislaid.

Jane's character showed what a family friend once called 'stern self-discipline'. She was reticent to speak about herself; her letters — edited by Lucy Bean and Elizabeth van Heyningen — reveal little of her faith or Christian experience.[7] But she was not at all unfeeling; hidden in the depths of her character were large wells of empathy. A younger Scottish contemporary, whom she may well have met in South Africa, was the writer John Buchan. He once remarked that his friend Raymond Asquith, 'disliked emotion, not because he felt lightly, but because he felt deeply.'[8] That was true of Jane Waterston.

LOVEDALE: THE TEACHER (1866–1872)

In 1821, the Glasgow Missionary Society established their first South African station among the Xhosa people. It was located on the Tyume River, beneath the Amatola Mountains, in the north of Cape Province. In 1824, the Rev John Ross opened a second station some twelve miles south-east which was named Lovedale, in memory of Dr John Love, the secretary of the mission. Lovedale was destroyed in the 1834 frontier war between the Xhosa people and the British, but rebuilt two years later a few miles further west. In 1841 a school was established there by Rev William Govan, whose first intake of students included eleven Africans and nine Europeans. From the beginning, like the keys of a piano, ebony and ivory were side by side in class and took part together in all school activities.

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6 Apart from their nominally Sandemanian upbringing, little is known of Charles and Agnes' religious convictions. His commercial and social position may have inclined him towards reticence, though he was not against using his position to secure favours for new comers to the Auld High Kirk. On 24 July 1856, he wrote to Mrs Baillie of Dunain, a lady well established in Highland society, requesting permission for a Mr Bethune, a clergyman's son, 'recently arrived for Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania),' to take a seat in the front pew rented by her family. Cf. Letter from Mr C Waterston, Caledonian Bank to Miss Baillie of Dunain, Highland Council Archive, External ID, Z_GB232_D456_A_12_109_2. Asset ID 4968.

7 Lucy Bean and Elizabeth van Heyningen (eds), *The Letters of Jane Elizabeth Waterston, 1866–1905* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1983).

8 John Buchan, *Memory Hold the Door* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), p. 66.

From 1843 to 1900 the school was under the control of the Free Church of Scotland. Govan's successor, Dr. James Stewart, who has been a member of David Livingstone's ill-fated 1862/63 Zambezi expedition, arrived in 1867, taking over the principalship in 1870.[9]

When, how and why Jane Waterston first felt herself inclined to African missionary service remains a mystery, but it is doubtless true to say that no romantic impulse prompted her, but it was rather a deep sense of spiritual duty, coupled with a strongly practical outlook, that led her to do what she believed God required of her.

Nor do we know when she first met Stewart. In August 1866 he wrote to the 23 year old inviting her to establish Lovedale's girl's boarding department. Jane's father did not consent to this venture, but as he did not stand in her way she accepted Stewart's invitation. Travelling with Stewart and his wife Mina, she arrived at Lovedale in January 1867 and threw herself into her work, learning to speak isiXhosa and developing a deep interest in and affection for African people, which remained throughout her life.

Holding a high view of women's abilities, both African and European, and not least her own, Jane was determined to use her skills and strength of character to enable her students to emerge as mature educated women, able both to build strong Christian homes and play a part in the growing Christian community. It was not in her to patronise girls by doing for them what they could do for themselves, but she fully supported them with love and respect as they strove to achieve their goal. Lovedale girls, she insisted — and few doubted it — were more highly motivated, worked harder, more quickly, and better than their male counterparts.[10]

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9 For Stewart see James Wells, *Stewart of Lovedale: The Life of James Stewart* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910).

10 Among the many she influenced three might be mentioned.
Vertically challenged Margaret (Maggie) Majiza was looked upon by the missionaries as a child and considered too immature to know her own mind or marry. Waterston was outraged, complaining indignantly that it was quite wrong to judge Maggie's intelligence and maturity by her diminutive stature. Her support was rewarded: in 1874 Maggie became an assistant teacher and in 1877 married Elijah Makiwane, a prominent Xhosa intellectual. Their daughter, Cecilia Makiwane, was South Africa's first registered nurse — of any race — and an early activist in the struggle for women's rights. The Cecilia Makiwane Hospital in Mdantsane, Eastern Cape, is named after her.
Letitia (Letty) Ncheni, passed her entrance examination with distinction and in 1876 was invited to travel with Mrs Stewart to Scotland. Three years later, she returned to South Africa to marry and support the celebrated John Knox

Despite her enthusiastic and energetic leadership during this period, Jane Waterston's heart was not really in teaching. Although she had no doubt her life's work lay in Africa, she found herself being pulled in other directions. As she explained to James Stewart, the situation at home had become almost intolerable. The emotional instability of her mother and two sisters, their growing dependence upon medication and sherry, led to constant friction as all three teetered on the brink of mental breakdown. With her mother emotionally blackmailing Jane to come home and her father offering money for her passage, Jane saw no option but to return to Inverness to help with the needs of her dysfunctional family.[11] She resigned from Lovedale in May, 1873.

LONDON: THE MEDICAL STUDENT (1873–1880)

There was, however, more to Jane's restlessness than her home situation. Her growing conviction was that her future lay in medicine, a field hitherto closed to women. Along with this aspiration, she held unfashionably strong views about women's abilities and entitlements, was always ready to challenge any man who denied women intellectual or professional equality, and championed the case for women's suffrage a generation before the suffragettes. James Stewart tells how once a travelling companion, a medical doctor, made derogatory comments about strong-minded women being philosophers in petticoats. This Jane deeply resented, immediately contested and remained out of sorts for the rest of the journey.

In January 1874 she resigned as a Free Church missionary and after a short spell in Cape Town gaining a little medical experience, returned to Britain to become one of the first three students at the London School of Medicine for Women, with a view to return later to Africa.

Unsurprisingly, as a student she was competitive and outspokenly critical of her contemporaries, especially the head of the school, Sophia Jex-Blake, towards whom she felt a strong antipathy. She suspected, rightly as it turned out, that she was a predatory lesbian.[12] Writing frankly to James Stewart, she confessed, 'I cannot bear Jex Blake. Nature certainly

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Bokwe, a gifted journalist, able musician, composer and hymn-writer, and an ordained Presbyterian minister.

Martha Kwatshe also completed her education in Scotland, returning to marry Mpambani Mzimba, the first black Free Church of Scotland minister and leader of an influential secession that broke away from the Free Church in 1889 to form the Presbyterian Church of Africa.

11 Cf. Bean and Van Heningen, op. cit., p. 45.

12 For Jex-Blake's lesbian predilections see e.g. Margaret Georgina Todd, *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1911), p. 65. Cf. Sharon

made a mistake in making her a woman. She wants to make friends with me and I am keeping her at arm's length.' But she also had the good grace to see some of her own faults reflected in Blake, adding, 'I will get a lot of my faults of voice and manner corrected by seeing how ugly they are in others.'[13]

Although gaining valuable clinical experience at Elizabeth Garrett Anderson's New Hospital for Women, and at the Rotunda Lying-In Hospital and the Royal Free Hospital, Jane, nevertheless, felt herself an outsider. She was convinced she was disliked by Garrett Anderson, partly because she was Scottish, but mainly because she was unwilling to do academic work on Sundays. This was not a paranoid notion. Garrett Anderson had found her own mother's evangelicalism repugnant, and had no scruples whatever about ridiculing similar convictions in others. Jane's opinion was that was 'certainly a godlessness' about her.[14]

Despite these tensions, Jane Waterston proved to be an untiring student with a reputation for hard graft. Her work was rewarded, not by the English or Scottish medical authorities who refused at that time to qualify women, but by the King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland. On 24th May, 1879, the *British Medical Journal* announced that she had been licensed to practice medicine and midwifery. She now applied to the Livingstonia committee of the Free Church of Scotland, to join the new work on Lake Nyasa which would seek to implement the 'Christianity and commerce' approach advocated by David Livingstone and now led by James Stewart.[15] It was to be a momentous decision.

Meanwhile, trouble had once more overtaken the Waterston family. In December 1878 the City of Glasgow Bank collapsed, undermining the Caledonian Bank, threatening the financial state of the Waterston family and straining her own finances. Jane decided to go to Inverness for the New Year, and found her mother and sisters emotionally incapacitated and her father depressed. They were glad to see her, but she refused to stay. In the following March she was relieved to hear that her father would be reinstated by the bank and the family's finances had sufficiently recouped to permit her father to send her a gift of money.[16]

Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 46.

13 Bean and Van Heningen, *Letters*, p. 77.

14 Cf. ibid., p. 104f.

15 For Stewart's involvement in Lovedale see Wells, op. cit., p. 123ff.

16 For the 1878 banking collapse see Ashraf A. Mahate, 'Contagion Effects of Three Late Nineteenth Century British Bank Failures' in *Business and Economic History*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Fall 1994, pp. 102-15; S. G. Checkland *Scottish Banking: A History, 1695–1973* (Glasgow: Collins, 1975), p. 470.

LIVINGSTONIA: THE PIONEER MEDICAL MISSIONARY (1879–1880)

Jane Waterston's interest in becoming a doctor in Africa seems to be partly attributable to her experience at Lovedale and partly to the inspiration of David Livingstone's life. Livingstone's funeral took place in 1874, the year Jane arrived in London. There is no evidence she attended, although James Stewart was present. The event, however, generated great enthusiasm for the new Free Church project, the establishment of the memorial mission on Lake Nyasa, to be known as Livingstonia. Jane wanted to join this mission as a fully qualified doctor.

Jane Waterston's reputation having preceded her via Stewart, her application was received by the Livingstonia committee with enthusiasm.[17] She was appointed as 'female Assistant at the Mission' for 'the management of a boarding school for native girls and assistance of the medical men at the Station.'[18] The Ladies Missionary Association would underwrite her expenses.[19]

The warmth of her acceptance was, however, offset by petty restrictions placed on her activities. She was told that, 'in rendering such assistance it must in every case be understood that her position shall be subordinate to those of the regular [i.e. male] physicians.'[20] To Jane this was both unfair and offensive and would rankle with her throughout her time in Livingstonia. There were other quibbles too over her salary and outfit allowance, as well as her terms and conditions of service. From the outset ominous clouds loomed over Jane Waterston's career at Livingstonia.

Enthusiastic that the mission would operate on Livingstone's own broadminded principles, Jane nevertheless felt uneasy with attempts to combine both Presbyterians (the Free Church and Church of Scotland) and the High Church Anglicans of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa. In a letter to Stewart, she questioned the wisdom of such disparate traditions attempting to cooperate. She also warned Stewart that the mission must not be hampered by 'cooks and tinkers and […] loads of luxuries', thus hindering missionaries from establishing a close rapport with Africans. Furthermore, she feared failure unless the mission was united under a strong leader whom all respected, and argued that no one was better equipped for that than Stewart himself.[21] Her judgement proved to be sound: in the event the High Church party operated separately; the

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17 Letters from missionaries in Livingstonia to the secretaries of the Foreign Mission Committee, 1874–1926, NLS, Acc 7876, pp. 41–43.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Bean and Van Heyningen, op. cit., p. 85.

Church of Scotland established its own work at Blantyre, and the Free Church went on to found Livingstonia. Though under the strategic supervision of Stewart, Livingstonia was to be run by a young medical officer, Dr Robert Laws, who continued in the post until 1927, thus dominating the work for fifty-two years.

The Church of Scotland mission at Blantyre struggled to get going. Poor leadership and incompetent missionaries resulted in stagnation, with no schools being opened or even services of worship held. Help was sought from the Free Church and, as a first step, Dr Stewart went up to Blantyre to assess the situation, later sending William Koyi and Mapassa Ntintili, two Xhosa missionaries from Lovedale, to lend a hand.[22]

The moral bankruptcy of Blantyre was revealed by a case of attempted petty theft in February 1878. In the wee small hours Koyi and Ntintili were awoken by thieves trying to steal their blankets. They gave chase. Ntintili caught one of the robbers, who was brought back, tried by the missionaries and sentenced to be flogged. He received a brutal 156 lashes, administered in two separate punishments.

This was but the first of a number of occasions at Blantyre when Africans were brutally beaten, in one case to death. Another was executed by firing squad. In the absence of any African or colonial authority, the missionaries had unwisely set themselves up as a force for law and order in the region. Much to the chagrin of the Church of Scotland, Andrew Chirnside, an Australian hunter and traveller, whom Jane had met when he had visited Blantyre and Livingstonia in 1879, published on his return to London an account of the atrocities in a pamphlet.[23] The ensuing controversy resulted in the dismissal or resignation of most of the Blantyre staff.[24]

Blantyre's darkness cast its pall over Livingstonia. Despite strong denials to the contrary by Stewart, Laws and the Livingstonia committee in Edinburgh, Jane Waterston's correspondence leaves us in no doubt that the Free Church mission had also submitted Africans to imprisonment and floggings. At Livingstonia there also existed a totally dark prison cell, reputedly swarming with rats, in which a young mother had been incarcerated, her unweaned child being forcibly removed from her.

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22 Cf. T. Jack Thompson, *Touching the Heart: Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876–1888* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2000).

23 Andrew Chirnside, *The Blantyre Missionaries: Discreditable Disclosures* (London, 1880). A short defence was offered by Alexander Riddel, *A Reply to "The Blantyre Missionaries: Discreditable Disclosures. By Andrew Chirnside, F.R.G.S."* (London: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1880).

24 Cf. T. Jack Thompson, op. cit, pp. 68ff.

Able to judge Livingstonia's faults for herself, Waterston's reliable sources of information at Blantyre were Koyi and Ntintili, the Xhosa evangelists, who reported the harshness with which Africans were treated and how Koyi had often to act as an intermediary between the missionaries and the Africans.[25] Deeply ashamed of Livingstonia's excesses, it was not sectarianism that led her to consider Blantyre the more demoralised mission station. Although events in Nyasaland cannot be compared to the atrocities in Leopold's Belgian Congo, there is in Jane's indignation something of the sense of horror we find in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and with more justification as Blantyre and Livingstonia were ostensibly Christian establishments.

Jane herself was now in deep turmoil, having lost confidence in the leadership at both stations.[26] She identified the fundamental problems as moral and spiritual, as she explained to Stewart:

> [The] most hateful thing about the Missions at present is that there are no conversions, that there is not a blessing on the gun, and the lash, and the prison. I was asked at London if I were going out as a Missionary with a very big gun and a very small Bible and indeed, it is the gun and not the Bible they rely on in Blantyre and even here the gun is relied on to a much larger extent than should be and they [the missionaries] are so satisfied. I am the only thorn they have got.[27]

Her unhappiness was made worse by a personality clash with Robert Laws. In December 1879 she confessed:

> I can't go to Dr Laws. He and I are so very different […] Honestly I don't see how I am to work here as we won't pull the same way.[28]

She believed Laws resented her medical qualifications or skill. She complained he never once spoke a word of encouragement to her, or thanked her for any contribution she had made, despite her shouldering a great part of the medical burden. Rather, she believed, he and his wife had poisoned the minds of others against her, making hurtful innuendos that she was only in Africa to find a husband. Yet in her tribulation she felt a grim joy as she discovered that her capacity for work far exceeded that of any of the men around her. 'It has been proved,' she crowed to Stewart, 'I can

25 Ibid., p. 9, Bean and Van Heyningen, op. cit. p. 166.
26 Ibid., p. 162.
27 Ibid., p. 165.
28 Ibid., p. 166.

work everybody here out and so I am let alone, to my great delight.'[29] But that provided sparse comfort, overall she was frustrated and disillusioned. With her faith in God shattered, her joy in serving in Nyasaland turned into 'a very apple of Sodom', she now felt ashamed be to a missionary.[30]

Then she dropped a bombshell, announcing her resignation after only four months at Livingstonia. Agreeing to go, she felt, had been a grave mistake, not because of the demands of the work, and certainly not because of the Africans among whom she worked, but because of her incompatibility with missionary colleagues and the prejudices against her. Her experience of Livingstonia had, she said:

> shattered my faith in God and man and I fear I will never recover it […] Life is no longer what it was to me and never will be again. If I come to Lovedale you will want me to conduct worship and turn up at Church and services and I can't do that at present. What I want is to be let alone and left to fight out doubts, if that be possible, and get back, not some fragments of the old belief, that is not possible, but some standing ground on which to work at the present and have some slight hope for the future. I will not sham what I don't believe for any consideration. I have got a horror of religious humbug that will last me the rest of my days. [31]

Unlike her frank letter to the sympathetic Stewart, her resignation letter to Dr Laws was brief, cautious, formal and cramped.

She left Livingstonia in April 1880 and arrived in Lovedale in mid May. Although her physical health was robust, the Stewarts knew she was deeply depressed. In James Stewart's professional opinion she was 'not at all well'. Nevertheless, by September Jane was running a small dispensary at Lovedale, the first to be opened under mission auspices in the region, and was beginning to find returning glimmers of joy among the Africans she loved.

In Edinburgh, the committee took a very dim view of her resignation. They immediately removed her name from the list of missionaries, stopped her salary and demanded she refund the full cost of her fare to

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[29] Bean and Van Heningen, op. cit., p. 168. James Jack's history of the Livingstonia mission, endorsed by Robert Laws, treats Jane Waterston as little more than a footnote. Speaking of Mrs Laws it adds, 'She was followed the same year by Miss Waterston, L.M., from Lovedale. Both these ladies continued the work already begun; and a few months afterwards, when Miss Waterston returned to Lovedale Mrs Laws undertook the entire work herself.' James W. Jack, *Daybreak in Livingstonia: the story of the Livingstonia Mission, British Central Africa* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1901), p. 331.

[30] Cf. Bean and Van Heningen, op. cit., pp. 162–71.

[31] Ibid., p. 168.

Central Africa, as well as the outfit allowance she had received. Without an income this was impossible. Stewart considered her treatment dishonourable, and negotiated to get the amount reduced. He and his wife showed her every kindness and arranged for her to receive a small private allowance to enable her to live in the nearby town of Alice and work at Lovedale, but the depressing burden of debt hung over her.

CAPE TOWN: THE INDISPENSABLE PHYSICIAN (1883–1932)

Towards the end of 1883 Jane Waterston moved to Cape Town to take up private medical practice. Before her departure, the Lovedale staff and students presented her with an illuminated address, signed by 136 people, appreciating her friendship and work among them, assuring her she would be missed and wishing every success in her new sphere of service. Due primarily to the Stewarts' love and care, the spiritual crisis had passed and in Cape Town she felt able to become a full communicant at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, the centre of the Scottish community.[32]

The move to Cape Town did not mean a total break with Lovedale nor with education in Cape Colony. Dr Langham Dale, the government's Superintendent-General of education unofficially enlisted her help at a critical time when racial segregation was increasing and hostile voices were opposing African education. She threw herself wholeheartedly into the fight.

Jane Waterston bought No. 61 Plein Street, which would be her home and surgery for the next five years. As the only woman doctor in South Africa, she realised the necessity of being as up-to-date as possible in knowledge, skills and treatments. So in 1888 she sold Plein Street and

[32] Scottish Presbyterian church life in South Africa dates from 1806 when the 93rd Regiment of Foot (Sutherland Highlanders) was stationed at the Cape. As no chaplains were appointed to regiments at that time, the men on their own initiative constituted a society and elected a Kirk Session of two sergeants, two corporals and two privates. They called Rev George Thom of the London Missionary Society to be their minister in 1812 and the following year they furnished themselves with Communion silver. By 1820, under the leadership Dr John Philip the congregation became a Congregational Church and the focus of Presbyterian worship shifted to St Andrew's Church, whose foundation-stone was laid in 1827, and the church officially opened in 1829. Around the same time the Scottish missionaries of the Glasgow Missionary Society arrived on the eastern frontier of Cape Colony. Cf. David Reid, *The Kirk of the 93rd: A Short History, 1808–1868* (privately published, n.d.); Frank Quinn and Greg Cuthbertson, *Presbyterianism in Cape Town: A History of St Andrew's Church, 1829–1979* (Cape Town: St Andrew's Church, 1979).

travelled to London to prepare to be examined as a licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. It gave her great satisfaction, to be told, somewhat patronisingly, that her papers 'were not the ordinary run they got from women students.'[33] Typically, she remarked, 'I valued that more than anything.'[34]

In June the same year she obtained the degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD) from Brussels University and in July was awarded the Certificate in Psychological Medicine from the Medico Psychological Association (MPA) of Great Britain, the first woman ever to acquire this qualification. The president of the MPA in 1888 was the chauvinistic Thomas Couston of Edinburgh who may well have been irked to announce to the Annual Meeting that 'they had granted certificate to forty-five gentlemen and one lady, all of whom had passed most satisfactory examinations.'[35]

Meanwhile in Inverness, the still struggling Caledonian Bank had withdrawn her eighty year old father's pension, and then repaid it at a reduced level of one third, thus plunging him into near penury. The thought crossed her mind that she might be obliged to remain in Britain to financially support her ageing parents, but decided that she could best serve them by returning to her practice in Cape Town. As for herself, she knew she would be better off in 'a younger country and a simpler life.' [36]

Now forty-five years old and in the prime of life, Jane Waterston returned to face the challenges of the rapidly expanding Cape Town, plagued with great disparities of wealth and poverty, largely reflecting a growing racial segregation. Poor districts were lawless and overcrowded, notorious for cramped, shoddily built properties, rented at extortionate rates, where as many as sixteen people occupied a single room. A shared earth toilet stood in the back yard. Bathing, if it took place at all, was in a galvanised bath tub on the kitchen floor. In the poorer districts there was virtually no access to medical facilities and no modern maternity help. Disease was rife and mother and infant mortality high.

Determined to address some of these needs, Dr Jane opened a Ladies' Branch of the Free Dispensary, to care for women and children. It later trained midwives and maternity nurses. To fund the dispensary, she used the profits from the high fees her wealthy private patients were able to afford.

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33 Letter 121, Bean and Van Heyningen, op. cit., p. 210.

34 Ibid.

35 'A Hundred Years Ago — Jane Elizabeth Waterston (1843–1932)' in *Women in Psychiatry Special Interest Group Newsletter*, Royal College of Psychiatrists, June 2006.

36 Bean and Van Heyningen, op. cit., p. 212.

In 1905 she was appointed an Official Visitor to Old Somerset Hospital, South Africa's first psychiatric hospital and when seriously disturbed psychiatric patients and leprosy sufferers were transferred to Robben Island, she became an Official Visitor. She was also appointed president of the Cape of Good Hope (Western) Branch of the British Medical Association. In 1910 she joined the Cape Provincial Hospital Board, and in 1916 was given a seat on the board of the Valkenberg Mental Hospital.

Elizabeth van Heyningen portrays a busy Dr. Jane going about her work:

> For more than thirty years, black medical bag in hand, Jane Waterston was a familiar visitor to the poorer streets of Cape Town as she tramped to confinements with a friendly smile for everyone […] She did not use a pony trap or later a car. The trams, occasionally a Hansom horse cab, and her sturdy, black booted feet sufficed.[37]

Right up into her eighties she took an early morning swim in the sea at Muizenberg, whatever the weather, and at least annually climbed Table Mountain. The three hour expedition invariably started by her removing her long skirt to reveal beneath a pair of tweed plus-fours. Not only did she exercise regularly, but she ate frugally. A friend noted her Spartan diet:

> She never eats at all hardly. A cup of tinned coffee and milk and slice of Boerbread for Breakfast; a spoonful or two of tinned fruit, or of cornflour pudding for luncheon, and a cup of tea and biscuit at 4 o'clock in the afternoon is all she eats; she never has dinner […][38]

Independent and eccentric, she did not care a fig what people thought about her. In a letter home, in 1896, her young friend, the *Cape Times* editor Edmund Garrett, described her as the 'Silly, nice, unreasonable, absurd, excellent, indispensable Physician!'[39]

Women colleagues could find her difficult to work with. Travelling with her by train to Johannesburg, Lucy Deane complained:

> We were to have had a lovely lie-a-bed morning, breakfast not till 8.a.m., Alas! at 5.30 I was waked by a vigourous [sic] thump on my door and Dr. Waterston's cheerful voice in strong Scotch: "Miss Deane, I've begged a pail

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37 Bean and Van Heyningen, op. cit., p. 253.

38 Elizabeth van Heyningen, *Dr Jane Elizabeth Waterston (1843–1932)*, paper given at the Van Riebeeck Society Summer School in 2009.

39 Fydell Edmund Garrett *The Garrett Papers* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1984), p. 84.

> real hot water for you from an Engine-driver, make haste dear and seize the chance of a real bath before the shunting begins at six!" I could have killed the dear friendly old lady! She is extraordinary. Never tired, never hungry, never quiet.[40]

She staunchly opposed republicanism and supported Imperialism, under which she felt black people would get a much better deal than in an independent South Africa. Nor was she afraid to make such opinions public. Her house stood in Parliament Street, the only privately owned property, entirely surrounded by government buildings. When in the late 1920s there were plans to abandon the British flag in favour of a tricolour with horizontal stripes of orange, white and blue, she had the red, white and blue Union Flag flown in protest from a flag pole in her garden.[41] In 2015 the flag, along with her brass plate, was discovered on the old Lovedale premises and donated to The Amathole Museum in King William's Town, South Africa.

After all the agonising personal, academic and professional struggles of earlier days, in later years Dr Jane was highly regarded. Honours were showered upon her. Her Cape Town contemporary, Dr Christian Lawrence Herman, said that 'As a physician she had few equals, and her advice was much valued. She was quick in her decisions; sound and reliable in her view, she was of great help in consultations, where her opinion were alway clearly and concisely expressed.'[42] In 1919 she was presented with an illuminated address, a letter-case and a cheque, acknowledging her medical, social and missionary work during half a century, and paying tribute to her unceasing Christlike attempts 'to lift up the fallen, to succour the poor and downtrodden, and to bring comfort and healing to the homes of misery and distress.'[43] In 1925 Dr. Jane was elected a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, only the second woman to achieve the honour, and in 1929 made an honorary Doctor of Laws of the University of Cape Town.

In the early summer of 1932 Dr Jane's health declined critically and she was at last confined to bed. A fortnight later she lost consciousness and on Monday 7th of November, at 3.20pm, she slipped away to her eternal home. She was 89. One obituarist said, 'Death came to her but gently, as if in love.' After the funeral service at St Andrew's Church, her mile

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40 van Heyningen, op. cit.

41 Robertson, op. cit.

42 Christian Lawrence Herman, 'Obituary: Jane Waterston M.D., LL.D., F.R.C.P.' in South African Medical Journal, Volume 6, Issue 22, Nov 1932, pp. 742–44.

43 Anon. 'Death notice: Dr Jane Waterston', in South African Medical Journal, Volume 6, Issue 21, Nov 1932, pp. 683–84.

long funeral cortège wound its way to Woltemade Cemetery, No. 1, where an 'immense concourse' of dignitaries gathered at her graveside to pay tribute.

CONCLUSION

Through a quiet, rarely articulated, but steadfast faith in God, Jane Waterston was enabled to rise above the many grave challenges that beset her. She doggedly tackled the societal restrictions placed upon Victorian women, graciously deflected the selfish expectations of her family, determinedly defied the pretensions of colleagues in the Free Church mission in Nyasaland, winsomely overcame resentment in the male-dominated Cape Town medical fraternal, and withstood the growing illiberal racism endemic in the South Africa of her day.

Those who mourned her passing were drawn from all parts of South African society, from Ministers of the Crown to Xhosa dockyard workers, who, in their own ways, remembered this intelligent, intrepid, pioneering, determined, courageous woman, who as a compassionate and skilled doctor contributed so much to the wellbeing of others. But Jane Waterston was so much more the sum of all these very considerable parts. To all her gifts must be added the Christian graces of love and self-denial, which we note less for our admiration and more for our emulation.

Jane Waterston's love knew no barriers of gender, race or class. In 1929, Sir John Carruthers Beattie, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, in conferring on her an honorary degree, bore her this testimony, 'She has been a jealous fighter for the prestige of the medical and nursing professions but the most authentic record of her life work will be found written in the annals of the poor, by whom her deeds of mercy will be long remembered.'[44]

An outstanding example of the second was her immediate and instinctive response to the news brought in by an African runner, that away in the bush of Central Africa, the colonial Herbert Rhodes, older brother of Cecil J. Rhodes, had been very seriously burned by an accidental fire which had taken hold of his tent. Without hesitation, with no thought for herself and with minimal rest or refreshment on the way, she set out from Livingstonia to walk the truly perilous two hundred miles, but arrived too late to save his life.[45]

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[44] Cited by Anon. 'Jane Waterston: a Pioneer Missionary', in The South African Outlook, December 1st, 1932, p. 231.

[45] Ibid.

Little wonder the Xhosa people, noting the springy, bouncing gait of the enthusiastic young Jane, named her *Noqakata* (mother of activity), but they always coupled her activity to her Christlike, selfless love. Jane Waterston, animated by God's love, followed her Saviour wherever he led and like him 'went around doing good.'[46]

[46] Acts 10.38.