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Revival Memories.

BY THE REV. CANON W. HAY M. H. AITKEN, M.A.

THE "Twelve Days' Mission" in London in the year 1869 made, as I have said in a former article, a most profound impression upon the country at large; and as a result there began to be a great call throughout the land for both missions and missionaries. Of these last at that time there were very few; indeed, I should suppose that all the clergy in our Church that had any real capacity for such work, or experience in it, might have been numbered on the fingers of two hands. It is, I think, the glory of the mission movement that it has, under God, been the means of calling into existence within our Church quite a little army of effective and more or less experienced evangelists. I should judge that there are fifty amongst us to-day, where there was one forty years ago. Surely if this had been its only result, it alone would have sufficiently demonstrated the value of this agency.

I was at that time a curate of some three years' standing, and it was not easy for me to be spared, for even a short time, from the pressing work of a large London parish. But in William Pennefather I had a kind and sympathetic vicar, who was fully alive to the value of evangelizing efforts, and seemed to think that God had called me to this particular kind of work. It was not long, therefore, after the London Mission before I found myself taking my first independent parochial mission. I say "independent," for in the "Twelve Days' Mission" I had rather been helping men more experienced than myself than acting as missionary in the sense that we now attach to the word.

It was in a town of moderate dimensions, in the West of England, that my first mission was held, and it was arranged that my work should extend only over four days. On the fifth the Bishop of the Diocese was to come and wind up the proceedings with a closing sermon. On my arrival, I found the vicar in quarantine. Scarlet fever had broken out in his house-

hold, and he was absolutely precluded from taking any part in the proceedings. He informed me by a letter that awaited my arrival that his senior curate would act as his representative, and give me what help he could. The parish church was a very large one, and was well filled on the first Sunday evening. It was thought in those days quite improper to hold an after-meeting in the church, and so the Town Hall, which was not a very large room, but lay conveniently near the church, had been secured for the after-meeting. It was crowded, and it was evident from the very first that God was working amongst the people, and that a great impression had been made.

On the Monday night the congregation was as large as it had been on the Sunday, and on the Tuesday the Church was crammed in every part. Before the service some earnest lay folk held a consultation with the curate and myself as to the expediency of extending the mission over the following Sunday, and it was agreed that, if on that night the interest seemed to be increasing, a letter, which was actually written then and there, should be despatched to the Bishop, asking him to postpone his visit to the following Monday, and to sanction the extension of the mission to that date. I may mention that I had received by telegraph permission from my kind vicar to adopt that course. The letter was written in the name of the curate, but at our dictation, and he agreed to post it after the service, if there were still signs of deepening interest. With regard to these there could be no doubt. The church was crowded that night, as I have said, from end to end, and there was a most wonderful breakdown in the after-meeting, where the number of anxious souls was so great that we hardly knew how to deal with them. I was staying with some excellent elderly ladies, who lived on the top of the hill nearly a mile away from the church, and I well remember with what joy we made our way home that night, full of hope and expectation that we were to have a blessed harvest-week.

The next afternoon they had taken me out for a drive, and on returning we met the curate in the suburb of the

town. He beckoned to us to stop, and then proceeded to inform us that on reflection he had decided that it would be better to adhere to the original programme, and that this was also the view of the Bishop.

It appears that, instead of posting the letter, he had suppressed it, and had started off at shout of morn to the palace, without even consulting his vicar. He had conveyed to the worthy Bishop the idea that we were all getting very excited, and that it would be very much wiser to bring the thing to a prompt conclusion, and accordingly he handed me a letter from his Lordship, containing this decision, and concluding with the words: "My sermon will be *sedative*; I hope that you will work towards this end."

My feelings of indignation and disappointment can better be imagined than described; but there was no help for it: we had to submit to everything, except the administration of sedatives—that was too much for even Episcopal authority to enforce. Again the church was crowded, and again the power of God was present, both to wound and to heal, but it was heart-breaking to feel that the whole place was being stirred, and then to have to turn one's back upon all the fair promise of the work. The Bishop invited me to meet him at tea the next day, before the service, and heard so much, from others, I believe, as well as from myself, of what God was doing amongst us, that, I think, he himself caught something of the mission fire, and I don't remember that the sedative element was very much in evidence in his sermon; but with the after-meeting which followed in the hall I had to bring my work to a close, and I cannot, even now, after all these years, recall without the keenest regret this untimely conclusion of my first mission.

Another mission, in which I took part while still a curate, was held in one of the largest towns of the Principality, and was one of the most remarkable that I have ever worked in. The missionaries for the whole town, which at that time had only four churches, were my dear father, Robert Aitken of

Pendeen, my elder brother, at that time Vicar of St. Paul's, Penzance, and my lifelong friend (as I may almost call him), Sholto C. Douglas, who now bears the title of Lord Blythswood. The dear old vicar of the town was a keen man of business, and had done yeoman service for the external interests of the Church; but the spiritual tone of the parish was low, and a spiritual revival was sorely needed; and by God's mercy it came.

It is not too much to say that the whole place was stirred, and so intense did the interest become that ordinary business was almost suspended. It seemed as if people could hardly think or speak of anything else but the mission. Perhaps this was partly due to the fact that some of the most prominent people in the place came under its influence, and were conversed with in the after-meetings. One leading merchant who was considered a rather advanced High Churchman, but who was really living an immoral life, found my dear father's preaching somewhat disquieting, and for that reason mainly, I believe, took refuge at St. Nicholas Church, where my brother was preaching. Here, however, he fared no better, for the preacher's text was: "Thou hast been partaker with the adulterers. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; and thou thoughtest wickedly that I was even such as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set in order before thee the things that thou hast done."

It was arranged that, when the various services broke up, there should be a general "after-meeting" in a large central schoolroom; and thither the unhappy man betook himself, with the arrow of conviction quivering in his heart. He was recognized by the vicar's wife, who, noticing the signs of sorrow in his face, begged me to go to him as soon as the work of dealing with the anxious began. I found him completely broken down, and as I was endeavouring to press upon him the message of pardon, he turned on me a look of anguish that I shall never forget, as he whispered: "It is written, 'an adulterer shall not inherit the kingdom of God.'"

I arranged to see him the following afternoon, and found him in the same state of agonizing remorse. "One thing alone,"

he said, "gives me a ray of hope; I have told my poor dear wife of all, and she has actually forgiven me, and if she can forgive so foul a wrong, surely God cannot be less forgiving than she is." When next I called, he caught sight of me as I approached his house, and, pressing past the butler, opened the door for me himself. What a change there was in that face! It seemed positively radiant with the joy of pardon; verily God had put off his sackcloth and girded him with gladness. The sequel of his life showed the reality of his conversion; he lived and died a good Christian man, although, unfortunately, his usefulness was somewhat diminished by the extreme Church views into which he drifted. Both he and his wife have long since passed away, so I am in no way breaking confidence in telling this story of God's grace to one who had much forgiven.

One of the most interesting of my early missions was that held at All Saints', Derby, in the year 1873, when my friend already referred to, the present Lord Blythswood, was vicar. The mission opened with a prayer-meeting in the schoolroom, in which I gave an address to workers; but at the end I suggested that perhaps there might be someone present—possibly just one—who had not yet yielded to Christ, and I made an appeal to any such to yield then and there. The vicar took up this suggestion, and, I confess, somewhat surprised me by the insistence with which he urged it. I had not thought of the meeting as an evangelizing meeting at all, and perhaps may have felt as if this urgent appeal were somewhat out of place.

But the sequel showed that my good friend had been Spirit-led. An utterly careless, godless man, who had happened to pass by just as the people were crowding in, was moved by curiosity to enter the room, just to see what was going on. It flashed into his mind that he must be the one man that we were speaking about, and that God had sent this message direct to him. So powerfully did this conviction lay hold upon him that he broke down there and then, and I believe the conversion work of the mission began with him.

The crowds that thronged the church during that mission were something wonderful to witness. Up in one corner of the church there was erected a huge monument to a member of the Devonshire family; it was a sort of canopy or half dome, supported upon four massive pillars. It appears that some workmen, who had been doing something to it, had left their ladder beside it, and when we entered the church we found that quite a number of men had climbed the ladder, and were sitting upon the flat top of the canopy; and it was stated afterwards that one man was brought to God there and then, as he sat listening on the top of the monument. The vicar was a great believer in small Bible-meetings, in which young Christians could be placed under the care of some more experienced member of the flock, and trained for service by Bible-study. Six years later, when he was leaving the parish for a London charge, he told me that not less than twenty-nine such meetings had been organized after the mission, and he did not think that up to that time one of them had fallen through.

But the mission which I always look back upon as that in which I was permitted to reap my largest harvest was held in Leeds two years later. I came on to St. James's Church straight from a very blessed time at the Dome, Brighton. Perhaps I had taxed my voice too severely, or perhaps I may have caught cold on the journey, but, whatever the cause, I lay awake on that Saturday night coughing most of the time, and found myself next morning almost voiceless. I mention this, because it certainly was a remarkable thing that the most successful mission that I ever held should have been commenced in such utter weakness. A doctor was sent for, and my throat was painted; but it seemed more than doubtful whether I should be able to make myself heard across the church. My morning sermon was whispered rather than spoken, but, strange to say, my voice was a trifle stronger in the evening, and before the week ended I was ready for the very exacting work that lay before me in the great Town Hall. The crowds were so large that it was thought expedient to migrate from St. James's

Church to this huge hall for the second week, and before we had been there many days it was crowded in the middle of the day, chiefly by business men. At night the numbers were so large that several of the chapels in the vicinity of the hall were thrown open and filled with the overflow. Night by night the large room set apart for the anxious was filled with seeking souls, and our chief difficulty was to find workers to deal with those who required help. I saw beside me one night a member of the Town Council, whom I knew to bear the reputation of being a Christian man, and, turning to him, asked if he would go and speak to two or three young men who were kneeling by themselves with no one to help them. He replied that he could not venture to attempt anything of the kind; but I had to answer, "If you don't, I fear no one else can be spared, for all are busy. Can you not tell them just how the light came to you?"

Very timidly he fell on his knees beside one of the young men, and just did what I suggested, with the result that before he had been speaking long the light broke upon the young fellow, and he began to rejoice and praise God. Greatly encouraged, he proceeded to help the second and the third, with equally happy results, and soon there was no keener worker in the room than he. When we reached the retiring-room, this good man came in with us, and, flinging his arms round dear old Canon Jackson's neck, he fairly sobbed for joy of heart to think that God should have allowed him to take part in such happy work. On my return to Liverpool, where Moody's mission was just beginning, this gentleman suddenly reappeared upon the scene. "Can you give me," he asked, "a ticket to go and work amongst the anxious in the inquirers' room? If you can, I am going to stay and help; but if not, I return by the night train. I have come across, not so much to hear Moody, as to have the joy of leading a few more souls to Christ."

I have mentioned this incident because it illustrates another phase of the value of missions. How many effective workers throughout our land to-day owe their efficiency under God to

what they have learned in their efforts to help anxious souls during a mission season!

Ah, those dear old memories! how they crowd into one's mind as one looks back upon the past, until sometimes one is tempted to say with the ancient prophet, "Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desireth the first ripe fruit."

But though missions are a much more difficult work to-day, this is not because they have failed, but because they have to so large an extent succeeded. Their influence has so penetrated the country that the mission message is no longer a novelty—men know it well; and where it is not a savour of life unto life, it proves the savour of death unto death.

There are probably a larger number of really converted men and women in our midst to-day than there ever were before, and they are carrying on all over our land—many of them at any rate—conversion work in a thousand ways that were never thought of forty years ago. Missions are as much needed as ever, and are still doing a most important work. But they depend for their success now, much more than they used to do, upon the personal influence exercised by the local clergy and workers. Where these do their part well, great results still may be expected to follow; but where all is left to the attractive power of the preacher's eloquence, disappointment is almost sure to ensue.

And there is still a vast field open to this agency in which as yet no such harvest labourers have had a chance of doing their reaping work. It is a sorrowful fact that there are still thousands of parishes in our land where no mission has ever been held, and a still larger number where such an effort is only a memory of the remote past. Well would it be, indeed, if our clergy would more fully recognize, both in town and country, the value of this agency, and give their people a chance of benefiting by it.

Surely there are very few parishes that would not be the better for a mission once in every four or five years at least.

To me it seems as if our clergy incur a very grave responsibility when they neglect an agency that has been so signally owned and blessed of God.



Modern Criticism and Candidates for Ordination.

By F. E. PARGITER, M.A.

THE supply of candidates for ordination in the Church of England is a matter of the first importance. For some years past the number has steadily diminished, and at present appears to have become somewhat stationary at a low figure. The diminution has been noticed with concern by the authorities in the Church. Various reasons have been suggested, and no doubt the change is the result of various factors, for the conditions are complex. This is indicated by the statement which has been made on authority, that the diminution is among candidates of higher social position, while those of lower position continue to present themselves in much the same number as formerly. The main factors therefore are such as influence the former rather than the latter.

It is not the intention of this article to discuss the whole question, but rather to deal with one matter, which is of the greatest importance, and yet has hardly been brought into such prominence as should be given to it in this connection. It is the subject of belief in the Holy Scriptures as affected by the Higher Criticism.

It is obvious that the position of the teachers of a religion which is based on sacred writings is related most closely to the authority of those writings—that is, to their genuineness and trustworthiness when critically examined. The Bible has been subjected to a rigorous scrutiny in its nature as a collection of books written by different authors in different ages, and the conclusions which have been enunciated by the Higher Criticism necessarily concern all those who have, or will have, to teach it.