

Our Contributors.

A Tribute to a Great Preacher,

BY PROF. W. G. JORDAN D.D.

Dr. Parker, of the City Temple, was, since the death of Spurgeon, the English preacher most widely known throughout the world. That pulpit was the throne from which, for more than a quarter of a century, he executed a powerful and beneficial influence. In the summer of 1901 I had another opportunity of attending one of those famous Thursday services. I met there a Presbyterian layman from Ontario, and a recent graduate of Knox College; and I daresay that if the census of that congregation could have been taken, the result would have been to show that it contained people from all parts of the British Empire, and representatives of almost all the Christian communions. When a man has sustained a service of that kind for over a quarter of a century, there is no apology needed for calling him "a great preacher." In this case also, it is true that "you cannot deceive all the people all the time." No sensational tricks or vulgar eccentricity will account for such real success and abiding usefulness.

At the close of the service just mentioned, I went into the vestry to shake hands with the preacher, and to thank him for helpful stimulus received in bygone days. I am not much given to that kind of demonstration, perhaps, like other Presbyterian people not so much as I ought to be. On this occasion I had a special stimulus, as I wished to thank Dr. Parker for a wise and timely letter he had written some time before, to a well-known religious journal on the subject of Old Testament Criticism. He seemed to appreciate this sincere testimony from one specially engaged in Old Testament study. When I told that about twenty-five years had passed since I first heard him preach and that I still had a lively recollection of the sermon, he replied "You see I still preach the same old Gospel." True, it was the same Gospel with the same tone and colour if not quite the old vigour. And now he has gone to his rest and reward, as I write this brief tribute there is a feeling of loneliness creeping over the spirit, and I for one feel poorer because Joseph Parker is gone.

Parker was first and last a preacher, a preacher to intelligent men and to preachers. He wrote many books, with whatever strength and weakness they possessed they were the books of a preacher. Our young men—who are studying the great art of preaching should possess and read some of these suggestive expositions. Some went to hear Parker as they went to hear Henry Irving, and these said that "he would have made a great actor." I do not know whether or not he would have made a great actor. I am not a dramatic critic. But I know that he was not an actor, all the drama of human life, the tragic results of wickedness, the tenderness of Christ's compassion, the efficiency of His atoning love—all this was

real and living. Rich meditations on these great themes he brought into the pulpit and set them on fire. He knew when he had hold of a great central truth, and he was determined that his hearers should know it. He was a strong, sturdy man with a powerful voice and he dominated his audience. He could speak in italics or in capital letters. He could use an illustration in such a manner that it stood out in bold relief like a living picture making the principle set forth as clear as day light to those who possessed any intelligence. The man who was offended by the preacher's mannerisms and did not go back, suffered a great loss. I was exceedingly fortunate in the first sermon I heard him preach but I must reserve that for another day.

Parker had his faults then? You say, Oh yes! lots of them. He was very much open to criticism. Some superfine people settled the whole business by saying that he was vulgar and bombastic; that is futile criticism, which shows the limitation of those who make it. He was not one of the men of whom all spoke well; he was not sufficiently negative, there was something in him that must come out. Your small perfect people never explode, they do not possess the energy to make an explosion. They are always smoothly happy and graciously self-satisfied. Dr. Parker sometimes brought his withering satire to bear upon that class of people, and one felt that it was not enough to be perfect and find fault with other people. To come up to the preacher's ideal one must possess the power to flame out with indignation against wickedness, and fight with all one's might against insolent tyranny and braggart hypocrisy. If Parker was not a model of neatness, and a pattern of perfection he was a man of real originality and tremendous force. From his great efforts men went away and said "Yes, that is preaching; there is a real man and a living voice."

I remember very distinctly a smart critical article on Parker written by a very clever young man, whom at that time I numbered among my friends. It patronised the great preacher, it pointed out how ridiculous some of his mannerisms were, how he played strong tricks with his handkerchief, how "he roared and snook his mane." We were very young then as a certain writer says "No one was ever so young as we were then." I had to admit the truth of some of these criticisms, and I learned some homiletic tricks from my friend, but when I heard the strong man deliver a great discourse full of philosophic insight, poetic beauty and sublime passion, all these little things were swept away. My friend is a respectable vicar in the Church of England and has published many homiletic helps. I am trying in my feeble fashion to teach young men how and what to preach, and Parker having through all those changeable years fought a good fight "in the fierce light that beats upon a throne" has just finished a glorious career. What career is nobler than that of a great preacher? To me, at least, it is an inspiration to remember that such a man has lived.

Notes by Nemo

In these days there is an increase of attractive interesting books dealing with missionaries and their work, but what is more there is a cheerful recognition of the powerful beneficial influence exerted by the leading missionaries, and that in quarters where at one time the attitude was coldly critical. There are now thousands or men on the foreign field, and it is to be expected that some of them will be weak and indiscreet, but on the whole they are a fine body of men, and the really great leaders in this wonderful work have compelled the respect of the world by their high intelligence and statesmanlike skill as well as by their sincerity and courage. We may safely say that many of these men have shown capability and character that is quite equal to anything seen in the noblest specimens of workers in any other sphere. The following sympathetic notice of a South African missionary is taken from the Literary supplement of the London Times.

"A South African Seer"—"There is hardly any other word which will describe the character and work of the man whose life is presented in John Mackenzie of Shoshong, written by his son Professor Douglas Mackenzie, of Chicago (Hodden and Stoughton, 7s 6d. net.) Again and again the reader is reminded of such work as Samuel did for Israel, bringing a divine message, seeing justice done between man and man, seeing a definite example in his own person. Mackenzie was, indeed, a man who deserved and needed a biography, and in his son he has found a chronicler whose impartiality is worthy of acknowledgment, and whose only fault is that he did not give his work an additional month or two for the sole purpose of compression. John Mackenzie was a strange mixture. His youth, passed in the town of Elgin, was characterized by a devout religious introspection. He made daily entries of his meditations in paper diaries that he stitched together. He told the Almighty all about himself. "Every day"—so his confession ran—"I am engaged as a printer. I cannot then think on Thee, or if I do I cannot think on my work." And you fancy, as you read his musings, that you have come upon a Henry Martyn. But his acceptance by the London Missionary Society plunged him into the heart of Southern Central Africa, and turned his youthful mysticism into farseeing statesmanship. He was perhaps never quite understood by the directors of his society; committees mostly fail to manage missionaries of more than ordinary ability. But he takes his place among the men who have made history in South Africa. His one fault in the eyes of Boer and Afrikaner, in the eyes of Mr. Rhodes and the Colonial Office as it then was, was an intense sympathy with the Bechuana, which impelled him to resist the mere land grabber with all his might. But his experience of the country and his knowledge of its problems were possessed in the same degree by few other men. He had his first taste of Boer ambitions in 1859; he interviewed Moselekatshe in 1863; he drew up the proposals of Macheng, the Bamangwato chief, to the Governor of the Cape at the time of the gold discovery in the Tati district in 1867; on various occasions he conducted earnest campaigns in this country in favour of a