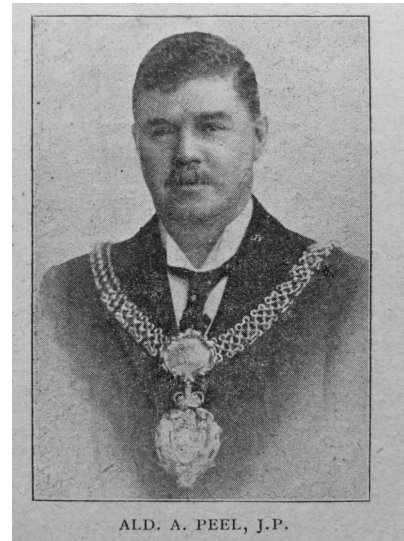


The Lord Mayor of Bradford - Ald. A. Peel, J.P.

Transcription of article published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Rev. F. Hobson

IT is always interesting to trace the career of one who has risen from obscurity to eminence. "From Half-timer to Lord Mayor" was the headline in *The Times* on November 10th, 1916, when it recorded the election of Alderman Abram Peel, J.P., as Lord Mayor of Bradford. At seven and a half years of age he was working in the mill as half-timer; at fifty-three years of age he was unanimously chosen to be the chief citizen of his native city. Whether romantic-like, as Dick Whittington, Alderman Peel listened to the bells and caught in their music the prophecy of his Lord Mayoralty, nevertheless it is a fact that early in life he had a premonition that one day he would occupy this eminent position. At the opening of the Bradford Town Hall in 1873 his father took him down to see the procession, and, pointing out to him the new building, then considered to be the most magnificent town hall in the provinces, remarked, "You'll happen sit in there as a Councillor some day, lad." Surely he was the son of a prophet!



ALD. A. PEEL, J.P.

It has been said that when God wants a great man He begins with his mother.

Like many successful men, Alderman Peel owes much to a devoted mother. On the day of his election as Lord Mayor he related an episode which made an impression on his mind which he thinks will never be erased. His mother went to his schoolmaster and requested a certificate to permit her son to go full time. In a sorrowful manner, knowing the need in the home for further earnings, he replied, "I am very sorry, Mrs. Peel, but your son has not got his full attendance, and I cannot give you a leaving certificate." The mother, disappointed, turned to her son and said, "He that feeds the ravens will feed us." With youthful assurance he replied, "Never mind, mother, some day I shall have four pounds a week, and be Mayor of Bradford."

It is evident that early in life he was moved with large ambitions, some of which have passed beyond the realm of dreams. To-day ideals of the loftiest type are the controlling forces of his life. Best of all, with true humility we believe he would say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

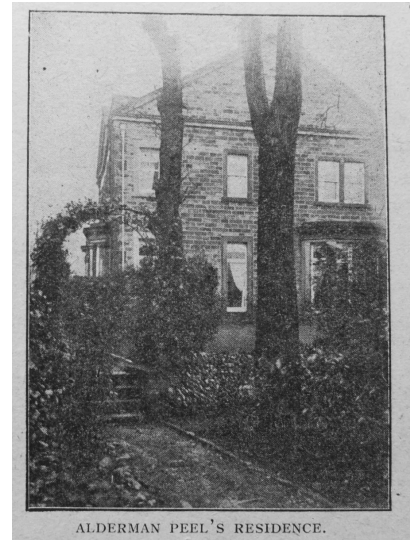
Alderman Peel is a man of many gifts. A more genial spirit it is hardly possible to imagine. His business acumen, technical knowledge, and administrative qualities in themselves would carry him far. But those who know him most intimately would say that the key to his successful life and far-reaching influence is to be found in his high-toned and deeply religious character. It is



MRS. A. PEEL.

from this point of view, as Primitive Methodists, we rejoice in the honour which has crowned his career. He is a true son of our Church; pre-eminently a product of Primitive Methodism. So long as our Church can produce such men, fit by character and ability to occupy the most responsible positions in the community, it will be an influential force in civic and national affairs.

From childhood the Lord Mayor has been associated with the Dudley Hill Church of the Bradford Fifth Circuit. The story of his conversion is beautiful in its simplicity. It occurred at a week-evening service in the old chapel. On the evening of the day when the Rev. T. Dearlove was interred the Rev. Mark Knowlson, the second minister, was planned at Dudley Hill, but could not get back from the funeral in time. Seven people turned up for the service, including a lad of sixteen years of age. They were about to depart without having any meeting when an elderly man, David Worsman, said, "We'll never break off without having a meeting of some sort. Let us have a prayer-meeting"! Like true Primitive Methodists, they had a prayer-meeting, and in that little gathering the lad, Abram Peel, gave his heart to God. One member still remains in the Dudley Hill Church who was in that memorable little service, Mrs. Butler. Would that the Church to-day had such faith in its prayer-meetings! From that time Alderman Peel has actively engaged in the work of the Dudley Hill Church. For over thirty years he has been Sunday school superintendent, and the new school is a monument to his faith and zeal. For a considerable period he has been class leader, trustee, and church treasurer. He has been circuit steward since the formation of the circuit in 1900. Needless to observe, he has put heart and soul into all his service.. He has never been an armchair official and member. Each Sabbath he is to be found in the house of God, not once, but twice, and upon the alternate Sunday, when he is superintendent, three times, unless there are adequate reasons for absence. He never makes a busy week in commercial or civic work an excuse to stay away from worship. He joyously lives up to the belief that he and his household shall serve the Lord. In his Christian service he shows a worthy example, whether it be when he takes his turn to sit amongst the boys, or when he engages in the prayer-meeting.



Some years ago, when he lived in the immediate locality of the church, so frequently was he called upon to visit the poor and sick and dying that he was known as "the Vicar of Dudley Hill." It was a fine tribute to an unselfish Christian service. It would be well for Church and community if more leading men of commerce and civic position would emulate such service and find in it the source of true delight and satisfaction.

Whilst naturally his interest has been concentrated in his own church, Alderman Peel has a wide Connexional outlook. All that concerns the welfare of the Connexion is of interest to him. He is a frequent visitor to Conference, and has been delegate on several occasions. When the Conference was held in Bradford in 1910 he was chairman of the Arrangements Committee, and was elected one of the four to the Norwich Conference. He is a director of the Elmfield College.

In all his service the Lord Mayor has had the truest helpmate in the Lady Mayoress. She also has been connected with the Dudley Hill Church from childhood. There is no place, apart from her own home, which holds such a warm place in her affections. Very few of its services does she miss. Not that it has always been easy for her to attend. The mother of a large family—five boys and five girls—must have had to make many a sacrifice and contrivance to be present at the means of grace, and to do all the outside work which the Lady Mayoress manages to do. Her deepest interest has always centred in her home. To see and to know her family is to realise what a splendid mother she must have been. All are interested in the Church like their father and mother. On the day of the Lord Mayor's election Alderman Sir James Hill, Bart., M.P., who made the nomination, paid a well-deserved tribute to Mrs. Peel, and said that any lady who had reared a family as she had was worthy to be Lady Mayoress, a sentiment which was warmly applauded.



The feature of the life and character of the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress is their genial spirit and unostentatious and unaffected manner. The humblest citizen will at once feel at home with them and receive the kindest consideration as well as the highest. They have come from the people, and the people feel they belong to them. "Our Abram" epitomises the popular regard for the Lord Mayor.

It is with no small amount of pride that the Lord Mayor points out the cottage in which he was born in Rooley Lane,

near the Dudley Hill Church. His father was a miner, and his mother a weaver. It has been by dint of hard work and determination, allied to high character, that he has risen to be one of the leading captains of industry in Bradford. His chief concerns are Abram Peel Bros., Ltd., a branch of the British Cotton and Wool Dyers' Association, Ltd., and Robinson and Peel, Wool Combers, Recta Mill, where he is partner with Alderman G.H. Robinson, J.P., his bosom friend. In Bradford their friendship is so well known that they are called "David and Jonathan." They were contemporaneously raised to the aldermanic bench in 1904, and appointed magistrates in 1906. "Jonathan" was Lord Mayor in 1914, and it was inevitable that in 1916, when the Liberals were due to make another choice, it would be "David." Alderman Peel has sat on the City Council since 1897, and ungrudgingly has he given his services to the public cause. The education, health and morality of the city have ever claimed his closest attention. His chief work of late years has been in connection with the Corporation Conditioning House, of which he is chairman. This is almost a unique civic institution. Probably there is nothing quite like it in Great Britain. It aims to secure honesty in the many difficult commercial transactions which a highly technical business like the Bradford trade involves. It tests the wool, tops, yarns, and cloths, and gives its certificate, and thus is the most reliable trade guarantee to the world at large of the quality of Bradford goods. In its success the Lord Mayor has been largely identified.

Both the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress have travelled abroad extensively on business and pleasure. They have journeyed all through the States and Canada, and paid frequent visits to France, Spain, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. The Lord Mayor was in Madrid at the time of the war between America and Spain, and had exciting experiences. Three of their sons spent some time at Celle in Germany in order to acquire the language, and consequently they visited Germany a good deal, and at that time thought the country very fine. The Lord Mayor enjoys a game of golf, when he can get one, and in 1908 was the winner of the Corporation Golf Handicap.

We have had many Primitive Methodists as mayors, but, apart from one nearly half a century ago, Ald. Peel is the only one who has been a Lord Mayor. We could wish for no worthier or more popular representative of our Church.

References

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