

John Vernon - Model Choir Master

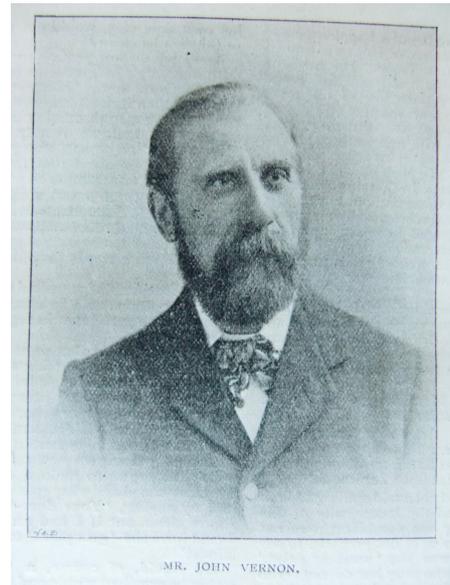
Transcription of Sketch in the Christian Messenger by W.R.B.

The subject of this sketch bears an honoured name in the city and district of Chester. His brother is a member of the Council, Board of Guardians, Free Library Committee, Governor of the Grosvenor Museum, City Infirmary, etc., etc., and no citizen stands in higher repute for genuine integrity and moral worth. He is the superintendent of our George Street school, and no truer or more valuable school-worker exists in the country.

Mr. John Vernon, though he has not taken the same civic honours as his brother, is nearly as well known, and is universally beloved. His forte is music, and one only needs to mention that he was in the choir at ten years of age and has been the choir-master of the most valuable choir of our George Street church since 1863, a period of thirty-seven years, to show in which direction his genius and sympathy flow. Mr. Vernon thoroughly believes in warmth *versus* brilliancy, and would very much prefer to have lively whole-souled congregational singing than mere scientific finish and execution. This by no means implies that he is prejudiced in favour of old tunes, though he can lead them as but few can, but at intervals he blends the modern with the ancient, and whilst sustaining sweetness and fervour keeps his sixty to seventy colleagues thoroughly abreast of the times. There is the higher spiritual accent in the song of this choir; nearly, if not quite all, are members of the church. When the soul breathes in the song the accents have a richer, mellower tone.

In 1875, after an illness of six weeks' duration, the choir presented their leader with a very beautiful illuminated address and a valuable baton. Mr. Vernon was married in 1869 to a most estimable lady, a true help-meet. The choir took advantage of the silver wedding to again express their confidence and love by presenting life-sized portraits of his wife and himself chastely and artistically framed. During 36 years Mr. Vernon could have been at his post in 3,852 services: he was actually present at 3,834, and absent only 18, and this was accounted for by sickness.

It ought to be said that Mr. Vernon's father used to lead the singing in the grand old pioneer days of our Church. If any hoary-headed Cestrian ever speaks of the far-off past, the halcyon days of fifty years since, he is sure to get into raptures over the Folly Field Camp Meetings, when from over an area of half the county men and women used to gather in those early days of power and glory for worship and tell you of the singing, of the rare old marching choruses led by Mr. Vernon. Perhaps there is something in heredity. It is very interesting fact that the name of Vernon can be traced almost from the commencement of our church-roll, and exists to day in the fourth generation. Mr. John Vernon, born June 17th, 1847, is in the flower and vigour of a robust manhood, active, alert, enterprising, always ready to give a whole-hearted enthusiasm for any good work. For a great many



years he has been an energetic school-worker. He would very much like to see formed a union of our choirs south of the Mersey for mutual improvement and inspiration, and any choir-master writing him in connection with this idea would have a quick and interesting response.

We would like to mention that Mrs. Vernon is in complete accord with the aims and ideals of her husband. They are united in every good word and work. Their home is a sanctuary of hospitality, of spiritual life, of peace. It is just one of those delightful retreats into which any lover of Zion finds 'Heaven on the way to Heaven.'

References

Christian Messenger 1900/88

[Census Returns and Births, Marriages & Deaths Registers](#)