

An Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, Evangelists
"And he gave to some (to be) evangelists." – EPHES. iv., 11.

Transcription of Sketch in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by S. Horton

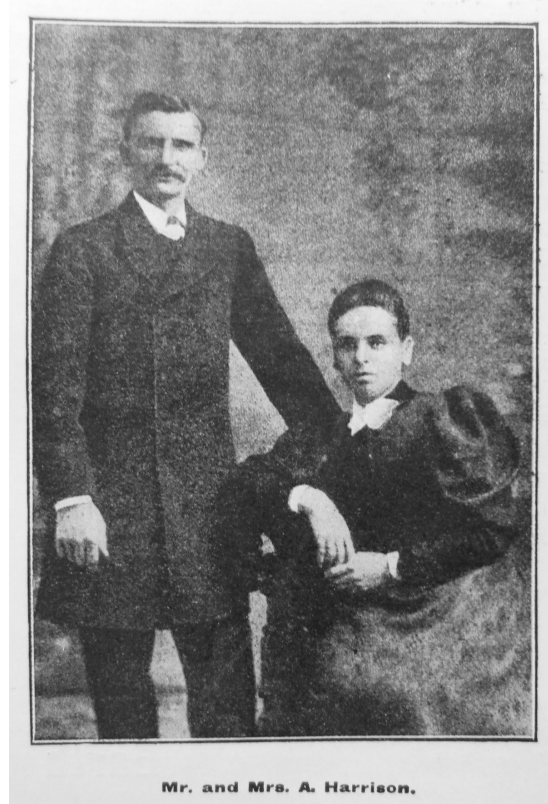
This is pre-eminently true of Mr. and Mrs. A. Harrison. That they have received the Divine call and are working along the line of the Divine purpose none can doubt who have witnessed the marvellous success which has attended their labours. Whom God calls he equips. Those whom he sends never go on a fruitless errand, a great passion for souls distinguishes them. Man's need of salvation and God's provision for that need is the burden of their addresses, and everywhere they have found a glad response to their appeals.

Having recently had the opportunity of a few days' holy and helpful fellowship with them, I took the opportunity of asking them "*to tell their experience*," both for the strengthening of my own faith, and the encouragement of others who are anxious to be soul-winners.

First I requested Mr. Harrison to tell me the story of his early life. To the student of human nature processes are interesting as well as results. When God wants a man for special service he seldom nurses him in the lap of luxury. Heroes are not made in the bowers of ease. Saints are not fed on sweetmeats.

The story of Mr. Harrison's childhood is a most pathetic one. He came from a home cursed by drink. His father was for many years a member and official of a Methodist church. But one fateful night a grave act of injustice was done in a leaders' meeting which rankled in his soul, and he went straight from the meeting to a public-house, and for the first time he returned home drunk. For many years he drank all he earned, and the mother, a splendid God-fearing woman, unable to give her children more than one meal a day, used to pray that God would keep the hunger away from her children, and says her son, "I have seen more hungry on four meals a day than I was on one." She tried to bring her children up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. "I remember," says Albert, "being sent home from the Sunday school because I had no shoes or stockings like the other children, the teacher telling me not to come back till my mother could afford to purchase me some.

"I went home weeping for my little soul was sore wounded. My mother asked me what was the matter, and I was afraid to tell her lest it should cause her pain, but when at length she got it from me, she took me into the room and prayed with me, and then said, 'Never mind my son, some day you may have as good shoes and stockings as she has,' but I could tell it had struck home like a barbed arrow. I have preached to that woman since, and at the close of the service she came and



apologised for sending me home. What un-Christly things some professing followers of Christ will do.”

“ Tell me the story of your conversion,” I said. ‘

“Well,” he replied, “I never remember the time when I had not some craving after God. My mother’s prayers and example had a powerful influence over me. I should have been converted as a child by the work of God’s grace. I attended some services conducted by Mr. Henry Holloway, one of the greatest evangelists I ever heard, and was greatly impressed. But when I went forward at the close of the meeting a man thrust me back, and told me it was not for boys but for men and women. The act robbed the Lord of nine years of my life. At nineteen I was a wild harum-scarum youth, with a local reputation as an athlete. I was captain of a football team, had beaten a professional boxer, and was a fast runner, all of which tended to give me some prominence and importance among the young men of the neighbourhood. A revival of religion broke out in Coatbridge, a place Peter Mackenzie once described “as the mouth of Hell.” And with its great iron furnaces, vomiting flames into the sky, it certainly looks like it. One Saturday I had to play in a football match, my mother said before I started, ‘Albert, remember I am praying for you,’ I never played faster or harder than I did that day, and I kicked the only goal that was obtained. My team was of course very enthusiastic, and wanted me to go and celebrate the victory at a public-house, I replied, ‘No, I am going home, my mother is praying for me. This is the last match I shall ever play.’ And so it was. I went to the Salvation Army barracks that night, and at the close of the meeting went out for salvation. But no light came, and it was not till three weeks after when on my knees in my own room that peace came to my heart, and I could truly sing:

‘My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear,
He owns me for His child,
I can no longer fear.
With confidence now draw nigh,
And Father, Abba, Father, cry.’

“And how came you to think of being an evangelist?” I enquired.

“Oh! Well,” said he, “the Salvation Army has always known how to use her enthusiasts. Conversion means to them service. Dumb Christians have an uneasy time of it. My first effort at public speaking was in the open-air, I had committed to memory a tract, and I intended to repeat it, but the only word I could remember was ‘Lost ’ - I shouted that out at the top of my voice and then collapsed. But I went on making other attempts, and soon I was sent to the Salvation Army Training Home. Before going I had the joy of leading my father to the penitent form. So foolish and ignorant was I in those days that I offered to buy him some intoxicating drink if he would go with me to the meeting. He went and ere the meeting broke up he found his long-lost peace of soul, and to the day of his death lived a consistent Christian life. But such was the surprise and incredulity caused by his conversion among his old companions that he was followed about the streets for weeks to see if he entered a public-house.

"The Salvation Army," he went on in answer to my questions, "is a splendid training school for young recruits. General Booth is a wonderful man - and the glamour does not wear off by personal contact. I soon won his confidence and was sent to take charge of a corps in a south of England town. Uphill work: I should think so. I remember the first sabbath a wealthy gentleman in the neighbourhood attended the service and asked me to accompany him to tea. When we reached his villa and had entered he said, 'May I take your hat?' I replied, 'No, sir,' for I thought he wanted to keep it and it was the only one I possessed. So unaccustomed was I to the forms of educated and refined society when tea was served I could not make out what the serviette was, put by my plate. I thought it was a pocket handkerchief. But I had to learn by watching what others did, and soon I managed to get along without embarrassment.

"In London I had a rough time of it, for the Army then was not popular with the lower orders of Cockneydom, and I remember how on one occasion we were so bespattered with rotten eggs that the people, when we arrived at the barracks, were glad to escape, holding their handkerchiefs to their noses. Yet I gloried in being counted a fool for Christ's sake, and rejoice now that I was counted worthy to endure persecution for His sake."

"You have been abroad I believe. Was it in connection with the Army?"

"Yes, the General requested me to go to Australia where the Army was just beginning its work. I had the joy of being one of the seven who met and commenced the meetings which resulted in what is now known as the Great Revival. There I met with the late Rev. John McNeill - whom I shall always hold in profound reverence. What a man of God he was. Like his Scottish namesake, he possessed the saving grace of humour, and, like him, he knew how to get at the hearts of the people. Dr. Torrey and others came and rendered assistance, and the time of 'Divine visitation' will long be remembered on the Australian continent. At Bendigo I had the honour of being imprisoned for preaching the gospel, and the joy of pointing one of the warders to Christ while there.

"Returning to England I left the Army, and in 1893 married Miss Woodhead, of Gainsborough. God has given me a true helpmeet, and henceforth my usefulness, and happiness were trebled. '

"It was through the Rev. A.J. Campbell, then of Motherwell, that I was led to throw in my lot with the Primitive Methodists.

"Our first great mission for what is now my own Church was at Blackhill and Consett. Somebody told me there was a man there who could shout 'glory' louder than I could. He tried it the first Sunday morning but I beat him. What scenes we witnessed during that mission. God put his seal upon our work. Since then we have been going on from mission to mission, and now we cannot respond to one tithe of the applications sent to us. The Lord has opened a very wide and effectual door. Sixty thousand souls have professed to get converted under our agencies. And people wonder that I shout 'glory.' I feel sometimes like Billy Bray, if they put me in a barrel I should shout 'glory' through the bung hole. At Williamson Street, Hull, we saw marvellous scenes. At Crook the public houses were emptied. At Ashington there was a marvellous outpouring of the spirit. At Filey we saw God take hold of the fishing-folk in a way that has not been equalled since the days of Johnny Oxtoby. At Thornton Street, Hull, we had Pentecost over again.

“One of the strangest and most beautiful incidents in connection with evangelistic work occurred during a mission at the Livingstone Hall, Edinburgh. A poor blind girl had brought, as a companion, to the service, another blind girl, who was also dumb and partially deaf. She, however, managed to catch a few words, and at the close she indicated to her companion that she would like to seek the Saviour. The two knelt together, and the blind girl, by pressure of the hand, translated to her friend the preacher’s directions to look to Jesus. Bye and bye she rose with beaming face, and indicated that she had found Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour.”

“You generally have a ‘faith tea’ in connection with your missions, I see. How do you work that?”

“Oh!” he replied, “we don’t work it at all. We leave it to the people to bring what they like. We simply announce a tea and tell them to bring provisions for it. And somehow it always turns out right. We have had grand times at our ‘faith teas,’ and seen scores converted at the after-meetings.”

And so once more God is teaching his Church how much he can do with a consecrated agency. The spirit-filled life is the life of power. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison live in the realm of miraculous, because it is the realm of faith. They believe, therefore they conquer.

Further particulars of these consecrated evangelists may be obtained from a booklet entitled “What hath God wrought.” Price twopence: to be obtained from the bookroom.

References

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