

James Flanagan

Transcription of Obituary in the P.M. Minutes of Conference 1918

REV. J. FLANAGAN was born at Mansfield on December 18th, 1851, and was the son of an Irish father and an English mother, in whose veins flowed French blood. James Flanagan displayed something of the genius of all three races - the Celt's wit and passion, Briton's force of character and perseverance, Frenchman's sensibility and lyricism. By his passing on March 30th, at West Bridgford, our Church has lost one of its most eloquent and successful ministers, and the Church militant a personality of rare saintliness and charm. His early days were marked by struggles and hardships, from which grew tender compassion and great love for the poor, the needy, the unfortunate, in the subsequent days of his ministry. It was not until after his marriage that he came under the influence of our Church, and from his conversion to his passing he ever sought the highest and the best. In the early "eighties" his fame as an evangelist was known in every town and hamlet within 20 miles of Nottingham. In 1885 he was appointed city missionary, his labours being chiefly devoted to the Narrow Marsh, and the people tell today of his wonderful work. Later, under the United Gospel Mission, he became the minister at the Albert Hall, and for four years 2,500 people would gather to hear his sermons. At the Conference of 1891 he became a minister of our Church and was stationed at Trinity Street, London. His achievements here are without precedent in the annals of our Church. He found a Church burdened by debt, cramped in its usefulness by unsuitable premises, and with undaunted courage and the vision of a seer he set himself to provide a "workshop" suitable to the many-sided ministry needed. St. George's Hall and School are the fruits of his labours. He saw the poor, wretchedly housed, victims of a vicious system, and he became their champion. It was this passion for the poor and the downtrodden, and his faith in the power of the Christ to save and to redeem them, and not the zeal of a mere chapel builder, that held spell-bound immense crowds in Great Britain, America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. His lecture, "A Walk Round my Parish," charmed from his hearers £20,000 which was devoted to the establishment of one of the most successful Central Missions in the Metropolis. He could do no other than become an evangelist, so impassioned was he by the love of his Divine Saviour and his fellow-men. I have sat in his bedroom when he has lived those early days over again, and, with tears of gratitude rolling down his cheeks, he has told me of miraculous things which had happened and the wonderful conversions that took place. He was an omniverous reader and a close Bible student. Few men knew the Book better or loved it more. We do not hesitate to say his one object was the winning of souls. The man saintly, the seer of almost prophetic precision, the practical mystic, he built well on earth by reason of his familiarity with the New Jerusalem. He had been on the Mount and had his "patterns" of God. He achieved great beauty of literary style, and was one of the most mellifluous men we have known. As philanthropist and social philosopher his opinions were canvassed by legislators. He knew the needs and interpreted the sufferings of the people. A man of culture, he was in all and throughout all the type of the highest evangelism. James Flanagan was indeed a soul-winner. Rev. Joseph Johnson, Mr. Flanagan's immediate successor for thirteen years as superintendent, of St. George's Hall Mission, declares that "no man was ever more entitled to be regarded as the 'Good Samaritan' of these modern days. His whole passion was to do good. Night and day he yearned to lead men to Christ, and few men have a finer record of a soul saving ministry than James Flanagan." Rev. A. Taylor, his former pastor, speaks of him as the brother beloved and ever considerate, sympathetic and inspirational. His sufferings were keen. "He was crucified," he confessed, "with his Lord." But in

the calm of the strong soul and unfaltering faith, his testimony was of "grace sufficient." His sick room was the holy place. On Easter Saturday March 30th, he entered the homeland. He had expressed a wish to spend Easter with his Lord. A large and representative congregation assembled in the Canaan Church, Nottingham, on April 4th, to the funeral service. The Rev. R.W. Russell paid a touching tribute to the unique spiritual personality and great services of the sainted brother. The Revs. H.J. Taylor, J. Johnson, S. Horton, A. Parkin, W.T. Hosier and J.T. Ecob also took part. In the Central Cemetery his mortal remains were laid to rest. The memorial service was conducted by the Rev. A. Parkin in the Canaan Church, Nottingham, on April 14th. The text was, "And Enoch (Flanagan) walked with God and not, for God took him." There was a large and appreciative congregation. The chorus of his Swan Song was:

"I'm going home, I'm going home,
I'm going home to-morrow."

He has entered that home.

ALFRED PARKIN.

References

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