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SOME REMINISCENCES OF OXFORD FIFTY YEARS AGO.

By the Rev. J. D. Mullins, D.D.

I ENTERED into residence at Pembroke College, Oxford, in the short three weeks' Trinity term, in order to sit for "Smalls" and get that examination out of the way, for the present system of a corresponding examination while yet at school had not become general. I was lodged for those weeks in a set of rooms whose tenant was absent. They were the highest set of rooms in the turret over the college gateway, and tradition had it that the great Dr. Johnson had lived somewhere on that staircase. The dean of the college liked to think that his rather spacious rooms had been inhabited by the Pembroke worthy whom he always called "the great lexicographer." The undergraduate on the next floor above him was quite confident that his were Johnson's rooms; but when I think of the story of the poor proud scholar who found a new pair of shoes outside his door and indignantly threw the well-intentioned gift down the stairs, I am inclined to think that my temporary habitation might have been his after all. It would be more like his narrow means to have lived so high up. My window looked out over St. Aldate's Church, which is half embraced by the college and its Master's Lodge, and farther away to the right one could see Christ Church.

My first appearance at college chapel gave me a shock. The service was quite plain, without any music whatever. The psalms were read in alternate verses by the dean and the congregation, and the reading was expedited by the dean's habit of starting his verses when the undergraduates had barely reached the middle of theirs. The shock came at the Creed, for every one turned to the east. I had been brought up in a church where the black gown was worn in the pulpit and every other detail of the services corresponded with it. So I stood as I was, though full of fears of the possible consequences. Writing home to my father, I told him of this circumstance and he, proud of my staunch Protestantism, took my letter to our kindly vicar. He, however, an Oxonian of the old school, said that the custom was ancient and had nothing to do with modern Ritualism and I should give offence if I did not conform. Such advice coming from so impeccable a source was not to be resisted, and I obeyed; but the habits of youthful days are not easily forgotten, and I still feel some qualms if I have to turn to the east in the Creed.

On Sundays I found my way to St. Aldate's, for there were no sermons in our college chapel, although there were fuller services in other colleges, and I cannot remember Holy Communion there. The Rector of St. Aldate's was Canon Christopher, whose kindly benevolent face I had seen as I walked about the neighbouring

streets. I learned in the course of time that he had a Saturday evening meeting for undergraduates in his rectory room, and used to attend it. Mr. Christopher was at the time the only Evangelical clergyman who laid himself out to be helpful to undergraduates. Although hampered by his deafness—he and his big ear-trumpet were conspicuous at the May Meetings of the period—he had carried on those weekly gatherings for many years. Sometimes he secured Evangelical leaders to address them, but very often he spoke himself. I remember how inexhaustible he used to find the eighth chapter of Romans. Besides these meetings, he organized every year a great missionary breakfast, and at all times readily gave spiritual counsel in private to individual men who sought his help. Thus to one who was anxious and dissatisfied about his spiritual state and had laid his troubles before him, the old man said:

"Where do your desires for a higher life come from? From the Devil, or from your own sinful heart?"

"No, of course not," replied the inquirer.

"Then they must have come from God," said Mr. Christopher, and then quoted Philippians i. 6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

I have no doubt that like a wise physician of souls he heartened or guided many another as he did this young man.

Staunch Protestant and Evangelical as Canon Christopher was, his treatment of controversial subjects was without bitterness, and High Churchmen as well as Evangelicals often resorted to him. He was an embodiment of Christian love.

A year or two later a younger man became Rector of the neighbouring parish of St. Peter-le-Bailey—the Rev. F. J. Chavasse, one day to become Bishop of Liverpool. Before very long he attracted the undergraduates in large numbers to his services and Greek Testament classes. It would not have been surprising if Canon Christopher had felt himself supplanted by the new-comer, but on the contrary it was beautiful to see how heartily he rejoiced in the success of his younger rival, without a trace of jealousy or irritation.

I was one of those who, without deserting Christopher's meetings, regularly attended Chavasse's Greek Testament readings held in his house after Sunday evening service. There used to be a supply of little folding chairs; each man secured one, and with it crowded up to the speaker's desk till the large room was packed. The door had to be left open, and outside it those who could not get in sat on the landing and on the stairs above and below, content so long as they were within earshot of the lecturer. I still have some of the notes I took of those lectures, and can recall the tiny figure of the lecturer, his clear unhurried voice, and his lucid expositions. After I was ordained I showed my notes to Bishop Drury, then the Principal of the Church Missionary College, Islington, who remarked that he could not hope to work out lectures as exhaustive as they were. Those meetings were the beginning of a friendship

with one whom I loved and reverenced as I still love and reverence his memory. If I do not describe him and his manner more particularly it is because the beloved Bishop has so recently passed to his rest and the vision of him is still fresh in the minds of many.

I might perhaps mention that about the same period Canon King, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, used to hold classes for undergraduates in Christ Church. I never happened to attend them, but remember hearing that he rendered that characteristic of the ideal bishop in 1 Timothy iii. 3—*μὴ πλήκτης*—as "not given to scoring off people." Some present-day bishops might well lay that phrase to heart.

Besides the influences of Christopher and Chavasse came the afternoon University sermons in St. Mary's. The services were unique. They consisted of a hymn, the Bidding Prayer and the sermon. The preacher wore the gown and hood of his degree and a pair of bands. The floor of the church was reserved for dons and the huge gallery for the undergraduates. The gallery was a barometer of the preacher's reputation. If a famous orator was to preach, it would be full to overflowing, but if some unknown country clergyman was unwise enough to preach in his turn he was confronted with a "beggarly array of empty benches." I used to attend if I heard that the preacher was well known, and amongst them I remember hearing Liddon, Vaughan, Wilkinson (afterwards Bishop of St. Andrews), Salmon, Burgon and Magee. Twice Pusey was announced, and the excitement was great, but the crowd was disappointed on both occasions for the sermon was read by another, in the one case by Liddon and in the other by Paget, afterwards bishop.

Of Liddon, what I chiefly remember were his dark ascetic features and the vehemence with which he would fling his body from side to side in emphasizing some point in his discourse. Vaughan, then Master of the Temple, impressed me by the grave, serene goodness of his face. Wilkinson, with his sallow complexion, the skin tightly drawn over his face, his jet-black hair and his sepulchral voice, seemed almost unearthly. One of his sermons was on the Prodigal Son, and ended with some thrilling question which, alas, I have forgotten. Salmon may have been suffering from a cold, but my memory is that of a snuffling old man, hard to reconcile with one's mental portrait of the lucid and brilliant author of *The Infallibility of the Church*.

I went to hear Magee expecting a flow of glittering oratory and was disappointed. My attention was riveted for an hour and I followed his thought with ease, but I had no ears for his language. However, the sermon was published in the following week, and when I read it at leisure I discovered the charm and appropriateness of his phraseology. Surely this was after all the acme of oratory, for the words were a perfect instrument for conveying the message and did not distract attention from it to themselves. In like manner, when Demosthenes delivered his Philippics his Athenian audiences went away saying not "What a brilliant oration that

was!" but "Let us fight against Philip!" One simile used by Magee remains with me. He compared the truth to an ancient fortress round whose walls in the course of ages had clustered other buildings. When the enemies of truth assailed the fortress they would from time to time beset one of these excrescences, and the crash of its ruin would cause exultation to the enemy and dismay to the defenders of the fortress; but when the din had died down the walls of the fortress itself would be seen to stand out more impregnable than ever.

Dean Burgon was a man with a peculiarly mobile face and the muscles round his mouth worked as he paused to give effect to some utterance. He was something of a belligerent but also a man whose natural cast of thought was humorous. Thus in a sermon which dealt with the Darwinian theory, then a subject of heated controversy, I heard Burgon say, with great solemnity, "I am quite content to seek my ancestors in the Garden called Eden." —Pause.—"Let others, if they wish, look for theirs in the gardens called Zoological." And a ripple of laughter ran over the congregation.

I am afraid I did not attend those Bampton Lectures in which Hatch propounded theories of the primitive church which were then scouted as revolutionary, but have since found more favour when propounded by such men as Headlam and Streeter. I retain no recollection of any sermon by Jowett, though I must have heard him, but oddly enough I do remember a description of him in a contemporary journal—that "with the face of an elderly cherub he poured forth views which corroded like vitriol." A Balliol friend also described to me a course of Jowett's sermons in the college chapel which consisted in portraits of unnamed characters, trait after trait being added until the name was disclosed at the end. The subjects were of varied types as diverse from each other as Bunyan and Spinoza. I was assured that acute but ribald undergraduates in the stalls indulged in surreptitious bets as to the identity of the person intended, and that the odds grew closer as the clues multiplied.

Naturally the teaching of the University sermons varied from Sunday to Sunday and presented an infinity of mutual contradictions to regular hearers. One might say that the successive statements of doctrine cancelled each other! One of the old bedells is credited with the authorship of the well-known saying, "Sir, I have attended University sermons for fifty years and still I remain a Christian!"

Though I never heard Jowett in the pulpit, I used to hear a good deal about him. He was then in the zenith of his fame and had raised Balliol to the highest pitch of scholarship, and one might add of cosmopolitanism, for all colours, nationalities and creeds were represented there. Stories of him abounded. Perhaps the best was the apocryphal legend that he had accepted as an undergraduate a Thug—one of that race of religious assassins in India happily now extinct. The Thug had not been long in residence before he exercised his devotions by slaying a man on his staircase.

The Master, ever tolerant of doctrinal eccentricities, sent for the Thug and reproved him. He was sorry, he said, to interfere with any man's religious convictions, but he must not make a mess on the staircase. Some little while afterwards the Thug went to the Master and stated that he proposed to become a Christian. This time the Master remonstrated. He regretted, he said, that the Thug should abandon so picturesque a religion and one that solved so beautifully the problem of a surplus population! The kernel of truth in this burlesque bit of fiction was that the Master was understood to have dissuaded a Mohammedan from becoming a Christian! Certainly if the Master's reputation did not belie him, his creed was shorter than that of the average Mohammedan!

Amongst the celebrities of that period no one was more picturesque than Ruskin, then almost at the close of his term as Slade Professor. It was my privilege to attend one or two of his last lectures. They were held in the lecture theatre of the New Museum early in the afternoon. Undergraduates of course had to go in cap and gown and that at an hour when most self-respecting men were in flannels. The room was packed long before the time announced for the lecture, but I remember how unfair I thought it that two seats in the front were reserved for two ladies who came in at the last moment. They were the two daughters of the magnificent Dean Liddell of Christ Church. I did not know then that one of the two was the original of "Alice in Wonderland." When Ruskin appeared he had on a glaring blue stock and his gown was all awry. He wore mutton-chop whiskers, and, generally, one would never have taken him for an apostle of culture. His lecture would begin on some topic connected with art, but wandered off in all sorts of directions. The only thing I remember was his exaltation of Carpaccio above Titian and Giorgione. I believe the very picture he praised so much was in the recent Royal Academy Italian Art Exhibition. At one of the lectures he exhibited a painting of a Venetian doge, and expatiated on it. After he had left the room we naturally crowded up to the picture for a closer view. One undergraduate near me, after an apparently intense study, remarked sagely, "I should like to have a smoking-cap like that!"

In the foregoing I have of course far overrun my first term and indeed my first full year. When I went up for my first October term I was settled in rooms of my own in the inner quadrangle. During my first year my opposite neighbour on the same landing was a singular man named Podmore, who in later life became closely associated with Psychical Research. By the following October he had gone out of college and his rooms were taken by a mathematical scholar who had just come up from the City of London School, named Francis Scott Webster. An ardent Christian and possessed of a gift for discovering like-minded men, he soon became the centre of a large group of earnest Evangelical undergraduates. One of his first acquaintances was a very tall Wykehamist of Corpus, George Anthony King, who became Webster's

devoted admirer. Sometimes when he called it would happen that Webster wanted to read and turned him over to me, whereupon King would come across the landing and lie on my sofa, overlapping it at both ends. Thus began a friendship which lasted as long as he lived. I had already known A. R. Buckland, now Archdeacon of Norfolk, for we came up together and both held Townsend scholarships; indeed, we had first met as schoolboys at the Oxford local examinations. Amongst other members of the circle were David Stather Hunt of Merton (afterwards Canon) and his brother Matthew; F. Baylis, student of Christ Church (afterwards a Secretary of C.M.S.); F. C. Paul of Wadham, Walter Horne of Worcester, and F. W. Newland—the last named being the now prominent Congregationalist. There was also a senior man, an artist and married, who lived in rooms somewhere near Worcester—A. R. Tucker, destined to become Bishop of Uganda.

Through these men I learned of a Daily Prayer Meeting held somewhere in the Broad, and of a small weekly Missionary Prayer Meeting, presided over by a mild-looking young don of Merton named Knox. Little did any of us then know of the reserves of force in the man who was to become Bishop of Manchester and the leader of the attack upon the Revised Prayer Book.

Before very long I came to know a very remarkable man, now almost forgotten, the Rev. Henry Bazely. His story, as nearly as I remember it, was somewhat as follows. He was the son of a clergyman, had come up to Oxford, taken his B.A. degree, had been ordained deacon and had worked for a time as curate to old Canon Christopher. But he had come under the influence of a middle-aged Presbyterian clergyman from the Orkneys named Johnston or Johnson, who used to take his annual holiday by coming up to Oxford every year to reside during the short Trinity term; when he had qualified by keeping twelve such terms he took his degree, and, owing to a defect in the statute, was eligible for the Kennicott Hebrew Scholarship, which he secured. He must have been a man of unusual personality for he was able to impress his views on Bazely, who was far from being a weak or malleable character: so much so that the latter resigned his curacy, and joined the Presbyterian Church, but because of his views about establishment, the Established Church of Scotland, not the English Presbyterians. To maintain himself he became a theological coach—the best in Oxford, it was said, and sought after even by High Churchmen—and to be free of the jurisdiction of the proctors took the B.C.L. degree. He was now wont to frequent fairs and races as an evangelist, sometimes carrying texts on boards like a sandwich man. Later, he set up a chapel in one of the poor districts of Oxford. I visited him sometimes at his lodgings, and he gave me the impression of an ascetic capable of all the self-mortification of a mediaeval anchorite.

It was through Webster, I think, that the rest of us got to know him. He became the leader of a large band who went down to St. Thomas' after hall on Sunday evenings, and were divided up

into sections of three or four, each group told off to hold services in one or other of the "doss houses" in the neighbourhood. I myself never aspired higher than the last chosen and smallest of these lodging-house kitchen services. These over, we reassembled and marched to the Martyrs' Memorial, where we lined up against the railings facing the Randolph Hotel. When we had sung a hymn, the undergraduates who were strolling up and down St. Giles' gathered round in large numbers. Then would come addresses, perhaps from Webster or one of the others—I never reached that honour myself—but at any rate from Bazely. I can picture him now, a gaunt figure in a B.C.L. gown, with a trumpet-like voice which caused people on the far side of the street to throw up their windows to listen. It was no mere rant that he gave, but always a powerful, reasoned address, and, knowing his audience, he did not mind occasionally quoting Latin. Thus I remember his telling of a clergyman who had inscribed over his door "*Tanquam non reversurus*" as a reminder of the uncertainty of life. When Bazely had finished the crowd would melt away. The life of this striking character was written by Canon E. L. Hicks, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, and published by Macmillan, but I fear it must now be out of print. Bazely died in 1883, at the early age of forty-one.

With the memory of that scene at the Martyrs' Memorial these stray notes may well close.

Mr. Harold B. Shepheard, M.A., raises a number of searching questions in his book, *For Middle-class Christians* (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 3*s*. 6*d*. net). There is a contrast between the religion of Jesus and much of our conventional morality. He seeks to probe our insincerities and to show that there is a stern need for a deeper understanding of all that is implied in the following of Jesus Christ. There are problems of wealth, of class distinction, of business relationships, of political theories which require fresh examination. Even if we may not agree with all that Mr. Shepheard writes, we may find a stimulus to conscience which may not be unnecessary.

The Triple Chord is a series of Thirty Sermons and Stories for Young Folks, by the Rev. James Aitchison, Falkirk (H. R. Allenson, Ltd., 5*s*. net). These addresses are rich in variety of matter and of illustration. The author's gift of verse adds a further element of interest. They will be found very suggestive by those instructing the young.

The Man Christ Jesus, by Dr. John Lamond (Simpkin, Marshall, Ltd., 3*s*. 6*d*. net), contains much useful information on the historical character of Christ, but is marred by some unnecessary speculations, some of which are based on the supposed discoveries of psychic science.