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Professor Rendel Harris and F. W. Crossley.

THERE is many a man who lives a better life because he is a minister. His high calling involves responsibilities. Like the king of Egypt, he is raised up for this purpose that God might show His power in him. And sometimes it is with him as with the king of Egypt—God's power is seen in his failure. But it is only the exceptional minister that becomes a castaway. God's grace is generally sufficient. He is a better man because he is a minister.

Of course he gets less credit for his goodness. Something, we say, is taken off for professionalism. But that is a mistake. Something, we mean to say, is taken off for the grace of God. Being found mostly where the grace of God flows fullest, it is less credit to him if he proves a saint. Down in the workshop or the market, the grace of God is less directly in the way. And when a merchant becomes a saint we give him all the credit for it, and write his biography.

Professor Rendel Harris has written the biography of Francis William Crossley, merchant and saint of Manchester.[1] With characteristic sensitiveness he refuses to call himself biographer. On the title-page he chooses the designation 'Editor'; and in the opening of the book he says, 'A number of his friends and lovers have conspired to play the part of scribes and chroniclers, and one of them has undertaken the office of an editor.' But the sensitiveness is overkeen. The hand of Professor Rendel Harris is on the book and cannot be hid. His hand makes it the book it is. He is the biographer.

Take his account of Frank Crossley's wooing. In passing to that we skip the *Sepher Toldoth*, or Book of the Generations, though that also reveals the biographer's hand. We skip some other things besides, but may return to them. The story of the wooing reveals the man of whom this is the biography, and at the same time the manner in which the biography is written. To take it first will be gain.

[1] *The Life of Francis William Crossley.* Edited by J. Rendel Harris. Nisbet. Crown 8vo, pp. 249, with illustrations, 6s.

The letter in which Mr. Frank Crossley made his offer of marriage has fallen into the biographer's hands, and he has permission to transcribe a part of it.

'Although I have what may be called fair prospects, I am a poor man at present. But here is the chief point I wish to name. If my business, which has good possibilities about it, did become lucrative, I would never, if I continue to hold my present views, think it right to live in such a way as conventional morality pronounces in favour of. There is too much wretchedness in the world, in my opinion, to warrant any useless or unnecessary expenditure on self. Until the poor, who have always been with us so far, have departed or become well-to-do, the principle, I take it, ought to be: Spend on yourself that only which will enable you to contribute to the well-being of others in the greatest degree.

'I wonder if I am right to say all this here. I fully feel what a strange place it is to say it. I would not say it if I did not think you would agree with me—I mean I would not write this letter at all if I did not believe I was writing to one who loved the same Master that, I trust, I love, and whose best guarantee for the conduct of the man who asks to be so near her, as I have ventured to ask to be, is her belief in His power and keeping.'

'It is not often,' says Professor Rendel Harris, 'that the words, "Come live with me and be my love," are set to such a lofty strain as this; nor does the "voice of the bridegroom and the bride" commonly discourse such excellent music. One wonders whether either of them dreamt of what would be involved in the carrying out of such a "contract celestial." Did Miss Emily Kerr suspect that she would, in carrying out the marriage vows, be down in the cellar breaking the necks of the champagne bottles, or Francis Crossley, that he would be packing up his best pictures and sending them to the Whitworth Gallery; or, both of them, that they would, in days to come, be setting up in front of their house a statement concerning the Sale or Letting of a desirable villa residence?'

The time came when all these things were done. And all were done in the interests of the poor who are always with us, the desirable villa residence being sold that Francis Crossley and his wife might find an undesirable tenement residence in a low and degraded neighbourhood in Manchester.

Meantime the course of true love did not run smooth. Miss Kerr was willing, but Miss Kerr's guardian shook his head. He would give Francis Crossley two years to get rich or bankrupt. Francis Crossley believes that he is more likely to get bankrupt than rich, and dares to say even to the guardian that he does not consider that altogether a disadvantage. 'Riches,' he writes, 'are doubtless less often a blessing than a curse, or one should find more of them strewn about the world under a beneficent Providence. Certainly a well-known series of beatitudes begins with "Blessed are ye poor."' Professor Rendel Harris has not discovered whether the cautious guardian 'consented to be knocked over in this summary fashion with the butt-end of a beatitude,' or whether he merely accepted the inevitable, but the wedding was accomplished and the early uphill years of married life began.

We have spoken of Francis Crossley as a merchant and saint of Manchester. Strictly speaking, none of these expressions is correct. Crossley and his brother were partners in the manufacturing of indiarubber machinery. In 1867 they had come together and purchased 'a going concern' in that line of business, and found that it was going to nothing. 'For some time they only handled sufficient business to keep their doors open, and at the end of a year or so Frank Crossley was known to declare that if increased orders did not come in next day they would have to close their doors.' Increased orders did not come in; but they did not close the doors. They reduced expenses. 'Frank dispensed with a draughtsman and made the drawings himself; his brother William kept the books to save the cost of a clerk; and their whole office staff amounted to—a single boy. That boy has since risen to be the chief cashier of the Crossley firm.'

'At length, however, the clouds began to lift. The German patents of the Otto gas-engine were in the market for an enterprising English firm to take up; and the two brothers saw their opportunity. They understood the value of the patents, and guessed the future that lay before the gas-engine, and were able to lay the foundation of that great business which has made their name one of world-wide reputation. Surely,' says Professor Rendel Harris,—'surely one of the things which most helped the two brothers through the dark days of their early partnership was the fact that they had prayerfully sought God's will in the matter: what is begun in prayer is commonly carried on in faith and hope. No sooner was their first deed of partnership signed than they kneeled in prayer as their first act of partnership, and, believing themselves to be rightly guided in what they had undertaken, besought of the Lord grace to carry on their business worthily.'

So we should have called him a manufacturer, not a merchant.

Again, we called Francis Crossley a saint. Professor Rendel Harris insists that the more accurate expression is a philanthropist. For the philanthropist is the modern form of the evolution of the saint. In earlier times, says Professor Rendel Harris, those who were the keenest after sanctity fell short of what we should in the present day describe as common and necessary goodness. That is to say, they separated themselves from their fellow-men, and cultivated their own souls' gardens in the wilderness. They did not feel the pressure of others' poverty; they did not hear the cry of cities; they were not anxious to be written down as those that loved their fellow-men.[1] No doubt there have always been exceptions. In every age there have been some, and they have been more conspicuous because they were exceptions, who gave themselves to the art and science of making the world better. But it was left to the nineteenth century to discover the laws of that science, and to lay down rules for that art, and bind them on the conscience of all who name the name of Christ. The saint of to-day is a philanthropist. And when we find him, as we find him in Francis Crossley, we are not, says Professor Rendel Harris, to regard him as belonging to a lower spiritual order than the prophet and martyr, but as a newer and higher form of both, and we are to say of him to Him

[1] Professor Rendel Harris tells us that he asked his Arab dragoman once what constituted the sanctity of a certain Moslem saint, 'What does he do?' He replied, 'He do nothing; he very holy man.'

that fashioned him, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

But the source of philanthropy is an honest and good heart. We have already peeped into the love-letter which Francis Crossley sent to Miss Emily Kerr, saying, 'Come live with me and be my love,' and we observed there the modest words, 'the Master that, I trust, I love.' We have also heard how he and his brother-partner knelt down together as the first act of partnership. When we go back to discover the beginning of these things, we are startled to find a heartless young woman of the world their instrument. It is an episode in Frank Crossley's youth, a passing fascination, most unlike the love that gave itself to her who could join in the bridal song of poverty we have heard; but it left its mark upon him. For a time he suffered acutely. His life had been lonely enough till now. Now there was bitterness in its loneliness. But the empty, lonely life turned round toward God, and the good angels began to look down lovingly, and whisper to one another, 'Behold, he prayeth.' He wrote to his sister Emmeline: 'You will all see the difference when I come home at Christmas.' And they did see the difference.

It was a household that was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Characteristically outspoken, Frank Crossley found it easy to speak freely in his own home. He was only falling into line with the others. When he came home at Christmas they began to be merry. And it was a new joy to him to enter into the meaning of their lives and share their fellowship. The home was in Ireland. Anagola they called the country house. Besides sisters and brothers there were the mother and four of her sisters. Year after year Frank Crossley came all the way from Manchester to be beside these aunts as one by one they entered the valley. Three times in less than three weeks he crossed the sea that he might be with his mother in her last hours. In 1894, the last of that generation passed. It was Aunt Fanny. She was one of the Shining Ones who commonly walk in the land of Beulah because it is upon the borders of heaven. She often spoke of the presence of her departed sisters with her, and was surprised that others did not know them to be in the room. For her, as later for her beloved nephew, the traditional 'dark valley' was either non-existent or long past. 'How can anyone call it a dark valley?' she said; 'it is all light and love'; and she stretched her worn hands towards the Invisible Friend whom she best loved, and whispered, 'I could *run* to meet Him.'

It was said of this Aunt Fanny that she did twice as much amongst the poor of the district as any clergyman, and was greatly beloved. It was no wonder that Frank Crossley became a philanthropist. And no doubt the true modern philanthropist is as wide in his sympathy as the early saint was narrow. Thus in 1886 Mr. and Mrs. Crossley went to Torquay for a short visit, and for the first time came under the influence of the Salvation Army. They never joined that organisation. It is clear that they were never pressed to join it. At the time when they were nearest joining it, and were in correspondence with the 'Mother' of the Army, Mrs. Booth wrote: 'I am so anxious on the one hand that you should not be pressed, and on the other hand lest you should lose anything spiritually. All I can do is to commend you to God continually.' But he gave from first to last, says Professor Rendel Harris, no less than £100,000 to its support. And what was more than that (for him if not for the Army), he stood by its adherents 'when they had to run the gauntlet of Northern rowdyism.' 'Upon one notable occasion,' writes his biographer, 'when he was on the bench of magistrates (for he was now a Justice of the Peace), he was called upon to take part in the trial of a Salvation Army lassie for obstructing the public thoroughfare. (What they were really obstructing,' inserts Professor Rendel Harris parenthetically, 'was a broad road of another character, for the crowding of which *they* were not responsible.) When the case was called, Francis Crossley left his seat on the bench, and took his stand by the side of the Army girl in the dock. When the Army, who are the modern successors of St. Francis, find time from their multitudinous labours to evolve an artist, we suggest that their Giotto of the future should try his skill upon this canvas. The Salvation Army has a good picture-gallery getting ready, but no subject that will lend itself to finer treatment than this.'

Besides the Salvation Army, Mr. Crossley gave his money to what we euphemistically call the Purity Crusade, as well as to many other things which lie more in the line of ordinary philanthropy. And wherever he gave his money, he

gave his time with it. And if it is asked where the money and the time came from, the answer must be that they came from a business personally conducted and carefully attended to. How carefully his business was attended to, how much personality he threw into it, is discovered in a letter which he wrote to Dr. M'Laren of Manchester. Here are some sentences from the letter:—

'There is another matter on which I want to consult you. It is a business point of the conscience kind, namely, Is it right to sell engines to brewers? Our business with them has largely been for engines to drive soda-water machines. They do a trade that way as well as in intoxicants. Still we have probably sold a good many for the manufacture of alcoholic liquors of one sort or another. In my mind I draw a line between selling a brewer a loaf or a coat, and selling him an article which he wants for his morals-destroying trade. I am therefore against it, and vote to pull up.'

But it is time we had made our third correction. We have seen that strictly Mr. Crossley was not a merchant but a manufacturer, and that strictly he was not a saint but a philanthropist. Now let us see that strictly he was not of Manchester but of Ancoats.

After Mr. Crossley began business in Manchester, he and Mrs. Crossley resided in suburban Bowdon. The home there became a centre of religious influence, from which emanated all sorts of schemes for the social and religious regeneration of Manchester. It was also consecrated by the death of a beloved son. 'But as time went on they became more and more convinced that God was calling them to a closer fellowship with the actual life of the people.' In a definite and decisive way the words came to them, 'This is not your rest.' Their thoughts were directed to Ancoats. An old music-hall was there, known as the Star, and as the worst place of the kind in Manchester. Mr. Crossley bought it, pulled it down, and built a mission-hall which cost him over £20,000. Who is to manage it? At first they thought of the Salvation Army. Then came the command, 'Go and work there yourselves.' 'Burningly it came on them all at once.' By November 1889, Mr. and Mrs. Crossley, with some other workers, were actually in residence at Ancoats. 'The plunge,' says Mrs. Crossley, 'was a big one, but it proved to be the right thing, and we have never regretted it.'

It is Mrs. Crossley that says so. It seems that Mrs. Crossley was slower to learn the trade of philanthropy than her husband. In their early married life, Frank Crossley, we are told, gave away his money almost as fast as he got it, dispensing it with both hands, neither of which knew what the other was doing. And Mrs. Crossley, the biographer hints, was not in it. For he says, 'I suspect also that his conduct would sometimes square closely with an interpretation which St. Augustine gives of the rule that the left hand must not know what the right hand is doing, according to which the right hand stands for the man and the left hand for his wife.' In short, it is evident that for a time Mrs. Crossley lagged behind. The close connexion which her husband formed with the Salvation Army was at first a sore trial to her. 'Her distaste for the Army and its ways was cherished by her, in all good conscience, as a testimony in favour of natural refinement of disposition.'

But patience had her perfect work. At last it could be said of these two, that 'as the husband is, the wife is.' The dislike to the Salvation Army passed away, and left only regret that ever it was there. And when that which Professor Rendel Harris calls 'the enlargement of heart' came to Mrs. Crossley also, her husband was astonished at the pace of her progress. 'She has jumped miles ahead of me,' he said, 'in spiritual things; I have come along by a slow train, she has caught me up by the express.'

No doubt 'enlargement of heart' is a modern form of the ancient formula, 'faith in Christ.' The Ancoats experience was a trying one to both; they endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Frank Crossley expressed it for himself and for his wife just ere he reached the goal of love on the Happy Hill. 'What is the meaning of being saved to the uttermost?' he asked. And he answered, 'It means that He is able to save us *up to the goal*.'