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## FORTY YEARS IN THE ITINERANCY.

By Rev. James Mudge, D. D., in *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*.

I am attempting a very difficult and hazardous thing—to crowd two thousand weeks of experience into as many words; to give the impressions of a lifetime in a few lines. Is it worth while? Perhaps not. But let the reader judge.

This at least I may say to start with—some rather unusual and decidedly favorable events attended the opening of my ministerial career. I felt the call from boyhood. And I came into the ministry, as is quite common, through the local door. That is, just in the middle of my college course, while at home on a vacation, I was tendered a license, the document being made out in a tent on the camp-ground at Yarmouth, Mass., August, 1863. Then, nearly five years having elapsed, I was induced to join the New England Conference on trial, April, 1868, before completing my first year in the School of Theology at Boston, becoming an ordained deacon in the same connection. And two years later, just before graduating from the School, I was ordained an elder, and entered as having completed the Conference course of study. The examining committees reported me as having at that time passed satisfactorily in the second, third and fourth years' books. Good Bishop Scott objected to the irregularity of the proceeding, but finally said that if the Conference was satisfied, he would not refuse to put me through; which was accordingly done with great unanimity. So I found myself in full orders and a full graduate both of the Conference course and the Seminary course at the very threshold of my first full appointment. It was certainly convenient, and a trifle unique.

Also out of the ordinary was it that my first two stations were in connection with educational institutions. The church to which I ministered while in the school joined the grounds of Harvard College at Cambridge, and the one to which I was sent on graduating was at Wilbraham, the site of our oldest Conference Academy, where a new stone church of handsome proportions was just being completed. In my second year of ministry my salary was just double what it was the first, and in my third it was double what it was the second. At the close of my three years' term at Wilbraham arrangements were completed, without my seeking it, for my transfer to one of the largest and strongest churches in Boston, and the ball seemed in many ways to be at my feet.

Then all worldly prospects went to the wind. A summons came from the India Missions—there was then but one Conference in that Empire—asking me to come out and give myself to editorial work in connection with the press at Lucknow. The appeal was signed by Doctors Parker and Thoburn. The latter was so urgent that the too long neglected press should have this succor that he surrendered his own salary for my use. Under such circumstances what loyal heart could hesitate? I had been deeply interested in missions from earliest boyhood, in my two churches I had pushed the collections to an unprecedented height, my willingness to go if the duty was made plain had long avowed, and now the call seemed clear. I was transferred to India at once, and my American career as a preacher was prematurely closed.

To be sure, I returned after ten years—the recall being as clear as the summons—and have spent twenty-five years more in the pastorate at home. But the absence was fatal so far as taking up my old position was concerned. The churches did not welcome one whose years were now forty, whose heart was across the sea, and on whom a decade under fiercely blazing suns had left very evident marks of age; who, in fact, had dropped out of the procession, and been forgotten. But I never regretted having been "obedient to the heavenly vision," and I took up thankfully what was left of a broken life.

My ministerial career, then, in the ordinary sense of the word may fairly be regarded, perhaps, as confined to the twenty-five years since my return from India. I have had churches in seven town and cities—Boston, Lowell, Natick, Clinton, Webster, Pepperell, Whitinsville—among hard-working people, for the most part, laboring in factories, mills and shops. What of the retrospect, now that it is all over and I am retiring for a little interval before the great change comes and One higher than a Bishop gives me my place?

Three words may serve to gather up the chief conclusions. The first is Friendship. Though my churches have not been large, I have met in them some very large and noble souls. Their love has come to be a main joy of life. Their gratitude for benefit received has been very sweet and precious. They have greatly prized the help I have been able to afford them, and they have expressed in many ways their strong attachment to me. Who can set a value on love? Truly it is the greatest thing in the world. The faithful pastor gets it. It is one of his chief assets. Little money may come, but that which money can not buy pours in, and he is rich indeed. Let the young man looking toward the ministry take this into account. No other calling yields so much at this point. The fellowship of hearts will be his; the "communion of saints" will mean a great deal to him as the years go by; he will find himself bound by very tender cords to larger and larger numbers of the best people on earth.

Another word of delightful sound is Fruit. The retrospect of the years embraces a goodly quantity of that, as indeed the friendship received implies. Souls won for the Master in all the churches, lives lifted to loftier levels, Christian character built up, right ideals held steadily, attractively before the youth, children impressed with the love of Jesus and turned into straight paths, wrinkled brows smoothed out as the true joy of living has been learned, the secret of happiness imparted, comfort in time of sorrow bestowed, counsel in hours of perplexity given, temporal aid at times afforded. "Much fruit" it is the "Father's good pleasure" that His faithful ones bear; and though in comparison with the possibilities or with what others have borne the result may seem meager, yet there is satisfaction of a very solid sort in the thought that multitudes of human beings destined to immortality have been considerably helped in making that immortality glorious.

The third word is Fatigue. It would not be fair to look on the sunny side only, or to paint all in colors of the rose. While the modern Methodist minister is not summoned to endure the hardships of those who pioneered the cause a hundred years ago, nor of those who fight on the frontiers at the present time with their enormous journeyings, their widely scattered flocks, their exceeding scanty compensation, nevertheless there are not a few elements of bitterness mingled in the cup. There is some reason why so many faint and fall out by the way. Narrow-minded, close-fisted, small-souled members, selfish, quarrelsome, conceited, obstinate, gossiping, worldly, bent on making a disturbance, disposed to rule or ruin, fault-finding, touchy, unreasonable, spiteful, cross-grained, ill-tempered, ambitious, never satisfied, always ready for a change, and not above using underhanded means to procure it—these are found in all the churches, and while in large churches they may often be ignored, in the smaller ones their opportunity for mischief is great. They are a sore and heavy burden to the pastor; they are clogs on the wheels of progress; they make revivals impossible. The wear and tear of the itinerancy is still a very positive factor to be reckoned with. It uses great numbers of earnest spirits. The small support compels an unseemly and unworthy economy; family feelings are lacerated; children suffer, and are alienated from the church; wives are worn out. Injustice is experienced in the turning of the Conference wheel.

Often the churches are heartless, the authorities are helpless, iron enters into the soul. No little heroism is called for, and furnished, to build up these widening walls of Zion. But, thank God, they go up!

Although I have experienced, as the last paragraph may indicate, some of the trials of the itinerancy, I do not regret having entered the work. The joys have more than counter-balanced the sorrows. I have done some little good with my pen, for which work the small pastorates have afforded abundant opportunity. So there has been compensation here. There is compensation always. God mingles the dark and the light as we need them. He never makes a mistake in His arrangements. I have found it good to take everything from His hand, and "rejoice evermore." I was glad to buckle on the armor of the gospel warrior; I am glad as the evening shadows fall to lay it off. The long day's work is nearly done. The crown is near.

## THE DAY OF DREAMS.

This is the day for visions, the day of the fearless few,

When the hope once weak first dared to speak,  
when the mighty dream came true!

"A child in the darkness wailing!" the kings  
laughed loud and long;

But the child was a man in an hour, and the cry  
was a battle-song.

And the dreamers woke to sing it wherever a  
dreamer led,

Till the kings had ceased their laughter, and the  
dreamers' hands were red;

Till there grew a thing of wonder where once was  
a thing for scorn,

And, sired by the high Ideal, the marvelous Real  
was born.

Nor yet is the great dream ended; forever and  
ever new

There is work for the present dreamers, there are  
deeds for the arm to do;

And the fathers' sons are ready, and busy with  
watch and ward,

Till the last rose-dawn shall flower and the Mas-  
ter sheathe the sword.

From the green Virginia valleys to the Klondike's  
silent snows,

In the pluse-beats of the people the vision grows  
and grows;

And the sweat-stained tollers, seeing, know well  
they are not in vain,

From the golden-shored Pacific to the rock-  
ribbed coast of Maine.

In the shriek of the locomotive, in the mine with  
the death-dews wet,

In the million mills, on the fruitful hills, we are  
toiling and dreaming yet;

No muscle strains without it, no labor low or  
mean;

We are waiting the last night-whistle, we are  
keeping the Vision clean.

And now, as of old, we labor, the many that once  
were few,

At the task of the deep-eyed dreamers, that the  
mighty dream come true,

When real and ideal are welded forever and ever,  
and then,

In the last rose-dawn's full flower, the Master  
shall pay his men.

—Reginald Wright Kauffman, in Saturday Eve-  
ning Post.

The Bible is on the side of the oppressed and suffering and poor; if the church is on the side of privilege and property and power, then the church and the Bible are on different sides.—Rev. H. T. Smart.