

JOTTINGS FROM MEMORY

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Jottings from memory by Sir Alfred Stephen

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SIR ALFRED STEPHEN

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FROM MEMORY**

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BY
A CLERGYMAN.



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PREFACE.

THIS little book has been written, principally, for the purpose of bringing the "Mission to Seamen Afloat," under the notice of the public. This most excellent Society is conferring great benefits on our seafaring population, and deserves to be widely known, and cordially supported.

JOTTINGS FROM MEMORY.

It has occurred to me to write an account of my clerical life. I was a curate many years. I have filled curacies in various spheres. I have seen a great deal of human nature. My experience is wide. Perhaps what I have witnessed may prove interesting to others.

I shall begin with my ordination. A few days previous to the ordination Sunday, the candidates, who were very many, assembled in a large room. In this room the written portion of the examination was conducted, under the superintendence of one of the Bishop's examining chaplains. The "viva voce" part was conducted in an adjoining room by another chaplain, in the presence of his lordship, who asked questions at intervals. Having been prepared by a good course of theology, I only missed one question in the written examination, and none at the "viva voce." Having never

before been brought into such close contact with one of the chief rulers of our Church, I felt a little nervous at first. I was soon reassured by the kind manner of the examiners, and proceeded with great facility. Significant glances were exchanged between the examiners: I observed them, and felt safe. All the candidates passed; and on the Sunday we met in the old Cathedral. At a certain part of the service, the Bishop's secretary intimated to me, to my surprise, that I had been selected by his lordship to read the Gospel. This honour is bestowed upon that candidate who makes the best examination; and I was warmly congratulated by my friends. How I managed to get through the reading of the Gospel, I cannot tell. It was very like a dream. Had I received any intimation the day before, I should have been prepared: but on the other hand, the knowledge of the fact would have had a tendency to make me nervous. I dare say it was best ordered as it was. Thus I was admitted to the office of a deacon.

During the time my examination was going on, one of my brothers was undergoing examination in the College of Surgeons, London. My father received our letters on the same day. Never was father happier.

The incumbent of the parish to which I was licensed being in poor health, and there being an evening service in an outlying part of the parish, and no one to take it, I set off immediately; and in the evening of the Sunday of my ordination I conducted a full service.

The room was crowded to inconvenience. The people wished to see and hear the new curate. I shall never forget the scene. Everything seemed confused. With God's help, I managed to get through without a mistake, and the sermon made a favourable impression. It was a sermon that I had written with much care, but not such a sermon as I should desire to preach now. The doctrine was good, but the words were large and the sentences long and well-rounded. I have learned by experience that simple words and short sentences are the best scaffolding for a sermon intended to reach the hearts of the hearers.

From that first Sunday until the end of three months I preached three times every Sunday, and performed nearly all the remaining portion of the duty. It was heavy work, but God had conferred upon me good health and a willing mind.

The parish contained eleven thousand people—principally working men and their families. One

portion of it, having three thousand inhabitants, was placed under my sole charge. I laid myself out immediately to fulfil my duties as efficiently as possible. I visited all the people carefully and repeatedly. They received me kindly, and became much attached to me. The Sunday services attended by me were three,—two in the parish church and one in the room above referred to. My residence was situated between the church and licensed room—nearer the latter than the former. I attended the Sunday-school under my charge in the morning, and conducted the children to church. This Sunday-school and the parish church Sunday-school were well attended and highly valued. There was in the parish a Sunday-school for all denominations. This was also very well attended. Young women from eighteen to twenty-four years of age attended these schools. They never had a thought of leaving until about being married.

An outcry has been made against Sunday-schools, and some have even gone so far as to denounce them as failures. They may not indeed have effected all that might be desired, but I feel sure that the condition of the country would have been ten hundred times worse if the Sunday-school system had not been called into existence : and fur-