



**JAMES A. VICARY, Veteran Evangelist, Bristol.**

**JAMES ANDREW VICARY** was born in Barnstaple on 12th October, 1835. When only three years of age he was adopted by his grandparents, from whom he received good moral training. His grandmother was one of the first members of the Church in Grosvenor Street, Barnstaple, the meeting place of the saintly R. C. Chapman. Through the frequent pastoral visits of Mr. Chapman young Vicary was brought into contact with him, and in later years delighted to look back on the privilege he then enjoyed of being brought up at the feet of such a teacher. It was, however, not till he had reached early manhood that the great spiritual change in him took place. Naturally musical, and having considerable gift in playing various musical instruments, he was drawn away into worldly company. He says of himself that he was "a total abstainer all his life and a non-smoker, yet up to nineteen years of age a lover of pleasures more than a lover of God." His conversion took place in the autumn of 1854. Shortly after this he was baptised by Mr. R. C. Chapman in the river at Barnstaple, and later on in the same day was sitting by the side of his aged grandmother partaking of the Lord's Supper. His apprenticeship to the tailoring business having expired, he moved to Devonport, where his parents were then living. Here he addressed himself earnestly to Christian work, and as no Sunday school existed in connection with the assembly, he set to work to form one. In 1858 he was married to Miss Key, and started business on his own account in Plymouth. After continuing in this a few years his mind became much exercised about the preaching of the Gospel in the neighbourhood, and from time to time he visited surrounding villages with the Gospel message. He also preached in the open air in different parts of Plymouth.

The more he engaged in this work the greater did the desire become to extend operations, and to reach the multitudes who are never found in church or chapel. A large loft was secured and roughly fitted up for holding services. Invitations were readily responded to, and about 200 of the right class, fishermen, boatmen, porters, and their wives occupied the place. The work prospered, and many notorious characters were converted. Midnight meetings were held for fallen women, and a home provided

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for those willing to abandon evil courses. The Exmouth Music Hall was also taken for services, and hundreds of souls were converted. Open-air work was pushed forward,



A baptism in the River Taw at Barnstaple, where J. A. VICARY was baptised by R. C. CHAPMAN fifty-six years ago. Many hundreds have thus been immersed at different spots in the Taw.

## Evangelistic Cruise in Cornwall.

and large crowds were gathered to listen to the Gospel. All this work, added to business labours, began to tell on his health, and as it seemed impossible to go on with both, the business was given up. This decision was not hastily arrived at. For twelve months the step was the subject of prayer and deliberation, and at length, husband and wife being fully agreed about it, in the spring of 1868, every financial claim having been met, he launched forth in the service of the Gospel, in dependence on God for guidance and temporal supplies.

His first evangelistic tour was through Cornwall and the Scilly Islands. After this came villages and towns in South Devon. The year 1869 found him in London, Ipswich, and Eastbourne, in which places the Word was effectual in the conversion of souls. Returning to Plymouth for a time, new work was begun in various buildings, hired for longer or shorter periods. In the summer of 1870 Col. Onslow invited him to join in an evangelistic cruise in his yacht along the west coast of Cornwall, from Plymouth to Penzance. "Bright, soul-saving seasons were experienced among the sailors, fishermen, and landsmen." Other places visited at later dates were Bristol, Waterford, Dublin, Lurgan, Belfast, Glasgow, Greenock, Paisley, and Dundee. In 1873, when conducting a mission in Newton Abbot, while returning one night from a village, the horse took fright, Mr. Vicary was thrown out of the conveyance, and one leg was broken. This, of course, laid him aside for a time, but he records the fact that the Roman Catholic doctor who attended him, hearing the Gospel from his patient, was happily converted. Returning to Plymouth, he was enabled to purchase a tent for Gospel work, and the tent was first used on the occasion of an agricultural show, with encouraging results. Subsequently it was removed from place to place in various parts of Devon.

About this time Mr. Vicary was invited to the Clifton Conference, and by request gave an account of the summer's tent campaign. This awakened great interest, and led to many invitations to conduct Gospel missions in various halls in the city. Associations were thus formed with various brethren in Bristol, and attention was directed to a needy locality known as Newfoundland Gardens, in



## Forty Years of Pastoral Labour.

the east end of the city. A strong desire was expressed that he would come to reside in Bristol, and erect his tent in this locality. The way being opened, he came to Bristol, 26th November, 1873.

Missions were held in different parts of the city, and early in the summer of 1874 the tent was erected in Newfoundland Gardens, and services were held every night for twenty-seven weeks. Much blessing attended the work, and it soon became evident that steps should be taken to provide for a permanent work in the locality. Mr. Vicary and the brethren associated with him acted with promptitude, and soon a plan was formed for the erection of the Gospel Hall in St. Nicholas Road, opposite the site of the tent. The building was opened in January, 1875. Here Mr. Vicary continued to labour for forty years, with occasional missions in other parts of the country.

Until about a year ago Mr. Vicary was enabled to continue at this work, but a severe illness at the end of 1914 laid him aside for several weeks. From this he made a good recovery, but was soon troubled with serious failure of sight, which came very near to blindness. More recently symptoms of an internal malady made their appearance, and our aged friend gradually sank, until he fell asleep on 22nd November, 1915, in his eighty-first year, leaving behind a record of abundant and happy labour for the Lord. Well known and beloved by many, he will be greatly missed, particularly by those with whom he was most intimately associated.

J. L. S. (in *The Christian*).

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