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ANSWERS AND COMMENTS

THE REV. THOMAS GARRATT, MA

(query no. 1,133 September 29)

[1,272] In answer to the inquiry of "WG" relative to the above clergyman, I have pleasure in giving the following particulars of his career:- Thomas Garratt was born at Baddesley-Ensor, in Warwickshire, February 22nd 1796, and was the son of a small farmer and butcher. He received his early education at the village school there, and his keen perception of the branches of knowledge then taught in such institutions early made him a favourite with the Vicar, the Rev. John Adamthwaite, DD, who took special interest in him, and finally prepared him for Edinburgh University, whither young Garratt went to study for his degree of MA. He left that seat of learning however, without graduating, and on his return some two or three years later, his first work was published, "Original Poems," 1818. Dr Adamthwaite had removed to Winton, in Westmorland, during Garratt's sojourn in Edinburgh, and here the poet stayed on his return under the Rev. Doctor's tuition until his ordination to the Curacy of Altcar, near Liverpool, which occurred in St James's Church, Westminster, January 28th 1821.

He was ordained priest at a general ordination at Chester, October 7th 1821 and a few months later on the avoidance by death of the Vicar of Altcar, the Rev. W. Naylor, he was licensed to the living, being nominated by the patron, the Right Hon. William Philip, the then Earl of Sefton. Whilst Vicar of Altcar Mr Garratt issued two more volumes of poetry, "The Bachelor's Whim; or the Hermit of Lathom", and "The Pastor; a poem in Two Parts". It was about this time that his poetical and oratorical abilities became somewhat famous, and people flocked from far and wide to hear him discourse. The Earl of Sefton shortly afterwards presided at a meeting of the local clergy, when it was resolved to petition the University of King's College, Aberdeen, to confer on Mr Garratt the honorary degree of MA. Their efforts were crowned with success, and on April 11th 1825, the degree was conferred, the certificate in the University form being signed by the Rev. George Vanbrugh, LL.B., Rector of Aughton, and the Rev. A Browne, MA, Fellow of St John's College Oxford.

Shortly after receiving this honour he was induced to accept the Curacy of Prestbury, to which he was licensed on October 14th 1825. At this date he was still holding the living of Altcar, which he resigned in 1826, his resignation taking effect from January 30 that year. His vicar was the Rev. J. Rowlls Brown, MA of Butley Hall, Macclesfield, one of the magistrates for the county, and Mr Garratt was engaged by Mr Brown to take entire charge of the parish, as the latter rarely officiated.

He held the Curacy of Prestbury until June 1828, when he was instituted Curate in charge of Wilmslow. At Prestbury two further works emanated from his pen. In June 1826, appeared "An address to the Inhabitants of Prestbury and Neighbourhood on the Observance of the Sabbath", and another poetical work "Elegy on the Death of Lucy Dooley".

The Rector of Wilmslow during Mr Garratt's curacy was the Rev. J M Turner, who in January 1829, was appointed Bishop of Calcutta. Mr Turner was in the habit of receiving at Wilmslow Rectory a few gentlemen's sons to prepare for the University, and amongst the pupils who resided there at the time, and who were for several months under Mr Garratt's sole tuition – Mr Turner being away on the Continent – were our present Prime Minister, the Right Hon. W E Gladstone, MP, Sir C A Wood, and the Hon. Horatio Powys, afterwards Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man.

It was about this period that the Catholic Emancipation Bill was introduced in Parliament, and Mr Garratt became involved in a heated controversy with the Rector of the adjoining parish of Alderley. Pamphlet after pamphlet was issued, and Mr Garratt was supported by brochures from the pens of the Rev. John

Hoskins, BA, the Rev. A Auriol Parker, BA and numerous other clergymen and controversialists. The result was that Mr Stanley, the Rector of Alderley, a life-long friend of the Rector of Wilmslow's, wrote to Mr Turner, who taking Mr Stanley's part, wrote to Mr Garratt protesting against the issuing of further works on the vexed question, and practically pointing out that the living of Wilmslow would not now fall to Mr Garratt's lot. The parishioners of Wilmslow deeply deplored this decision, and as a protest against their Rector's action, they presented their Curate with an address signed by 500 of the villagers, and bearing date April 16th 1829. The address read as follows:-

"The parishioners of Wilmslow, in the County of Chester, deeply regretting the probability that the pastoral superintendence and friendly attentions of the Rev. Thomas Garratt, MA, their present Curate, may speedily be withdrawn from them, conceive it would be highly unjust to permit that gentleman to take his final adieu without expressing their sense of his private and public worth. In the warmth and energy of his pulpit instructions, the moral and devotional tenour of his truly Christian doctrines, in his example as a trainer of youth in the way they should go, as a comforter to the afflicted and a supporter of the needy, in his laudable activity to promote the welfare of this parish, and to serve our best interests, individually and collectively, in his domestic capacity and social qualities – we acknowledge ourselves to have found edification and benefit, and heartfelt satisfaction, which have not been surpassed under the ministry of any predecessor of his, nor are likely to be under any successor; and we request him to accept this respectful testimony of a gratitude and attachment too sincere to fade from our hearts and memories, and to assure himself that our cordial wishes for his future professional usefulness and for the success he so fully merits, will attend him unabated through life".

Mr Garratt's Wilmslow curacy terminated on Sunday, May 31st 1829 and on this date he preached his farewell sermon to a congregation of more than two thousand persons (vide "Macclesfield Courier", June 6th 1829). This sermon was afterwards printed at the expense of the Wilmslow parishioners.

After leaving Wilmslow; Mr Garratt was appointed Curate-in-Charge of Southport, at which now populous town only one church (Christ's) then existed. Here in June 1830, he published through Baldwin and Craddock, London, a volume of 180 pages, entitled "Six Discourses, delivered during Lent, 1830, at Southport". In September of the same year he left Southport to undertake a like position at Audley, in Staffordshire, and a few weeks later his Vicar presented him to the living of Talk-o'-th'-Hill, near Audley.

Towards the end of 1832 the Vicar of Audley died, and in January, 1833, Mr Garratt was instituted to the Vicariate, thus holding a dual living. Whilst Vicar of Audley and Incumbent of Talk-o'-th'-Hill he issued two further publications, "The Contrast of Scripture and Tradition", and "A Letter to the Rev. E Stanley, MA".

Mr Garratt died in London from an attack of diabetic gout on December 9th 1841, and on the 18th his remains were interred in Audley churchyard.

He was twice married, firstly to Miss Ann Cooper, a niece and ward of the Rev. Dr Adamthwaite, and secondly to Miss Frances Dorothea White, daughter of John White, Esq, JP, DCL, of Park Hall, Derby, master of the celebrated Cheshire Foxhounds. He had one son by his first wife, who died in infancy.

I only know of one existing copy of his poem "The Hermit of Lathom". This is in the reference department of the Manchester Free Library.

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