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THE STORY
OF
BAPTIST HOME MISSIONS.

BY
CHARLES BROWN.

“THEY WENT FORTH AND PREACHED EVERYWHERE, THE LORD WORKING WITH THEM AND CONFIRMING THE WORD WITH SIGNS FOLLOWING.”

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INTRODUCTORY.

I HAVE been requested by the Council of the Baptist Union to prepare a brief historical sketch of the Home Missions now under their direction.

The request was acceded to with many fears that a mistake had been made. Leisure to search the records, and literary ability to set forth the facts in an interesting manner, seemed absolutely necessary to the prosecution of the task. The writer of the present sketch has neither of these qualifications, hence the above-mentioned fears.

He has done as much as the multitudinous cares and duties of a London pastorate in these busy times have allowed, but he has been compelled to seek help. The piles of minute-books and records which were kindly placed at his disposal in the Baptist Union office, made his heart sink within him. He turned in his need to the Rev. W. H. King, and the help, without which for his part this work could never have been done, Mr. King has generously and most efficiently given. Mr. King has made diligent search in the records, he has furnished most of the facts; I have dressed them up, or undressed them, selected or rejected, as seemed desirable. If there is any merit in the book it is largely due to my colleague. My thanks are also due to the Rev. W. J. Avery for very kind and valuable help.

The great hope is that the sketch will be read in spite of its imperfections, that its facts will be diligently pondered, and that by the grace of God there will come a great revival of interest in the work of the Baptist Union Home Mission from the various efforts which mark this centenary year.

CHARLES BROWN.

Hornsey, April 1897.

THE STORY

OF

BAPTIST HOME MISSIONS.

CHAPTER I.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE ORIGIN.

THE closing years of the eighteenth century were most memorable years in the history of the Free Churches of England. The influence of the Wesleys and of the Great Evangelical Revival had touched them, and helped to awaken them to new life and earnestness. The horizon of faith and duty became immeasurably broader, conscience was quickened. The passion for the salvation of men began to possess the heart of the churches in an unusual degree. They began to realise that God had called them, not to rejoice in quiet thankfulness over their election to Eternal Life, but to be the bearers of the evangel of the Cross to the benighted and degraded men of other lands and of their own.

The Baptist Missionary Society was one of the firstfruits of the new enthusiasm. Pity for the perishing heathen led to the sending forth of Carey and his companions to preach the Gospel in India, and the same pity moved the same men to a more earnest endeavour to reach the benighted and godless multitudes in their own country.

It seems that the first organized effort made by Baptists to evangelize the neglected rural districts of England were made by the same society as that which sent out William Carey to India. "Preach the Gospel to every creature" was its motto, and in fidelity to that principle it directed the Rev. P. J. Saffery, of Salisbury, and the Rev. W. (afterwards Dr.) Steadman to go upon an evangelistic tour through the whole of Cornwall. Starting from Plymouth in July, 1796, they held services in the towns and larger villages along the southern coast to Land's End, then, having returned northward by way of Launceston, they went over nearly the whole of the same ground a second time, preaching three times on each Sunday, and every evening during the week in chapels, town halls, market halls, private houses, or in the streets, a tour lasting for eight weeks, and described thus by Dr. Steadman in "Rippon's Baptist Register."

"Whether in meeting houses, town halls, private houses, or in the open air, we were, as far as we know, entirely free from any designed interruption. In several of the towns we had from 500 to 1,000 hearers. The tinnors are greatly inclined to hear the Word, and when under it may be easily distinguished by their steady, eager attention . . . and if we may judge from appearance the Word made great impression upon many. But the nature and continuance of such impressions we seldom had an opportunity of knowing. Three or four instances, however, of persons being awakened under our ministry came to light."

It is quite evident that the brethren who were sent, as well as those who sent them, were much impressed and encouraged by the experience gained during this tour. And in the following year some prominent Baptists in London resolved upon the formation of a society for the distinct purpose of sending the Gospel to the rural districts of England.

An "Address to the friends of Evangelical truth in general and to the Calvinistic Baptist Churches in particular" was written by the Rev. Abraham Booth, and published under the sanction and authority of those who were associated with him in the



From the]

[Christian Pictorial.

REV. W. STEADMAN, D.D.

launching of the work. The address is printed in full in Rippon's Register, and the following extracts reveal the fine spirit and motive of the men who laid down the first lines of Baptist Home Mission work :—

“While we rejoice in the spiritual and laudable exertions of our Christian brethren, under different denominations, to propagate the Gospel among the heathen in foreign climes, we should not forget the many myriads at home, who have scarcely anything pertaining to Christianity besides the name, who are profoundly ignorant, if not notoriously profligate and profane.

“Nor is much reflection required to convince us that there is no object of equal importance with that of promoting the genuine cause of Christ. To this, therefore, let pious and prudent exertions be directed. Let suitable persons for an itinerant ministry be therefore engaged, and let stated pastors in the country, according to their abilities and opportunities, employ themselves in village preaching.

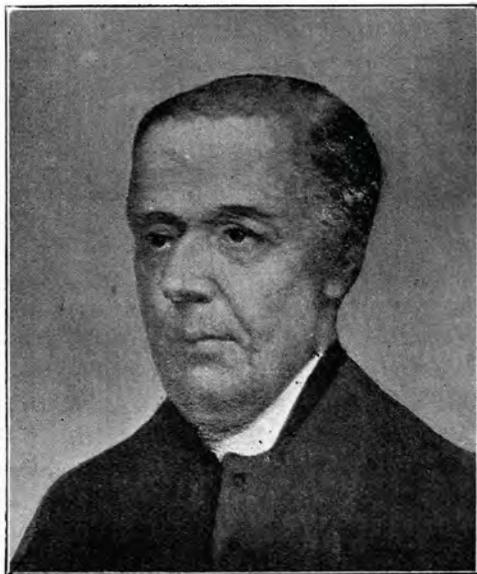
“In these labours let them keep the great object constantly in view ; which is not merely to propagate a set of theological sentiments, though ever so true, much less to disseminate political opinions, or to canvass the affairs of state ; but in the fear of God, with much prayer, circumspection, and self-denial, to warn sinners of the wrath to come, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to render their ungodly fellow-creatures truly wise, holy, and happy.”

A complete and most business-like set of rules was drawn up for the government and guidance of the new Society, setting forth *inter alia*, that the Society should consist of members who contributed one guinea a year to its funds, and that donors of ten guineas should be life members, that its business should be managed by a Committee which should meet monthly, and that its itinerant ministers should be at liberty to unite with Pædo-baptist Ministers of evangelical principles who might be engaged in the same generous design. So that our fathers were not as narrowly exclusive as they have been sometimes represented.

The fourth rule declared that, “The following ministers, Abraham Booth, John Martin, John Rippon, William Smith,

William Button, James Dore, Timothy Thomas, Thomas Thomas, and William Hutchings, with any other Baptist Ministers the Society may think proper, shall be considered as members," and these men, with Mr. W. Fox, of Colebrooke-row, Islington, the first Treasurer, and "Mr. Gale, of Clement's Inn, the first Secretary, took the new Society under their pious fostering care."

From the modern point of view, and with our love of conciseness, the title of the New Society seems unfortunate "The Baptist Society in London for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant and Village Preaching" would be sufficiently long to perplex any modern public speaker who sought to advocate its claims if not cumbersome enough to impede the progress of the Society itself, but the cry for short sermons and speeches had not arisen then and life was more leisurely ; and in spite of its name the Society took immediate root, so that in 1798 Rippon's Register reports that, "Such societies have been formed at home for village and itinerant preaching as were never before heard of among the Baptists in this country. Exertions have been made all through Cornwall and in the North of Somerset and Devon, in Shropshire, and in some parts of the neighbouring counties, not without effect. To these efforts there has been scarcely any opposition, nor is opposition to be much feared in any part of His Majesty's dominions. Almost the whole country is open to village preaching."



From the

[Christian Pictorial,

REV. ABRAHAM BOOTH.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST EFFORTS.

THE need for the work which the Baptists of London undertook was very great. The moral condition of rural England was extremely deplorable. Ignorance, vice, profanity, and brutality abounded everywhere, and hundreds of villages were entirely destitute of Gospel teaching and of vital religion.

A clergyman of the Established Church, the Rev. John Newton, of St. Mary's, Woolnoth, writes in 1801: "I am told there are ten thousand parishes in England. I believe more than nine thousand of these are destitute of the Gospel." Many of the clergy were self-indulgent, religiously indifferent, and even loose-living men, caring nothing whatever for the spiritual welfare of their parishioners.

A clergyman in the neighbourhood of Salisbury boldly avowed that the peasantry of the kingdom were so neglected by the regular clergy as to render the interposition of lay preachers absolutely necessary to snatch the souls of men from depravity and vice, and he joyfully hailed the advent of the village evangelist.

The men who were sent forth on their evangelistic mission by the Baptist and other Free Churches were not universally welcomed by the clergy of the Established Church, and it is easy to see that the evangelistic zeal of the Free Churchmen of that day caused great disturbance, keen searchings of heart and much jealousy in the ranks of the slothful and indifferent State-appointed clergy.

One prominent clergyman openly attacked the Dissenters for offering up their public prayers without a Liturgy, preferring as he said, "to pour out their extemporaneous effusions in enthusiastical nonsense."

Another prepared a pamphlet which he called, to the huge merriment of his clerical friends, "A Broom for the Conventicle," and which was intended to sweep Nonconformity from the face of the land.

The principal champion, however, of this school of critics was a certain Dr. Horsley, Bishop of Rochester. In his charge to the clergy in 1800 he first inveighed against the French Revolution, which made people in England think little of orders and dignities, of titles and sacred offices. The Revolution, he maintains, was not the effect of any real grievance of the people, but of a "plot of infidels originating in mere malice to overturn an establishment of 130,000 innocent and faithful priests." A similar plot he warns his clergy, is hatching in this country, to overturn the throne and the altar. The people who are deep in it, affect a great zeal for orthodoxy, and make great pretensions to an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit's influence. "In many parts of the kingdom," he says, "conventicles have been opened in great numbers, and congregations formed of one knows not what denomination. The pastor is often, in appearance at least, an illiterate peasant or mechanic. The congregation is sometimes visited by preachers from a distance. Sunday schools are opened. There is much reason to suspect" (*very much good bishop*) "that the expenses of these schools and conventicles are defrayed by associations formed in different places. For the preachers and schoolmasters are observed"—(*how closely these plotting dissenters are watched!*)—"to engage in expenses for the support and advancement of their own institutions, to which, if we may judge from appearances, their own means are altogether inadequate."

The wickedest thing has yet to come, however, "The poor are even bribed—by small pecuniary gifts from time to time" to send their children to these schools of they know not what, rather than to those connected with the Established, Church, in which they would be bred in the principles of true religion and loyalty. "There is," he declares, "much ground for suspicion that sedition and atheism are the real objects of these institutions, rather than religion. Indeed, in some places this is *known* to be the case" (*O what a wicked ancestry we have!*). "In one topic, the teachers of all these congregations agree; abuse of the Established Clergy, as negligent of their flocks, cold in their preaching, and destitute of the Spirit." (*Why did they not learn charity and courtesy from this excellent Bishop?*)

This charge created a deep impression. One would have considered it too violent in its tone to be taken seriously by any sensible person—but its statements were very widely believed by those who wished to believe them—and on the other side they were exposed and opposed with much ability and indignation.

The principal champion of the Dissenters was Robert Hall, who dealt at length with the Bishop's charge in an essay on village preaching. He says that "if the Dissenters profess to have more piety than the members of the Established Church, it will be shrewdly suspected to rise from a very plain reason—namely, that they have more. Hypocrisy is generally the vice of individuals, not of numerous bodies of men. Moreover, nothing but a conscientious preference can incline a man to a mode of religious profession, which in the mildest times is unpopular, and at some seasons, not exempt from danger and disgrace. To be content with merely being tolerated, instead of sharing the honours and emoluments of an opulent establishment, to have all the avenues to greatness shut against them, is a sacrifice which nothing but conscientious piety,

however mistaken, can prompt them to make." Still further—as to the charge of dissenting ministers abusing the clergy—"although it is extremely disagreeable to be obliged to contradict a positive assertion in a manner equally positive, yet truth compels us to declare, that if there are any instances of conduct so highly improper they are extremely rare, and that when the dissenters offend in this particular *once*, the Established Clergy are guilty of it *ten times*."

We get a glimpse of what was actually going on in that region in which Bishop Horsley declared atheism and sedition were prevalent, through "Rippon's Register, 1798." This is from the neighbourhood of Bedford, "On the Lord's day at one or other of the meeting houses in the town, it is common to give out five or six notices of preaching in different villages on the following days of the week. Besides their own labours the ministers avail themselves of the talent of the pious and discreet in their churches. They have thirty gifted persons or more who are encouraged to promote *village* worship. Some of them can lead a tune, some can decently read a sermon—and all can pray. The consequence is that prayer meetings and village readings (of sermons) are established and increasingly attended, and multitudes are praying that Gospel ministers throughout the land would lay themselves out as they might in village preaching and for the increase of village reading."

Here is a picture from the same source, of the life of two rural pastors. "Mr. Wake keeps a day school. Monday evenings he repeats the substance of his discourses on the preceding day (!) Tuesday night is his lecture. Thursday evening village preaching. Friday night, prayer meeting. Saturday afternoon, catechising in his own house. His people voluntarily give up their Lord's day evening lecture in summer, and in the winter they meet for prayer, and reading a sermon in the forenoon, that good may be done in the vicinity wherever



REV. JOHN RIPPON, D.D.



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Providence opens a door for their pastor's services. Query: Might not many ministers be much better employed of a Lord's day evening than in preaching a third sermon to people who have heard two before, especially when it is considered that there are *multitudes* around who seldom hear anything of the way of salvation?"

Here is the second picture. "This society is in a prosperous condition. They have raised several prayer meetings in the surrounding villages, and their meeting house is well filled on the Lord's day. The happy pastor of this people has a salary of about £26 *per annum*, a house to live in rent free, and an opportunity of keeping a cow. This, with a small income of his own, he cheerfully devotes to the support of a wife and four sons, and though he has not been entirely free from trials, he finds that he has a good Master, in whose service he is willing to live and die."

The following items of news from the same source are to the point:—

"Bampton: Pastor, Samuel Norman. The pastor of this church, in company with Mr. Humphrey, a student under Dr. Ryland, called to the work of the ministry by the church at Long Buckby, has spent several weeks in village preaching in the North of Devon and Somerset, much to the satisfaction of the Baptist Itinerant Society in London, at whose instance he was engaged."

"Bovey Tracey: Pastor, Joseph Lee Sprague. He has spent four weeks . . . in the North of Somerset and Devon, under the direction of the Baptist Society in London."

"Tiverton: Pastor, Daniel Sprague. He accompanied his bosom friend, Dr. Rippon, for several weeks itinerating in the North of Somerset and Devon, a work for which Mr. Sprague is eminently fitted. Since then, he took his nephew of Bovey Tracey over the same ground, and was appointed August 28th,

1798, by the Society in London to go out again on the same delightful work. His preaching fourteen or fifteen sermons a week strengthened his body and invigorated his mind, so that when he resumed his pastoral work at Tiverton, he encouraged new meetings for prayer and exhortation at the extreme ends of the town, and began to preach in villages where he had never laboured before."

Thus this record, published in 1798, runs on, speaking of journeys undertaken through various parts of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Wales, for the purpose of scattering the good seed of the kingdom, and resulting in profit to the ministers whose churches encouraged them to go forth on this important work. It will be seen, subsequently, that the foundation of many a village church was laid by these itinerant preachers.

From 1798 to 1813 there is a blank in the recorded history of the Baptist Society in London. The good ship is lost in the mist during these years, but in July, 1813, by the help of an anonymous writer in the *Baptist Magazine*, we are able to get a glimpse of her still holding on her course. "It may be information to some," says the writer, "that there is a Baptist Society in London formed for the purpose of encouraging and supporting itinerant and village preaching. This Society has for many years been doing much good in a very silent and unostentatious manner." . . . "The blessing of God has attended their exertions, and they have been the happy means of enlightening many of the dark parts of Britain. Divine success attending the preaching of the Gospel, many a dreary wilderness has been converted into a garden of the Lord. Village prayer meetings and Sunday schools have been established, and in some places churches have been formed."

The testimony of this writer goes to show that great success and development had during the fifteen years of silence attended

the work. Little communities of believers had been gathered by means of the itinerant preaching. Sunday schools and prayer meetings were being sustained. Permanent results had begun to be seen. The report of the Society, published early in 1814, the earliest report of which any knowledge can be obtained, bears out this testimony.

It informs us that "during the last year the Society has given assistance to worthy, laborious ministers, in Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Dorsetshire, Essex, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Northumberland, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Suffolk, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Yorkshire, also to several others in Scotland." One interesting piece of testimony may be given from amongst many. Mr. Jones, of Wolston, near Coventry, writes: "I have preached at Draycott nearly two years, and in June, 1811, a church was formed, composed of six members, since which time our number has increased to twenty-three, and several more stand ready for admission."

The whole report breathes a hopeful and encouraging spirit. The work so well started had greatly grown, and had been enriched at every stage with the blessing of God.

CHAPTER III.

ENLARGED OPERATIONS AND CHANGE OF NAME.

IN the year 1814 our Society held its first public meeting at the New London Tavern, Cheapside, on Friday morning, June 24th. "More than a hundred persons breakfasted together on this occasion." A highly interesting report of the year's proceedings was read after breakfast, and many addresses were delivered by ministers and others proving the utility of itinerant and village preaching.

This was a distinct step in the pathway of progress, and another step was made in the next year when the annual meeting got away from a tavern, and assembled in the more appropriate surroundings of Elim Chapel, Fetter Lane.

The report, equally interesting to that at the tavern, stated that in the past year pecuniary aid had been afforded to about thirty ministers in England, Scotland and Wales, and to several County Associations, which had been supplied with Bibles, Testaments, and Tracts, all at an expense of little more than £200. The Report for the next year states that the ministers engaged under the patronage of the Society are in number forty-five, that these are employed in preaching the Gospel in twenty-six counties in England and Wales, in Scotland, the Isle of Man, and the Scilly Isles, in which last place most important work was done by the agency of the Society for many years; and 1817 shows the tide of extension still flowing; upwards of sixty ministers had been able to preach in more than two hundred towns and villages, and nearly 8,000 religious tracts had been distributed. Fifty Sunday schools for children, and five for

adults, had been founded, and not less than two hundred souls had been called to the knowledge of the truth, besides which six new churches had been formed during the year.

So the reading of the reports through these years, shows the march of continuous progress, the Word of God growing and multiplying, and agencies and interest widening until in 1820, in addition to the settled ministers giving a portion of their time to evangelistic tours, there are four missionaries wholly devoted to the work of preaching the Gospel and chiefly dependent on the Society for their support. In 1823, the number of missionaries had grown to seventeen, and the income to £1,050 18s. 8d. The average income of a Home Mission pastor and evangelist has never been such as to tempt men from other callings. At present it is a fraction over £92 per annum. As far as can be ascertained, in 1823, it hovered about the sum of £40, and some of the agents of the Society, who gave their whole time and strength to its work, received only £10 a year. There has never been any money squandered on salaries.

In 1817 several important changes were introduced into the Society's operations. A sub-committee of six was appointed to correspond with ministers in the country, "to make further exertions for the spread of the Gospel, and form auxiliary Societies in aid of this, which may then be considered A PARENT institution." An address, giving the history of the Society, was printed and circulated throughout the churches.

The longing for children, which the printed history and appeals expressed, was soon gratified. The first was born at Loughborough in the same year, and in two years there were sixteen auxiliary Societies calling the Baptist Society in London their parent.

In view of such a gratifying result it was felt that a new style and title should be adopted, and out of respect to the

juvenile branches springing up and growing strong, the designation, "The Baptist Itinerant and Home Missionary Society" was adopted, and, in 1822, still yearning for a name more expressive of its object, and probably shorter, at a meeting specially convened for the purpose, the members unanimously resolved to call it henceforth, "The Baptist Home Missionary Society," carefully adding that although its name was changed, the Society and all its objects remained the same, "it having been originally formed, and being still carried on for the purpose of introducing the preaching of the Gospel, and reading the sacred Scriptures in those towns and villages which are destitute of an evangelical ministry."

It was soon felt that between the parent societies and the auxiliaries some regular system of communication was needed, and in 1823 a small periodical was launched, devoted entirely to the interests of the Mission, and called "The Quarterly Register of the Baptist Home Missionary Society." It continued in its original form for thirteen years, and served the purpose which the *Missionary Herald* serves, in keeping the subscribers and friends in constant touch with the facts of the work, and with each other.

The first secretary of the Society, Mr. W. Gale, continued in office until 1815, when he was succeeded by the Rev. J. Edwards, pastor of the church in Wild Street, and in 1824, with a view to yet further development of the work, the Committee invited the Rev. F. A. Cox, M.A. (afterwards Dr. Cox), of Hackney, to act as joint secretary with Mr. Edwards. For twenty years Mr. Edwards held office, and devoted unremitting attention to the work. He aimed less at securing stated ministers who should go on evangelising tours, and more at sustaining missionaries who should give their whole time to the work of breaking up new ground or nursing infant causes. The development of the work on these lines is conspicuous in the

following statement: In 1826 there were twenty-five agents wholly sustained by the Society; in 1830, thirty-six; in 1831, forty; while in 1835 the number had risen to one hundred, and in the previous year three hundred members had been added to the churches sustained by the Mission, seven new churches had been formed, and thirteen new chapels had been erected. This was gain indeed; let the reader carefully mark it.

The Rev. C. H. Roe was the next secretary of the Society, holding the position from 1835 to 1841, and filling it with singular fitness and power. His skill in organising, his great spiritual force, his evangelistic fervour, his unwearied industry in visiting the stations, and appealing to the churches for support, gave a great impetus to every department of the Society's work. Not only was there an increase of missionaries during Mr. Roe's secretariat, but the income of the Society grew from under £2,000 in 1835 to over £5,000 in 1841. In that year Mr. Roe accepted a call to pastoral work in Birmingham, and resigned the position which he had so splendidly filled for six years, and the Rev. S. J. Davis, who had been assisting him for some years as corresponding secretary, was appointed to succeed him. The work had grown to such dimensions that it required a man of unusual gifts to control and sustain its operations. A statesman, apostle, and evangelist was required; and Mr. Davis seems to have possessed all these qualifications. The work of the Mission was thoroughly organised during the years of his secretariat, and the interest of the churches in it was thoroughly sustained. Excepting in 1845, when it reached the record sum of £5,901 3s. 9d., the income never quite touched the line reached in 1841. But the work continued to prosper, and the blessing of God abundantly rested on it. The permanent visible results in the planting of new churches, which in their turn became centres of help, will be detailed in a subsequent chapter. Meanwhile the interested

reader will have observed that during the fifty years whose history has been thus briefly sketched, the Mission had continually grown—and all along its course had been accompanied by manifold tokens of the divine favour.

There had been plentiful reaping as well as abundant sowing. From the first there were cheering evidences that men and women were being won for Christ, and in each of the later and more fruitful years converts had been numbered by hundreds. An incidental, but very important result, of its work was the new impulse that had been given to all kinds of voluntary Christian effort. The missionaries were largely assisted by the willing helpfulness of the people among whom they laboured. One report states that in the Sunday schools belonging to the stations sustained by the Society, there were five hundred teachers. Moreover, the contributing churches had been welded into a closer unity by co-operating in the work of caring for the spiritually destitute; their own life had been stimulated; in helping others they had themselves become stronger. And they had been gladdened and uplifted by the tokens of the divine benediction on their efforts. For half a century the work of the churches through the mission had been like a flowing stream, gathering and giving; increasing as the years rolled by, in breadth, depth, and volume; branching out in many directions, and making many a barren place fresh and beautiful with spiritual blessing—a real river of water of life.

CHAPTER IV.

DEVELOPMENT AND CONSOLIDATION.

IN 1846 there was a general feeling that the operations of the Society had outgrown its constitution and called for a modification of its rules. Its name had been changed, its basis had been widened by the inclusion of county auxiliaries and affiliated societies, and now it was felt that a revised constitution was required. Wise heads were set to work to draw up a scheme, which was duly presented, and adopted, apparently without discussion, at a special general meeting of subscribers and friends on the morning of April 24th, at the Mission House, Moorgate Street. The principal changes may be briefly summarised as follows :—

- (a) The encouragement of the formation and development of Baptist churches rather than the promotion of itinerant preaching.
- (b) A more democratic condition of membership, subscribers of 10s. per annum, collectors of 20s., and pastors of contributing churches being admitted.
- (c) The allowance of a larger measure of autonomy to the county auxiliaries and affiliated societies.

Two days after this special meeting the annual public meeting was held in Finsbury Chapel under the presidency of Dr. Cox, of Hackney, when the new constitution was unanimously adopted.

The next year was the jubilee year of the Society's history,

and its annual meeting is more interesting than usual. There is apparently no extra effort made to mark the jubilee year, but the first year's working of the new constitution has gone past, and the proceedings are full of life and hope.

Mr. J. Colman, Mayor of Norwich, presides over a large audience in Finsbury Chapel, and in his opening speech he utters thoughts which might have emanated from a famous pulpit in Norwich in this Centenary year. He says: "If we do not look more to our Home Missionary Society I conceive that our foreign operations will not succeed. It is by the labours of the former that the latter are supported. From that source our Foreign Mission has derived its Careys and Yateses in the East, its Burchells and Knibbs in the West."

After the chairman comes the Rev. S. J. Davis, pastor of the church at Salters' Hall, and secretary of the Society for the last six years. His report is jubilant in its hopefulness. More than five hundred members have been added to the churches during the year through the agency of the Society, and a considerable number of inquirers are seeking baptism. "The Lord has been with us of a truth." There are 111 Sunday Schools with 1,195 teachers, and 7,500 scholars. The income for the year has been £5,119 3s., an amount reached only twice before.

And what is, perhaps, equally healthy, the expenditure has exceeded the income by nearly six hundred pounds.

The points of the reports are driven home in telling addresses by the Revs. Francis Tucker, B.A. (of Manchester), John Howard Hinton, M.A., C. E. Birt, and John Bigwood, and the meeting is evidently one of great interest and enthusiasm.

Going on two years to 1849, we learn that the work is still progressing in a living fashion—there are 297 stations and sub-stations. The missionaries calculate that they preach to 23,000 persons weekly. The number of members in the Mission churches is 4,335, and 562 have been added during the year.

About the year 1851 there was a good deal of concern in the minds of Christian people generally in regard to the spiritual condition of the working classes. It was a time of great commercial prosperity and the populations of the towns in the manufacturing districts were increasing with immense rapidity. Large numbers of the people seemed to be entirely outside direct Christian influences and were drifting into practical, if not avowed, infidelity. This condition of things had engaged the very serious attention of the friends and supporters of the Society, and the matter was brought forward for special consideration at the annual meeting which was held in Finsbury Chapel, April 26th, 1851. The chair was taken by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Samuel Morton Peto, M.P., who speaking from a wide knowledge of the moral and spiritual condition of working people, strongly urged the necessity for direct evangelistic effort among them. The report for the year, which was read by the Rev. S. J. Davis, contained the following sentences, "Whatever be the fact in other denominations, it is not to be forgotten in relation to our own that in the majority of our churches and congregations, the working classes, as it is the fashion to call them, out-number the middle classes. In general they are not more alienated from us than are other sections of the community. We cannot truthfully adopt language which has been employed on this subject, and say that we have lost hold on these classes, supposing the term to refer to some hold possessed in times gone by." Still the gravity of the position was distinctly recognised, and while there did not seem to be any adequate reason for changing the methods of the Society's work, it was deeply felt that there was an imperative need of increased effort. A resolution was unanimously adopted in the following terms:—

"That while this meeting is thankful for what has already been accomplished, it cannot but deplore the ignorance and afflictive estrangement from God still manifested by vast numbers of our

home population, both in the rural and manufacturing districts ; that it recognizes with deep concern the efforts made by infidels and the advocates of anti-Christian errors to propagate their pernicious opinions ; and that it earnestly recommends the churches to enable the committee of the institution not only to maintain, but extend and improve its operations for the evangelization of the people." This resolution fairly expressed a feeling which was widely and deeply shared by the friends of the Society throughout the country, and some special efforts were made particularly in the northern districts to meet the prevailing need.

In some measure, as the outcome of this deepened conviction of the necessity for larger efforts, an arrangement was made with the secretary, who up to this time had been pastor of the church at Salters' Hall, by which he should give his whole time to the work of the Society. Mr. Davis therefore resigned his pastorate and devoted himself wholly to the Mission. He visited the stations supported by the Society in different parts of the country, and gave himself, with an earnestness and zeal which won the warm praises of his brethren, to the work of stimulating the churches generally to do greater things for the good of the people and for the cause of Christ.

In the year 1856, the stations wholly or in part sustained by the Society were distributed over the different counties of England, as follows : Bedford, 1 ; Buckingham, 2 ; Cambridge, 2 ; Cornwall, 2 ; Dorset, 2 ; Essex, 3 ; Gloucester, 4 ; Hampshire, 11 ; Hereford, 2 ; Hertford, 1 ; Huntingdon, 2 ; Middlesex, 2 ; Monmouth, 7 ; Northern District, 6 ; Nottingham, 4 ; Shropshire, 2 ; Somerset, 4 ; Stafford, 1 ; Surrey, 1 ; Sussex, 1 ; Warwick, 2 ; Worcester, 2 ; Devon, 7 ; Pembroke, 4 ; Leicester, 3. In addition to these stations, there were twenty-two others under the control of affiliated societies in different parts of England.

A glance at the work here and there will help to show what was being done.

One of the most interesting and successful workers in the whole history of the mission was Mr. Thomas Pulsford. This gifted brother began work at Great Torrington in 1818, and after twenty years of most fruitful labour in that neighbourhood, he was appointed by the committee to the Northern District. Wherever Mr. Pulsford preached, crowds gathered, and his work in the North was richly blessed. A church of twenty-three members was formed at Carlisle, as the first result of his labours, while great accessions in numbers and spiritual quickening came to the churches at Bedale, Hamsterley, Middleton, Wolsingham, North Shields, and Newcastle. In the year 1845, he conducted a mission at Haddenham, Cambridgshire. Every evening crowds assembled to hear the word, and *services were held at five o'clock in the morning*, before the men went to their work, which were attended sometimes by as many as 300 people. Twenty-five members were added to the church. At Halstead, Essex, in the same year, over a hundred were added to the church by baptism, mainly as the result of Mr. Pulsford's preaching. His work in the Northern district greatly augmented the strength of the churches and many believers were added to the Lord.

In Yorkshire, during 1846, five new stations were opened, three of them in the important towns of Barnsley, Ripon and Huddersfield. At Ripon the work unfortunately fell through, but at Huddersfield and Barnsley it grew and prospered—in the former place with great rapidity and healthiness. In 1847 work was began at Armley and Pudsey by taking rooms for public worship, at which latter place a new chapel was built and opened in 1851, amid a full tide of church prosperity. Eight other churches in the county were receiving help, some of which grew to be most important centres of spiritual influence.

In Lancashire and Cheshire the efforts of the society included assistance to the church at Stockport, the hiring of a room at Bury, and the forming of a church by which, in 1851, £560 had been accumulated towards the building of a new chapel, which was afterwards opened free of debt; assistance to the churches at Heywood and Blackburn, Chowbent and Salford; the starting of a new cause at Padiham, and general assistance to the work of itinerating in the villages.

In the Midland and Southern Counties the work of the Society lay more strictly in the villages, and many a lamp was kept burning which would have been extinguished but for the timely aid of the Society. From Semley, Wiltshire, the pastor writes in 1853: "About eighty have, during recent years, been brought out of darkness, baptized, and added to the church.

In 1849 the church at Studley and Cookhill, Worcestershire Association, was full of elation at the tide of spiritual blessing which swept over it. At Studley in April four persons were baptized, in June, eight, August, fourteen, November, three, and at Cookhill, five; whilst from many other villages, churches which were being aided by the Society, reports of an equally hopeful character were coming in.

One of the great difficulties was occasioned by the dearth of suitable men as evangelists and pastors. "Many stations have presented most promising openings," is the pathetic cry of one annual report about this time, "and churches have been willing to make extraordinary efforts to occupy destitute fields, *had they but the men to send—furnished, prudent, zealous men.* But your committee could not find them. The day in which we live demands, and the character of the Home Missionary field *imperatively calls for*, a superior order of men, and unless our churches can resolve to find and maintain such, we may bid adieu to any further hope of enlarged success in Home Missionary efforts." The Thomas Pulsfords were very few. They

are very few still, and the advent to our ministry of a really superior order of men, "furnished, prudent, zealous," would solve many a denominational problem for us. Still, with such men as the Society had, great work was accomplished amid many difficulties, and often for most meagre remuneration. One of them writes in 1851: "Even now I do not receive more than at the rate of £40 per annum." On that sum men were content to live that they might keep aloft the light of a Gospel ministry in otherwise darkened districts, for they had learned, and they still learn, in love to Christ and men, to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V.

UNION WITH THE BAPTIST IRISH SOCIETY.

AT the end of 1863 the Rev. S. J. Davis resigned his position as secretary of the Society, and became pastor of a church in Aberdeen. For nearly twenty-five years he had filled the office with distinguished ability and devotion, and the Committee very regretfully bade him farewell. The duties thus laid down were taken up temporarily by the Rev. Samuel Green, pastor of the church at Walworth, and were discharged by him until the union with the Baptist Irish Society in 1865.

It would be impossible to give, in the limits of this brief sketch, a history of the Baptist Irish Society. It ought to be written in separate form, for it abounds with interesting incidents. It must suffice to say here that it was started at a meeting in Eagle Street (now Kingsgate Sreet) Chapel—that the Baptist Missionary Society contributed twenty guineas through Andrew Fuller, that Rev. Joseph Ivimey undertook the secretariat as a labour of love, and held the office on those terms for twenty years—that the office came down to Rev. F. Trestrail, and finally to Rev. C. J. Middleditch, who resigned it in 1864.

At the close of that year there was no permanent Secretary to either the Irish Society or the Home Mission Society, and a feeling was strongly entertained—it had been growing for some time and had often found fugitive expression—that the two Societies should be united under one management.

A *modus vivendi* was soon found. The Committees of the two Societies met at the Mission House in Moorgate Street on

April 21st, 1865, when union was agreed upon, and the Constitution was formed.

The name was to be "The British and Irish Baptist Home Mission." The object of the Society, the diffusion of the Gospel of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland.

Money was asked for and appropriated as it came in, under three separate divisions—Funds (*a*) for Great Britain; (*b*) for Ireland; (*c*) for the Mission.

The Rev. Charles Kirtland was the first secretary, and he was succeeded by Rev. John Bigwood, who held office from 1875 to 1877.

It was a very happy union, and at the first annual meeting of the merged societies, held in Bloomsbury Chapel, with Sir Morton Peto, M.P., in the chair, Mr. Kirtland was able to show that the Union had taken very firm hold on the denomination. Baptist Noel and Mr. Spurgeon addressed an enthusiastic meeting, and the treasurer, Mr. G. B. Woolley, of Hackney, announced that the income for the year had amounted to £4,057 7s. 2d.

For nine years Mr. Kirtland discharged the duties of the secretariat with rare vigour and devotion. He visited the stations in England and Ireland, and his speeches at various churches and denominational gatherings, as well as his vivid sketches in the "Chronicle," will be remembered by many who are interested and patient enough to read these pages. In June 1874, feeling the pressure of the work, he retired from the office, and his resignation was received with very deep regret by the Committee.

Some idea of the greatness of the work and the energy of the Society during this period may be gathered from the fact that in 1868 there were 240 stations in England and Ireland, where regular services were held by men who received help from the Society. In 1865-6 new stations were adopted in Great Sampford, Sible Hedingham, and St. Heliers, Jersey, and new

work was begun at Brackley, Holyhead, Pembroke, Shirley, and Ventnor, whilst in 1867 Consett, Redditch and Faversham were added to the fields of the Society's operations.

In addition to the above interesting developments, the Society helped to start three new causes in East London, *ONE* at Old Ford in a very destitute neighbourhood, *ONE* at Grove Road, Victoria Park, co-operating with the London Baptist Association in the formation of what is now a most prosperous church, and *ONE* among the German population in Spitalfields.

Thus, in crowded centres, and in villages and hamlets, work for Christ and men was earnestly and patiently prosecuted, and much spiritual blessing gladdened and strengthened the workers. The report for 1868 reviewing the work of the Society states:—
“Not a single church has been without additions.” New light was kindled, flickering light was sustained and renewed under the auspices of the Society, and from all quarters came grateful testimony to the value and beneficence of its work.

CHAPTER VI.

FUSION WITH THE BAPTIST UNION.

WHEN the Home Missionary Society was started, and for sixteen years after, the Baptist Union did not exist. It might possibly be demonstrated that the Society, whose centenary has now arrived, drawing the denomination together as it did for united effort in the homeland, was the direct progenitor of the more august and formidable body. Be that as it may, the Baptist Union came into existence, and the natural course of things was that there should be a close relationship between it and the Home Mission. Moreover, the Union wanted work to do—nobody has any right to exist without work—and here was definite valuable work to hand, worthy to engage the sympathies of the whole denomination. So it is not surprising to find in 1879 a resolution on the books of the British and Irish Home Mission, declaring it to be desirable “that the secretariat of the Union and of the Home and Irish Mission be in future in the hands of one gentleman to be appointed by the Assembly of the Union, and that the secretary obtain such help as may be desirable.” This resolution was carried into effect, and the Rev. S. H. (now Dr.) Booth, secretary of the Union, was appointed secretary of the Mission, with the Rev J. H. Millard as assistant secretary.

Shortly afterwards both these gentlemen resigned their positions, and Rev. W. Sampson, of Folkestone, with Rev. J. M. Murphy as his assistant in the work of the Mission, became secretary of the Union.

In 1882, on the lamented death of Mr. Sampson, Dr. Booth was once more called to the office, and the revised constitution of the Union provided that the Home Mission should be one of its departments. In 1884, on the resignation of Mr. Murphy, the Rev. W. J. Avery was appointed assistant secretary, and Dr. Booth and he still continue their efficient services to the Union in all its departments, including the Mission.

Shortly after the incorporation of the Mission with the Union, the Rev. C. Chambers was appointed to labour as a district evangelist in the Potteries. The idea of his appointment was first that he should seek to strengthen the Baptist churches already existing there ; second, that a preaching association for the regular supply of branch stations should be organised ; and, third, that new fields of labour should be opened up. Similar work was undertaken at Burford, in Oxfordshire, and at Winslow, in Buckinghamshire ; churches were grouped for evangelistic effort in the counties of Warwick and Worcester, and in Hertfordshire the Committee, in conjunction with the local Union, appointed two evangelists for itinerary work. By these means cottages were visited ; in scores of villages and hamlets, services were held in the open air, in cottages, in chapels, and lodging houses. Tracts and religious literature were freely distributed, and the reports of the brethren engaged teem with interesting and encouraging incidents of sorrow comforted, ignorance and prejudice dissipated, and interest in the Gospel revived.

A great deal of attention was also devoted to colportage work, one of the colporteurs reporting as the work of a year the sale of 147 copies of the Scriptures, 928 books at 6d., and over 1,591 books under 6d., 8,098 magazines, 3,572 packets of books and cards, 933 wall texts and almanacks : amounting in value to £143 18s. 3d. In addition to these sales, 7,235 visits were paid and thirty-five sermons and addresses were delivered. This is a typical record of days that are filled with labour for the Lord.



REV. SAMUEL HARRIS BOOTH, D.D.

A great quickening of interest in work in the rural districts was caused by a paper read at a Session of the Baptist Union in Portsmouth, in 1881, by the Rev. G. W. Humphreys, B.A. The condition of village churches was very vividly pourtrayed and a scheme of grouping weaker churches strongly advocated. A conference attended by sixty delegates from thirty-six associations, met in London to consider the suggestions of Mr. Humphreys' paper. The whole matter was carefully and thoroughly considered, and a report was presented to the Assembly at Liverpool in the following Autumn. At the Spring Assembly in 1883, a plan formulated by the Council was unanimously adopted. The main provision was that a mission pastor should be appointed to a church unable to support a pastor on its being grouped with a church or churches in a like condition, or on its being affiliated to a larger or central church, or on its being placed under the direct control of the Association, &c.

The plan was at once put into operation, and at Gainsborough and Ledbury, Northchurch and Buckley, mission pastors were appointed, and generally speaking, the plan was eminently successful. So much was this the case indeed, that churches in other districts, which had at first viewed the scheme with disfavour, manifested a desire to fall in with its provisions; and at the close of 1893 there were ninety-five mission churches receiving help from the Home Mission Fund, fifty-two of which were formed into twenty-four groups of two or three churches each, with each group under one mission pastor. In addition to these, there were thirty-eight mission stations where the Gospel was regularly preached. The number of communicants was 5,099, of whom 365 had been baptized during the year. In the schools connected with these churches and stations there were 8,423 children and young people, and they had raised among themselves for all purposes, £8,349 16s. 1d. during the year.

This is a record which speaks for itself, of the life of these rural churches, which was developed and made more robust by the system of grouping under the judicious care of the Associations and the Baptist Union. The value of the work thus done cannot be fully estimated, its importance cannot be exaggerated.

If we leave the young people in our villages and smaller towns to grow up without religious knowledge, or under influences other than those which can be supplied by Evangelical Nonconformity, our larger towns and cities must proportionally suffer loss. These young people are drafted into great commercial centres, and it is of immense importance, in the interests of general morality, as well as of Christian virtue and zeal, that they should be well furnished with Biblical knowledge, and have an intelligent understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel. Whatever our larger and more influential churches may contribute toward the support of such Home Mission work, will come back to them in enlarged measure in the young fresh life by which their numbers and working power are being continually increased.

CHAPTER VII.

FRUIT WHICH REMAINS.

WE are now nearing the end of our story and have arrived at the point at which we may fitly ask what remains of all the efforts and sacrifices, the plans and achievements of the past? Much of the fruit is, of course, out of sight, but enough can be seen to stimulate thankfulness and renewed endeavour.

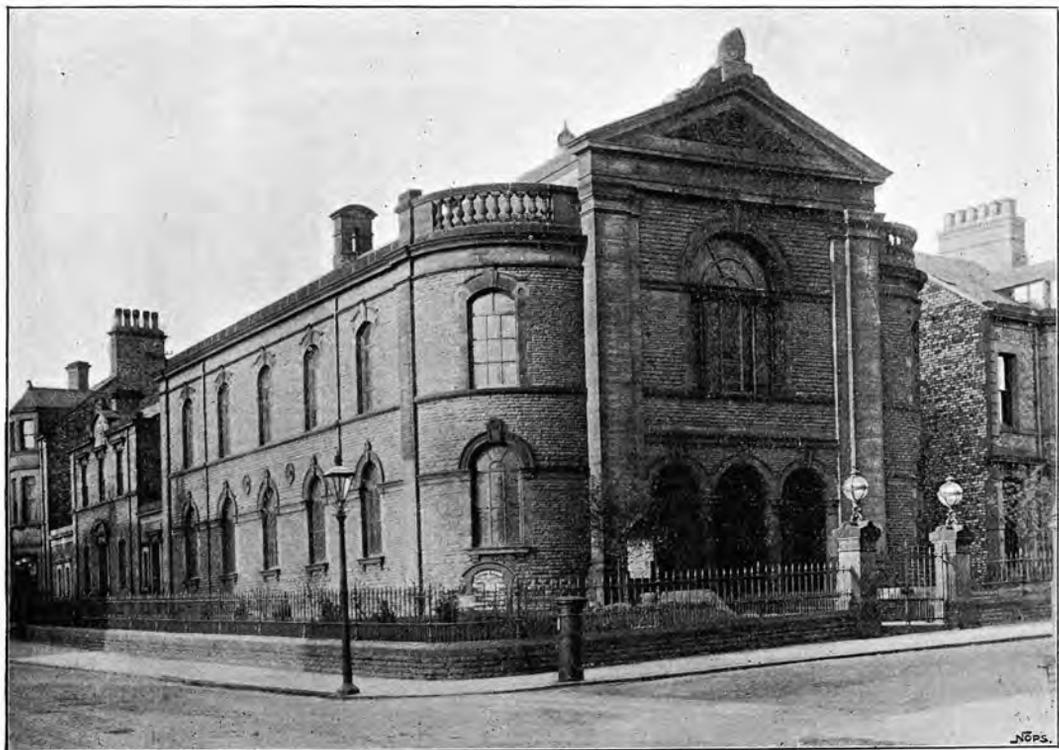
It was inevitable that as time went on the principle of devotion should increasingly come into play in Home Mission work, and that the County Associations should desire to take local work into their own control and guidance. When the first auxiliaries were formed there seems to have been no idea of their doing work on their own account, but as children grow they become independent, and although keeping in touch with their parents, they like to manage their own affairs. So it is not surprising to find certain County Associations with Home Missionary Societies of their own, doing work within their own areas which a central body could not do so well. In 1881, for example, the income of the Home and Irish Mission was over £6,000, while the income of the Associations for Home Mission purposes was over £7,000, and the amount reported for 1896 as raised in the United Kingdom for Baptist Home Missions was £18,222, of which £3,215 was the income of the Baptist Union Home Mission. Still there are weak and strong County Associations, and there is abundant need for a central Fund, administered to a considerable extent by representatives of the Associations, which shall, by means of the Baptist Union,

knit the Associations together in common sympathy and purpose, bringing the strong and the weak into helpful contact, gathering gifts where there is abundance and wisely dispensing them where there is the greatest need. All the work which the Home Mission does to-day is done in co-operation with the Associations. Behind the church or mission pastor who is aided, stands the County Association in which the work is done. Behind the Association stands the Baptist Union. For example, in the Mursley group of churches, for the pastor's stipend the three churches raise £40, the Buckinghamshire Association, an Association with only two or three strong churches in it, £20; the Home Mission, £35. This is a representative case in which it would be an unspeakable calamity for the work to fall to pieces, and where it is difficult to see how it could be maintained at all but for the Home Mission. Some day, it may be, the tide of life will turn in favour of our rural districts. God grant that it may, and many of these churches which are now helped will become self-supporting. Meanwhile they are rendering splendid service to Christ and to our denomination, and command our most respectful and generous aid.

But there are permanent results of this enterprise which can easily be set before anyone who wants to see them. In 1851 the annual report stated that "within the last ten years upwards of fifty churches have become independent of the assistance of the Society, and are now taking their part in aiding its operations, and in promoting the foreign missionary enterprise."

As a matter of fact, the money expended by the Society on these churches had turned out to be a splendid investment, from which there has been an income ever since.

In 1897, we are able to say that during the last fifteen years, about a hundred churches, which have been at some time helped are now independent of the assistance of the



DURHAM ROAD CHAPEL, GATESHEAD.

Society. It is a noble list, which we append, and it is compiled in the order of the Associations to which the churches belong:—

Bristol—Burnham.

Buckinghamshire—Great Missenden.

Cambridgeshire—Caxton, Mepal, Prickwillow.

Cornwall—Liskeard, Truro.

Devon—Teignmouth Group.

East Midland—Arnsby Stations, Austrey and Appleby Billingborough, Birches-lane, Chesterfield, Collingham, Derby (Trinity), Holbeach, Horncastle, Kirton-in-Lindsey, Newark-on-Trent, Smalley and Kilbourne, Stonebroom, Sutton-in-Ashfield, (Eastfield side), Sutton-on-Trent, Woodborough.

Gloucestershire and Herefordshire—Ewias Harold, Fownhope, Layshell, Ledbury, Lydbrook, Painswick, Uley.

Hertfordshire—Northchurch, Pinner and Harefield, Redbourne Tabernacle, Rickmansworth Group.

Home Counties—East Molesey.

Huntingdonshire—Brampton Group.

Kent and Sussex—Brasted, Faversham, Herne Bay, Portslade, Sheerness, St. Leonards, West Malling, Whitstable.

Lancashire and Cheshire—Crewe (Union-street), Audlem.

London—Erith, Hornsey Rise, Poplar and Bromley.

Northamptonshire—Braunston, Northampton (Mount Pleasant), Stantonbury.

Northern—Crook, Ford Forge, Gateshead, Hartlepool (West), Jarrow, South Bank, Spennymoor, Sunderland (Lindsay-road), Waterhouses, Wolsingham.

Oxfordshire—Bloxham, Burford.

Shropshire—Madeley Group.

Southern—Ashley, Beaulieu Rails, Blackfield Common, Boscombe, Gosport (Forton), Jersey (St. Heliers), Poulner, Sandown, Southampton (Shirley), Ventnor, Wimborne, Winchester, Yarmouth.

West Midland—Birmingham (Highgate-park), Dunchurch, Eastwood Vale, Fenton, The Potteries, Wolston.

Worcestershire—Droitwich, Great Malvern, Redditch.

Yorkshire—Scarborough (Westgate).

North Wales—Abergele.

Monmouthshire—Blaenavon (Forge Side), Cwmbran, Llanfihangel Crucorney, Llanfihangel Ystern, Maesycwmmwr, Nantyglo (Bethel), Monmouth, Pontnewydd, Redwick, Tintern.

Take a few churches in the list and look at them separately.

At Gateshead no Baptist Church existed until the year 1876. The Rev. A. F. Riley, now of Highgate, London, was invited by some friends at Bewick-street, Newcastle, to commence a new cause. He began his work in September 1876. Under his genial and able ministry, a church was gathered, a chapel built, and a handsome organ added at a total cost of about £7,000. Most valuable help was given by the ever-generous Newcastle Baptists, and without that help, the work could never have been done. But the following resolution speaks for itself: "That this meeting expresses its deep gratitude for the most liberal aid received from the funds of the Baptist Home Missionary Society during the six years ended last year, and desires to record that the origin and growth of the church, and its present prosperous condition, are largely owing to the substantial help thus received." This resolution was passed in church meeting, June, 1883.

The church at Faversham, Kent, is placed amid widely different surroundings from that at Gateshead, but it has the same story to tell of generous and timely help from the Home Mission. The Church was formed in November, 1867, and consisted of twelve members, including its first pastor, the Rev. A. Bax. In 1872 a chapel was erected, at a cost of £2,000, which was all paid by the year 1883. In that year the Home Missionary Society received from the church the following



FERME PARK CHAPEL, HORNSEY, N.

communication: "For some fifteen years the Home Mission has most willingly and liberally assisted our church in this town. Happily, alike for it and us, our connection of dependence is about to cease, and it is with feelings of unfeigned gratitude that I write a brief line of acknowledgement for the long continued help which has been so generously rendered us. I have said 'our connection of dependence' is about to cease, be assured, however, we shall continue to be united by doing all in our power to show practical sympathy for the Mission which has aided us in our time of great need."

A General Baptist Church was formed in Birmingham in 1775, which subsequently worshipped in Lombard Street Chapel, and had for its pastors successively, the late Rev. J. Cheatle, Rev. J. Harrison, now of Portsmouth, Rev. E. C. Pike, B.A., and the present minister, Rev. E. W. Cantrell, who settled in 1882. In 1889 a beautiful chapel was built at Highgate Park, with sitting accommodation for 700 persons, at a cost of £5,000. The present membership is 216, and there are twenty-two Sunday school teachers, 251 scholars, and four local preachers. The church had received annual grants from the General Baptist Home Mission when the "Amalgamation" took place in 1891, which were continued by the Baptist Union Home Mission until a condition of self-support was attained in 1895.

In the year in which the Highgate Park Chapel was built, a new chapel was opened at Ferme Park, Hornsey. It had been built at a cost, including the land, of something over £5,000. The basis of the building fund for this chapel, was a grant from the General Baptist Home Missionary Society of £1,500. Its inception may therefore be placed to the credit of Home Mission enterprise.

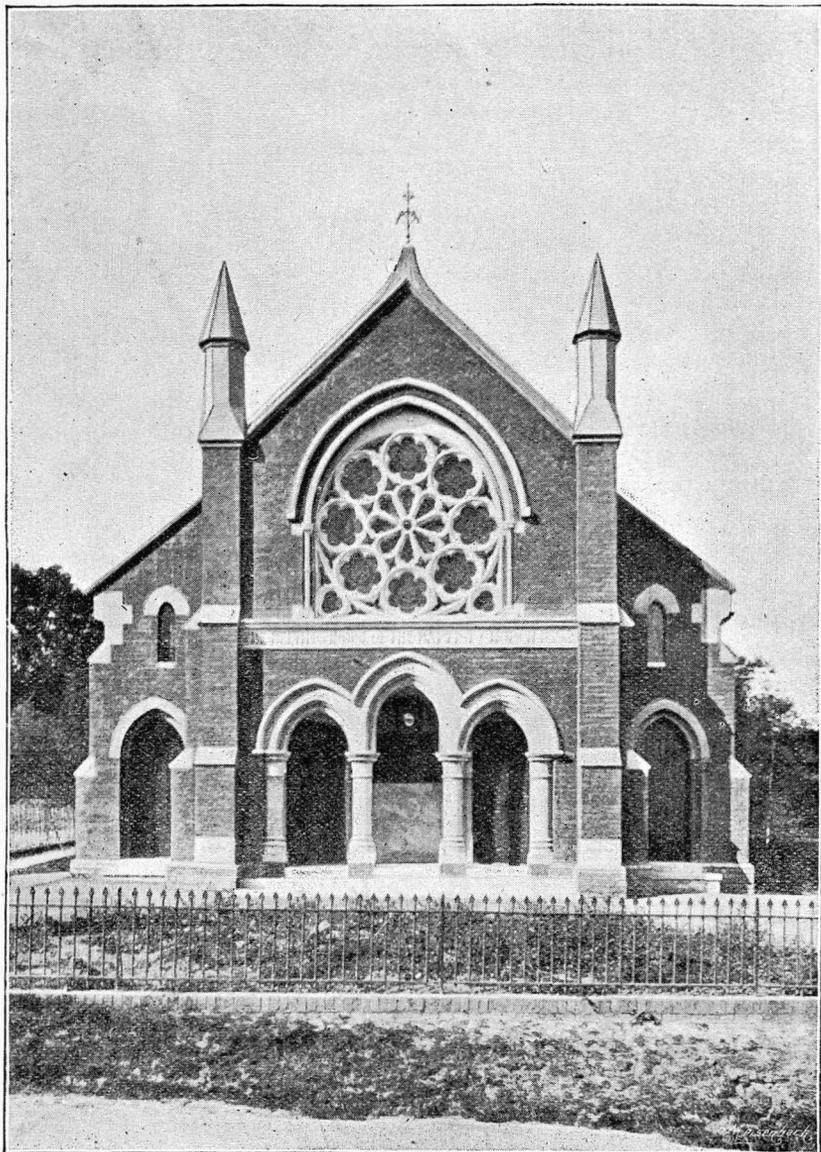
The church at Redditch sent the following communication, which requires no comment, to the Home Mission Committee in 1883. "The church and congregation worshipping

in Ipsley Street desire to record their grateful acknowledgement to the committee of the Baptist Home Mission for the generous and long-continued help which they have given for the establishment of a Baptist church in this town, where it was so greatly needed, and are thankful also in being able to say that through the goodness of God to them and the success which has followed the preaching of Gospel in this place, they shall be able to support the institutions of the church without the further help of the Mission."

In 1889 services were commenced at Hawkhurst, Kent, by students from Regent's Park College. The Church was formed in 1891, when Rev. S. J. Henman became the pastor, and he still remains there. The present number of communicants is eighty, and there are ninety young people in the Sunday School. On 19th April 1893, the new chapel was opened. It was built at a cost of £1,620, more than half of which sum has been paid. The work has been aided from the first by grants from the Baptist Union and the Kent and Sussex Association, and there is need for the continuance of such support in view of the forces of priest-craft and fashion which mightily influence the neighbourhood.

These are selections from a multitude of instances of churches which in some way or other have been assisted by the Mission. There has been great variety in the method of help rendered. In some cases it has been given to plant and nurture churches in large centres of population, in others to sustain churches passing through a time of special difficulty and depression, in others again to unite in a group churches in neighbourhoods where the population has decreased. Churches have been nursed in their infancy and in times of sickness, rescued in times of crisis, and saved when they were ready to perish.

Surely there is reason to thank God for the work which has been accomplished, and for the blessing which He has commanded to rest upon this enterprise.



HAWKHURST CHAPEL, KENT

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

WHAT are we doing now? will be the question which all who are interested in the spread of Christ's Kingdom, and who have been sufficiently interested in our work to read through this brief record of service. The answer to the question must be compressed into a few pages, though it could be expanded to half a volume.

We are now simply the "Baptist Union Home Mission." The Irish friends, as is most appropriate, have Home Rule. Since 1889 a committee in Ireland has had the exclusive management of that section of the work, and their efforts have greatly prospered.

First of all, Colportage work is aided by the Mission in three counties, and good work is being done by this important agency.

Secondly.—Itinerating evangelistic work is supported, the Home Mission allowing over £100 yearly towards the support of four evangelists in Hertfordshire and Worcestershire. Open-air services, cottage meetings, visitation of workhouses and lodging-houses, distribution of tracts, &c., form part of the work of these devoted brethren. One of them reports that between thirty and forty persons professed conversion to God in his district during the year.

Thirdly.—The Council has engaged the services of the Rev. F. C. Spurr as missionary, whose labours in our churches up and down the land have proved a great means of blessing in

stimulating the life of professed Christians and leading many to decision for Christ.

Fourthly.—The largest and most important part of the Home Mission operations at present is carried on through mission churches and mission pastors. No one cares to be worried with figures in connection with Christian work, but it is impossible to explain what is being attempted without them. It will help to bring a view of the work before the mind of the reader to state that there are at present

88 mission churches,

25 mission stations,

58 mission pastors working these churches and stations
assisted by the Society.

That in these churches there are

4,306 communicants,

9,713 persons on an average at Sunday evening
services,

7,504 Sunday scholars,

1,056 in Bible classes.

These figures do not require a word to add to their significance. A great work is being done, but those who know the work best are conscious that it might be largely increased if only means were at hand for its development. The work is spread over twenty County Associations in England and Wales, and it is sober truth to say generally, that each of these stations is a centre of Christian light and usefulness, and in many instances furnishes the only opportunity in the village or district for the proclamation of the evangel of salvation by faith.

From Devon, the oldest field of the Society, a mission pastor writes: "We are grateful to the Devon Association and the Baptist Union for the help . . . upon which our very existence as a creditable church depends." And from another assisted church this testimony comes: "Between fifty and sixty

have professed conversion during the year (1895), while our Sunday school has grown marvellously. The Y.P.S.C.E. is doing good work ; the pastor's Bible class for men continues to be useful. The cottage prayer meetings are well attended. There is vigorous life in the church, and everything points to a happy future."

Now what remains to be done? We look back for a moment over these hundred years ; we see how deep a hold this Society obtained upon the affections of our fathers, when they were a few and feeble folk in the land. Since 1798 our churches in England and Wales have grown in number from 445 to 2,500. It is unquestionable that we have grown in wealth and influence too. The favour of God has been wonderfully shown to us, so that the peculiar difficulties with which the founders of this work had to cope, the bitter and slanderous opposition which they had to face, have passed away from our larger churches.

To the growth of our dear denomination, the Home Missionary Society has singularly contributed, and we owe it a debt of gratitude and support which we are bound to seek to discharge. The sacrifices and devotion of the men who had gone before us, the recrudescence of sacerdotalism in the Established Church, the difficulties with which our rural pastors have to cope, the silent heroism of the country manse, the brave enduring of hardness there for Christ's sake, all summon us to renewed interest in and more generous support of this profoundly important work.

It seems, sometimes, as if we modern Baptists had fallen into a deep lethargy concerning the heritage into which we have entered, and the obligations which rest upon us. Appeals for work which cries to be done in the Homeland in the direction of Church Extension, in the sustenance of churches which struggle with insuperable difficulties, fall often on deaf and

preoccupied ears. Schemes upon which our future usefulness, and even our honourable existence depend, are passed by almost without notice or are regarded as though they were the private property and responsibility of those who advocate them.

Fifty years ago the income of the Home Mission for one year amounted to over five thousand pounds. This was exclusive of the sums raised by the Association for Home Mission purposes, which probably amounted to £4,000 more.

In 1895 the amount received for the Baptist Union Home Mission Fund was just over £3,000. Even if we take into account the amount raised by the Associations, and expended within their own areas, this cannot be called satisfactory. The denomination has grown vastly in numbers and in wealth, but its interest in its own work at home seems to have decreased.

May we not reasonably hope and believe that the arrival of the Centenary year will create a quickened interest in our operations through the length and breadth of the denomination.

If it is worth while for us to exist as a separate body of Christians, it is necessary that we be watchful to strengthen the things which remain, and prepared to enter into doors of usefulness which swing open to us on every hand.

It is clear that a great work remains to be done in the future on the lines along which our Society is working. The constant drafting of the bright and vigorous life from village to town imposes a serious strain upon the village churches. Some of them are able to bear it, but others will grow weak and inefficient unless help from strong centres be given. That help should be given without their being compelled to plead for it.

Sad disaster would befall the cause of religion if our churches in rural England which are not strong enough to support a minister were allowed to decay, or were denied the oversight of an efficient ministry, or if those who leave these districts for the towns were allowed to depart without the

influences which the ministry of the village church has exerted on so many of our lives.

It is an accepted fact that our church life in great centres is quickened and freshened continually by the tide which continually flows in from the country, and that many of our best workers in pulpit and school, diaconate, and mission field are sent to us from the village church.

Two things are urgently called for to-day—

A more efficient ministry in our villages ;

A continuous breaking up of new ground in our large centres of population.

Both may be very largely supplied if the interest of our people can be awakened in this cause proportionately as it deserves, if only we can feel that it is a piece of God's work which He has given us to do, and for the prosecution of which He has given us the adequate means. There must be thousands of our church members who never think of giving to it at all, who never think about it sufficiently to see its importance. If the perusal of this brief sketch should serve to secure their prayers and their gifts, many a faithful heart weary with the severe struggle will be refreshed and made to sing for joy.

Sixty years ago a remarkable thing happened in the history of our Mission. The income had declined to £2,000. Under the energetic secretariat of the Rev. C. H. Roe, who advocated the claims of the work with a zeal and an energy born of deep love for it, the income rose in a few years to five thousand pounds, and for fifteen years subsequently it was kept close to the level of four thousand pounds. May not history repeat itself? By the story of the past and the opportunities of the present, by the memory of the men who have gone before us and the heritage which has been bequeathed to us, may not our hearts be stirred to seek along the lines of work in which we have most confidence—the salvation of our dear native land from

indifference and priestcraft and sin? "Faithful is He who hath called us," rich are the blessings which He has vouchsafed to us, great the responsibility with which He has entrusted us, "moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." May we be found faithful to our past history and our present opportunity!

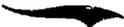
Our fathers planted and watered, and God gave the increase. Their labours and sacrifices proved a most remunerative investment to the cause which they loved. A like devotion will ever meet with a like reward. There is recorded in the writings of an inspired Apostle, a law which obtains over every seed field. "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." May the blessing promised to him "who hath a bountiful eye" be coveted and won by us at this important juncture—that we may worthily carry on what was so worthily begun and nobly sustained by our predecessors, to the glory of God and the good of men!



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