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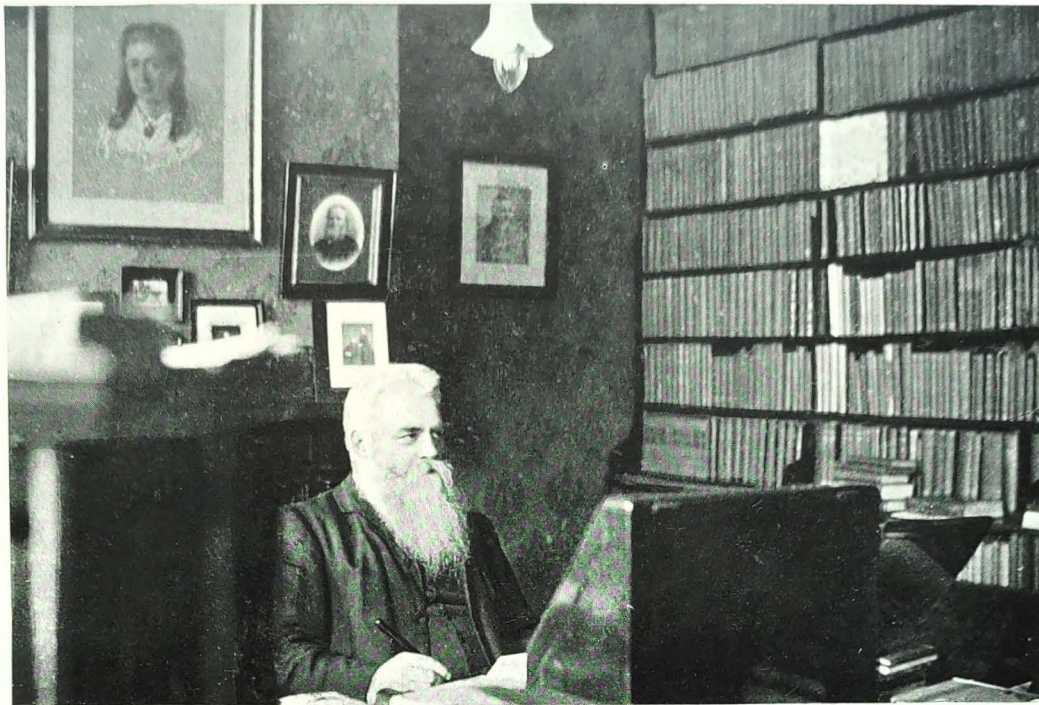
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PETER THOMPSON



THE REV. PETER THOMPSON IN HIS STUDY.

[*Frontispiece.*]

# PETER THOMPSON

*THE ROMANCE OF  
THE EAST LONDON MISSION*

BY

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## PREFACE

THE object of this little book is twofold. My aim has been, first, to give some account of the remarkable piece of 'practical religion at work,' known as the London Wesleyan Mission, East, with an historical setting where possible. There is a real romance attaching to such centres as St. George's Chapel, 'Paddy's Goose' and Old Mahogany Bar, and I have endeavoured to trace their early history, and the process of development by which they have arrived at their present position as religious beacon-lights in the prevailing darkness of the East End. I have given figures, facts and incidents of the Mission's work, and have tried to convey to the reader some impression of past and present conditions in that part of the metropolis. If the narrative succeeds in arousing interest—and that of a practical kind—in what is, perhaps, the biggest Mission to the masses in London, the writer will be amply repaid for the time and trouble expended in compiling it.

Secondly, I have endeavoured to present to my readers the Rev. Peter Thompson, who for twenty-three years has been the superintendent and chief factor in the Mission. Of Mr. Thompson

it can well be said, *si monumentum requiris, circumspice*. He is 'the Mission.' But his long and honourable career possesses many features of interest; and in the account of his early days and first ministerial work, an endeavour has been made to show how the hand of Providence was leading him up to his real life-work. I had hoped to make the personal element even more conspicuous in the narrative, but the well-known modesty of Mr. Thompson has prevented this. Still, what is said about the man himself will, I feel sure, prove no less interesting than the account of his work.

I have to acknowledge my deep gratitude to Mr. Thompson for placing at my disposal a wealth of material of which I feel conscious of having made a too poor use. He has also personally co-operated in various ways, and allowed me facilities for seeing first-hand the workings of the great Mission. Also to many of his colleagues I am indebted for valuable information and help. I would also acknowledge my indebtedness to the *Methodist Recorder* and *Methodist Times*, from whose columns I have obtained many facts that would have been otherwise inaccessible.

G. A. L.

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# PETER THOMPSON

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY DAYS

PROBABLY no place in the world exercises so potent a fascination over the thoughts of men as the East End of London. Here you have focused the baffling problems of all time and all places—crime, poverty, unemployment, economic issues—to the solving of which many earnest souls are devoting their whole lives. It is the great rendezvous of those who ‘go down to the sea in ships’; its streets echo to the tread of representatives of nearly every nation under the sun. The yellow Chinaman fresh from his cook’s cabin, the swarthy Malay but late released from the stokehole, find a common meeting-ground in East London with the British sailor. These men create their own problems, and help to make even more difficult the existing conditions. No wonder, then, that people are never tired of hearing and reading about humanity ‘east of Aldgate’; and in attempting to set forth a brief

outline of the life and work of the Rev. Peter Thompson in East London, the writer sincerely trusts that some adequate impression of the past and present conditions of that district may be given.

‘Believe me,’ says Ruskin, ‘joy, humility, and usefulness always go together,’ and in no man are these three attributes more harmoniously blended than in the Rev. Peter Thompson, who for nearly twenty-four years has bravely upheld the standard of the Cross amid the surrounding darkness and difficulties of East London. Full of the joyousness of life in its truest and best sense, and with a splendid record of deeds accomplished under incomprehensible drawbacks, Mr. Thompson is withal the most modest of men, and has only consented to this short record of his life and work under the conviction that such a narrative might stimulate interest in the Lord’s work in the East End, and so prove a twofold blessing—to the reader, and to the Mission itself.

Peter Thompson, the friend of the East-end gamins and mud-larks, and superintendent of the London Wesleyan Mission, East, is a Lancashire lad, having first seen the light in the Fylde district, near Blackpool, in 1847. His father, Robert Thompson, was a typical specimen of the English farmer, broad-shouldered and with the independence of mind characteristic of the Lancastrian. Born at Elswick in 1819, he was converted at a revival which took place at the village of Kirkham.

From that hour a desire to work for Christ, and to acquire knowledge, took a firm hold upon him; and when, in 1845, he applied for the position of assistant overseer he was unanimously appointed by the Board of Guardians. In 1843 he became an exhorter and in the following year a local preacher. In the year of his conversion he married Ellen Sudell, a woman of gentle spirit, gifted mind, and pure heart. In 1864 he removed to a large farm called Mythop Lodge, on the Earl of Derby's estate, situate midway between Preston and Blackpool. As a farmer few men were more successful, especially as a breeder of shire horses and short-horns. In 1889 he retired from business, and removed to Blackpool, where his closing years of life were crowded with much toil for God.

To Mr. and Mrs. Robert Thompson eight children were born, of whom Peter was the second son. From his earliest years he was dedicated to God by his saintly mother, and to this day acknowledges that all the success that has attended him throughout his ministerial career he owes to the early teaching of 'a godly mother, now in heaven.' Mrs. Thompson's place in the forming of her son's future destiny cannot be over-estimated. His lifelong enthusiasm for total abstinence is wholly due to the example and teaching of his mother, who very early became a teetotaller through her own observation of the terrible mischief wrought by intoxicants. Through her influence they were banished from her husband's farm. This temperance

teaching had a far-reaching effect, for it was her zeal for the cause that inspired the boy's first interest in Christian work.

Many years after, speaking at a temperance meeting in Exeter Hall, Mr. Thompson gave the following piece of autobiography—

‘I happen to be a Lancashire lad, and I happen to be a life total abstainer. I do not even know the taste of intoxicating liquor. Let me first of all say—and I say it with gratitude to God—that I owe all to a plain, homely, country mother, a mother who never changed her bonnet with the fashions, a mother who taught me to look all men in the face as an honest man, a mother who daily consecrated me to God in prayer, a mother whose first influence and first teachings sanctified a teetotal farm, and was the means of securing us the honour of a first place in the neighbourhood of Preston in conducting hay and corn harvests without a drop of beer allowed on the entire farm. I know what it is to mow and reap, to get up at half-past three in the morning and be at work at half-past four, and I know what it is to stay in the harvest-field till 9.30 at night and be hard at work all day, and I understand how this kind of day's work can be got through without a drop of beer. Like most country lads, I found I was a man before, I suppose, most people would give me credit for it; I felt I could go and mow as early as fourteen or fifteen years of age, and the difficulty was, I remember now, how to whet well, for at that

time we had to do it by horse power. The first day, and particularly the morning after, I found myself very sore under the fifth rib. I don't know how it was, but somehow or other, in harmony with the principle adopted on the farm, we had tea and coffee at almost every hour of the day, and when I began to mow, we found the coffee growing better and richer as the day advanced. Some eggs got into it, and a larger quantity of cream, and though I had the hardest work of the harvesting to do I managed to do it, proving myself to be a man in that way of work at all events, and gaining between one and two stones during the time it lasted. I do not know that I have grown less since that time. There are not many people who have had a happier, jollier, more smiling life than mine. I know something of happiness and I know how to enjoy the world, and I am thankful that I have had a life-long experience of this temperance reform.

'I call to mind the meeting that took place some years ago in the Preston Corn Exchange—the anniversary of the British Temperance League. One of the first things I read in temperance literature was that admirable "Malt Liquor Lecture," by Joseph Livesey. Month after month a large packet, addressed in his own handwriting, of the *Staunch Teetotaller* came to me, and when passing through Preston not long ago I called to see him whom I always regarded as my father in this tectotal work, Joseph Livesey. When I entered his room I found his head white with a

crown of glory, pure and stainless in his advocacy of this great movement; and just as I left the room he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "God bless you in your course."

'I come from very near Preston, and when I was old enough to have thought for temperance work, and to have allied myself with it, I asked a cousin of mine, an active worker, to take me to the Cockpit where Joseph Livesey had spoken his wise words to his fellow working men, and where "Slender Billy" had been asked to get up and defend the cause of temperance. I associated myself with those early reformers in that Cockpit, and I asked God to help me to be a true and faithful fellow worker, like those who had gone before, in fighting this noble battle.'

On another occasion Mr. Thompson, after referring to his mother's work for temperance, gave this piece of advice—

'If throughout the country such practical steps were adopted by the mothers of England as were adopted by my mother, the drink question would soon be settled. I beseech you mothers in the name of Christ, and in the interests of your children, not to tolerate drink within a mile of your door. Clear out your cellars and have done with it at all times and on all occasions. Regard it as my mother regarded it, as the enemy of the house, and that which may become a curse to the children.'

In this connexion it is interesting to learn that

the first book which made an impression upon the boy was one dealing with total abstinence. It was *Morning Dewdrops ; or, The Juvenile Abstainer*, by Mrs. Balfour. Years afterwards Mr. Thompson was telling Mr. Smithles, founder of the *British Workman*, and other illustrated papers, of the great charm which Mrs. Balfour's little volume possessed for him. 'Well,' said the editor, 'it is a curious thing that when I first came to London I picked up a badly printed copy of that book, in paper covers, and I admired it so much that I made the resolution that if I ever came to possess £100, I should reprint it in good type and in stronger binding. The copy you had must have belonged to my edition.'

Peter went in due course to the village school at Esprick. The teacher was Mr. Ralph Pass, a man of considerable culture, whose aim was to make his academy more of a grammar school than a mere place for elementary education. He was particularly strong in arithmetic and mathematics, and Mr. Thompson often acknowledges with gratitude the excellent grounding obtained in the little Esprick seminary. These were happy days, and, like most grown-ups, Mr. Thompson wistfully recalls them, and fancies he is back in the plain little village schoolroom. Mr. Thompson says—

'The master was a superior man, and the time passed not unpleasantly—with one annual exception. I was flogged five times in five successive years for following the hounds. The hunt had a

tremendous fascination over me, and willingly I paid the penalty.

'I had no difficulty about my lessons, especially arithmetic, algebra, and mathematics generally. The master advised my father that I should devote myself to mathematics, as he thought I should excel in this branch of knowledge. However, after this I had no further school, but afterwards received a good deal of help from a professor in Preston, under whom I had a grounding in Latin. My father preferred to keep on in this way ; he had a theory that boys lost in long holidays much of what they gained during school term. I had no great amount of reading in my early youth.'

After leaving school he entered on the regular work of his father's farm, busy from early morning until late at night. To these healthy conditions of his early life he no doubt owes his splendid constitution and magnificent physique. As a boy he was noted for great bodily strength, and stories are still current in the Fylde district concerning his physical prowess.

His father was a noted breeder of shorthorn cattle, and for the boy there was infinite delight in the tending of these beautiful creatures. One excellent rule that obtained on the farm was that none of the sons should be permitted to take charge of any department of farm industry unless they could do the work with their own hands.

In his work among the stock his father greatly



encouraged him, and allowed him to attend all the local agricultural shows at which the Thompsons exhibited. In this way the young fellow early came to know the differences of the Booth and Bates bloods, and became profoundly interested in the pedigrees of the various families and tribes of Duchesses and Oxfords, Barringtons and Wildeyes which were represented in the herds of the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Bective, and many other prominent breeders. To this day Mr. Thompson retains his love for farming, and could give points to many an agriculturist, especially in the matter of shorthorns.

A most exciting incident occurred at the cattle show at Preston during Mr. Thompson's first year at college. His younger brother, who had charge of the stock, wanted Peter to exhibit a shorthorn bull in the ring before the judges. Although he had been away from home, and hardly realized the length of his absence, he consented. But the bull did not know him, and, it being a hot day, he was greatly irritated. So no sooner had the theological student taken him in hand than he showed his ill temper, to which Peter replied with a cut of the whip. This thoroughly upset the bull, and he suddenly turned round and faced him, and stubbornly refused to change this attitude, and went backwards. After following him a long distance up the ring, and beyond where the judges stood, Peter pulled the animal in, which then made a furious rush at him.

In a moment Peter jumped on to the bull's head, and the latter carried him along with him for some distance. Then Peter saw that the bull was taking him with all his strength right against the grandstand. He just looked and saw how to manage him in this danger, and in a twinkling had clutched hold of the bull's nose-ring, and, throwing himself off, vigorously twisted the ring in the animal's nostrils and forced his head upwards. The bull bellowed terrifically, but Peter held him until two friends took charge of him.

## CHAPTER II

### CONVERSION AND FIRST CHRISTIAN WORK

FOR many of the particulars relating to Mr. Thompson's early days the writer acknowledges his indebtedness to an admirable sketch by the Rev. Nehemiah Curnock, contributed to the *Methodist Recorder*, of which he was so long the editor. This account has been supplemented from other sources.

Peter Thompson's earliest memories are associated with the Methodist class-meeting and the quarterly ticket. Those associations were solemn, sacred, almost awful. From his infancy it had been burnt into his soul that he must live all his days as a child of God, and this early impression never left him. He was regularly taken to 'class' long before he knew what it meant, and when childhood was past, and in his teens there gathered round him the allurements and temptations incidental to that period of life, this one thought—that he was a child of God—kept him straight. Peter had as a school-friend one who afterwards became a Congregational minister. Peter went with him to his early appointments,

and to this fact is due his after religious history. Being of a critical turn of mind, the young fellow criticized his friend, and so in this way gave an early indication of his qualification for a position of much importance that he now holds—the secretaryship of the Committee for the Examination of Candidates for the Ministry. On the occasion when young Thompson had offered his criticism, his friend turned round and, with a solemnity that carried the question straight into the citadel of his inner being, asked Peter what he was going to do with his life. He was at this time a member of Society, and to all outward observance religious, being the godly son of godly parents. Although Mr. Thompson acknowledges that at this time he had grown careless, forgot to love his Bible, and was drifting, yet this critical time did not last long. It was the word fitly spoken by his comrade which led him to take up temperance work and, later on, definite preaching.

One night he went to the village temperance meeting, and had prepared a speech—for by this time he had begun to identify himself with the movement. He could hardly have done otherwise, brought up as he had been amid temperance surroundings. He had intended to explain to the people the physiological reasons why they ought to be total abstainers, and prided himself not a little on the clever speech he had so carefully prepared. With the utmost confidence he took his place on the platform with the other speakers,

and awaited the moment when he was to start and do something with his life. But as a writer has observed, this was the very moment when the hand of God was upon him, and, to use his own expression, it 'knocked him over'—humiliated and an utter failure. His elaborate speech was never delivered. His friend had taken the line that signing the pledge would not save them, nor membership in a temperance society, nor, for the matter of that, membership in a church, nothing but the grace of God. After such a speech physiology was useless, and Peter went home to think, looked out upon life with open eyes and in a new light. From that Saturday until the Wednesday following, he was day and night in mental anguish, haunted all the time with the thought that he had been living the life of a hypocrite.

His conversion took place on Wednesday night, March 18, 1865. He went home and shut himself in his room alone with God and his conscience. Taking a sheet of paper he wrote upon it a vow, signing it with his name in all solemnity: 'From this day I will live and work for Thee.' He had an elder sister, who from nine years of age had enjoyed religion in the fullest sense. She, with a woman's quick intuition, had noticed her brother's condition, and stole into the room and saw him on his knees in prayer. She knelt down by his side with her arm around him, and together they prayed. He handed her the paper just written,

which she kept as one of her most sacred treasures. Presently their father came into the room. He was a man of duty, of stern integrity, and had brought up his children to be diligent in business as well as fervent in spirit. He taught them to serve the Lord in daily work as well as in other ways. At first he was minded to rebuke his son for leaving the duty of the moment on the farm, but when he saw them kneeling he recognized the hand of God, and knelt and prayed with them, and all three rejoiced in the wonderful mercy of God.

The following Sunday Peter went to Eccleston in the Garstang Circuit, and in conversation with a young fellow in the village chapel, learnt the way of the Lord more perfectly. A week later, being rooted in faith and love, he began his life-work, in fulfilment of the written vow.

Many will remember the Blowing Sands behind the south shore at Blackpool. In those days there was a little four-walled chapel for the donkey drivers. On this Sunday Peter Thompson presented himself to the class-leader, who was also superintendent of the Sunday school, with the question, 'Do you want anybody to help in the school?' The dear old man broke down, and replied it was just what he wanted. He had been praying for some one who would help in the work among the half-wild donkey-boys who lived among the sandhills, and here was the man in answer to his petition. For many Sundays Peter Thompson went to Blowing Sands, which became in reality

his Sunday home, teaching in the Sunday school, attending services, and in the intervals went round hunting up the donkey-boys and persuading them to come to the chapel.

At this stage we may go back a little to recount one or two experiences which Peter well remembers in connexion with the religious life of that time. The travelling preachers were in the habit of going round the circuit to their various appointments. His father's farm was a halfway house for them, and Peter's duty was to meet the preachers at chapel, between two or three miles away, and drive them to the farm. Then on the next morning he would drive them to the station. On these expeditions, he confesses, he had plenty of counsel from them, a good deal of which he did not appreciate at the time.

One most amusing experience was when, getting home from one of these drives, he went fishing—for to this day he acknowledges a fondness for the angling art. It was a moonlight night—one could scarcely call it dark—and so absorbed was he that he kept on with his fishing until midnight. At last he stopped and, taking up his rod, made for home. Arrived there, he found the house shut up and every one gone to bed. He knocked, when to his horror he heard the preacher who was staying there open the window and ask, 'Who's there?' Young Thompson gave no answer, but went round the house, and found a window open at the back, but it was fixed with iron bars.

Immediately he took off his coat and waistcoat so that the buttons could not catch, and managed to get his head and, by degrees, his body through. Then he felt for the table beneath, on which the milk-pans used to be put, and so got in safely. Reaching his room, and while taking off his shoes, he could not resist saying, quite aloud, 'Bravo! now I don't care a rap!' Suddenly he heard his mother's voice, 'What! doesn't thou care?' However, he made it right with her, and his father said nothing later, probably remembering the adventures of his own boyhood days.

One of the preachers whom Peter often drove on his rounds was the Rev. Benjamin Gartside, and he used to talk with the lad in a way that greatly charmed him—friendly little chats that went to his heart. When Mr. Gartside heard that he had been speaking in public, he sent an invitation to him. They sat chatting for two hours, but nothing was said on the matter. At last young Thompson said, 'I must be going home.' The minister helped him on with his overcoat, when he said, 'Peter, they tell me you are going to preach?' He replied 'Yes.' 'Well, then, Peter,' he observed, 'what you say, let it be your own. Say it, don't read it. Good-night.' That wise counsel has been the rule of Mr. Thompson's life.

The question had already arisen as to what Peter should be. His elder brother was on the farm, and would probably take his father's place. But Peter seemed to be preparing for a different



vocation. As we have already mentioned, he was proficient in mathematics, and had spent his energies in self-improvement. Then a situation was offered him in a great estate agency, in the duties of which a knowledge of mathematics as well as surveying would be an important feature. It was a tempting career that opened up before the young fellow; the work was agreeable, the prospects good, and he seemed especially fitted for it. As soon as he knew that he might have the position he rushed home and said, 'Mother, have you heard the news?' and then he poured out his eager story. She said, 'I am very sorry to disappoint thee, but I don't think I shall ever part with thee except it be to go into the ministry.' Peter stood and looked at her in amazement, and in a rage turned round and said, 'Mother, if thou never parts with me till then, thou'lt see me carried out feet foremost.' He next went and told his father, and he was too wise and too good to doubt the strong conviction of his wife, who lived so near to God. He reminded Peter that he was one of her children, and she had a right to a voice in determining what his future career should be. This was in the November of 1864. On March 18 in the following year the great revolution took place, and the vow was registered to live and work for God. This momentous event in Mr. Thompson's life we have already related. After that memorable evening neither Peter nor his family took any steps towards the realization of his

mother's wish, and Peter himself had never for a moment entertained the idea of entering the ministry. He rather looked forward to working for God just in the same way as his father.

It was at Eccleston, in the Garstang Circuit, that Peter Thompson began, not to preach, but to speak. After his first speech, the class-leaders and the old superintendent of the Sunday school gathered round the young speaker and said, 'You'll have to preach.' Soon a note came from the superintendent of the circuit asking him to do so. Peter's first inclination was to decline the honour. But on account of the vow he had made he consented. He preached monthly in the Garstang Circuit because it had more village chapels than his own circuit could boast. So impressed were those who heard him with his fitness for the ministry that, unknown to him, they sent a letter to the Blackpool superintendent suggesting that he should nominate Peter Thompson as a candidate for the ministry. The superintendent had no time to go and hear him, and said the nomination must wait a year, during which time they would watch the young preacher's career. Mr. Thompson senior was too devout and practical to urge a course which his own conscience did not clearly see to be right. Peter himself took his stand here. 'I am not aware,' he said, 'of my call to the ministry. If the voice of the Church speaks unmistakably, I will never say another word. That will be to me the call of God.'

Fortunately at this time the late Rev. Elijah Jackson came to the circuit, and advised Peter to leave the question, meanwhile giving himself to prayer. He directed him in his studies, and made arrangements for him to receive instruction from a professor in Preston. Minister and people all agreed in no uncertain manner that the ministry was Peter Thompson's true calling. Still, his own personal desire remained unchanged. The life of the Methodist local preacher was his only ambition.

One day he found himself face to face with the District Meeting, or Synod. Usually the candidate is questioned concerning his call to the ministry. If Peter Thompson had been then questioned he would in all probability have replied, 'No, I am not conscious of any inward call.' That reply would have raised a difficulty, and the probability is he would have been rejected, and Methodism would have lost one of its greatest workers among the masses. But the hand of Providence overruled all things on that day; no such question was asked then, or even at the July Committee. Thus Peter Thompson came to enter the Wesleyan ministry.

## CHAPTER III

### COLLEGE DAYS AND NORTHERN CIRCUITS

FROM Mythop Farm to Didsbury College was a great change for the young man. Hitherto his life had been uneventful, and until he entered on his theological studies he had divided his time between work on the farm and Sunday services at Blowing Sands. It was the opening up of a new world to him—the world of scholarship and fuller knowledge. But as showing how deeply agricultural things had entered into his nature, we may mention that even when at Didsbury Mr. Thompson spent a week in Manchester attending the Royal Agricultural Show.

Peter Thompson entered Didsbury College, the famous training-ground of so many of our best-known Wesleyan ministers, in the year 1869, and was fortunate in having as his professors some of the most eminent of Methodist scholars. His classical tutor was Dr. Geden, the celebrated Hebraist, who was a member of the Old Testament Revision Committee, and under his able guidance Peter Thompson developed an aptitude for languages. By five o'clock every morning, summer and winter, he was at his desk, with his books before him. He

grasped the principles of the languages with comparative ease, and still retains his love of Greek and Hebrew, acknowledging that these studies have been one of the greatest helps and joys of his ministry.

It was Professor Geden who helped to send Peter Thompson into the world of action, just as it was he who opened the realm of languages to him. He had watched attentively the career of the first student who was granted a fourth year at Didsbury, and who, with his fellow student, James Chapman, now Principal of Southlands College, had impressed him deeply in his class-room. He had observed that the young man was beginning German and Anglo-Saxon, and other special studies, and had a shrewd suspicion that he was devoting but little time and attention to sermon preparation. 'Mr. Thompson,' he said one day, 'what is your aim in life?' The student replied that he wished to become a scholar. 'That will never do,' said Dr. Geden; 'it cannot be God's will that you should be a book-worm.'

Dr. W. B. Pope was another powerful influence at Didsbury, and his lectures on 'The Outlines of Theology' deeply impressed Mr. Thompson. To the teaching of these two distinguished scholars he owes it that the fundamentals were laid for wrestling with the problems of theology and practical religious work. To the present day he retains his interest in the best theology, his favourite writers being A. B. Davidson, Driver, and Sanday.

Among his fellow students who were his closest friends at college he remembers with deep affection the late Rev. Edward Smith, the Rev. John Telford, B.A. (the Connexional Editor), and the Rev. J. H. Hopkins, formerly a colleague in London. 'Thank God for my fellowship with Edward Smith!' he once said, and at a meeting in 1889 Mr. Thompson referred to the fact that there were three Didsbury men of the same year engaged in the London Mission—Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Edward Smith, and himself—and recalled much of their fellowship in their college days: their meetings for prayer, their personal conversations, and united heart-searching. At the same meeting Mr. Hopkins had been speaking of the crisis of his life, and his surrender to the will of God. Mr. Thompson was reminded of a similar experience in his own life, when four years previously at the Conference at Newcastle he would fain have chosen his own lot, but at length consented to go to the East End of London. This crisis will be referred to in a later chapter, when we come to trace the history of the London East-end Mission. While at Didsbury Mr. Thompson engaged in gospel work, and was a tract distributor, having as his district Heaton Mersey. Along with Edward Smith and others he used to hold open-air services in parts of Stockport. Mr. Smith used to go with the college bell and perambulate the district, ringing up his audience.

Before we leave Mr. Thompson's college days we must briefly allude to the fact that in 1871 he

had matriculated at the London University, but his public duties since then have been so pressing that he has never proceeded to his academic degree. His friends feel that he has won a better degree which will confer greater honour upon him.

Mr. William Jackson, Governor of Didsbury, always tried to meet the wishes of his students, and when Mr. Thompson was leaving asked him where he would like to be sent. He replied, 'I don't mind where you send me, only don't send me south.' So it came about that at the Conference of 1873 Mr. Thompson was appointed to Broughton-in-Furness, in the Ulverston Circuit. Here he found himself in the midst of circumstances calculated to test his tact, his faith, his courage. There was no chapel, though afterwards Mr. Nathaniel Caine, father of Mr. W. S. Caine, M.P., and his family built and partially endowed one. Mr. Thompson had to live in a small cottage, and the total membership of the cause was six. But even in those days he laughed at difficulties, and found in them a stimulus to greater effort. He threw his whole energy into the work, and at the expiration of three years left behind him new places of worship and revived societies at Broughton and Coniston. His preaching proved most acceptable to the rough miners of the district. During his three years' stay in the circuit he devoted a good portion of his time to temperance work, and was a district officer of the Good Templars.

At the end of the three years at Broughton Mr.

Thompson was invited to a circuit in the Black Country. He was on his honeymoon, and went away to the Continent, leaving his appointment to the mercy of God and Conference. On his return he found that in five days he was expected in the Huddersfield (Queen Street) Circuit, and once more the hand of Providence chose his lot for him. The lady whom he married in 1876 was Miss Thomson, daughter of Bailie Thomson of Glasgow. He first met his future wife in Liverpool, where he was staying with the late Alexander M'Aulay, during Mr. Moody's revival. She came of a prominent Methodist family, and had spent much of her girlhood on the beautiful west coast of Scotland. Her father had a house named Dunfillan, on the road between Dunoon and Innellan, and Miss Thomson occasionally attended the ministry of the late Dr. George Matheson, whose name will be for ever linked with his beautiful hymn, 'O love, that wilt not let me go.' Her family worshipped in the St. Thomas' Chapel, Glasgow. Another member of the family married into ministerial circles, her sister being the wife of the late Rev. J. Tannahill, a Presbyterian minister of Penrith. In all her husband's subsequent work Mrs. Thompson took the liveliest interest, and nowhere was this more marked than in the East End of London. She was a true helpmeet for the stout-hearted missionary.

It is not our intention to enter at length into Mr. Thompson's fruitful Huddersfield ministry, which he acknowledges to have been one of the happiest



periods of his life. The woollen manufacturing town was as different as could be from the mining centre he had just left. At Huddersfield he had to deal with a fixed population of shrewd hard-headed Yorkshiremen. The people, especially the working men, were well read, and had decided opinions of their own. Rationalism was very strong in the town, and it was a hot-bed of Radicalism. Charles Bradlaugh used to visit Huddersfield almost every summer, and at a spot a short distance from the town would gather together a large audience. Unitarianism and a 'New Theology' of that day also held sway, and practically the only Nonconformist pulpit that preached an evangelical gospel was that of the late Rev. Dr. Robert Bruce. Mr. Thompson, with his usual quick insight, discovered that some antidote must be found, and preached very largely upon doctrinal subjects in his chapel at Queen Street. Here he again showed his genius as a builder, and a flourishing new chapel at Fartown, now the chief in that circuit, was secured through his instrumentality.

He took a full and praiseworthy share in the more public life of the town, and particularly in the temperance propaganda, which was in a flourishing condition in Huddersfield in those days.

## CHAPTER IV

### WOOD GREEN AND REDHILL CIRCUITS

IN 1879 Mr. Thompson began his labours in the metropolis by becoming resident minister at Wood Green, in the Finsbury Park Circuit. Even then he had no idea that his great life-work would be among London's teeming millions, but the three years' experience here familiarized him with a certain aspect of City life which has undoubtedly had a beneficial effect on his East-end ministry. At any rate, from the comparative seclusion of a northern suburb, he could not fail to hear of the distress and misery of the inner circle, and its claims on the Christian Church must have often occurred to him.

It was at Wood Green also that Mr. Thompson won his spurs among metropolitan Methodists. He had manfully to struggle against the depressing influences which everywhere surrounded him. At Wood Green he found a handful of people scattered over a broad expanse of pews and a membership of sixty all told. He inoculated them with his bright enthusiasm, laughed at difficulties, and proposed instant extensions. He came, he saw, he conquered.

Two outstanding features of this portion of his ministry may be briefly singled out. His most successful work was the establishment of a Working Men's Bible-class, held on a week-night, a department of service which was his peculiar delight. He succeeded in awakening in the men an intense enthusiasm for Bible study, and in making each member feel a personal interest in the class. By means of this class he succeeded in winning his way into the hearts of many working men, and in Wood Green to this day his name is gratefully remembered. Upwards of one hundred and eighty members were enrolled on the books at this class during the three years, while one hundred of these were attending at the time of his removal. Mr. Thompson acknowledges the cordial welcome he received from the late Mr. T. B. Smithies, founder of the *British Workman*, on joining the circuit, and the valuable help he received in many ways from the sturdy Wesleyan layman. The kindly disposition and extraordinary energy of Mr. Thompson, combined with the strictly unsectarian character of the work, largely contributed to its success and popularity. On the occasion of his departure he was presented in the name of the members with an address, suitably and tastefully mounted and framed, together with a gold pencil-case. The address was as follows—

'TO THE REV. PETER THOMPSON.—We, the undersigned members of the Wood Green Wesleyan

Working Men's Bible-class, desire to express to you on the occasion of your departure from Wood Green, our high appreciation of, and deep gratitude for, the untiring energy and zeal with which you have conducted our class for the past three years. Your earnest words and kindly manner will, we are assured, exert their influence on the lives and characters of those who have had the privilege of attending this class, and you will be remembered in the homes of its members as one who, by his interest in their welfare and ready sympathy in their troubles, showed himself to be the true friend of the working men. Our best wishes and earnest prayers follow Mrs. Thompson and yourself in your new sphere of labour, and we beg you to accept the accompanying gold pencil-case as a small token of our regard and esteem.'

The second outstanding feature of Mr. Thompson's Wood Green ministry was his endeavours for church extension, and particularly the erection of the school chapel at Winchmore Hill. The rapidity with which the district of North London was then being opened up and populated was very remarkable, and as the population increased the first concern of the Church of God then, as now, was to meet their spiritual requirements. Nowhere at the time was the prospect of this increase more likely than in the district of Winchmore Hill, and nowhere was there so much need of the existence of a purely aggressive Church,

whose aim would be to keep pace with the rapid increase of population. The need of some Wesleyan cause in the neighbourhood had long been felt; and through the generosity of the late Mr. Thomas Kelsey, land was given for a school chapel to seat 350 and a future church to seat 1,000. On Tuesday, November 30, 1880, the memorial stones were laid. The first stone was laid by Mrs. Thomson of Annfield, Glasgow. She and her husband had for nearly fifty years rendered valuable services to the cause of Methodism in Glasgow. At the evening meeting Mr. Thompson gave some account of the progress of the cause at Winchmore Hill, also a financial statement, which showed that the chapel would cost £1,200.

Great regret was felt when in September of 1882 Mr. Thompson removed to Redhill, and he carried with him the goodwill and hearty blessings of the congregation, who had greatly appreciated his devoted labours for the district. They presented Mr. and Mrs. Thompson with two splendidly mounted portraits of themselves, and an illustrated address—

*Trinity Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Wood Green.*

Presented to the Rev. Peter Thompson, with the portraits of Mrs. Thompson and himself, upon the occasion of their leaving Wood Green, as a small token of the esteem and respect with which the congregation and his many friends in the neighbourhood have been inspired by his inde-

fatigable labour as their earnest minister of the gospel, and as an expression of the hearty good wishes and fervent prayers with which they will be followed to their new sphere of work.

*Society Stewards*

Edward Hare

Thomas S. Bird

*Poor Stewards*

James Root

H. A. Rason

*Chapel Stewards*

Francis Hill

John James Brown

*Treasurer*

Thomas Bell

As one of the congregation neatly put it, of Mr. Thompson it could be said, that he found his portion of Wood Green brick and mortar and left it a really living Church, just as it was said of a Roman emperor that he found Rome brick and left it marble. The total membership of the circuit at the beginning of Mr. Thompson's ministry was 346 and on leaving it was 637. At Wood Green he was found harmoniously co-operating with the other Christian ministers in promoting temperance and general philanthropy, while his abundant labours and open-handed generosity endeared him to all his neighbours.

It was not a far cry from Wood Green to the Redhill Circuit, of which Mr. Thompson assumed the superintendency in 1882. Here he was still within sound of London's woes and sorrows, although his immediate field of labour was amid the lovely scenery of northern Surrey. During his

ministry the work was strengthened all round. In Redhill also he succeeded in establishing a Working Men's Bible-class which was a real training-school for Christian workers, as well as a seminary for the study of the Scriptures. During the three years about four hundred men were members of the class. At Dorking the chapel was enlarged and the schoolroom and class-rooms built. At Reigate a fine chapel and schools were erected, at a cost of £6,000, without entailing any burden of debt.

The story of the building of this fine new chapel deserves special note. For many years there had been a congregation of Wesleyans worshipping in the town, and for thirty years they met in a building in Nutley Lane, which was neither convenient nor ornamental, and could only be discovered by diligent search. Mr. Thompson and his friends set themselves to put the Wesleyan community more in evidence with the people. Ultimately a site was obtained in the High Street of the Old Town, the best that could be found in the borough. At this time the population of the municipal borough of Reigate was 19,000, and the provision in the different churches, chapels, and mission-rooms was only a very little over 7,000, so that there was ample room for the enlarged premises. Mr. Thompson could only claim a grant of about £300 from the Connexional Fund. He had, therefore, to make a special appeal to outside subscribers for the needed funds, and that he got every penny is a tribute to his financial genius,

which has been so marked a feature of his East London efforts. The first stone of the new church was laid on May 7, 1884, by Miss Fowler, Lady Mayoress of London.

The following year Mr. Thompson bade farewell to the Redhill Circuit, and again received valuable tokens of the esteem and respect in which he and his dear wife were held, a signed illuminated address being the gift of the Bible-class, while the circuit's gift took the shape of a costly bronze clock. When Mr. Thompson became superintendent there were 314 members in the Redhill Circuit, with 9 on trial and 19 junior Society members. When he left, the membership was 452, with 44 on trial and 150 junior members. Including junior members the return showed an actual increase in the membership of over 300. In addition there were over 1,000 Sunday-school scholars.



## CHAPTER V

### 'THE BITTER CRY OF OUTCAST LONDON'

IN the year 1883 a pamphlet from the pen of the Rev. Andrew Mearns, for so long the honoured secretary of the London Congregational Union, entitled *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, sent a thrill of horror through the nation. It was the opinion of many Methodists that they had hitherto failed in their duty to the great mass of the people of London, and had looked too much to the upper and middle classes. The London Methodists began to think seriously about the problem, and in the spring of 1884 the Rev. George Lester read a paper to the Ministers' Meeting on the subject of 'Outcast London.' In the discussion which followed, though no one had any plan of work to submit, it was generally allowed that the circumstances and conditions of life in inner London were so peculiar, and that the Methodist and other religious agencies at work therein had been so weakened by the removal of money and workers to the suburbs, that it was absolutely necessary that some new scheme should be devised if the Methodist people were to do their part in chris-

tianizing and civilizing the hundreds of thousands who crowded the central districts.

Two difficulties were in the way: (1) the vastness of the population and the extent of the spiritual destitution; (2) the social and economic conditions. A committee was appointed, which resolved: (1) That in order that the work for which the London Mission has been established may be successfully accomplished, it is necessary that in any great area that may be occupied by it a Mission Centre should be established, either in connexion with already existing trust premises, or with premises to be acquired for the purpose. That at such centres, with the preaching of the gospel and the ordinary means of grace, shall be associated philanthropic, social, and rescue work, and that accommodation shall be provided for the temporary as well as permanent residence of workers. (2) That in the most destitute districts around such centres smaller mission-rooms, to be worked from the Centre, shall be acquired. At this stage the Committee had their eye on St. George's Chapel in East London. The results of their deliberations were embodied in a report presented to the Conference of 1885. How Mr. Thompson came to be appointed at the Conference to the East-end Mission will be told in the next chapter.

Something must here be said of the particular character of the East End, especially St. George's-in-the-East, where the Mission started, in order to prove the wisdom of the Committee in fixing upon

this centre for a great forward movement, and in choosing the Rev. Peter Thompson as its first superintendent.

The resident population included pitiable thousands of 'fallen' girls, many of whom ought to have been at school, and from age indeed reckoned as juniors. They were scarcely ever sober. It included also vast numbers of 'trippers'—girls more insolent and shamelessly defiant of religion than the common women of the streets. These were the girls who roamed in bands to waylay seamen as they came ashore, and landsmen too, with their money, seeking to decoy them, lead them into the first gin-shop, drug them, rob them, and leave them spoiled of everything. Then the district also contained a full supply of the criminal, vicious, and workless, without home and friend. Those who were not vicious and criminal were chiefly shoemakers, wood labourers, dock labourers, wharfmen, bargemen, and 'anything' men, with a few shopkeepers, who had a fierce struggle for existence. Among the dock labourers were four distinct classes—

(1) Permanent men, whose numbers were greatly reduced by depression of trade.

(2) Preferable ticket men, who enjoyed generally good employment except in severe depression.

(3) Ticket men, who were taken on when work was good and as soon as all the preferable men had full work.

(4) Dock labourers—casuals, who had to get a

job when they could, and though attending the docks regularly, were, often for days, without a single hour's work.

Of the first three classes there were scarcely any in the area of St. George's-in-the-East. Most of the dock labourers in St. George's belonged to the fourth class, whose average earnings for the year were 12s. per week.

Among the women and girls were sack-makers, trousers-finishers, shirt-makers, fur-sewers, and bonnet-trimmers. Sack-making and tailoring, however, occupied by far the larger proportion. The sweating of those days was cruel. At sack-making, a hard, rough work done in the worker's home, when trade was good, the greatest experts could earn 1s. per day. The prices for tailoring differed according to the class of goods. One woman was making cord trousers for boys of from eleven to fifteen years of age. She had a machine, provided her own needles, thread, oil, and coal. By working hard she could make eight pairs in three days, and received  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  per pair. Cloth trousers were generally made by two pairs of hands; one doing the machine portion, and the other finishing them. They received from  $8d.$  to  $10\frac{1}{2}d.$  per pair. The finisher was paid from  $3\frac{1}{2}d.$  to  $5d.$  per pair, and by hard work through a long day, a woman could finish only three pairs. During a year of bad trade, some of these trousers-finishers were paid only  $2\frac{3}{4}d.$  per pair. Such were some aspects of the crime and poverty of the locality where Mr.

Thompson, in the year 1885, entered upon his crowning life-work.

Some notes by Mr. Jameson, the lay evangelist who was appointed to assist the superintendent will give a concise idea of the conditions at this time. He says—

‘In order rightly to appreciate our work, it is necessary to give, briefly, a description of the locality, and of the people in their houses. Cable Street is a long and narrow street, running north of the chapel, westward to Lemn Street, and eastward to Love Lane. Streets, lanes, and courts run northward to Commercial Road, and southwards to Ratcliff Highway and George Street. Numbers of these houses are *common* lodging-houses, occupied by English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, American, German, Norwegian, Flemish, Chinese, West Indian, and other nationalities. Other houses are occupied by bargemen, dock labourers, and other families. Houses of ill-fame are swarming. The neighbourhood teems with lazy, idle, drunken, lustful men, and degraded, brutalized, hell-branded women—some, alas! girls just in their teens. Those of us who have for the past few months been living in the midst of it, and anxiously looking into the great problem of the masses, feel how powerless we are to make it at all real to respectable society. The physical, moral, and social condition of tens of thousands is terrible. Drink, that withering, blighting, blasting, woe-perfecting curse, is fearfully prevalent. Some of

the public-houses present revolting and abominable scenes. In the constant medley and ever-recurring fight, language the foulest, mingled with shrieks and cries, continually fills the air. Besotted intoxication, quarrellings, imprecations, and ravings are now familiar. No language is strong enough to express the monstrous wickedness, or to express the habits of the thousands of degraded and dissolute, among whom crime and lawlessness abound. God only knows, who seeth in secret, how many times we have gone home after visiting, sick at heart, to weep sore for them. Cases of wife desertion are common. Frequently these people have not been married, though in some cases they have lived together for years.'

Bitter indeed in those days was the cry of 'Outcast London,' and though greatly changed in features to-day, it is terribly appealing and appalling; in particular, the poverty area has become incredibly large.

## CHAPTER VI

### ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL, PAST AND PRESENT ; THE LYCETT

THE Conference of 1885 was held in Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Mr. Thompson, having left the Redhill Circuit, was expecting to be sent to Blairgowrie. The hand of Providence again interfered and chose his lot for him. Instead of a home in one of the loveliest districts of bonny Scotland he found himself appointed to St. George's Chapel in Cable Street, right in the centre of darkest East London, with slums to the right and slums to the left, with thieves and outcasts for neighbours, whose nightly yells and hideous brawls made sleep impossible ; where ragged, shoeless children, swarming with vermin, squatted in the mean streets and courts ; where night after night his wife was to be awakened in terror by the cry of ' Murder ! ' Such was the lot that fell to Mr. Thompson. St. George's Chapel in its more palmy days was a fashionable place of worship ! Strings of carriages waited outside on Sundays, and a splendid carved marble mantelpiece in the minister's vestry, still to be seen, recalls the former glories of the fine old chapel.

But to go back a little. We have said Mr. Thompson fully expected to be sent to Blairgowrie. So confident was this hope that his luggage was in the furniture vans actually labelled 'Blairgowrie,' and a great many personal and family arrangements had been made. He had consented to undertake the work in Scotland and was preparing in his usual way to do it thoroughly.

He was crossing Brunswick Chapel-yard in Newcastle. A brother minister met him with the remark, 'I say, Thompson, you're down for the East-end Mission.' Mr. Thompson refused to believe him, and when, shortly after, the news was confirmed, fell into an agony of spirit. Then followed nights of sleeplessness, during one of which he prayed without ceasing until three o'clock in the morning. He decided to leave by an early train on the Saturday morning for Penrith, where Mrs. Thompson was expecting to go to Scotland, wondering what she would say when she heard the news. He dreaded the disappointment it would be to her, but it was the unexpected that happened. This brave wife of a Methodist preacher, instead of adding to her husband's trouble, instantly lifted the burden. Quietly and simply she replied on learning the news, 'It will be all right, my dear.' And this decided it.

For the best account of this momentous period in his life, I cannot do better than quote Mr. Thompson's own words, which also concisely describe his first beginnings in East London.



' The Conference of 1885, held at Newcastle-on-Tyne, changed the outlook and course of my life. It was the crisis of my ministry. The shock was sudden, profound, and with abiding results. The East End of London was to me then almost unknown, and I thought with a feeling of horror of being appointed alone to the work. Days of darkness followed, sleepless, prayerless, with distressful agony! Then the Lord came to my help, and in a wonderfully vivid morning hour gave me confidence and courage. My wife's joyful acceptance of the sphere filled me with surprise and satisfaction. To her inspiration, counsel, and companionship I owe practically everything that has been planned and done from that Conference till now. The weeks between Conference and September were full of thoughts and plans which for the most part proved worthless. A sense of bewilderment and helplessness came during the first months of inquiry and discoveries of the actual conditions at St. George's, and of the deplorable and unspeakable lot of the people of that part of the East End. The things I had done and the methods of working in circuits were impossible here. The experience and evangelistic power of Mr. Jameson, who stood by me in the first years, were of priceless value, and to him, it is due to say, the Mission owes some features of its best and permanent work. Miss Salmond (who is now in charge of the Orphanage at Marash) was the first lady fully employed in the Mission, and the varied and

effective work among girls had its beginning and took shape under her wise guidance and prospered greatly through her devoted toil.

‘We began at St. George’s on the first Sunday of September 1885. A small meeting of members was held on the Saturday evening before. The Society and congregation had almost vanished. Those who remained were few indeed, and curiously shy, and seemingly fearful of the worst. The chapel was good and lofty, and free of debt; but the seating arrangements were vile, and the schoolroom and vestries dismal and filthy, utterly unfit for use. Large and costly alterations and additions were at once carried out to make the schoolroom and other rooms suitable for social gatherings, and after a few years the chapel was internally remodelled and made an excellent centre of manifold and effective ministry.

‘Voluntary workers cheered us by their willing and beautiful efforts to bring brightness and help to the people, and especially by visiting in the rooms of the poorest, and by hearty and mirthful gatherings of the children and young people. The daughters of Mr. B. Broomhall were the first to undertake responsible work as voluntary helpers. The long walk on Sunday from and to Mildmay Park, the eager efforts in visiting in the courts, morning and afternoon, and their intense fervour and gracious ministry in the meetings during the day and in the inquiry-room, remain a surprising memory. Miss Walford Green also early began a

beautiful ministry in the district, especially in the interest of the rough girls. For many years she patiently and brightly devoted herself to the Girls' Home, first at Lee and afterwards at Blackheath, aided by her mother, Mrs. Clapham, Mrs. Sharpe, and other friends in the Blackheath Circuit. Later on we were joined by the two daughters of the late Henry Reed of Tasmania, who came to reside in St. George's, and gave unstinted and valuable assistance under great difficulties. Their mother was our chief helper in purchasing The Old Mahogany Bar. Only a little later Miss Florence Bennett (of Grimsby) and her sister Margaret (who became Dr. Margaret Bennett and went to medical mission work in China), and still later Miss Rosalie Budgett, entered with wonderful strength and impressive enthusiasm into the life of the East End, and they have accomplished great things for God. Many others from suburban circuits have rendered the Mission imperishable service.

'God's blessing was richly bestowed, conversions of surprising suddenness and manifest reality took place week by week, crowds of children were gathered from the street, Society classes were formed, meetings for women were held, girls' parlour, sewing-classes for women and girls, open-air work, in which we found a popular welcome through the children; clubs and classes were formed out of the most unpromising material, and a great work for God was inaugurated, whose fruits abide.

‘Through all changes St. George’s has maintained the freshness, variety, vigour, and success of its first years, though fewer voluntary helpers have been available and the financial support has been quite inadequate for efficient working. The one department at all the centres that has proved the most far-reaching, fruitful, and lasting is the Children’s Mission, whose principal work is done on week evenings. It is well organized, regularly maintained, succeeds in attracting the children and young people, secures our open-air services from bitter opposition, even from those who most oppose us, and prepares the way for, and aids, almost all the other work. The first Girls’ Parlour, gathered and nursed by Miss Salmond, led almost immediately to the establishment of the Girls’ Home for training the girls for domestic service, and of sewing-classes and other evening arrangements for girls.’

Soon after removing to St. George’s Mr. Thompson explored the whole neighbourhood with his well-known thoroughness, and carefully inquired into the classes of people for whom he had to care. After much consideration and prayer, it was agreed that those living nearest to the chapel—say within a half-mile radius—although the most vicious, degraded, and hopeless, ought to have the entire regard and energy of the Mission. This conclusion led Mr. Thompson to send out no bills or announcements beyond this *inner* area of courts, alleys, and squares, but rather to seek entrance

into the worst of these. Now, indeed, he heard the veritable 'bitter cry'—Mr. Thompson still hears it; he also 'saw' whence and why the 'cry' came—so bitter and so stubborn; and still he sees it, and simply wonders it is not even louder. At that time probably he had to contend with a larger area of almost unmixed 'slum' than could anywhere else be found. Even the 'front' streets and larger 'squares' had yielded to the awful demand for 'the one room!' The following notes made by Mr. Thompson during his first year at St. George's will give some idea of the terrible conditions under which the people of the neighbourhood were forced to live.

'N—C—t consists of eight houses of two rooms each, of the most wretched class; fifteen families reside in the court, and some of these have *lodgers*. Only one family occupies two rooms, and this is a sort of opium den, said to be that described by Charles Dickens. Two and sixpence per week is paid for each room. If a female lodger is taken in she pays 1s. 6d. per week for "*furnished apartments*."

'V—C—t. Mrs. — has a back room upstairs about 6 ft. square and 6 ft. 5 in. high—an undesirable hole. Husband left for "*parts unknown*" about twelve months ago. There are four children. She has to pay 1s. 6d. per week for the room. She is forty years of age. She is making sacks in the room, where these five have to eat, sleep, and exist together. The children are crying

for bread, and there is none. Not a particle of furniture in the room. A horrible heap in the corner represents the bed of these five.

'Same house—and same size of room. A widow with three children. She is a cobbler. Says she, "I have had no work for a long time. People haven't no money for food, so they can't have no boots mended." The three children are *literally naked*.

'R—H—, No. — Six rooms—thirty people reside here.

'A— Street. No words can describe this "*Home!*"—a room 8 ft. long, 7 ft. wide, and 7 ft. high. A table, two boxes, and a heap of something in the corner, which I was told was the bed, were the only furniture. Husband, wife, and eight children, most of whom are small, occupy the room. The man is out of work. No food. Almost without clothing.'

The present work at St. George's is deserving of special mention, as for many years it was the undoubted centre of the Mission, and the scene of Mr. Thompson's twenty years' ministry until the building of the Central Hall. From the following paragraphs some idea will be gained of the multifarious and successful efforts now being so worthily maintained under the guidance of its able and energetic young minister, the Rev. F. W. Chudleigh, who is specially successful in dealing with boys. 'Paddy's Goose' is worked with the same staff as St. George's.

The St. George's Men's Brotherhood is doing useful service among the men of the district, the majority of whom are of the poorest in the ranks of labour in the East End; their means of livelihood are very scanty, and regular employment for any lengthened period never comes. They belong to the crowd of casuals, many of them in eager search of work and on the alert for a job. Even a few days' pay brings relief and supply. Their lot is always hard, but when these men come to the Brotherhood and are known to have 'joined religion,' their life is full of test and trial of a very rough and wretched character.

Brother — has a wonderful life-story; the men listen with eager attention as he stands up to tell it in his own inimitable way. He is an African negro. His experience has been one of hard toil, a twofold slavery of body and soul. The interest of the group of listeners increases as he tells of the old days long ago when he was a slave and felt the lash of the taskmaster. Before he became a freed man he knew himself as redeemed from the slavery of sin, and with brightening eye and heightened voice, and yet so tender, almost breaking down with emotion, he proceeds to tell how 'My Massa Jesus presarved me and kep' me from de power of de ole devil.' He has led a wandering life, and since those days has not always kept as near to his Massa Jesus as he ought. His joining the Brotherhood has renewed his life in God and helped to keep him a better man. He is a market

porter, and in the great London markets at Billingsgate and Spitalfields knows much of hard toil and keen temptation, yet he bears glorious testimony to the power of Christ to keep even under the most trying tests. After long, hard days out in all weathers and surrounded with men of evil life and speech, he hastens to the meeting to join his brothers in telling of Christ's wonderful love. He is full of Christian assurance. He said one night: 'Mister Leighton, I loves Jesus and He loves me, and I knows it.' An African diamond for the Master's crown.

From the men the workers get, in typical East-end phrase, their experiences. Some of the Methodist folk, who seem to think that the days of class-meetings are passing, should go to St. George's on a Brotherhood night. Just at the close, Brother — has a word to say. He is young in the Christian life, but he is not without a story. He says: 'I know of days when we have had no bread in the house, when I have not been able to get any work, and when my mates, who know me as a Christian, taunt me, and ask me what God is doing for me now. Yes, brothers, it is hard; but many a time I have knelt down and prayed when I have not known what else to do, and God's blessing has fallen on me. I prayed to God for work, and I believed He would send it me, and He has—and I praise His name for it; and what He has done for me He will do for you.' This man, once far from God, is now



sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.

Once a month a Social night is held, when the men's wives are invited. One hundred or more come, and vocal and musical friends give a night of joyous entertainment. One woman said: 'Why, it is ten years since my husband and me were out together to anything of this sort. It has been grand!' The Mission is seeking to get at the men in the public-houses, and on Social night the plan is to enter some twenty or more of these places and put a card of invitation in the hands of men found drinking in the bar, and endeavour to get them to come to the meeting.

Joined to the Brotherhood is a gathering of men on Sunday afternoon. The great aim is through all the social service to lead them on to a definite choice of Christ as a personal Saviour from sin, and many at this Mission centre, through the touch of the Brotherhood and the Men's Own, have been reclaimed from ways of sin, and are now in ways of godliness, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour.

A casual visitor to the Junior Society Class would perhaps be surprised to find that the members are not very clean and orderly. This particular class, however, contains boys of the lowest stratum of East-end life, and therein lies the immense importance of the work. It is an excellent thing that such boys can be gathered together week by week for prayer and Bible-

teaching. The class has a great advantage over the large meetings, because it affords the opportunity of coming into personal touch with them. Those who have to do with boys of this character well know how crude is their conception of common virtues, such as duty, honesty, and brotherly love. Their lives are in most cases lived in an atmosphere of deceit, trickery, and wickedness of every kind. The following incidents will show how difficult it is to impart Christian truth to them even by means of the commonest illustrations.

On one occasion the leader was telling them about God's love, and said: 'Now you all know what a mother's love is, how she will do all sorts of things for you.' Instantly there was a chorus of laughter, and shouts of 'No, miss! No, miss!' filled the room. This astonished the leader, who was somewhat strange to the homes of the lads. Calling one little fellow, she said: 'How do you know your mother doesn't love you?' 'You would not say she loved me if you saw her kicking me,' he replied. If they are strange to a mother's love, how difficult is it to convey to such youthful minds what God's love is! What chance have these poor lads, apart from such influence as comes from those who love them for Christ's sake? Of this we are convinced, that patient work among them will have its glorious reward. For every one of them Christ died, and probably a diamond of the first water will be discovered amongst this handful of East-end urchins. Indications of this



SOME OF THE RAW MATERIAL,

[Face p. 58.]

are not wanting. At first it was found utterly impossible to maintain order. At prayer the lady who was leading naturally closed her eyes, but for a few moments only, as she was startled by a sudden shower of stones which had been hidden in the boys' pockets. For some weeks afterwards she found it necessary to compel them to empty their pockets on entering, and the collection of curiosities would have done credit to the British Museum. Now, however, there is a distinct improvement at prayer-time, and the boys are generally quite reverent. At first it was impossible to read the Bible, but now they nearly always listen attentively. Another hopeful side of the work is the influence of the boys on their parents, who, in most cases, are as ignorant of the Bible and its principles as a new-born babe. One boy had no Bible at home, and was given a New Testament. Next week it so happened that they were asked to bring a written answer to a question on the Old Testament. The little fellow came the following week and, with a forlorn look, said: 'Please, miss, I 'aven't done the lesson. Fahver looked all froo the New Testament and couldn't find the Old.'

Strange to say the Sunday night congregation is largely recruited from the class-meeting, rather than the class from the former, as one might suppose. It is the strength of the Church. At present there are upwards of 400 full members at St. George's, with 153 on trial, though the loss from frequent removals is very marked, for as many

as twenty a quarter leave the neighbourhood. This means a constant drain on the workers, and it becomes increasingly difficult to obtain Sunday-school teachers and other helpers, to take the place of those who leave the district. The fact is, once a man is converted and acquires a certain degree of respectability, he does not care to bring up his children amid the sordid surroundings of St. George's-in-the-East. The consequence is that some suburban districts are manned with Christian workers from the East End, and scores are now earnest attendants at the East Ham and other Wesleyan Missions whose faces had long been familiar at St. George's. Then the open-air work is deserving of mention. Every Monday and Sunday night Mr. Chudleigh and his helpers conduct successful gospel services in the adjoining Watney Market, where enormous crowds are attracted by the earnest preaching and the fine singing led by the Brass Band.

The great difficulty felt at St. George's is the extraordinary ignorance as to even the most elementary facts of religion among the people of the district. One Sunday night Mr. Chudleigh asked two young men of nineteen and twenty years of age if they had ever heard of Jesus. 'Yes,' they said, 'He was the man wot worked a lot of tricks!' Both acknowledged that the only time they ever read the Bible was at school. One of the young men further volunteered that he knew about Adam and Eve, 'who created the world.'

Truly the friends here preach to the heathen as much as do the Christian missionaries in China.

At this point we may briefly refer to three centres of the Mission which really deserve a separate chapter to describe them adequately, but the exigencies of space prevent more than a brief reference. They are the Lycett Chapel, Gordon Hall, and Mission Hall, Wapping.

The Lycett Chapel was transferred to the Mission in 1893, and Gordon Hall in 1907. Both of them were taken over by the London Mission to save them from being closed and sold. While the site of the Lycett is on the main thoroughfare, the buildings are most unsuitable and inadequate, and Gordon Hall is badly situated. But the workers at both places are devoted and faithful. The Lycett has been successful beyond what seemed at all possible with such premises. Large numbers of conversions have taken place, and the Sunday school is as big as the place admits. It has maintained its vigour and fruitfulness through all the years, and is now quite crowded. During recent years there has been constant revival. I take the following from the latest report of the Lycett—

‘We are thankful to report a good and prosperous year. We have been very conscious of the rich and abiding presence of God in our work. It has been not only a time of sowing, but of reaping, and we have continually seen conversions, whilst many during the year have signed the pledge. Our Mission is of no mushroom growth,

and influences the lives of thousands in the East End ; very many more than we sometimes think. One night I was walking in an alley amidst some low lodging-houses and came across a sailor, drunk. That is a very common thing, but somehow I was led to invite this man to the services and to sign the pledge. I stood pleading with him for some time, and he burst into tears. It was pitiful. The whole neighbourhood was aroused. The crowd very speedily gathered, and the man told me that years ago his father and mother were converted at one of our Misslon centres, and it nearly broke his heart to think that he was so far from God. He seemed to have sobered considerably after this, and we had a talk about the Saviour, which I know was not in vain.

‘Our services are characterized by great spiritual power, and the spirit of prayer is amongst our people. Only last Sunday night 150 of our people stayed to the sacramental service. That is a large number when you know the difficulties and problems of East-end life. Our open-air meetings have been very powerfully and wonderfully blessed. One night a man came up to me and said he had been impressed by the message and would come again the next evening, and he did. When the appeal was made for decision for Christ, he came forward, and the history of his life was painful. He had left a convict prison only a week, but a more marvellous conversion I never knew. Christ can save convicts. This young man of thirty-five

ultimately went home to see his mother. He had been a prodigal for years, and oh, the joy of that home! I have seen this man since he first left for home, and he said: "It's all right, guv'nor; I'm going straight. Thank God I ever heard the message. I thought God had given me up."

'The work of our Sunday school is in many senses remarkable. Here we sow and reap, for on Children's Sunday over 150 of our senior boys and girls deliberately and intelligently dedicated themselves to God.

'Our work is full of hope. We live in expectancy and faith, and realize that the gospel is God's power to save every one that believeth.

'Picture the schoolroom at the Lycett, cleared of forms and chairs and prepared for drilling the 61st London Company Boys' Brigade—the captain standing with military dignity, cane under left arm, glengarry cap at the right angle adorning a head usually covered with a very different sort of hat. A diminutive lad of twelve approaches, and makes an effort at the military salute, which the captain acknowledges with due solemnity. "Please, sir, farver says can yer tike ha'pennies?" An anxious look upon the face of the youngster and a scarcely hidden smile on the captain's. Regimental decorum is thrown to the winds for a moment, and the captain's arm finds its way to the boy's shoulders in a very unorthodox way as the two wander to a quiet corner to discuss the pros and cons. Tommy's "farver" can only afford to send a ha'penny a week



until the required sixpence is contributed. The boy duly appeared on parade as Private —, and is found not only on parade, but also in the Bible-class and at the church parade. In a short time comes a special service, and the lad whose "farver" can only afford ha'pennies becomes a King's son, an heir of heaven. Such transformations are not rare in our Lycett work. The great joy of the workers in the Boys' Brigade is to see permanent results of their toil. On a recent night we had on parade at least ten lads whose future has undoubtedly been changed by their connexion with our Company. Beginning as raw recruits, they have been trained and disciplined both physically and morally, until now—and we say it with no hesitancy—they would do credit to many of our highly favoured suburban churches. Considering the surroundings from which they have been "separated," they are miracles. No word of praise can be too high for our instructor. Himself an old 18th (O.M.B.) Company boy, he enters into every detail of his work as if his life depended upon the satisfactory performance of it, and this spirit inspires the whole Company. But we yet need one or two young men who will give their time as Boys' Brigade officers.

'The Lycett Men's Meeting has had a season of wonderful blessing and notable work. Brother — was a reduced tradesman who for years had been steadily going down-hill. He tried to rid himself of the burden of life by drinking. Gradually

becoming a victim to alcohol, and suffering all the ill effects of that condition, he was wellnigh hopeless when he was induced to join our Brotherhood. He presently signed the pledge, and has kept it. His circumstances have not improved greatly in business, but he finds the grace of God sufficient for his need, and admits his folly in trying to get freedom from care by drink. Another accession has come to us in a group of young fellows who used to spend Sunday afternoon lounging and gossiping, but who now, with the keenest delight, are amongst the most regular in attendance.

‘The Lycett Schoolroom on a Children’s Mission Night beggars all description. On a certain Thursday, for instance, at six o’clock we let in about six hundred and fifty of our “street arabs.” They were full of eager hope and wild enthusiasm. We had a lively time. There are many theories for the management of young people’s gatherings, but an East-end crowd of youngsters fresh from the streets wants more than a theory for their management. Dearly bought experience alone can help one. It is a remarkable fact, but it is true, to say that in our experience nothing so interests these children as a story out of their own everyday lives—a well-told anecdote taken from one of their own rooms or narrow streets, or a scene in one of the children’s hospitals. They readily grasp the whole matter, and follow with keenest interest. With open mouths and glistening eyes, they seem to anticipate all the story. To a new speaker this is somewhat

disconcerting sometimes, for just as the climax of the story is to be carefully and impressively put, half a dozen young rascals will yell it out at once for you and spoil the whole effect.'

Gordon Hall, as we have said, was taken over at the Conference of 1907. Had this not been done it would have been sold. During the past year it has been connected with the Lycett branch, and really good work has been done. There is a Mothers' Meeting of sixty strong, and an excellent Sunday school. The society classes are most encouraging. During the year many pledges have been taken and conversions have taken place. Throughout the summer a most vigorous open-air campaign is held. Hundreds have been seen standing round the ring, listening to the message of the gospel. The outlook is most encouraging.

Wapping continues to show steady signs of development. The Boys' Life Brigade has secured the challenge shield in competition with other companies from all parts of London. Prizes have been won by the children at local competitions of the Band of Hope Union, whilst, best of all, in the Sunday school many of the boys and girls have definitely decided for Christ. The six o'clock Sunday evening service for children is well maintained throughout the year, while the Men's Club, Mothers' Meeting, and open-air and indoor services are most encouraging in every way.

## CHAPTER VII

### 'PADDY'S GOOSE'

'PADDY'S GOOSE,' or The White Swan, to use its correct name, was formerly the most disreputable and notorious public-house in London, if not in the whole world. Standing on the Ratcliff Highway—a street whose name at once suggests memories of wickedness too awful to describe—it became the rendezvous of sailors of all nationalities by reason of its proximity to the river and docks. All up and down the Highway were taverns, many of which had dreadful stories of crime and vice attached to them. Abandoned women were here able to ply their awful trade in broad daylight, and in many of the side streets there was scarcely a house which was not occupied by them. But of all the public-houses in Ratcliff Highway there was none with a worse reputation than 'Paddy's Goose.' The two music-halls attached to this foul gin-shop were devoted to the most shameless entertainments. To them the low women of the neighbourhood decoyed the unfortunate sailors; and the number of those who were robbed and ruined there no one can compute.

Policemen at that time hardly dared enter it, and never a day passed but some story of outrage and robbery was reported to the force. In a room on the third storey was a door opening on to the leads, from which there used to be a plank stretched over an abyss to an adjoining wall. It was the well-known way of escape when the messengers of justice appeared. For a hundred years this place had been the devil's choicest hot-bed of vice and crime, and madness, and death, until bad trade compelled it to close its doors. Incredible as it reads, the principal items on the old stage at 'Paddy's Goose' were combats between women stripped for the fray, and belabouring one another for drink and money-prizes furnished by rich men from the West End who frequented the place.

In 1886 it had been closed for more than a year when the Committee of the London Wesleyan Methodist Mission took it on a twenty-one years' lease. This enterprise was cheerfully undertaken by Mr. Thompson, whose broad shoulders were capable of sustaining even this heavy burden. While primarily intending it for a Mission centre, Mr. Thompson, the new tenant, also wanted additional accommodation for his lady workers. Accordingly, on a cold, raw December day in 1886, he formally took possession as the 'landlord' of 'Paddy's Goose.' As yet nothing had been done to alter it; everything was in the state in which the last tenant had left it. Inside there was still the strange, musty, iniquitous smell; the

counters of the bar which once rang to the coarse laughter of besotted men and women and ribald songs were an inch thick with dust, the shelves behind it denuded of bottles, and the gaudy decorations tarnished. The snug little parlour behind the bar was dirty, and everywhere desolation and ruin stared the observer in the face. Innumerable pewter pots which had been left behind lay discoloured and dull on the floor and on shelves. These were cleansed and burnished, and put to good use in eking out the limited supply of tea-cups when the Mission had once started work. Behind the bar was the lower music-hall, and on its stage the tawdry scenery was ragged and rotting with the damp, so that the odour was unbearable. In the upper music-hall, above the one just described, was a double floor, with a layer of sawdust between the two. The walls were more showily decorated, and the seats all in position just as they had been left twelve months before, while from the walls still fluttered the play-bills of the last performance. Passing still higher, a dark and narrow stairway led to the roof. From the flats behind the figure of the White Swan which surmounted the house a wonderful sight could be seen. On one side the docks, with their bewildering tangle of yards and masts and rigging, and in another direction the tumult of smoking, falling, decrepit, threatening, or crooked chimney-pots. Quite near was the strong, square-built outline of St. George's Chapel. Such was the state of the

notorious 'Paddy's Goose' when Mr. Thompson took possession, prior to thoroughly cleansing, renovating, and adapting it for the needs of his Mission.

After a few months, during which willing hands put the place into proper order, the opening ceremony took place on January 24, 1887. The first music heard within its walls for many months was not the revelry of tipsy men and women, but the well-known hymn—

Let the Saviour in. . . .  
Let Him in : He is your friend,  
He will keep you to the end.

At last the licence of 'Paddy's Goose' was dropped, and it was registered on high as a house of prayer. On that memorable evening no face wore a more jubilant look than Peter Thompson's, and his heart-felt gratitude found expression in repeated hallelujahs.

The opening day was begun at St. George's Chapel with a prayer-meeting at nine o'clock, and in the afternoon there was a meeting for women, followed in the early part of the evening by a gathering for children. Later on, a meeting for men only was held at 'Paddy's Goose,' and last of all, a great public meeting in St. George's Chapel itself. During the day there were crowds of visitors from all parts of London, who brought good cheer and help. Such was the programme of a memorable day in the history of the East-end London Wesleyan Mission. Specially impressive was the women's meeting, at which the numbers

present were three hundred, very many of them bringing their young children with them; some played at their knee, others sat on their lap, and there were wee mites clinging closer still. Many of the East-end women had sadness stamped on their brows, while here and there a patch over the eye, or a bandage across the forehead, told its pitiful tale. There were women there who had cause to thank God for homes made happy by the gospel brought to them by Mr. Thompson and his Mission. Many could say with the converted woman, 'My husband and I used to swear at each other, but now it is "please" and "thank you!"' Many a man could say on that opening day, "'Paddy's Goose" used to pick holes in our coats, to take the money out of our pockets and make our characters bad; but that wonderful bird has now gone in for reform—it brings us the old gospel.'

At the evening meeting the Rev. Peter Thompson made a statement as to the way in which 'Paddy's Goose' came into his hands, for he declared himself the landlord. He explained the financial position, asking for £1,000 or £1,200 to pay for the house, the bar, and the furnishing, and to start the work during that year (1887). During his address Mr. Thompson told a remarkable story.

When he first entered the upper music-hall, or 'hall of the varieties,' as it was called, he found it covered over with play-bills, on which there was the name of one who was present that night. It was the name of the poet of the establishment, and



the enterprising agent in arranging and carrying on the meetings. The man had since signed the pledge and given his heart to God.

Another wonderful history related by Mr. Thompson was that of a man who had also recently been converted by the means of his workers. His life had been far from a happy one, and his wife looked crushed. It took Mr. Thompson eight weeks to get a smile out of her, and a long time to make her realize that her husband was a new man. But she could smile now. She and her husband were placed as caretakers in 'Paddy's Goose,' and when they went up into the variety hall, she, her husband, and son went on to the stage, and sang, where the walls had so often re-echoed the songs of the devil, 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!'

Thus the transformation was completed, and the old house started on a new lease of life. The huge mirrors and gaudy adornment of the music-halls were removed. The ground-floor hall was converted into a mission-hall to seat about three hundred. The up-stairs hall and other rooms were applied to various useful purposes. A girls' parlour and a boys' and youths' recreation-room were provided. The drinking-bar gave place to a coffee-room, in connexion with a reading-room for men, admission to the latter being by ticket gratuitously supplied to any man on making application. Only members of the reading-room were allowed to patronize the bar, the refreshments of which were

sold at cost price. A Mothers' Meeting was begun in April 1887, and a Women's Bible-class was held on Sunday afternoon, chiefly for the mothers who were brought under the influence of the gospel. All the transformations were made in accordance with Mr. Thompson's well-known plan of providing for the rational recreation and benefit of the people. The *whole* man is his motto, and to this well-defined method of dealing with the masses is due in no small degree his wonderful success.

From the very start public services were held at 'Paddy's Goose' on Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings. The attendances were on the whole good, though irregular, the congregations being composed of the lowest and most vicious. To describe the people who gathered at these services is beyond the power of words. Earth's most degraded sons and daughters constituted the audience, which at times appeared a most pitiable sight to those on the platform, formerly the stage. Often the preacher would be interrupted by questions or comments, and turbulent scenes and extraordinary experiences were familiar. Nevertheless, wonderful power from God rested on the meetings, men falling on the floor in agony of soul. Many remarkable conversions were witnessed.

Another leading feature was the 'Popular Saturday Evenings,' when the room was often filled, and the interest marvellously sustained. Many crooked and polluted came in, and were made straight and clean. The meeting began at

eight and closed a little before ten. There was an interval of ten minutes about nine o'clock, which was much appreciated and afforded an opportunity to get at strangers. At this time many adjourned to the bar for coffee, &c., and came back to the meeting in good spirits. A special class for the teaching of singing for girls of the Sunday schools was commenced during this year, and many other agencies, all of which went to prove how much needed a centre like 'Paddy's Goose' had become, as a place of resort better than the public-house, and the means of mental and moral improvement. It encouraged temperance and general good conduct, and brought considerable numbers within range of the best influences. Some of its first members became active workers in the church in Cable Street.

Saturday night is perhaps the best time to see 'Paddy's Goose,' not that there is very much on in the way of classes and clubs, but the visitor on this occasion can find what is unique in East London, a hundred or more men, human flotsam and jetsam of the streets, assembled in the hall of what was once the most pernicious public-house in all London, to witness a first-class refined entertainment.

You enter the door, and on the left is the bar-parlour, with the bar in the same position as of yore, no longer the engine of destruction in the shape of alcohol, but the place where steaming hot wholesome coffee is served at one halfpenny a cup. Passing

into the hall one looks round, and notices the stage at the end of the room pretty much the same as when it catered for the depraved tastes of the frequenters of the public-house a quarter of a century ago. The up-stairs hall is much loftier and brighter, though a trifle smaller, and one can call up the extraordinary scenes which must have been enacted in this infamous house in days gone by—the bar full of dissipated men and women, the two music-halls crowded out with a depraved audience listening to a still more depraved programme. All is changed now. 'Paddy's Goose' still bears a somewhat humble appearance, but what is the use of tawdry and garish ornament in a building devoted to a very poor and, for the most part, ill-kempt audience? Everything is clean and sweet, and this is all that is needed.

On the occasion of a recent visit the writer took his stand in the hall as the men came in for the Saturday-night concert. Miss Seddon, one of Mr. Thompson's most devoted and able lady workers, gave the history of some of the men.

'Where is your card?' she asks. ''Ain't 'ad it for two Saturdays,' is the reply. It must here be pointed out that there is nothing to pay for the concert, but cards are issued to the men, a wise forethought on the part of its organizers. Each Saturday the attendance is marked in a book and on the card, and a list of the men's addresses is kept. If a man is absent for some successive Saturdays he is looked up; thus wisely does the

Mission shepherd its members. Few of the cadger element were present, save one or two, who were duly pointed out. The use of cards puts a stop to that to some extent, for if the meeting were flung open in a promiscuous fashion there would be many undesirables, as the neighbourhood abounds in men, and women too, of that type, people who take all they can get and never return a word of thanks. In this way the Mission gets a firm hold of those who do come. They look upon 'Paddy's Goose' as theirs, and the Mission claims them in return. That is, after all, the only way of dealing with this type of men. If they did not wish to be helped they would not come; instead you would find them at the Flaming Dragon, or other of the many gin-palaces of the district.

Miss Seddon then interposed. 'You see that man'—pointing to a down-at-heel, ill-kempt individual who slouched in. I noted him.

'I sat up with his wife a whole night when she was dying with delirium tremens. She tried to throw a lamp at me, and it took three of us to hold her down.' It is the same story, drink, drink, drink. After years of patient working in the East End the Mission has still to confess that its arch-enemy is Giant Alcohol.

Then an old man, bewhiskered and bent, entered. I learnt he was a Crimean veteran, and he saluted, probably from force of long habit, as he approached the table to have his card marked. All sorts and conditions are present, young and old, neat and

shabby, with a good sprinkling of the unwashed and ill-kempt. One young man whose face bore the marks of sin and suffering shuffled in. Many would have turned away with loathing and disgust, but he is welcomed along with the others. The poor fellow seemed to feel his position acutely, sitting by himself; but as the music struck up, and the plaintive notes of an old-fashioned refrain sounded forth, I could see him wipe away a tear. Poor fellow! he too had once been pure and happy. Ah, these tragedies of the East End!

Of rough conduct I saw but little. True there were one or two who had evidently come straight from an adjoining 'pub,' but they were in the jolly stage, and did not create any serious disturbance. A look and a soft word from the stalwart secretary and 'chucker-out' quieted any desire to make a disturbance. Of course there were plenty of men present not teetotallers, but they are pleaded with, and many regularly attend who once spent the evening in the public-house.

Concerning the concert I will speak but briefly. It was by the Boy Scouts, who are so admirably trained by the Rev. F. W. Chudleigh, of St. George's, whose work in this connexion I have already referred to. The pieces were, for the most part, well-known songs, such as 'The Village Blacksmith,' and they awakened a deeper chord in these rough men's hearts than the most classical music could have done. Mr. Chudleigh recited Tennyson's 'Revenge' with admirable effect, and the roar

of cheering that went up from their throats as he concluded proved that they had not lost all sparks of manhood and appreciation of brave deeds. It says much for the admirable training they receive that the boys under the direction of Mr. Chudleigh acquitted themselves so well. He is a lover of boys, understands them, and so wins their hearts. During the interval those of the men who had the money bought a cup of steaming hot coffee ; and, it being the Saturday before Christmas, as a special treat Miss Seddon had kindly provided a slice of Christmas pudding for them, perhaps the only bit they would taste during the year. So with pipes—for the men are allowed to smoke—and wholesome song and healthy music the evening wore off, and at ten o'clock the Doxology and Benediction brought this remarkable men's 'free-and-easy' at 'Paddy's Goose' to a close.

One left the place feeling that something was being done to brighten the lot of these men. In the hundred families represented there that night, allowing for an average of six each—and most are married—you have a population of at least six hundred coming directly and indirectly under the influence of the Mission. The man will tell his wife of the Mothers' Meeting, and his children of the Sunday school, and so you have circles of beneficent influence growing ever wider and wider, while the fact that the men are visited in their homes is another powerful factor in the redemption of this part of the field in and around the Ratcliff Highway.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE OLD MAHOGANY BAR

LIKE 'Paddy's Goose,' the far-famed public-house and music-hall known as The Old Mahogany Bar, long bore an evil reputation. Its name was derived from the old mahogany bar, wellnigh black with age, boasting elegant carving and a beautiful 'shine.' It is even doubted if the mahogany is real, and certainly where lumps of carving had been torn off by curio-hunting British sailors, it is replaced only by plaster of Paris, painted to match, and varnished. What was undoubted mahogany was a piece of wood fastened to the under-surface of the beam running straight across the ceiling of the bar-parlour. An ornamental scroll surrounding a tablet behind the counter contained the words, The Old Mahogany Bar. Such was the public-house as well known in every port where English sailors are found as 'Paddy's Goose.' Just in the same way it was snatched out of the hands of the enemy and pressed into the service of the Mission, the event taking place in February 1888. The story of its conversion is a remarkable one.

Situate in Wellclose Square, it was known as a



haunt of vice. There was attached to it 'Wilton's Music-hall.' Three years previously Miss Annie Macpherson and Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Radcliff chanced to be passing the door of this music-hall. They were moved to enter it, paying the usual fee for admission. What they saw and heard is not exactly known, but they were constrained, in the very middle of the performance, to kneel down in the hall and pray to God that the devil's work going on there might in some way be stopped. Within a few months of that time legal proceedings ensued, and the hall had to be closed.

Now comes a piece of real romance such as is seldom experienced. A Mr. Watson, formerly a Methodist local preacher in a country circuit, bought The Old Mahogany Bar and Music-hall, thinking to put them in order, and himself conduct in them a gospel mission. Increasing infirmity led him to offer the buildings to Mr. Thompson, with the result that they came to form part of the machinery of his Mission.

Accordingly, in 1888, The Old Mahogany Bar and Wilton's Music-hall, with three houses adjoining, were taken over. These were converted into a coffee-palace and mission-hall, to seat nearly 1,000 persons, and a residence for workers, with over thirty beds.

At first it was intended to lease the premises, but Mr. Thompson was induced to try to secure the freehold from Mr. Watson at the price of £6,000. Towards that Mr. Watson himself gave

£1,000, and two other friends £3,000 between them, while by the opening day the whole amount had been promised except £700, which was soon made up.

The premises were duly opened on February 2 in the name of Christ and for His glory. The interior of the transformed den of infamy has been vividly sketched by a writer who was present just before the opening ceremony.

'You just open the swing-door of the public-house,' he said. 'In front is the beam with its mahogany lining. On the right a new lead-encased counter stands, containing not beer engines, but huge copper coffee and cocoa machines, three of them with complete apparatus behind for washing cups and saucers; a lift, communicating with the kitchen below; and shelves amply furnished with crockery-ware. The space on the left and behind is filled with stained deal tables and forms, in decent cook-shop fashion—all new, good, plain, most comfortable. The floor has been relaid, the walls and ceiling are resplendent with fresh paint or colouring, and everything betokens thought, common-sense, and generous regard for the guests and customers expected. Down a narrow staircase we descend to the lower regions, where we find kitchen No. 1, with three 60-gallon boilers for soup, coffee, &c., and an air-shaft for ventilation; also kitchen No. 2, with a vast close-fire range, shelves, cupboards, lifts, &c. For this, as for every other department, there is a complete service of utensils and imple-

ments all new. Upstairs we return. Passing through a small doorway from the coffee-bar, an astonishing sight greets us. Mr. Thompson looks benignly upon me, and laughs (I like to hear him laugh) at my surprise. I expected to see somewhere in a back-and-behind quarter of the "pub" a low-ceiled, narrow, frowsy room, in which, afore-time, folks sat boozing and smoking to the scraping of fiddles, and fooling of "variety" actors. I certainly did not anticipate the vision which burst upon me when my friend triumphantly ushered me into the hall. It is seated, so Peter Thompson told me, for nearly 1,000—a long, lofty, galleried hall with comfortable forms, and a broad, deep platform. It is lighted by day from the roof and at night by a powerful sun-light, the scroll-like gallery front richly ornamented. From the hall we pass across a lobby, opening by double doors on to the street, into a long dining-room fitted with shelves, tables, chairs, &c. In this room, for two hours every morning, the young men of this Mission will receive secular instruction from a competent tutor. Here also they will study such theology as they need to prepare them for examination, whether as candidates for the ministry or as local preachers or lay agents. The bedrooms upstairs have been divided on the cubical system, so that each man may have a room—small, but cosy and well-ventilated—to himself. Each room has a strong iron bedstead with spring mattress, a locker, and convenience for washing. It is all extremely plain,

but new, clean, good, such as any gentleman who cares nought for luxuries may be happy with. Exclusive of the accommodation required for master, matron, and servants, Mr. Thompson has at his disposal twenty-five cubicles, or small bedrooms. In all probability several young men, engaged in business during the day, but anxious for Christian work on Sundays and in the evening, will join the Mission, paying cost price for bed, breakfast, and supper.'

From the very start The Old Mahogany Bar became a centre of light in the darkness of the surrounding neighbourhood. In addition to the public meetings held in the hall every Sunday at 11.30 a.m. and 7 p.m., also every Wednesday at 8 p.m., gatherings were held very frequently outside in Well Street, with its large Sailors' Home; Leman Street with its many side streets and courts; Peabody's Buildings and Glass House Buildings, all near at hand. Open-air meetings were organized—often very rampant.

The coffee-palace soon began to do a brisk trade, the men liking to come in, and sit and read, and warm themselves by the fire, even if they had little money to purchase coffee and bread. A Sunday school was started, which has flourished ever since, many of the workers who volunteered as teachers being young men and women who had given their hearts to God at St. George's. Thus the new work created found its supply of helpers. Special mention should be made of the splendid

services of Mr. John Jameson, who for many years was Mr. Thompson's most efficient and successful principal helper. He had the honour of conducting the first Sunday services at The Old Mahogany Bar, on February 5, 1888. He was an ideal worker among the masses, and full of the fervent enthusiasm of the soul-winner. One night he rushed into The Old Mahogany Bar, exclaiming to a visitor who stood in the empty hall, 'We have had six souls to-night at St. George's! One was a great Guardsman from the Tower. Praise the Lord!'

Stories of changed lives as the result of the opening of The Old Mahogany Bar by Mr. Thompson could be given *ad infinitum*. Here is a typical example—

'Ah,' said a sailor, 'if you had been here a few years sooner, some of us chaps who have gone sadly adrift might have been moored up and been saved from the land-sharks and alligators. Instead of that, you have let the bands of music play, and the houses have been dressed with flags and ever-greens, the fiddles have been going, so we got 'ticed into the publics, and we all got pretty well cleaned out. Ah, guv'ner, you'll have to shut up more public-houses and grog-shops. If we shoot past one there's another, and we are almost compelled to break our good resolutions before we can run the gauntlet. However, I'm glad you've got this; stick to it, make it lively, and you'll do some good.' Well may it be said that The Old

Mahogany Bar was once 'the avenue to perdition, but now the gate of heaven!'

Upstairs a Medical Mission did its kindly work, while those who waited to take their turn with the doctor were sung to and pleaded with in the name of Christ.

Direct gospel services and children's meetings were frequently held. For the latter any quantity of the 'raw material' was obtained from the streets, where children congregate 'thick as leaves in Vallombrosa.' It was a pitiable sight to see the poor little ragged, hatless, shoeless things coming in grimy and shivery; yet withal, boisterous with irrepressible childish glee.

The Old Mahogany Bar is now one of the most fruitful centres of the Mission. Its recent renovation marked a new period in its history. The usefulness of the place is increased by its clean, attractive appearance, and well-lighted, well-warmed rooms. Situated as it is, in wellnigh the darkest part of Whitechapel, with its ever open door and continual activity, it has been, in the twenty years that are gone, like an 'oasis in the desert.' From morning till late at night every day in the year the hand of helpfulness is held out, and the beneficent ministry of Christ, through consecrated men and women, is exercised in the place where the gospel is most needed.

It seems hardly necessary to describe the district, with its mixed population, its unemployment, its poverty, its sin, and its extraordinary number

of public-houses. The New Testament description of Pergamum fits it best, 'Satan's throne is there.' Forty meetings are held every week, the homes of the people are constantly visited, the sick cheered, the children shepherded, and the hungry fed.

The question of the class-meeting is no problem at the 'Bar.' Almost every afternoon and evening vigorous classes are in active being, and form one of the essential features of the work. The secret of success may be in the homeliness, sympathy, and spiritual tone of the gatherings ; but, be that as it may, in attendance and power the classes are its delight. Take one class as an example. It is what is called mixed. There are thirty-four people present ; some are youths of about eighteen, others men of all ages, and several women. The singing is hearty, the prayers are intercessory and direct. A chapter from the Bible is read without comment ; more singing, and then a practical address from the leader on some aspect of Christian experience, and the sources of victory in everyday life ; then follows the feature of the evening, testimony by the members. Brother — is reminiscent. 'Twelve years ago I knelt in that corner, the slave of sin and drink. I bear marks on my body to-day as a result of my sin and folly. I laid violent hands on myself, but God delivered me, and since then Christ has helped me to live true, and in spite of persecution and difficulties I mean to go on serving Him.' This testimony is no platitude, for Brother — is a remarkable

instance of the saving grace of God, and since his conversion, by his devotion and service, has proved to be God's gift to the Church.

Four open-air meetings a week during the summer months, with a Mission Band, headed by the Brass Band, every Sunday evening, indicate the value placed upon this form of service. In contact, as the Mission is, with so many foreigners and sailors, it finds it difficult to conserve results, but letters are often received from those who have been impressed telling of continued steadfastness to their pledge and to Christ. Some remain as a witness and a stimulus.

The Adult Bible-class held on Sunday afternoons is a unique gathering of its kind, bringing together a strange medley. The desire to learn is most marked. A new feature of the class has been the establishment of a Book Club. At the first distribution of books by the club, held recently, books to the value of 25s. were presented, which had been paid for by the pence of the members, paid weekly. Then, a warm welcome is given to young men, and has a gratifying response in the numbers who attend Society Class, the Young Men's Bible-class, the recreations of the Guild, Cricket Club and Gymnasium; while the Choir gives valuable service in public gatherings. The acquisition of a choirmaster has given an added interest and has increased the heartiness and brightness of the Sunday evening service.

As for the Men's Club, it has made good pro-



gress during the past year, and the men appreciate the fact that by using the room and the games they spend their time to more profit than in the 'pub.' The weekly meeting for debate and discussion is instructive and helpful. Lately a growing desire to help others has shown itself, and the members have undertaken to pay for and feed, if possible, fifty hungry men per week. There is also a flourishing Goose Club, which is so successful and satisfactory that its numbers last year reached their record figure.

The Band of Hope has now a weekly meeting of 150 children, who pay their farthing per week subscription and keenly enjoy the excellently arranged programme, with its strongly enforced temperance teaching. The Children's Mission does good work, and a large number have benefited by the annual Christmas-tree and outing to Redhill, while the Sunday school has a useful place. Many foreign children attend the Mission.

The Girls' Guild is a valued and valuable department of work, and great blessing has attended it. The Guild nights are eagerly looked forward to, and drill, singing, and games furnish wholesome recreation. The Young Women's Society Class formed from the Guild is nearly forty strong, and the White Ribbon section for temperance is equally flourishing.

The Mothers' Meeting has always been a boon to the poor mothers, with its hour and a half of good influence and spiritual teaching. The clubs

connected with it are appreciated as well as the cheerful cup of tea. It is easy to understand what a force for good the meeting must be, for so many of the mothers, with the cares of home and poverty of clothing, find it almost impossible to attend the ordinary means of grace. The workers rejoice in the evident blessing that has rested upon this work. Many pledges are taken, and many of the women are rejoicing in the knowledge of the Saviour's love.

The Boys' Brigade (18th City and East London Company), the oldest company in East London, is in the twentieth year of its existence. The value of the work of past years is shown by the fact that three of the present stewards were formerly members of the company, dating their connexion with the 'Bar' to their membership with the Brigade and its influence.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GREAT FORWARD MOVEMENT—STEPNEY CENTRAL HALL

IN tracing the steps that led up to the erection of the palatial new Central Hall in the Commercial Road, it may be useful if we briefly run over the main landmarks in the Mission's development. St. George's Chapel was the first centre, and, after renovations, alterations, and additions to the schoolrooms and vestries, was opened in December 1885. 'Paddy's Goose' was secured in November 1886, and opened in January 1887. The Old Mahogany Bar was purchased and opened in February 1888. The Seamen's Chapel was taken over at the Conference of 1888, and reopened as Stepney Temple, after extensive alterations and enlargement, in April 1889. The Lycett was transferred to the Mission in 1893, in 1894 Wapping Mission Hall was taken over, and in 1907 Gordon Hall was added.

The lease of Stepney Temple was to expire in 1906, and in view of that fact, Mr. Thompson, with his eye on the great forward movement now so happily consummated, purchased some years



CENTRAL HALL, COMMERCIAL ROAD, STEPNEY.

previously the lease of adjoining properties, and secured their extension so as to terminate at the same date. By this means he obtained on the most reasonable terms a new lease of ninety-nine years for the entire site, which has a frontage to Commercial Road of 150 feet, with Portland Street on the west and Bromley Street on the east, and a depth of 170 feet. The new Thames Tunnel is within a minute's walk of the site. These central buildings, therefore, stand at the only point between the Tower Bridge and Blackwall where east and west and north and south meet. They occupy the finest position in Commercial Road, and are without a doubt the best site possible for the inner East End. This forward movement was necessitated by the growth and success of the Mission, and the provision of such central buildings is most opportune. The work at Stepney Temple, which had been so marvellously successful, had been greatly limited by the entire unsuitability and inadequacy of the premises. There was no school-room and scarcely any class-room accommodation.

The new central premises were erected from the designs by Mr. James Weir, F.R.I.B.A. The Central Hall is confessedly as beautiful and satisfactory as could possibly be desired. The acoustics are perfect, the ventilation excellent, and the chasteness and brightness of the hall impress all who visit it. It is 111 ft. by 62 ft., with seating accommodation for 2,000 persons; but the hall is capable of accommodating more when needful, and

it is so arranged that every one is able to see and hear the preacher.

The new premises were erected in three sections, in order to maintain the work during the time of rebuilding.

The first section included three schoolrooms, which, with class-rooms, have provision for 2,000 children and young people; caretakers' rooms and two evangelists' residences are on the west side. The second included the Central Hall, with two ministers' residences, and a considerable portion of the class-rooms and vestries, together with business offices.

The third section provides suitably for (1) a large settlement, where resident and voluntary workers can be accommodated, whether for continued residence or for weekly visits, and it will especially meet the requirements of suburban workers who can help regularly on one or more days of the week. These new premises enable the Mission, for the first time in its history, to arrange suitably for friends who cannot give full permanent help, but who can do valuable work in different ways, either from Saturday to Monday or on one or more days of each week. This kind of voluntary help is of priceless value, and secures co-operation of suburban and country friends. (2) It also provides a great Social Institute, consisting of an admirable lower hall, which will accommodate nearly 1,000 people, and in which the Mission can deal with the large numbers of young people of a far less privileged class than those provided for by

the People's Palace and University Settlements. Around this large Institute are club-rooms and class-rooms of every variety, which will allow for the instruction and help of numbers of youths and girls who are largely left to the streets after school hours and after school age. It will furnish help of every kind for their guidance and improvement. By this means it is hoped to elevate in character this very large class of the inner East End, and prepare them for better and regular employment.

It is in the combination, in these central premises, of arrangements for the highest religious and evangelistic work, with suitable agencies and rooms to deal with the roughest element of the population, and to bring them gradually into direct relations with Christ and His salvation, that the Mission has its strength and assurance of success.

In the front of the premises are six lock-up shops, all of which are already let. These, with the other residential parts, when fully let, will bring in a net rental of over £500 a year. Access to any part of the building is gained from a spacious Entrance Hall, which leads into a large Crush Hall, 32 ft. wide, in addition to which there are numerous staircases and exits from all parts. These premises are ideally suitable and complete for doing the work of God and securing permanent results among the people crowded in this vast area. The site proves grandly central, as we have already noted. The changes and improvements which must result from the opening of the new Rotherhithe and Ratcliff Tunnel, which opens on the

north side of the Thames close by the new hall, and the reorganization and improvement of the Port of London, must at once bring the Central Hall into large prominence. The far-reaching changes involved in these great improvements will combine to give peculiar importance to the new premises.

Wednesday, February 20, 1907, has been described as the happiest day in the life of Peter Thompson, for it witnessed the stonelaying of the Central Hall, and marked the culmination of his long and strenuous labour in East London. Mr. Thompson himself conducted the ceremony, and called upon the Rev. William Goudie to pray, and the Rev. Joseph Dixon to read the lesson. The ten stones which are placed across the front of the building facing the Commercial Road, were laid by Lady Marshall, Mrs. T. R. Ferens, Mrs. Hardy, Miss Dawson, Miss Florence Bennett, Miss Rosalie Budgett, Miss Walford Green, Miss D. Rank, Miss Rowe, and Miss Rose Morris, all of whom contributed handsome donations. After this ceremony addresses were delivered in the schoolroom by the chairman, Mr. C. Hay Walker, of Norwood, Rev. C. H. Kelly, Rev. W. D. Walters, Rev. George Charter, and the superintendent.

Mr. Thompson's address was in his best vein, full of enthusiasm and gratitude to God for the great things He had done for them. It was, he said, the happiest day of his life. He was not given to melancholy. He had no memory of depression lasting for more than an hour or so. Long ago he



had made up his mind never to offend any one and never to take offence. Never had he been younger in the work than he was at that moment. No part of it had grown stale to him. It was every whit as interesting as ever. He concluded by dwelling upon the honesty of the East of London and the slowness with which reforms, long since promised, and long enjoyed in other parts of the metropolis, were introduced. There was, he added, more good, at bottom, in the poor than in those higher in the social scale, and this gave the Churches a great lever whereby they might raise the masses.

After tea, a procession headed by the band was formed, and the company marched to St. George's Chapel, where an evening meeting was held. Here Mr. Thompson, after other speeches, resumed the thread of his afternoon remarks by quoting some of the questions he has been asked touching this new venture. One was, 'When you get the new hall, which of the other places are you going to give up?' His answer to that, he said, was that until he was forced he was not going to retire from any place. Not by such tactics was God's kingdom extended. No advance was made when Churches or individuals were transferred from one building to another; but only when new territory was wrested from the devil. It was difficult to estimate the result of these twenty years' work, but during that period they had dealt with at least twenty thousand inquirers; the whole neighbourhood had been benefited by their vigorous temperance policy; their costliest work, both in money and strength,

was that done among the young, but it was yielding abundant fruit, and their converts were to be found in all parts of the world.

I have given this space to Mr. Thompson's words because they form a valuable picture of the aims and results of the Mission, and have the additional advantage of being first-hand from the lips of one better qualified than any one else to speak on the subject.

Equally important both in Mr. Thompson's personal history, and in that of the Mission, was the opening ceremony in connexion with the new Central Hall in July 1907. It was formally opened by Lord Strathcona, who was presented by the Rev. C. H. Kelly with a golden key.

That the work of the Mission was a great one must, he said, be evident to all, and too great praise could scarcely be devoted to the man who had been at its head since it started, twenty-two years ago—the Rev. Peter Thompson. The new buildings were then dedicated by the Rev. J. S. Simon, of Manchester. The entire cost was £40,000, of which £14,000 still has to be raised.

From personal investigations the writer is able to give the following summary of the network of Christian and social interests at the Central Hall.

Tuesday night is 'Children's Night': at six o'clock some seven or eight hundred boys and girls file up outside the premises waiting to enter. 'Boys to the right, girls to the left!' shouts the caretaker; then the doors are opened, and the flood of irrepressible juvenile life flows into the three large

schoolrooms under the control of workers whose love for the bairns is the effective weapon they use in securing and maintaining order. At Stepney it is a three-deck gospel ship. Girls fill the top schoolroom, boys the middle room, and the tiny tots under seven the lower room. All three rooms are bright, well ventilated, comfortably warmed, and at once the children settle in their places. The great hymn-sheet is suspended, the piano gives the time, and off goes a volume of song, the preliminary to an hour's thorough enjoyment.

The Children's Mission is an institution loved and therefore enjoyed by the children. Fourteen or fifteen hundred, sometimes even more, join in these weekly meetings, which are from first to last of a strictly religious character of the broadest and brightest type. Early in October the workers have to cease entering new names on the registers; every child's attendance is regularly marked each week.

The Little Mothers' Guild is a branch of this work held on another evening, when the girls bring the babies of which they have charge. Thus the Mission gets these babies, often from a few days old, and having come, they come again and again, and in many cases continue for years.

The Boys' Life Brigade does good work through the year, increasing in numbers, improving in discipline, and raises a drum and fife band of decided merit.

Over seventy class-meetings are held each week throughout the Mission, Stepney having its full

share. One may be taken as typical of the rest. Men and women whose lives are hard and full of suffering, whose purses are scarcely ever lined with silver, whose homes are furnished in the barest possible manner, whose hours of labour are longer than they should be, especially the women, who toil from early morning to nearly midnight to keep things together—these find a joy in the Methodist class-meeting such as belongs to no other event of the week. Oh, the joy of this close personal friendship, the freedom in prayer and praise, the open testimony, the presence and power of the Holy Ghost in the opening up of scripture truth. These make the class-meeting a most precious heritage. In all the rush and roar of London life and the excitement of Mission work, the class-meeting 'come ye apart' experience is of the greatest possible value to hundreds of these people.

One feature deserves special mention. There has been started for the young men of the Mission, a club, named the 'Thompson Club,' after the esteemed superintendent. It is open four nights in the week. The young men are taking it up with great heartiness, and the club promises to be a means of blessing to all.

The Sunday schools are doing excellent service. Their character and spirit is perhaps best attested by the ingathering of Children's Sunday, when upwards of one hundred scholars, from ten years to twenty, signified by open confession either their renewal of previously acknowledged discipleship of Christ or their decision to become Christians. The

Mission Band is full of good works—in the summer in the open air and in the regular marches with the Brass Band before service, and in distributing thousands of invitations to the Mission during the week-days. The Brass Band, the Orchestra, and the Choir render signal service to the Mission, while the various clubs continue to meet the social needs of the members. The Girls' Parlour and the Young Men's Guild cater for a distinct class of grown-ups.

A few impressions of a visit paid by the writer to the Central Hall on a Monday night may be of interest as serving to show but one side of the varied activities that are housed in this branch of the Mission.

On arriving outside I saw a number of ragged but smiling urchins, and inquired of them what was on. 'Band of 'Ope, sir,' said one lively chap. 'Garn!' said his companion; 'it's the cinematograph.' I learned that both were correct, though the numbers attending the latter were naturally far in advance of the former. I inquired again why they were not at the cinematograph, and the answer came from all, 'Ain't got a 'apenny.' Leaving these disappointed youngsters I made my way into the hall. It was the first time that I had been at a meeting in the famous new large hall of the Mission; but I had no need to ask my way, for a faint rumbling as of approaching thunder greeted my ears in the vestibule, and every second it grew in volume until it really resembled the loud clap of a peal of thunder, only to die away as suddenly. It was the children cheering at the

pictures shown by the cinematograph. The hall was in darkness save for the light reflected on the sheet. I strolled round quite unnoticed by the tiny mites present, whose eyes were all for the pictures and nothing for what was going on in the other portions of the hall. What struck me most forcibly was the really smart way in which these East-enders rose to the occasion as soon as a certain type of picture was put on the sheet. If it was a mother ill-treating a little boy, there were loud and angry cries of 'Shamel' 'Leave 'im alone!' and other such expressive comments. Again a little girl in a picture is represented as being kidnapped. Her faithful dog, a fine large collie, sets out and rescues her; and what a volume of cheering, which is redoubled when all comes right in the end! When, in one picture, the villain is caught, a shrill, piping little voice exclaims, 'Got yer!' and so the comments go on. What I wish to show from this brief description is that these poor children, coming from all kinds of homes, some havens of love and sweetness, others dens of infamy, all seemed to know the difference between right and wrong, could appreciate virtue rewarded, and emphatically condemn cruelty, stealing, and other vices, with which they are only too familiar.

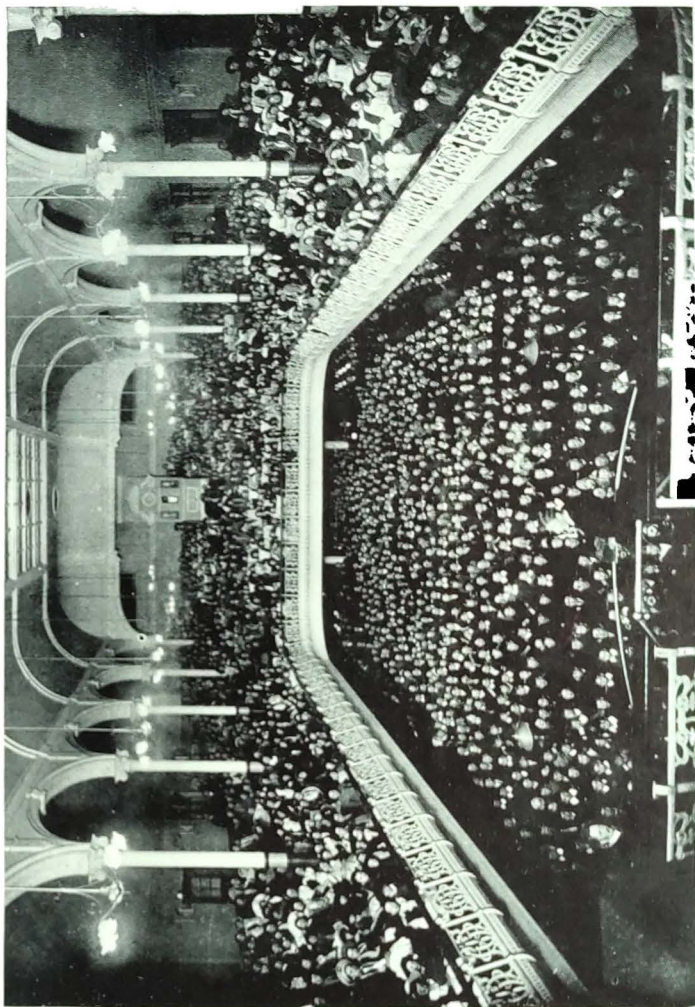
Looking around the hall I next saw that the boys were congregated in the body of the building and the girls in the gallery, a wise arrangement, for although they all go out quietly and orderly, and often within three minutes, it is only too

obvious that many of the smaller girls would get pushed in the 'general post'; and, as many of the latter have babies with them, the rule is all the more to be commended. I was informed by a helper that there were about 1,800 children present, but as the weather was inclement it was considered a poor turn-out. The numbers often run to over 2,000. How is this huge army of children managed? Very simply. The evangelist in charge is seated on the commodious platform, which commands a splendid view of every part of the hall, and as the noise increases blows a whistle. Very rarely does he have to sound it a second time, for obedience is the rule at these meetings. Up in the gallery the ever-patient, sweet-faced ladies look after any unruly girls who may be inclined to romp, but I am told that bad conduct is conspicuous by its absence. All this is commonplace, you say. I agree; but it is something to give 2,000 poor children of the streets an entertainment pure and simple for the remarkably low sum of one halfpenny, and lasting a whole hour. During this time 2,000 young souls are transported from the sordid mean streets and alleys of Stepney and made to live in another world, the realm of adventure, humour, and beauty, for a whole sixty minutes. The gathering is both instructive and entertaining, and has its own particular place in the scheme of the Mission's work.

At eight o'clock I entered the hall again. But the scene is changed. Gone are all the children's

faces which but late were beaming with joy, and instead there is a vast adult audience filling the whole building. It is *the* meeting of the week for them. Most are teetotallers, but some are not. This is an advantage to the workers, for the latter are the very people they want to get hold of. Dotted all about the hall are chairs with this inscription printed thereon, 'Chair for Pledge Steward,' and so thickly spread over the building are these seats that the tippler, if he has strayed into the meeting, will have no excuse for saying that he has never had a chance of reforming. On an average from twenty to thirty pledges are taken at each meeting. It is the Gospel Temperance meeting; for Mr. Thompson is an enthusiast to the backbone in the cause of total abstinence. Here his wisdom and practical common-sense are shown. He does not get two thousand people together and say, 'Look you here, strong drink is a poison,' &c., and proceed to give lugubrious pictures of its dire effects. He tries a simpler way. He woos them to temperance. A hymn is thrown on the sheet, and the people sing lustily. Some who have never sung a hymn before in their lives no doubt think it strange, but the majority appear to know the tune, and the words are provided for them in clear, bright letters. Then follows a short, practical prayer, devoid of all cant, an earnest petition to the Divine Father to help the struggling men and women present to live better lives, to perfect those who have begun to





THE MONDAY EVENING CHILDREN'S MEETING AT THE CENTRAL HALL.

walk with Him. This precedes the cinematograph entertainment, which is the same as that provided for the children an hour before. The Mission owns the machine, and the gas used is that of the general account, hence the thing can be done at the price. During an interval cheap refreshments may be had. After lights are turned up a breezy temperance talk follows, sane and helpful, just suited to the men and women who live in crowded Stepney, with all its poverty, sin, and woe; and the benediction concludes a bright, pleasant evening. What is the result? Conversions, drunkards reformed, and lives brightened. Is not this a justification of the new hall and its splendid resources? The Mission can now work with thousands where hundreds was the tale before.

At this point we may briefly allude to the splendid help rendered to the Mission as a whole by the Bands. Every member is voluntary, and is trained from the beginning by Mr. R. Dyke (the late Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry), the bandmaster, who receives a salary. The Mission has no more loyal and attached agent than Mr. Dyke. He has worked in it for twenty years. Due to the influence of one or two members the Band has always sustained a high spiritual tone. The character of a member is as carefully considered as his, or her, musical ability. The Orchestral and the Brass Bands are in much request at various East London functions.

## CHAPTER X

### THE WIDER MINISTRY

AN intimate friend once remarked of Mr. Thompson that there was not enough of the 'showman' about him. He spoke what is an actual fact, for no man is less inclined to speak about himself, or let others do it for him, than the genial superintendent of the East London Mission. For this reason much of his public and private life remains unknown. It is true that his more public work, the wider ministry, cannot be hid ; but it is never spoken of by the man himself, and many of his splendid services to the community in general, apart from the Mission, remain little known. To give some adequate idea of this side of his character and service is the aim of these brief paragraphs.

If Mr. Thompson's service to East London is of untold value from the Methodist point of view, his work in relation to social relief and public morality has been no less marked. He is the terror of wrong-doers and sweaters, while the low public-house and all questionable haunts have in him a stern and trenchant opponent. As a guardian he has been the true friend to the honest poor, and

yet considerate to the over-burdened ratepayers. His knowledge, impartiality, and common-sense are valued by those who are responsible for the unemployed who have money to disburse.

As a guardian for over twenty years Mr. Thompson has a thorough knowledge of the Poor Law, and holds certain well-defined opinions. He is an advocate of the equalization of rates, and with regard to reforms in this direction once said—

‘To begin with, I would have a thorough discrimination in dealing with the inmates of the workhouses, specially with the old people and married couples, and in separating the criminal classes from the inoffensive. I would give judicious outdoor relief in cases of good character, especially where the comfort and freedom of the home could be maintained at the same or less cost to the rates than in the workhouse. For the unemployed a special method should be used entirely apart from the Poor Law. Some such authority as the County Council or the District Boards should have the power to set such men to work on the land to develop rural industries. I would have a test place similar to that used by the Mansion House Committee, by which the men can be assorted. This is preferable to setting all kinds of men to such menial and degrading tasks as breaking stones and picking oakum. For the men who don't want to work, I would make things very hot. Such men ought to be treated as criminals. Rogues and vagabonds must not be pampered. No work-

houses should be open for them; their place is not to associate with honest and unhappy poor. But whenever there is a man willing and able to work he should be given work that is not degrading, and which does not rob him of his rights as a citizen.'

Another branch of public work that has Mr. Thompson's ardent support is that of the Christian Social Service Union, on whose first committee he was an active worker, along with the Revs. Dr. Paton, of Nottingham, J. F. B. Tinling, B.A., Drs. Clifford, J. Monro Gibson, J. Scott-Lidgett, and other leading public men. The union has farm colonies and homes for epileptic children at Lingfield in Surrey and Satterthwaite in Westmoreland. Its appeal for the services of earnest and devoted men, called by the Spirit of God to a work of companionship among the unemployed, many of whom are broken in spirit and sick in body, found a ready response in Mr. Thompson, who, by his close study of the problem of unemployment and the woes of the poor in the East End, was able to render valuable aid at the commencement of this work.

His sympathies with the working men of his district have always taken a practical turn. He has been president of two trade unions and treasurer of a third. He himself says he found it difficult to count the *direct* results from his having entered into that work. When he used to spend an evening with the dockers in a trade-union meeting, an hour might seem to be lost, so far as he was able to count the actual conversions of sinners. But

*indirectly* the results were large. In such ways he gained a strong hold upon the sympathies of the men, who never found him standoffish or superior, but one who placed his brains and time at their disposal, and proved by his actions that he loved them.

Mr. Thompson was a member of the old Vestry until it was merged into a borough. He is a trustee and manager of Miss Steer's 'Bridge of Hope' Mission for girls, and acknowledges the splendid results that have followed from its operations. He was one of the first promoters of the Anti-Sweating League, and is a member of the Executive Committee. He assisted in promoting the arrangements and supplying workers for the *Daily News'* Sweated Industries Exhibition at the Queen's Hall. He is working so that practical, wise, and effective means may be taken to end these unspeakable miseries.

Then again, Mr. Thompson is not afraid to speak out in municipal life. He holds that the gospel can be applied to our civic affairs to sweeten and ennoble, and on the occasion of an election of the London County Council issued an appeal to his Methodist brethren hoping that they would give themselves thoroughly to the service of London by promoting the success of the Progressive candidates, who were pledged to temperance and morality. It is part and parcel of his rooted doctrine that when doing your duty as a citizen or when caring for the hungry and relieving the

oppressed, you are doing the work of Jesus Christ just as much as when preaching His gospel.

His fearless and outspoken denunciation of the evils of the district once cost him and a valued colleague many days of anxiety and much financial loss, though both had the privilege of knowing that the sympathies of the whole Mission, as well as the public at large, were on their side.

This ordeal occurred in 1896, when the Rev. Peter Thompson and his colleague the Rev. John Howard were sued for libel by the landlord of the Rose and Crown public-house in Ratcliff Highway. The statements complained of were the two ministers' criticisms of the manner in which the plaintiff conducted his business, and were published in *East End*, a newspaper owned by the Mission. The article recalled the fact that there were two houses in St. George's which the Licensing Committee of the London County Council had deprived of their music licences. It said of these two houses that sailors were robbed, prostitution encouraged, and drunkenness and every kind of vicious excess was the order of the day. The plaintiff, a Spaniard, said his house was one of the two thus referred to, and the statements were untrue. The case came before the High Courts, and created a great sensation. Twice the jury failed to agree. In 1897 the charge against the ministers collapsed. Mr. Cock, Q.C., the counsel for the defendants, made the following announcement in court: 'On behalf of the defendants I only wish to say one word, and it

is this. They published this statement with regard to this house in a paper called *East End*, which deals with philanthropic work at the East End. They expressed what was their view from the evidence which was presented to them, and they have always been unable in any way to recede from the position they then took. Of course, they had no desire to press this matter *à outrance*, the juries on each occasion having been unable to agree.' Thus ended a long-protracted ordeal for the Rev. Peter Thompson and his colleague. He came out of it with flying colours, making it clear that he retracted nothing and apologized for nothing. This piece of work on behalf of public morality in Stepney cost him £2,200, which was generously forthcoming in public subscriptions.

Nor have the members of his Mission been behind him in the cause of public morality and in performing the duties of citizenship. Several of his most active workers are on public bodies. We may specially mention the valuable services rendered to the Mission, both as an inside worker and a public woman, by Miss A. E. Seddon, who has a record of twenty years' strenuous effort to her credit. She is a daughter of the manse, and more than twenty-five years ago came to St. George's-in-the-East. Up till 1889, in which year she entered the Mission work fully, Miss Seddon found scope for her active energies as a voluntary worker in Band of Hope and Sunday-school work. She is secretary of a large Temperance Society at the St. George's



centre, where Pleasant Evenings for the People are given during the winter months. She conducts a large mothers' meeting, and has a society and other classes. For years Miss Seddon has been a Poor Law Guardian, and has filled important offices in connexion with house and school committees.

One of the pleasantest recollections in Mr. Thompson's busy life is his visit to America in 1891. He was a delegate to the Œcumenical Conference at Washington. Great interest was shown in the accounts he gave of his East-end work and the noble support he received from his lady workers, many of whom had left comfortable suburban homes to labour among the outcast and degraded, without any worldly gain, only relying on the Master's smile for their meed of service. Speaking at one of the meetings just after the whole world had been horrified by the terrible 'Jack-the-Ripper' murders in Whitechapel, Mr. Thompson said: 'Our place is in the very centre of this area, in the very streets and courts where the recent shocking crimes were committed. Our women have taken their stand on almost the very flagstones which were stained with the victims' blood, and sang praises to God before a crowd of those miserable outcasts. They go wherever the devil is, and take their stand boldly and fearlessly and speak out the Word of God.'

After a visit of two months, Mr. Thompson, whose absence from the East End had been keenly felt by his co-workers, was given a magnificent reception on

his return home. At a gathering at St. George's over a thousand persons were present from all branches of the Mission. An address was presented to the minister and his wife—who had accompanied her husband—expressing the love they bore them and testifying to the kind and genial manner in which Mr. Thompson had attended to all matters connected with the work of the Mission. Mr. Thompson, in suitably acknowledging the token, referred in his usual humorous style to the incidental inconveniences of the sea voyage, and his varied experiences while travelling from place to place. He was deeply affected by the race problem in the United States, and visited some of the 'coloured' churches whenever he had a free Sunday. He was naturally pained at the way in which the race distinction had crept into the religious life of the Americans, and to this day is a warm supporter of the casting down of all barriers that divide the children of God.

Of his place in Methodism, one can only say that no man is better loved and respected. He is described as being the biggest man in the denomination, and he has certainly an equally big heart. He was appointed secretary of the Candidates' Examination Committee in 1889. He is a member of the Legal Hundred, a position of honour and responsibility, and his election, on the nomination of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, in 1892, reflected the high opinion held by his brethren of Mr. Thompson's ability, service, and practical experience.

As a preacher he is, above all things, sincere and practical, and his message is felt far beyond his immediate field of labour. He preaches the old gospel in all its simplicity. He holds that it is not the social reformer who is to be the forerunner of the evangelist, but the evangelist of the social reformer. He believes in the gospel which in the days of Whitefield and the Wesleys regenerated the colliers of Kingswood and Newcastle and the roughs of Moorfield, as the power of God for the salvation of the outcast.

The following brief report, as given in the *Sunday at Home*, of a sermon preached at St. George's Chapel to a large congregation, is typical of the homely, practical, and sound message which he gives his hearers—

The subject was three passages of the first epistle of St. Peter. Chap. i. 16: 'Be ye holy, &c.'; iv. 7: 'The end of all things is at hand'; and v. 8, 9: 'Be sober, &c.'

'These verses,' he said, 'all enjoin personal sobriety as a permanent condition of fellowship with God. I need not remind you here to-night that our surroundings are full of temptations to wrong thought and to wrong conduct. In St. Paul's words: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers." He describes an organization of devilry. The devil associates with himself all bad men, all evil agencies, therefore keep perfectly sober. There is not much hope of a man in this district if he drinks.

'A man who begins to reason with the devil is acting foolishly in his own interest. Give him no quarter. Shut the door in his face. Tell him you don't want an interview. "*Whom resist.*"

'An old friend comes to you. He says: "We'll have a talk about old times; let us go to so-and-so and have a *bottle of ginger-beer.*" Oh! that ginger-beer! The wiles of the devil!

'I never forget my father telling me that in his early days he enjoyed the frolic and fun of life. He had an arrangement with two companions to spend an evening at their old haunts. But he had seen his mother in the meantime, and she had spoken to him about his soul. He arrived at the rendezvous, and said to the one who met him, "I'm not going." "Not going!" "No, it's the way to hell! I'm going to the Methodist chapel. There's a revival meeting there!" That night saw him converted. Resist!'

Pressing duties have prevented Mr. Thompson from following out his natural literary bent. That love of learning acquired at Didsbury College has never left him, and even to-day in the brief intervals he can snatch from a busy life, he is with his beloved books in the well-lined study. In this way he manages to keep abreast of the best in modern literature, though few novels find their way to his house in Well Street, Hackney. An examination of his book-shelves shows a wide and varied taste, from modern theology, Syriac and Arabic grammars, to the recently issued magnificent edition

of Ruskin's collected works. Mr. Thompson has also engaged in editorial work. He took over *Experience* from the late Rev. Alexander M'Aulay, and in connexion with it promoted a book-fund for local preachers and class-leaders, and for some years was able to distribute large numbers of suitable books.

When the Rev. S. Chadwick was in London he and Mr. Thompson began the publication of *East End*, which has since continued as the organ of the Mission. He is one of the secretaries of the *Out-and-Out* Band monthly organ.

In the pulpit and on the platform Mr. Thompson is a striking personality. His broad, massive frame and leonine head suggest power and immense reserve of strength. An utter absence of affectation or dramatic effort is allied with intense earnestness and downright home-thrusts. Nor is there any mincing of words; he sees sin in all its hideous aspects and fearlessly denounces it, and pleads with its victims to abandon their evil ways. His voice is full and deep-toned, and never fails to hold the attention of his congregation or audience. He is, in short, the ideal preacher and speaker to the masses. To his staff and the people of Stepney generally he is always the 'Bishop,' and the following tribute by one of the latter shows how he is loved by them.

'We call him "the Bishop" among ourselves. And, shure, doesn't he have to work? It's just wonnerful how he gits thro' it all. He's hardly a

minit to call his own, and the invitations he receives almost by every post to go here and to go there! He has to say "No" time after time, for he won't be away from the Mission on a Sunday if he can help it. He's a most peaceable man is Mister Thompson, and when you do anything wrong there is none of those nagging ways! He jest overlooks it, and passes it by quietly.'

Of his few recreations, fishing and agriculture are his chief favourites. He is a true farmer's son, and to this day retains his interest in everything pertaining to the raising of cattle. He is never happier than when angling for trout, or knee-deep in a Highland stream with overalls and nor'-wester, plying the rod for salmon. One can well believe that he throws as much energy and whole-souled enthusiasm into his fishing excursions as he does in his work as a fisher of men in the East End of London. Like his namesake, Peter Thompson can say in a double sense, 'I go a-fishing.'

## CHAPTER XI

### RESULTS AND OUTLOOK

WE must now gather together some of the threads of the foregoing narrative, and see exactly how the Mission has been successful in achieving the objects for which it was started. Many of these results have been touched on incidentally in previous chapters, but a few general observations will help to a better appreciation.

First as to neighbourhood. The streets and homes of the East End are still sordid and wicked. But there has been a vast improvement of late years owing to the splendid work of the London County Council and School Board. The scenes that were witnessed in the old days of 'Paddy's Goose' and Old Mahogany Bar are now entirely of the past. Nor does vice so unblushingly vaunt itself to the public eye. There are fewer public-houses, though drink is still the arch-fiend, and these are better conducted. As the result of the St. George's Goose Club, the biggest and most successful of its kind in East London, none of the 'pubs' in St. George's can run one. This means that the drinking in the homes at Christmas is very much lessened as the result of the temperance propaganda of the Mission.

Then, the character of the population has entirely changed. The slackening of work at the docks has had a marked effect, and not to such an extent as formerly is the Ratcliff Highway the gathering-ground for sailors of all nationalities. Until recently there was an ever-increasing influx of Jews and foreigners. Now they seem to be more generally distributed. A local head master informed one of the evangelists at St. George's that ten years ago he had not more than forty foreigners among the pupils ; now it is difficult to enumerate fifty Christian scholars, and the school is a large one. This influx has not been without its good features, for the Jews are hard-working, and are abstemious in drink. Their children are always clothed comfortably, and a shoeless Jewish boy or girl is hard to find. On the other hand, these Polish Jews have introduced new trades. There is a very large casual working population, and it is a heartrending sight to see five hundred men struggling at the docks for fifty tickets for work, literally fighting for a day's job. We have no space to enter into the vexed question of unemployment in this part of the metropolis. It is still the terrible problem that it has ever been, and no solution appears forthcoming. Mr. Thompson himself has worked manfully and well on Mansion House and Relief Committees, and thinks that the decay of the apprenticeship system and the ramifications of drink are two fruitful sources of unemployment in the East End.

From the religious point of view things are not very bright. In twenty years as many non-



conformist places of worship have had to shut up, and during all this time the Mission has shone forth as a beacon-light over the turbulent waters of unbelief and misery. The number of lives that have been changed from darkness to light as the result of its work will never be known until the great Harvest Day, but countless homes have been sweetened and purified by the network of agencies connected with the East-end Mission. It is certain that its methods are the most effective and economical under the circumstances.

The greatest hope lies in the children. They are the men and women of to-morrow, and Mr. Thompson has all along recognized the strategic importance of children's services. His children's missions for the very poorest class, and Sunday schools for those a little better, have been the means of doing incalculable good. To-day he is accosted in the streets by grown men and women who were once children at his schools and services. All this effort cannot be in vain, and when these youngsters grow up, even if they leave Stepney, Whitechapel, or the Ratcliff Highway, they carry with them the lasting impressions of purity and grace learned at the Mission.

One of Mr. Thompson's evangelists informed the writer that after his first year as evangelist at 'Paddy's Goose' he was strongly inclined to follow the advice of some friends and give up the work, so great did the fight with armed forces of evil become; but after fifteen years' experience he is deeply convinced that religion and that alone is able

to 'manage the job,' and is doing it. The Mission has been enabled to put new life into men and women whose outlook before its advent was hopeless. It has watched over, shepherded, and tended, as a mother her bairn, sinful men and women, and in the end achieved victory, and has many triumphant death-bed scenes to enumerate.

The Mission, in short, is *practical religion at work*, and its greatest need is spiritual reinforcements. Money is needed, and as years go on this appeal for the sinews of war becomes more pressing and immediate, but devoted and self-sacrificing service is equally required. The new Central Hall, with the possession of a fine Settlement, is now assisting to solve the problem of helpers, and what could be a finer sphere of Christian service than for young men and women with leisure to spend some time in residence at the Mission, give single nights, or devote a week-end to this work?

At this point we cannot do better than let Mr. Thompson speak as to the present outlook, than whom no one is more able and qualified. Of the proposals to sweeten the neighbourhood by removing dilapidated and sordid streets he remarks—

'It is very difficult to form an idea of the results of this great development in the neighbourhood. Already various proposals have been discussed for securing open spaces with public gardens along the river, and by the widening of streets and the making of new thoroughfares, for opening up the vast area of Stepney and Mile End between the river and the Victoria Park, and other open spaces further north.

'Much of the old and dilapidated property must be demolished, and a great part of the district along the river reconstructed; and it is to be hoped that the various authorities will agree upon plans of reconstruction and development of the whole district affected. The poverty and unemployment of this region continues, and is even more serious over a much larger area than ever before. Stepney has been the only borough that refused to open a register for unemployment available for all the unemployed. The Local Distress Committee for the borough from the beginning objected to register any man who could not give a reference to an employer where he had had two months' continuous service during the previous two years. This, of course, excluded practically all in our area, as they depend on casual dock labour and riverside work. The majority are eager for work, and are not loafers. During the first year of the Mansion House Unemployed Committee a special appeal was made to the Stepney Borough Committee to adopt the same method of registering the unemployed as the other boroughs of London, but they firmly adhered to their own exclusive method. The consequence is that in the published report by the Government the unemployed in the Stepney borough refers only to those who were not excluded by the local regulations. Had the full number been registered, as in other boroughs, the actual figures would have been startling. Many shops have had to close. The better paid and those regularly employed leave at the first opportunity,

so that the wider area is left to an alarming extent to those with "sweated" wages.

'The need and urgency of our work in this vast East End is greater than ever. . . . The Salvation Army now is represented almost solely by Shelters. The Anglican Churches have generally become Anglo-Catholic, and the Roman Catholics seem to me to be seriously crippled in their work because of the poverty of the people, though vigorous mission efforts are constantly made. Our own Mission has to be maintained at great cost of hard work, and by the generous help of friends outside the district. Amidst all that is depressing and disheartening, we are constantly cheered by wonderful success, especially among the children and young people. The ever-increasing area of paralysing and disabling poverty makes larger demands upon our faith and courage.

'The following shows the terrible power of the liquor traffic. Just recently we have made inquiries into the conditions of the neighbourhood by a fresh test and standard. In the Stepney borough, which forms the larger part of our area, with a population of about 310,000, there are left only 349 persons whose rental of premises qualify them to be on the list of special jurymen, and of these 154 are engaged in the liquor traffic. In the Stepney and Mile End Old Town Parliamentary Divisions only 93 are qualified to sit as special jurymen, and 57 of these are publicans; in St. George's, with a population of about 50,000, only 20 are qualified, and of these 13 are publicans; while in the parish of Shadwell only 7 are qualified, and they are all

publicans. Will you take time to think what this condition of things means for any and all Christian work? Judge Rentoul truly says that "The liquor traffic is doing more to wreck religion in the East End of London than any other circumstance I know." We are proud of our constant and fierce fight against the liquor traffic. For us the passing of the Licensing Bill is vital, and the prospect of its becoming law fills us with assurance and joy.<sup>1</sup> How profoundly it will help us! Taking only the Borough of Stepney; the Mission has one or more of its centres in each of the five Parliamentary divisions into which the borough is divided. In this borough, on March 31, 1908, there were 675 "on-licences" in existence. The population (census, 1901) was 298,600, with an average density of 169 to each acre—one "on-licence" to each 445 persons (population is now estimated at over 313,000).

'The Bill provides that where the population is more than 100, and not exceeding 200, per acre, there shall not be more than one "on-licence" for each 900 of the population left in existence at the end of the time-limit; so that if the population were evenly distributed throughout the borough the number of "on-licences" left would be 332, being less than half the present number.

'But as the population varies greatly—in 5 of the wards the density is over 300 per acre, and the "ward" is the area to which the provisions of the Bill will apply—it is interesting to note how each of the parliamentary divisions will be affected thereby.

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<sup>1</sup> Written before the Bill's rejection.

'Limehouse has 163 "on-licences," with a population of 55,812, an average of one "on-licence" to each 342 of population. Under the Bill the number would be reduced to 63, so that 100 licences would be suppressed in this poverty-stricken and squalid East-end district.

'Whitechapel has 195 "on-licences," with a population of 80,893, an average of one "on-licence" to each 414 of population. Under the Bill the number would be reduced to 90.

'Mile End has 101 "on-licences," with a population of 49,129, an average of one "on-licence" to each 486 of population. Under the Bill the number would be reduced to 55.

'Stepney has 119 "on-licences," with a population of 63,698, an average of one "on-licence" to each 535 of population. Under the Bill the number would be reduced to 71.

'St. George's has 97 "on-licences," with a population of 49,608, an average of one "on-licence" to each 506 of population. Under the Bill the number would be reduced to 55.'

## SUMMARY.

Division.	Existing Licences.	Under Bill.
Limehouse . . .	163	63
Whitechapel . . .	195	90
Mile End . . .	101	55
Stepney . . .	119	71
St. George's . . .	97	55
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	675	334

What a startling picture of the hideous, hellish ramifications of the drink traffic in the East End!

With regard to the present financial position of the Mission, it may be here stated that about £14,000 more on the building account, and about £4,000 more on the current account, is urgently needed. This is due to the following reasons. First, there has been an unexpected loss by death and other circumstances of some six or eight friends who have been generous supporters from the beginning. Then, when Mr. Thompson accepted the capital sum of £5,000 from the London Mission section of the Twentieth Century Fund, he surrendered £500 a year of the grant from the Central Fund. The total outlay on the new central premises is about £37,000, besides the £5,000 capitalized value of the ground rent, the interest of which is covered by the shops and residences, which will bring in a rental of over £500 a year.

No account of the present outlook in East London would be complete without a reference to the recently instituted 'Council of Public Welfare,' of which Mr. Thompson is vice-president. It consists of the clergy and ministers of the Borough of Stepney, with a number of laymen. Its object is to deal with temperance, housing, and public morality, and to press questions needing attention on the public authorities.

This brings us to the consideration of the part played by the Mission in the public affairs of the East End. We have already described Mr. Thompson's own wider ministry. It is his wise plan to

have as many of his workers on the various public bodies as possible. So well informed on all social matters appertaining to the district are his co-workers that if they responded to all invitations they would all be on public bodies, to the detriment of the Mission's work.

Other public work in earlier years was the splendid help rendered by the Mission during the great Dock Strike of 1889, when Mr. Thompson threw himself with all his energies into the struggle, and spoke on behalf of the dockers, and helped them and their families during the terrible period of distress. It should be mentioned that 'Paddy's Goose' became the home of a new 'Dockers' Union,' where the men could meet away from the evil influences of the public-house, and Mr. Thompson was asked to act as treasurer. The Medical Mission did its utmost among the sick, and again during the winters of 1892, 1895, 1902, when there was terrible distress, it rendered enormous service.

One fact concerning the relief work of the Mission must not be overlooked. Little or nothing directly is given away, every case being carefully and separately dealt with. As far as possible work is found for the people instead of doles. This is a strong point with Mr. Thompson, who some years ago originated a system of sewing-meetings for women, at which work is given them to do. They receive payment according to the quality of the work and the nature of the garment. Three ladies act as overseers and judges, and these apportion the work, divide it when done into classes accord-



ing to its quality, and estimate its value. It is then paid for upon the scale they arrange. This practice has the special advantage that it encourages women who at first can do only plain, rough work to perfect themselves in the art, so as to secure the higher remuneration. Then periodical sales are held, and the garments that are left over eventually find their way to the Mothers' Meeting sales. From these transactions a profit of about 10 per cent. is made, not, of course, reckoning the labour of the ladies and workers; though they would spend as much time were the relief given in any other way. 'It has long been my deliberate policy,' declares Mr. Thompson, 'that if I have only £50 to spend, I will spend it all on an agent rather than upon food and doles for a day. The great need of the East End is for personal influences that will afford inspiration to set the people a lofty ideal, rather than for soup and casual assistance.'

That the saving of the East End is of pressing importance will be plain from a few figures. The area worked by the Mission contains a population of well over half a million; it has 75,000 day scholars under fourteen years of age; Sunday scholars, same age, about 34,000; children under fourteen years not attending any Sunday school, about 40,000. The Mission's operations cover about three square miles of London's most crowded streets, and are confined to the Borough of Stepney, which includes the rating areas of Mile End Old Town, St. George's-In-the-East, Limehouse, Ratcliff, Shadwell, Wapping, Whitechapel, and Norton

Folgate. Further, the borough is one of the poorest and most densely populated in London, containing 170 persons per acre, possesses 13,282 one-room and 15,690 two-room tenants, 812 public-houses (or one to every 394 inhabitants), and, sad to relate, has an aggregate attendance at a place of worship of only one in five of the population.

To meet this appalling state of affairs the Mission is straining every effort ; in fact, there is no known human agency along mission lines that is not pressed into service ; and with all the aggressive weapons it is still fighting a 'soldier's battle.' Figures are but a poor gauge of the enormous amount of religious and social effort that is being put forth, though the following give some indication of the gigantic and far-reaching endeavours in this direction. No fewer than 260 meetings, public, society, and social, are held in the Mission buildings every week, and twenty meetings weekly in the open air during the summer reach thousands of non-churchgoers. The total membership for 1908 is as follows : Full members, 1,508 ; Members on trial, 515 ; Juniors, 917. Total membership, 2,940.

There is a ministerial staff of four, with five evangelists and fourteen ladies ; not, after all, a large staff divided between seven centres, which minister to about three square miles of London's poorest and most crowded streets.

If the Mission has been successful beyond all doubt in its past children's work, it is eminently so at the present day, when thousands upon thousands of the children of the streets, the homeless, the

unwashed and degraded, gather every week in the Mission premises, many of whom get drafted to the Sunday schools, and ultimately join the Mission. It is a curious fact that the two classes of children do not readily mix. In discussing the outlook special emphasis must be laid on the Children's Missions. The following statistics relating to attendances at Children's meetings at the Mission may be of interest, being the latest available: Central Hall, 2,500; St. George's, 1,800; Lycett, 2,000; Old Mahogany Bar, 700; Gordon Hall, 'Paddy's Goose,' Wapping Hall, 800. Total, 7,800.

Here we close our brief account of the work of the London Wesleyan Mission, East. Though certain of the darker aspects of East-end life have been incidentally touched upon, it will be admitted that the brighter side is predominant. The personal influence of Mr. Thompson, and the thorough leavening of his Mission, have worked miracles. Public life is sweeter as the result of their efforts, and reforms long wished for are nearer now than twenty years ago. There is no aspect of life in Stepney into which the Mission has not brought sunshine, and homes to-day are brighter and purer. With such a splendid record of things accomplished the Mission is very much alive and is going hopefully forward, knowing that it has the blessing of God. Its motto now, as always, is 'Full steam ahead!'