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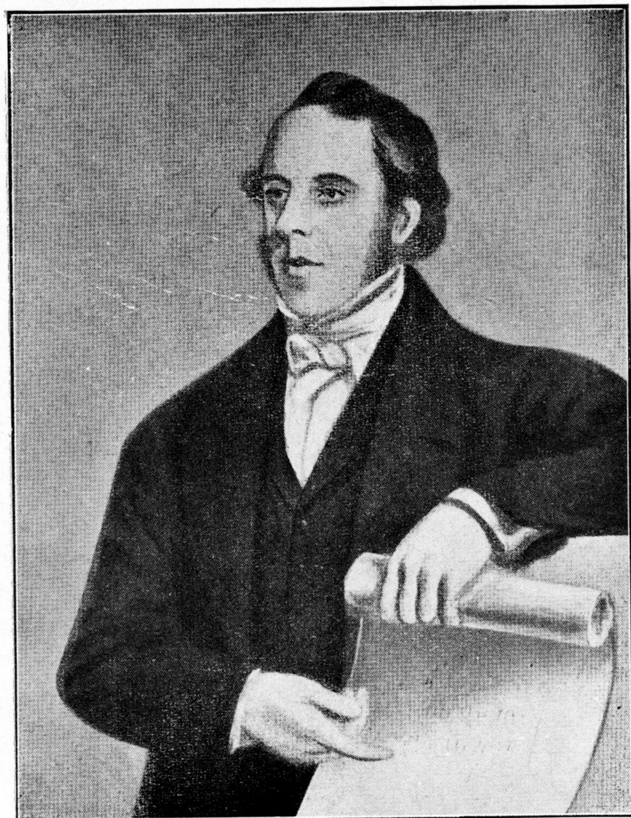
FREEDOM IN JAMAICA



WILLIAM KNIBB *Frontispiece*

FREEDOM IN JAMAICA

SOME CHAPTERS IN THE STORY OF
THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

BY
ERNEST A. PAYNE
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SECOND EDITION

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TO

W. M. P.

First Edition - - - 1933
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" Oh how comely it is and how reviving
To the Spirits of just men long opprest!
When God into the hands of thir deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the Earth, th' oppressour,
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honour Truth;
He all thir Ammunition
And feats of War defeats
With plain Heroic magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd,
Thir Armories and Magazins contemns,
Renders them useless, while
With winged expedition
Swift as the lightning glance he executes
His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd
Lose thir defence distracted and amaz'd.
But patience is more oft the exercise
Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,
Making them each his own Deliverer,
And Victor over all
That tyrannie or fortune can inflict."

MILTON, *Samson Agonistes.*

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FOREWORD

" Unlike all the other missionaries, they had identified themselves with the rights as well as with the welfare of the negroes." This statement regarding the Baptist missionaries in Jamaica by Dr. Mathieson, the historian of the anti-slavery movement in the British Empire, is sufficient justification for our recalling at this time the part played by those of our own persuasion in the struggle for emancipation, and some of the events that followed. The story is a dramatic one, full of excitement and gallantry, and at times of tragedy, and of their part in it Baptists have reason to be proud. They have been in the centre of the stage. In these quieter days in Jamaica there are still many problems and difficulties, not a few of them the legacy of the happenings recorded in these pages.

I am obviously indebted to those who have worked over some of the denominational sources before me, to those who have written out of their knowledge of Jamaica itself, and to Dr. Mathieson.

JANUARY, 1933. E. A. P.

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION

More than a dozen years have passed since this book was written. Much has happened since 1933 in the West Indies and throughout the world. The Christian Church, as well as the British Government, is recognising the necessity of giving more attention to Jamaica and the neighbouring islands. Baptists are being challenged afresh, as are many other Christian communions. The demand for a new edition has given me the opportunity of revising what I had written in the light of a visit paid to Jamaica in 1939. I have also added some pages and brought the matter up to date.

Oxford. E.A.P.

CHAPTER I

Westward Ho!

"God has not frowned upon our undertakings in the East, and we cannot but hope for the continuance of His blessing on this our first effort in the West."

Andrew Fuller, 1813.

On a December day in the year 1813, Broadmead Baptist Chapel, Bristol, was the scene of an historic gathering. In its long history there have been many important occasions, but few of greater significance for the future. The little group of friends who in 1792 had taken leading parts in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society, and who during the subsequent years had carried the burden of its affairs in this country, according to their promise to William Carey, had assembled in Bristol to commission John Rowe, of Yeovil, for service in the West Indies. The young man, who was twenty-five years of age, had had training at Bristol College. Its President, John Ryland, offered prayer. Prudent and practical John Sutcliff, over six feet in height, had come from his church at Olney, and asked the customary questions of the one who was to be ordained. Then tall, broad-shouldered, big-hearted Andrew Fuller, the Secretary of the

Society, preached. The company assembled again in the evening to hear the great Robert Hall. Those who were present must afterwards have been much moved as they recalled the proceedings, for only a few months later Sutcliff passed away, and in little more than a year Andrew Fuller also. They had lived, however, to see the beginning of the second great venture of the B.M.S.

The eyes of most people at the time were fixed upon the continent of Europe. The great empire which Napoleon had built up was crumbling around him after his disastrous Russian adventure, and a few months later the Allies entered Paris and secured their enemy's banishment to Elba. The little group in Broadmead Chapel had their attention occupied with other issues. For them the Napoleonic struggle had less significance than the efforts to defeat superstition and cruelty in India and other distant parts of the earth. And though the minds of many Baptists were still full of the story of the destructive fire at Serampore, and the Missionary Society was still but a small concern with its head-quarters in Northamptonshire, they dared to be venturing on a new undertaking, a mission to Jamaica, that "slave-cultured island" as Cowper had called it.

It was fitting that this valedictory service should be held in Bristol, and that John Rowe should be a man of the West Country. Was it not sturdy John Hawkins of Devon who

first involved England in the slave-trade, seeing no reason for leaving so profitable a line of business in the hands of foreigners? Two hundred and fifty years earlier, he had made his first voyage to the West coast of Africa. There he "got into his possession, partly by the sword and partly by other means, to the number of 300 negroes at least," and then carried them across the Atlantic to the West Indies, where he disposed of them to the Spanish planters. During the subsequent years the trade had assumed terrible proportions.

Jamaica, to which John Rowe was to be sent, is the centre of the semicircle of tropical islands known as the West Indies. It had been captured by the Spaniards as early as 1494. As colonizers the men of Spain showed themselves barbarously cruel, even according to the standards of a universally cruel age. The original inhabitants of the island quickly disappeared before them, some by the sword, some the victims of new diseases, some by way of new vices. Slave labour was soon demanded in the New World colonies to meet the needs of plantations and mines. When, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the English drove the Spaniards out, and added Jamaica to the British Empire, the general conditions in the island altered comparatively little, though among the new settlers who were encouraged to go out there were Puritans and Quakers, and upon the latter George Fox urged the duty of caring

for the negroes and training them in the fear of God. As a system slavery was accepted without question. Even Christian people did not feel it to be inconsistent with their religion. One of the slave ships was named the *Jesus*, and John Newton, who in 1779 published the hymn, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," was captain of a slaver both before and after his conversion. Even as late as 1811, Andrew Fuller could write: "Slavery is not *in itself* wrong." Yet as the years passed slavery's inevitable accompaniments of degradation and cruelty became more and more manifest.

The raids to capture slaves were barbarously carried out. It is estimated that 17 per cent. of those shipped from Africa succumbed on the voyage, which was made under the most terrible conditions of overcrowding. Of those who did reach the West Indies a third died in the process of what was called "seasoning." In their native land these unfortunates had never been accustomed to long periods of hard toil. They brought with them their superstitions, and were so much under the influence of the "obeah-men" or witch-doctors that many died from fear. The evil traditions of obeah may even to-day be found in Jamaica.* Slaves were denied the most elementary human rights. They could be sold in settlement of their master's debts. Their testimony was not admitted against free persons. They could not be legally married.

* Price, *Bananaland*, ch. XVI.

Immorality abounded, and this, together with the general conditions under which they lived, prevented the natural increase of the slave population. The constant demand maintained the supply from Africa. The ready supply made it unnecessary for the planters to worry about the appalling wastage of life. For their work on the sugar plantations the slaves were divided into three gangs, each with its own field officer—"the great gang," consisting of those between the ages of sixteen and fifty, the second gang made up of those over fifty together with boys and girls from twelve to sixteen, and lastly the "small gang," under a female-driver, of children between six and twelve. In addition there were companies of jobbers who could be secured when additional help was needed. The whip was the recognised means of discipline and stimulus. The horrors of the slave-trade and of slavery should be a dark and terrible but not forgotten memory of the white races.*

Gradually in the second half of the eighteenth century the misery and cruelty involved began to impress themselves on the minds of sympathetic and intelligent men. Plans were discussed for the amelioration of the lot of the unfortunate negroes. The abolition of the slave system itself was not at first thought of. Indeed, only gradually did those interested come to agree that the trade must be stopped

*For contemporary pictures of Jamaican slavery, see *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 1801-15 and *The Diary of the Rev. William Jones*, 1777-1821.

at its source if the condition of those working on the plantations was to be improved. At last, however, it became the accepted view among English philanthropists that the planters were so callous in their treatment of the slaves only because there was a plentiful supply from which to fill the gaps. There began then the long struggle for the abolition of the slave-trade. Into its details it is impossible here to enter. It proved, in the words of Wordsworth to Clarkson, "an obstinate hill to climb." Small, frail William Wilberforce was the hero of the story, and not until 1807 did he achieve success. The attitude which Cowper satirized in his verses entitled *Pity for Poor Africans* was only slowly overcome :

> "If foreigners likewise would give up the trade,
> Much more in behalf of your wish might be said ;
> But while they get riches by purchasing blacks,
> Pray tell me why we may not also go snacks ?"

At last, however, the measure for the Abolition of the Slave Trade throughout the British Empire was put upon the Statute Book. Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, Clarkson and the other leaders in the crusade found many of their most ardent supporters among English Nonconformists. "Without the aid of Nonconformist sympathy, and money, and oratory, and organisation, their operations would have been doomed to certain failure."* John Wesley was with them. Robert Hall was courageously outspoken. Many of the London Baptist lead-

* G. O. Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, p. 45.

ers were influential in the councils which went on behind the scenes.

Probably John Ryland was the one to whom the proceedings that December day in Broadmead Chapel gave the greatest satisfaction. He had long been greatly concerned about the condition of the slaves, and many letters passed between him and William Wilberforce. In the very year of the abolition of the trade, 1807, he added a note to one of Wilberforce's replies :—" I cannot but think it to be of great importance to send some one out speedily to Jamaica : I have waited for several years with anxiety." It was another six years, however, before the way became clear for the carrying out of his purpose.

Some few missionaries had already worked in Jamaica. With characteristic devotion the Moravians settled there as early as 1754, but in order to procure labour for working the land attached to their settlements they themselves bought slaves and resorted to flogging sometimes as a necessary means of discipline. The Methodists arrived in 1789. That man of apostolic zeal and energy, as capable as he was eccentric, Dr. Thomas Coke, visited the West Indies on one of his great journeys, and introduced missionaries into several of the islands. Their number and their influence were, however, small.

What chiefly attracted Ryland and his friends to Jamaica was not the example of the Moravians or the Methodists, but the discovery

that groups of Christians were being gathered from among the slaves as the result of the work of men from America who had Baptist connections. The full story of this romantic and unexpected beginning of Baptist witness in the island is now lost beyond recovery.* It seems that in 1783, partly because of the war between England and her American colonies, an emancipated Christian slave from Virginia made his way to Jamaica. His name was George Liele (or Lisle). He had been called to exercise his gift for preaching in America, where he had been a member of a Baptist church, and when he discovered the general godlessness in Kingston, where he had settled, he boldy proclaimed his faith on the race-course, then hired a room for services, and finally organized a church. He had much persecution to meet from the white inhabitants, but in 1793, the year that Carey reached India, the first Baptist chapel in Jamaica was erected. Meantime similar beginnings had been made elsewhere. A mulatto barber, Moses Baker, also a refugee from America, was baptized and joined Liele's church, and shortly afterwards, when a Quaker planter sought someone to instruct his slaves, went with him to his estate at Adelphi in the north-west of the island, as teacher and preacher. There he met with remarkable success, though

* But see E. A. Payne, "Baptist Work in Jamaica before the Arrival of the Missionaries," *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (July, 1934), and J. P. Gates, "George Liele," *The Chronicle*, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, Vol. VI, No. 3 (July, 1943).

with fierce opposition, being charged with sedition and often going in personal danger. Writing in the early years of the nineteenth century, Dr. Coke gave this testimony to what he had seen :—" The Baptists have had societies among the negroes of Jamaica for nearly twenty years, and much good has arisen therefrom."

From the first the planters showed great hostility to work among the slaves, and in 1806 the Jamaica Assembly was able to enforce a law preventing all teaching and preaching on the plantations. This remained in force for eight years, and was a sad blow to all that Moses Baker and his friends had done. Meantime, however, he and Liele had begun correspondence with Dr. Rippon, whose *Baptist Register* had in it American as well as English news, and with John Ryland. A direct appeal was made for help. The sincerity and simplicity revealed, the dangers of lapses into fanaticism and heresy, the difficulties and opportunities of this new field, the special duty of Englishmen in this direction, all made their appeal to Ryland, and he did not rest until the B.M.S. was ready with an agent to send to Jamaica.

And so, at last, on December 31st, 1813, three weeks after his valedictory service, John Rowe sailed from Bristol with his wife. Seven weeks later they arrived at Montego Bay.

That the mission would have no easy success was soon evident. " Before he left the

Bay he learned the prejudices of the people of Jamaica were strong against his denomination." So runs the earliest report of Rowe's experiences in the *B.M.S. Periodical Accounts*. There were difficulties with the law; permission to preach was only grudgingly granted. There were dangers from the climate. Within two years and a half of his arrival in Jamaica Rowe was dead—the parish register of St. James' describes him as an "Anabaptist missionary"—the first of a pathetic procession of European workers who were stricken down with fever and other diseases, and whose average length of service was less than three years. Rowe had but time in face of many hindrances and much misrepresentation to lay the foundations of work in Falmouth. Lee Compere, the second missionary, who came to the south side of the island a few months before the pioneer's death, stood the climate and other difficulties for barely a year, and then passed on to America, where he did a fine piece of work among the Creek Indians. Christopher Kitching, a Yorkshireman, who reached Jamaica in the autumn of 1818, succumbed to yellow-fever after fifteen months. Thomas Godden, who had served in the navy and spent eight years in captivity in France, met with encouraging success at Spanish Town, but fought a losing battle with ill-health, and was in the end compelled to return to England. The Scotsman, James Coultart, struggled on in spite of disabling weakness. Thomas Knibb

died after only a few months of service. And what that is adequate can be said of the heroic wives of these men ?

Nevertheless, at Kingston, Falmouth and Spanish Town regular services were commenced and schools were opened, and a ready response to the preaching of the Gospel came from the slaves.

Some few years before, the Baptist Missionary Society had embarked on an ill-fated mission to Sierra Leone, on the west coast of Africa. Partly because of adverse circumstances and partly because of bad blundering it soon ended in disaster, and the two missionaries returned to England. Of one of them it is recorded that he was "before his time in hatred of slavery." The Committee were anxious to avoid any such complication in Jamaica. They were concerned with the salvation of the slaves. The full implications of this they had not yet realised. Something of the spirit in which they regarded the work may be gathered from instructions given to a young missionary in 1825, after more than ten years' experience had been gained.

"You are quite aware that the state of society in Jamaica is very different from that under which it is our privilege to live in this country, and that the great majority of its inhabitants are dependent upon their superiors in a degree altogether unknown here. The evidences of the fact will probably, especially at first, be painful and trying to your feelings ; but you must ever bear in mind, that, as a resident in Jamaica, you have nothing whatever to do with its civil and political

affairs ; and with these you must never interfere. . . . The Gospel of Christ, you well know, so far from producing or countenancing a spirit of rebellion or insubordination, has a directly opposite tendency. . . . Let your instructions, both to young and old, be conceived in the spirit, and correspond with the directions and example, of our Divine Teacher, as laid down in the New Testament at large ; and then, whatever disposition may be felt to obstruct or misrepresent you, none will justly be able to lay anything to your charge."

Reading between the lines one discerns a deep concern, and yet real anxiety to avoid provoking mischief.

After ten years the little Baptist missionary band consisted only of Coultart and Tinson, Henry Tripp, an Englishman who was ordained as a minister in Jamaica and added to the agents of the Society, and a group of new recruits—a Norfolk man named Phillippo, Thomas Burchell from Gloucestershire, and Ebenezer Phillips, who succumbed to fever after less than three years' service.

CHAPTER II

INSURRECTION

"While Wilberforce, Buxton and Clarkson fought in the British Parliament, it was the missionaries who bore the full brunt of the battle abroad."

J. C. HARRIS.

THOSE in England who had been the leaders in the struggle over the abolition of the slave trade eagerly watched conditions in the West Indian Colonies in the succeeding years. The news that reached them from missionary and other sources caused a growing disappointment and concern in the hearts of those who had hoped for a speedy improvement in the lot of the slaves. Something further was clearly necessary if " man's inhumanity to man " was to be ended.

In 1823, therefore, the Anti-Slavery Society was formed with the avowed object of putting a stop to the system itself. The little group who had begun the earlier struggle against the trade in 1787 had consisted of only twelve persons, nine of whom were Quakers. The new body had a royal duke as its president, five peers and fourteen members of Parliament among its vice-presidents, and an imposing committee numbering forty. Clearly

there was a growing and influential body of opinion in England determined to secure proper rights for the negro. Leadership was in the hands of Thomas Fowell Buxton, whose towering height and enthusiasm for country sports made him a striking contrast to Wilberforce, whose strength was by this time spent, though he remained to inspire the younger men and to give them counsel. Wilberforce was sometimes called "the Shrimp," whereas at school Buxton had been nicknamed "Elephant Buxton," but, as Professor Coupland has pointed out, "in their attitude to life, in their sense of public duty, and above all in their deep religious faith, veteran and recruit were close akin."*

On May 15th, 1823, Buxton moved in the House of Commons that "the state of slavery is repugnant to the principles of the British Constitution and of the Christian religion," and ought to be abolished gradually "with as much expedition as may be found consistent with a due regard to the well-being of the parties concerned." After an important debate, which revealed something of the strength of the West Indian party in the British Parliament and also the hesitancy of moderate opinion in the face of the practical difficulties, the motion was withdrawn in favour of a resolution proposed by the Foreign Secretary, George Canning, who was

* *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, p. 118. *Cf. Memoirs of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton* (Ed. by Charles Buxton), Everyman Library.

at the time Leader of the House, that decisive measures should be taken for ameliorating the conditions of the negroes with a view to their ultimate freedom.

The principle having been admitted, and the goal indicated, there began a long, complicated, and embittered struggle. The West Indian planters had many representatives in Parliament, and there were many others who still accepted slavery as a necessary institution, and were at the most prepared for certain new safeguards against its abuse. The owners in Jamaica were most unwisely led throughout all these controversies, and yielded to anger, spite and fear. "A decree has gone forth," they declared, "whereby the inhabitants of this once valuable colony, hitherto esteemed the brightest jewel of the British Crown, are destined to be offered a propitiatory sacrifice at the altar of fanaticism." Sensational reports of what had happened in England caused unrest among the slaves of Demerara in 1823-4. They were cruelly punished, and their friend, John Smith, of the London Missionary Society, after a court-martial most unsatisfactorily conducted, died in jail. The feeling aroused by these events further inflamed the Jamaica planters.

The Jamaica Assembly, which consisted of forty-seven members returned by an electorate of some 2,200 freeholders, and representing chiefly the smaller planters—the least educated and the most violent—produced under pressure

from England a Slave Code which, whilst it did propose some minor reforms, contained clauses which were deliberately aimed at the work of the missionaries. Slaves were to be prohibited from becoming religious teachers; meetings for worship were not to be allowed between sunset and sunrise; it was to be punishable to collect money from slaves for religious or charitable objects. Such iniquitous proposals were rejected by the Home Government, and further wrangling began between Spanish Town and London, with the abolitionists growingly restive.

Public opinion in England demanded that some ameliorative measures should be carried through, and at last, in 1831, an Order in Council was issued setting out certain directions in which abuses must be checked. In several West Indian Colonies the planters planned resistance, and in view of what subsequently happened it is to be noted that in Jamaica there was talk of raising a militia and of placing the island under the American flag that slavery might continue without interference.

Considering that this was the atmosphere in which they had to work, the Baptist missionaries achieved remarkable success. The message they brought and their manner of life gave them a growing following among the slaves. Slowly but surely their influence spread, particularly in the western part of the island. In the spring of 1827 it was reported that there

were eight Baptist churches and more than 5,000 members. Four years later there were twenty-four churches, 10,000 members, and another 17,000 inquirers. Those engaged in the work, however, were increasingly troubled and anxious.

Many of the planters, feeling that their days of authority were numbered, showed great ferocity towards their slaves. The slaves, from the scraps of information they picked up, came gradually to believe that their freedom had been granted them by the British Parliament but was being unlawfully withheld. In some places they inclined to the view that the missionaries were conniving at this deceit. In the north-west of the island, where Baptists were strongest, the discontent of the negroes was aggravated by the opposition which the missionaries had met with from the planters.

It was in 1831 that the tragic outbreak, made almost inevitable by the attitude of the white population in Jamaica, occurred. Thomas Burchell, of Montego Bay, after seven anxious and strenuous years in Jamaica, had been compelled for the sake of his health to sail for England. In his absence the slaves of the neighbourhood became increasingly restive. The rumour spread that Burchell had gone home to bring out the "free paper," and it was believed with a pathetic eagerness and credulity. Sam Sharpe, an intelligent and eloquent domestic or house slave and a Baptist deacon, became the leader of a passive resistance

movement. A large number of slaves bound themselves by oath not to resume work after the Christmas holidays. Altogether inadequate steps were taken to disabuse the minds of the negroes regarding the supposed attitude of the British Parliament, although the authorities received plain warning of what was afoot. Discontent was, indeed, fanned higher by a curtailing of the Christmas holidays. Forces had been set in motion that Sam Sharpe—like many another leader in similar circumstances—could not control. On December 27th, an insurrection broke out. Houses and sugar-works were burned. Planters, though not personally assaulted, were compelled to leave their estates. The militia was foolishly handled, and for a few days large tracts of country were entirely in the hands of the negroes. Revolting slaves, however, stood little chance against the disciplined armed forces at the disposal of the masters. The estates were recovered and the rebels subdued. In the disturbances only fifteen white persons were killed, but some four hundred negroes.

The planters had contributed to their own undoing, but they were determined on revenge. About a hundred prisoners were shot or hanged, and as many again flogged—some of them to death. Then followed a series of judicial executions ending with that of Sam Sharpe on May 23rd, 1832.

But this was not all. The revolt had had its

origin in a district where Baptist influence was strong. Its leader was a Baptist deacon. The missionaries were, therefore, charged with having incited their converts to rebellion, and to the use of the torch as well as the sword. Actually on Christmas Day, which was a Sunday, William Knibb at Falmouth, and young Francis Gardner, who had not yet been a year in the island, at Montego Bay, had expressly told their congregations that no "free papers" had come or were coming. Two days later a number of the Baptist missionaries met at Salter's Hill, near Montego Bay, for the opening of a new chapel. They made renewed and unequivocal appeals to the negroes to remain quiet. Once the disturbances had ceased, however, and the situation was in hand, the planters turned their attention to these fellow-Englishmen, whose presence in the island they had always resented. Knibb, Whitehorne and Abbott, who had been working on the north side of the island, were arrested at Falmouth on January 3rd, 1832, were allowed no communication with their wives, and after some hours' confinement in the court-house were transferred to Montego Bay in an open canoe under the blazing sun. There they were treated with the greatest indignity and cruelty, without being acquainted of any actual charges against them. Their captors gloated at the prospect of their being put to death. The generous intervention of influential friends secured their

release on bail, but they were ordered to remain at Montego Bay, and Francis Gardner, who had been arrested at Savanna-la-Mar, was added to the party.

At the end of that same week, Thomas Burchell and his wife arrived back in Jamaica from England. He had been away from the island since the previous May, but the planters were particularly fierce in their hatred of him, and secured his immediate arrest. He was imprisoned first on the frigate *Blanche*, and then placed in custody on the ship in which he had crossed the Atlantic. Friends endeavoured to secure him a passage to America, but before this could be accomplished he was again arrested. He was in danger of being lynched as he was brought ashore. An unforgettable account has been preserved of his kneeling in prayer in the little cabin and then asking before he set out that two Psalms should be read—"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." He and Francis Gardner were placed in the common jail on the charge of sending leaders amongst the slaves "to tell them that freedom was theirs, and that they must fight and pray for it, and they would get it." Meantime Knibb and his companions had had to be released as no evidence could be found to support a criminal prosecution.

The sad tale was not over, however. On January 26th, while martial law was still in force, in the rectory of St. Ann's Bay, an Association had been formed calling itself the Colonial Church Union, with the object of preventing the dissemination of doctrines at variance with those of the English and Scottish Churches. The real intention behind it became evident when a disreputable Scotsman, the editor of a leading Jamaica paper, headed and circulated a list of names of those willing to destroy Dissenting chapels. The idea proved attractive. If the lives of the missionaries could not be had, at least their property should not escape violence. The work was begun at Falmouth on February 7th, when some of the militia, encouraged by their officers and several magistrates, razed to the ground "that pestilential hole, Knibb's preaching shop." On the same day the chapel at Stewart Town was destroyed, and in the course of the week those at Montego Bay, Brown's Town, Savanna-la-Mar, Fuller's Field, and Rio Bueno suffered the same fate. Mission premises, houses used for worship, and Burchell's dwelling were also burned down. Attempts to wreck the chapels at Kingston and Spanish Town were happily frustrated, but the total damage to Baptist property was estimated at £14,000.

Other Christian missions also became the objects of attack in this outbreak of vandalism. Several Methodist chapels were destroyed, and

their ministers imprisoned and ill-treated; a Moravian missionary was most cruelly handled; an attempt was made to set fire to a building belonging to the Presbyterians; even clergy of the Church of England, if they had shown any friendliness towards the slaves, were the objects of suspicion and abuse.

Then came the March Assizes at Montego Bay. A few days before the trial the only witness against Burchell confessed that the statements he had made were false. No other satisfactory evidence being available, the missionary had to be discharged. So savage was the mob of planters and their friends that there was still danger of his being murdered, and yielding to the persuasions of government officials and friends he went on board a ship bound for America. Gardner was brought up for trial, and with him Knibb. The evidence against the former, however, was so contradictory and inconclusive that the Attorney-General could not proceed with the case, and consented to an acquittal. In these circumstances, and in view of the fact that the missionaries had gathered over two hundred witnesses to vouch for their innocence, the charge against Knibb was allowed to drop.

Knibb, Gardner, Abbott, Whitehorne and Dendy, a new recruit who had come out with Burchell to this scene of turmoil, proceeded with their wives to Kingston, and then on to Spanish Town, where special thanksgiving services for their remarkable escapes were

held. They had to take counsel what to do. Around them lay the ruins of their work. Although acquitted in the courts, they had had little chance of publicly vindicating themselves. Garbled versions of the events of the previous four months were no doubt circulating in England. And the iniquitous system of slavery, the root cause of the trouble, remained. It was decided that Knibb should proceed home at once to lay the state of affairs before the B.M.S. Committee and the British public. Meantime *A Narrative of Recent Events in Jamaica* was drawn up and printed.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUGGLE IN ENGLAND

> "It was a turning point in the history of the world. . . . If slavery had continued throughout the nineteenth century, armed with the new weapons of the Industrial Revolution and of modern science . . . . the European races would have been degraded by the diseases of slave-civilization, of which the old Roman Empire had died." G. M. TREVELYAN.

KNIBB left Kingston at the end of April, 1832. As the ship sailed up the Channel, the pilot came on board and the missionary's first question was: "Well, pilot, what news?" "The Reform Bill has passed," was the reply. "Thank God," exclaimed Knibb. "Now I'll have slavery down. I will never rest, day or night, till I see it destroyed, root and branch."

William Knibb, to whom his brethren had entrusted so important a mission on their behalf, was a young man not yet thirty years of age. He was destined to play so prominent a part in events, both in England and Jamaica, that it is well to have a picture of him in mind. Born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, the birthplace of the Baptist Missionary Society, he had been trained as a printer in Bristol by Andrew Fuller's son, and had joined the Broadmead Church. He was tall and strong, ardent, vivacious and impulsive, and had

thrown himself eagerly into Christian work in the slums of Bristol and in the village preaching stations around. Dreams of missionary service had come to him—how could they do otherwise in such an atmosphere at such a time?—but he had put them from him because he felt that effective public speaking and preaching, to say nothing of learning a foreign language, would be beyond his capacity. In this Dr. Ryland, who had his eye on him, was inclined to concur. William's elder brother, Thomas, however, volunteered for service abroad, and was sent out to Jamaica in 1824. Within a few months he was dead. When the news reached Bristol, twenty-year-old William cried out at once, "Then, if the Society will accept me, I'll go and take his place." And, as a schoolmaster, he was sent out. He went back to Kettering to say good-bye to his mother, who was ill. Her last words to him from the window were: "Remember, I would rather hear you have perished in the sea, than that you have disgraced the cause you go to serve."

The needs of the mission and his own swiftly developing capacities soon caused Knibb to become a pastor as well as teacher. He worked in Kingston, in Savanna-la-Mar and then in Falmouth. "The more I see of slavery, the more I hate and abhor it," he wrote not long after his arrival in the island in 1825. From his letters it is clear that what filled him with the deepest loathing was the

. . . When Knibb stood before me in my study I was closely connected with the Committee of the Missionary Society. Mr. Gutteridge and other members of the Committee were members of my church. I felt there was great danger. . . . . I questioned him as keenly as I could. I said, 'Knibb, you must have broken the law.' He replied, 'I am no lawyer, but if I had broken the law, I should not have been here to ask your help.' Still I questioned him, till at last he rose from his seat and looking at me with an expression I shall never forget said, 'Sir, I hoped to have had your help, but if I cannot, I wish you to know I am here not to risk my connection with the Society alone, I am here to gain the emancipation of these slaves or die.' 'Well,' I replied, 'be calm. Keep your seat. How are you engaged on Sunday?' 'Not at all,' he answered. 'Then,' I said, 'preach for me, and take the full field before you, and make your case as palpable and forcible as you can.' He did; the members of the Committee to whom I referred were present, and he made the place ring, warmed the old timbers, until it seemed to me as if the very bricks would talk. There was indeed an impulse given to that assembly, and that assembly carried the force on his side into Committee. It had been resolved that he should be abandoned and employed no more."

The scene in the chapel on that June Sunday is worth picturing. Thirty years before in that same place Abraham Booth had preached courageously against the slave trade.

When Knibb met the Committee of the Society and pleaded with the members to range themselves definitely against slavery as the real cause of the recent disturbances, many of them urged caution and compromise. Knibb's declaration, however, was unequivocal: "Myself,

my wife and my children, are entirely dependent on the Baptist Mission ; we have landed without a shilling, and may at once be reduced to penury. But, if it be necessary, I will take them by the hand and walk barefoot through the Kingdom, but I will make known to the Christians of England what their brethren in Jamaica are suffering." To their honour, be it said, those who heard him resolved to throw in their lot with Knibb, and to give him opportunity of putting his case before the annual meeting of the society at Spa Fields Chapel on June 21st.

It was an historic occasion. Among the earlier speakers was J. M. Phillippo, of Spanish Town, who had had to leave the island in August, 1831, owing to ill-health, and so had been out of the insurrection troubles. By arrangement he confined himself in his address to the need for re-starting and developing the work of the mission. Then came Knibb's turn. Not all the supporters of the Society were yet prepared that slavery should be made a major issue. Even while Knibb was speaking, John Dyer, the Secretary, is said to have pulled his coat-tails to caution him. "Whatever the consequences I will speak," he cried, and the story he had to tell of the sufferings of the negroes, and the passion and eloquence with which he told it, swept opposition away. "The place was in an uproar," Charles Stovel recalled. The following day the Committee again met, planned a great

meeting in the Exeter Hall, and urged that Knibb should at once visit Bristol, Birmingham and Liverpool to tell his story. Thomas Burchell, who had been in America since his escape from Jamaica, was sent for that he might join in the campaign. As the historian of the anti-slavery movement remarks: "Much as the planters detested Knibb, they would have done better in their own interest to tolerate him in Jamaica."

The Anti-Slavery Society was also active. Buxton had declared himself for "total emancipation, for emancipation with as little delay as honest necessity would allow." Only a week or so before Knibb reached England, Select Committees of both Lords and Commons were set up to inquire into the situation in Jamaica. They dragged their proceedings on till the end of the session and of the Parliament without concluding their labours, but Knibb had the chance of giving them some weighty first-hand evidence, and they were able to cross-examine him. On four occasions in July, 1832, he appeared before the Commons Committee, and on three occasions before the Lords. "His evidence," it is recorded, "was complete and unassailable; and it contributed largely, more largely perhaps than that of any other single witness, to the general impression which then took root in the public mind that slavery must be abolished."

As soon as this examination was over, Knibb began his tour of the country. A

great meeting was held in the Exeter Hall on August 15th. Lord Henley was in the chair, and a Methodist missionary spoke together with Knibb, who made then one of the greatest speeches of his life, in the course of which he dramatically threw upon the platform a pair of slave shackles. More than seventy years later an old gentleman presented the chains to the Baptist Missionary Society; he had been present in the Exeter Hall, and could still hear in imagination the noise of their fall and the hush that succeeded it. There are many records of meetings which Knibb addressed. The West Indian party did their best to discredit him, but unsuccessfully. In many places Burchell was his companion.

He travelled to Scotland with Eustace Carey on what the *Missionary Herald* described as "a missionary journey unexampled, we believe, for extent, duration and continuity of labour." They brought back nearly £1,200 for the funds of the Society, but more important was their part in rousing and shaping public opinion. The first reformed House of Commons, which assembled in February, 1833, was elected to a great extent on the question of slavery—"owing largely to the efforts of Knibb and of the Agency Committee," so writes Dr. Mathieson. The Agency Committee was the group of younger abolitionists who looked to Joseph Sturge as their leader.

The new Parliament had its mandate, and was prepared for action. In the middle of

May, 1833, the Secretary of State for the Colonies introduced into the Commons "An Act for the abolition of slavery throughout the British Colonies, for promoting the industry of the emancipated slaves, and for compensating the persons hitherto entitled to their services." In its original form it gave satisfaction neither to the advocates nor the opponents of emancipation. Several changes were made in the course of the debates. A proposed apprenticeship of twelve years for the negroes was reduced to six, and a clause was inserted securing for them the full use of Sunday and liberty of worship. On the other hand a suggested loan of £15,000,000 to the slave-owners, to be repaid gradually by the negroes, was changed to a Government grant of £20,000,000 as compensation. "Thank God," cried the gallant crusader, Wilberforce, who was on his death-bed, "that I should have lived to witness a day in which England is willing to give twenty millions sterling for the abolition of slavery."

At last, on August 28th, the bill received the royal assent. The vital clause was as follows :

"Be it enacted, that all and every person who, on the first day of August, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four, shall be holden in slavery within any such British Colony aforesaid, shall upon, from, and after the said day, the first of August, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four, become to all intents and purposes free, and discharged from all manner of slavery ; and shall be absolutely and forever manumitted ; and that the children hereafter born to any

such persons, and the offspring of such children shall in like manner be free from their birth, and that from and after the first day of August, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four, slavery shall, and is hereby utterly and for ever abolished, and declared to be so throughout the British colonies, plantations and possessions abroad."

There was joy in many hearts when Parliament passed what has been called "the noblest measure in its history." Nowhere was there deeper satisfaction than at Serampore. William Carey was in the last months of his life. As a young man he had given up taking sugar that he might "cleanse his hands of blood." He had been an ardent supporter of Wilberforce in the early days of the abolition agitation. The meeting of the Northampton Association which heard his great sermon in May, 1792, voted five guineas to those fighting "the inhuman and ungodly trade in the persons of men." All his years in Bengal, Carey was eager for news of what was happening in the West Indies. "For twenty years," wrote J. C. Marshman, "in his every prayer, he has been pleading for the destruction of slavery. In no public question has he taken a deeper interest. When the particulars of the measure were named to him, with tears in his eyes he thanked God, though in some points it falls short of his benevolent wishes. He proposed that for one month we should give special thanksgiving to God in all our meetings—a proposition with which we cheerfully complied."

There remained one question in the minds of the Baptist missionaries and their friends. What of the ruined chapels in Jamaica? The local legislature refused compensation. Burchell, Knibb and the Committee of the Society, aided by Buxton, applied, therefore, to the British Government. A first offer of some £5,500 was made, half the debts which had existed on the demolished buildings. This was totally inadequate, and Buxton prepared for a direct appeal to the House of Commons. Thereupon a further £6,195 was offered, provided the Society would raise an equal amount.

At the annual meeting of the Missionary Society, again held in the Spa Fields Chapel, Burchell and Knibb put the challenge to the subscribers, and at once secured £2,700. It was decided to celebrate August 1st, Emancipation Day, by special collections throughout the country. Other denominations shared in the response. On August 7th, 1834, a great public meeting was held at the City of London Tavern to receive the gifts and to hear farewell addresses from Burchell and Knibb. John Dyer was able to announce that nearly £10,000 had been received, "on which an expression of astonishment and delight burst from the whole assembly." "The voluntary principle!" exclaimed the chairman. "The grace of God!" rejoined John Dyer.

"When I left Jamaica," said Knibb, "it

was proclaimed that, so long as those men lived, Knibb should never preach to their slaves again. That will be true. I shall not preach to them as slaves, but as free men."

CHAPTER IV

THE APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM

> " Not his the golden pen's or lip's persuasion,
> But a fine sense of right,
> And Truth's directness, meeting each occasion
> Straight as a line of light."
> WHITTIER : *In Remembrance of Joseph Sturge.*

THE opponents of emancipation had gloomily prophesied what would happen in Jamaica and the other colonies affected by the Act on August 1st, 1834. The ex-slaves would run wild. There would be terrible excesses. The negroes would never be got to work under the new conditions. In the view of the Duke of Wellington—a sounder military leader than he was politician—" before long, matters, he was afraid, would come to such a pass as to reduce us to the necessity of destroying the black population." Memories of the horrors of the French Revolution still coloured the minds of many and warped their judgment.

When the day came it was quietly observed as a day of thanksgiving. The chapels were crowded. Throughout the whole island hardly one drunken man was seen. Relief and joy and wonder were the dominant notes.

Three months later Knibb arrived back in the island, and was given a tumultuous

welcome. The negroes crowded round him with childlike excitement and gratitude. "Him come, him come for true," they cried. "It him, it him for true; but see how him stand, he make two of what him was when he left." He had filled out in the two years in spite of his strenuous campaigning. When Burchell arrived in November he was similarly greeted. "Hi, massa, and it you for true! and you for we. Massa Burchell! and me see you with me own eye! Blessed God!"

Missionary work had been gradually re-started, as soon after the troubles of 1832 as possible, by the workers remaining in the island. For a while not much could be done. The infamous Colonial Union—the word Church was tacitly dropped from the title after a few months—had done its best to secure that "every dissenting preacher, of every colour, should be sent off the island," but the new Governor, Lord Mulgrave, took a firm stand for justice and the rights of Nonconformists, and gradually the missionaries were able to return to their different spheres. In many places they found that churches had been kept together by faithful negro deacons.

Phillippo and Coultart returned refreshed from England early in 1834, followed shortly by two new recruits from Stepney College, one of them Knibb's cousin. With Knibb himself and Burchell back again, with money at their disposal, the work of rebuilding the chapels and extending the field of the mission

went on apace. It was natural that the emancipated slaves should accept readily the leadership of those who had fought their battle and suffered so much on their behalf. Congregations became very large at all the centres. By the spring of 1837 it was possible to report that under the care of sixteen Baptist missionaries and schoolmasters, there were 16,000 church members, and an equal number of inquirers, and that nearly 3,000 people had been baptized in the previous twelve months.

So far, however, as the general conditions of livelihood of the negroes were concerned, disappointment was speedy. The apprenticeship system, which had been agreed upon, as worked by unprincipled masters and magistrates who had favoured slavery, turned out to be almost as bad as the old system. What Parliament took away from the owners with one hand, it partially restored with the other. The negroes were compelled to work forty-five hours a week without wages, and were still so much the property of their masters that they could be seized and advertised as runaways, and could be transferred arbitrarily from one estate to another. "Free, no free at all!" many said. "Work like afore time." And there were still cruel imprisonments and floggings, and a new iniquity—treadmills. Of these we are told by the historian, "most of them were of local construction and merely instruments of torture.

Being too light or not properly balanced, they revolved so fast that the prisoners found it difficult, if not impossible, to catch the step. Those who failed to do so—women as well as men—were flogged, and suffered the additional torment of being battered and bruised by the steps of the wheel." It was estimated by J. M. Phillippo that in two years 60,000 apprentices received in the aggregate a quarter of a million lashes, and 50,000 other punishments by the tread-wheel, the chain-gang and other modes of legalised torture. The Jamaica planter seems to have learned nothing from the previous ten years' struggle, and to have forgiven nothing. He was determined on his pound of flesh. Lord Sligo, who succeeded Lord Mulgrave as Governor, speaking of the Apprenticeship System and the planters, said :—" If it fails, on them will rest the entire blame."

The Baptist missionaries were full of thankfulness at the success attending their work in chapel and school, but they burned with indignation at the continued injustices and cruelties which they saw around them. The story has been handed down of Knibb's walking excitedly up and down, his mind full of the sufferings of his friends and the danger of protests, with his coat-tails flapping behind him, as if to say, " Don't care ! don't care ! " He needed all his courage, for attempts to expose the enormities that were going on brought upon him and other missionaries

much odium and many threats of vengeance. Moreover, the supporters of the Society at home were some of them inclined to regard him as a firebrand. Knibb himself had written, early in 1836 : "I bless God for what has been done, but I do not like the appren-riceship system because it is unjust ; yet it is not slavery, and it must issue in freedom." Eighteen months later his tone changed and he wrote : "Leave no stone unturned to get this abominable system down in 1838," and in a subsequent letter, he said that, had he not been in debt over his chapel-extensions and other schemes, he "would come home and have another tilt at the monster."

Another missionary working on the north side of the island, John Clark, of Brown's Town, began correspondence in 1836 with Joseph Sturge, the wealthy Birmingham corn-merchant and Quaker, who was the leader of the younger members of the Anti-Slavery Society. Before going to Jamaica, Clark had been employed by the well-known firm of John Haddon & Co.* of London, who at the time printed most of the Baptist literature. He had there become acquainted with the most active friends of the slaves in England. Sturge, when he heard what was going on, decided to visit the West Indies himself to investigate the carrying out of the Act of Emancipation. Accompanied by his friend,

* Further information regarding the Haddon family and their connection with the denomination will be found in *Clipston Baptist Church* by E. A. Payne and A. R. Allan.

Thomas Harvey, he came that same year to the island, and in the course of his tour visited the mission stations and attended the meetings of the Baptist Association. After some hesitation the missionaries urged Sturge and Harvey to work for "the total abandonment" of the apprenticeship system, and they themselves sent a petition on the subject to the British Parliament.

In Brown's Town the Quakers met an eighteen-year-old lad named James Williams, who gave them so vivid and faithful an account of his own sufferings and of what he had seen of the sufferings of others, that Sturge purchased the remaining term of his apprenticeship that he might take him back to England. In June, 1837, there appeared the *Narrative of James Williams*, and the publicity it secured did much to draw attention to the condition of things in Jamaica, and to compel redress. In some two-and-a-half years Williams, who looked after his master's horses, had been seven times flogged, thrice imprisoned in a loathsome dungeon, and four times sentenced to the treadmill ; further, having twice tried to escape, he had had to make up fifty days' labour from his free time. Dr. Thomas Price, of Devonshire Square Church, the man who had befriended Knibb in 1832, introducing him to Charles Stovel, and with whose church John Clark, of Brown's Town, had been connected, wrote a preface and a conclusion to this pamphlet. He was guilty of exaggeration

when he said that "the tale of Williams is the tale of near eight hundred thousand of our fellow-subjects," and that the apprentices were suffering "cruelties unheard of, unthought of, in the worst days of slavery." But Williams's story was corroborated on an official inquiry, and the facts justified strong language.

The rising tide of disquiet in England was swelled by the publication, early in 1838, by Sturge and Harvey, of an account of their journey, entitled *The West Indies in 1837*. Sturge was examined by a Committee of the House of Commons. Anti-slavery meetings were again held in many parts of England, and monster petitions were signed.* Nonconformists took a leading part in this, as in the former, agitations. The Government produced an Abolition Amendment Bill, which proposed to make it illegal for women to be placed on the treadmill or in the chain-gang, or to be flogged, or to have their hair cut short, and for men-apprentices to be flogged except for offences for which all might be so punished. During the debate on these proposals, in a small House, a majority of three was secured for complete emancipation, which caused a somewhat complicated Parliamentary situation. Lord Sligo, the former Governor, had meanwhile liberated his own apprentices.

In Jamaica itself feeling ran high. It was rumoured that the planters were out to provoke

* See William Lucas, *A Quaker Journal*, p. 102 for a description of a meeting to hear Sturge on his return from Jamaica. "I had rather be Joseph Sturge than the Duke of Wellington." (*ibid.* p. 146).

trouble among the negroes that they might have excuse for repressive measures, and for a renewed attack on the missionaries. In March, 1838, nine of the agents of the Baptist Missionary Society, including Burchell, Knibb, Abbott and Clark, sent home to the Secretary in London a strongly-worded private warning and a plea for help. Knibb wrote to Sturge at the same time: "My death is resolved on as the first that shall be sacrificed, the abettors of slavery rightly supposing that a Baptist missionary's blood would be the most acceptable offering to the expiring monster." There was no talk of withdrawal from their posts, however.

What eventually happened was that the Jamaica Assembly, in an effort to maintain its authority and to prevent the overriding of its functions by the Governor, who had received increased powers from the British Parliament, agreed to give up the remaining term of apprenticeship, and to allow 800,000 negroes to become fully and unconditionally free on August 1st, 1838.

When the news of the Assembly's decision reached England, Henry Brougham, one of the leaders of the Anti-Slavery party and later a famous Lord Chancellor, remarked to Richard Cobden: "Joseph Sturge won the game off his own bat." But Sturge would have been the first to testify how much he owed to the missionaries in Jamaica for their staunchness and co-operation, and to his Nonconformist

supporters in England. An old Birmingham leaflet gives a glimpse of the way men celebrated the occasion :

"On this auspicious day (*i.e.*, August 1st, 1838) the children of the Sunday Schools belonging to Cannon Street, Bond Street, Graham Street, Newhall Street and Lombard Street Chapels, amounting to nearly 3,000, and also the children of the Lancastrian Schools of Severn Street and Ann Street, amounting to about 500, will meet in the Town Hall, when religious services will be conducted by Baptist ministers. The following hymns will be introduced during the service :—

Behold the glories of the Lord,
On the Mountain Top appearing,
Sound the loud Timbrel.

After the service the children will be supplied with a substantial meal of bread and beef, and then march in procession to a piece of ground in Heneage Street, when the Foundation Stone of New School Rooms to be erected in commemoration of the glorious event—the Emancipation of the Slaves—will be laid by the friend of the negro and the friend of man, Joseph Sturge, Esq. The following hymns will be introduced :—

The Trump of Freedom sounds,
Rejoice, the Saviour reigns,
Here we suffer Grief and Pain."*

There seems something of an anticlimax in the last of the suggested hymns, but it is worth recalling that it was with the Heneage Street Sunday School that George Grenfell, the Congo pioneer, became connected nearly twenty years later.

In Jamaica the first of August was celebrated

* v. W. Finnemore : *The Story of a Hundred Years*, 1823-1923. *The Centenary Booklet of the Birmingham Auxiliary of the B.M.S.*

with even more enthusiasm but no less sobriety than the day four years earlier which had marked the ending of slavery. "There was joy without riot, triumph without reproach, multitude without confusion, while religion assumed the undisputed precendency over the soul-exhilarating scenes." Churches and chapels were crowded. How dramatically and characteristically Knibb kept the occasion at Falmouth has been often described. Less than a year before his eldest and much-loved son had died. The chapel entrance was decorated with the word "Freedom," and a great congregation gathered there at 11 o'clock on the evening of July 31st. A service was held lasting till a few minutes before midnight. Then, after a period of silence, Knibb, pointing to the face of the clock, exclaimed: "The hour is at hand, the monster is dying." There was a great stillness while the clock struck twelve. Then he cried: "The monster is dead, the negro is free." The congregation rose as one man and burst into shouts of praise. "Never," said Knibb afterwards, "did I hear such a sound. The winds of freedom appeared to have been let loose. The very building shook at the strange yet sacred joy. Oh, had my boy, my lovely slavery-hating boy, been there!" In the grey hours of the dawn some of the monster's effects—a slave whip, a chain and a collar—were buried in a specially prepared coffin, and the Union Jack was reared over the spot.

CHAPTER V

Free Townships

"The task of the Christian Church is both to carry the message of Christ to the individual soul, and to create a Christian civilization within which all human beings can grow to their full spiritual stature. . . . It is its duty to speak and work fearlessly against social and economic injustice."

Jerusalem International Missionary Council, 1928.

"If ever a law was generous in its motive and foolish in its method it was the law that made Jamaica a free country." It would probably be truer to say that there was no method in the final grant of freedom—the Assembly acted sullenly to avoid what it regarded as a greater evil. The subsequent difficulties arose from the fact that no real preparations had been made for the sudden ending of the apprenticeship system, and that so few people had really at heart the guidance and training of the negro for his new responsibilities. The echoes of the celebrations of August 1st, 1838, had hardly died away before there was confusion, disillusion and suspicion throughout the island. The negroes had still the greatest need of their missionary friends

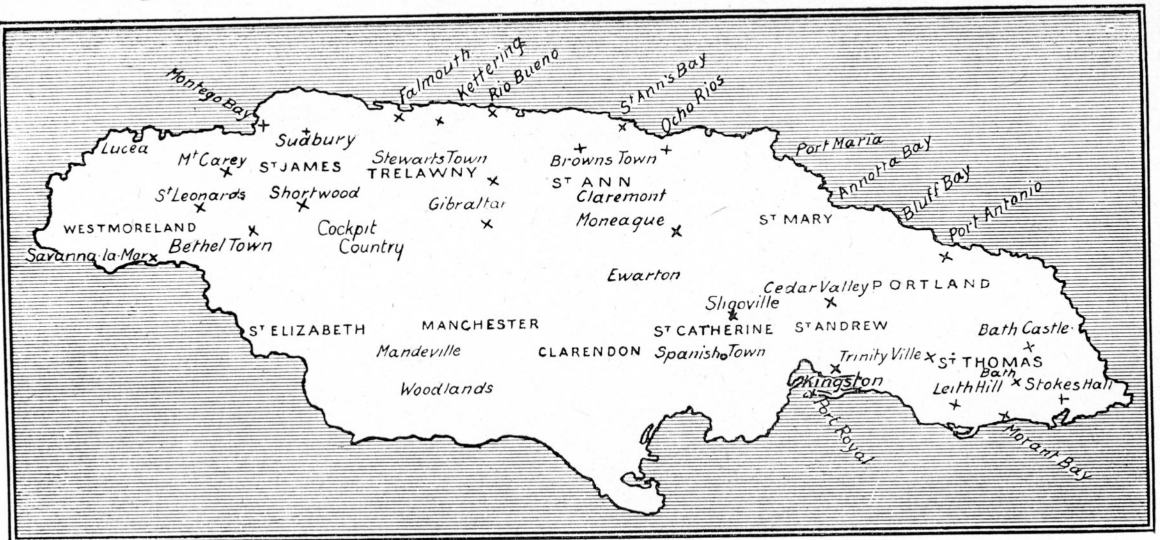
as counsellors and protectors as well as spiritual guides, and in the gradual reconstruction of Jamaican economic and social life it was a notable part that the missionaries played.

The first difficulty that arose concerned wages. The planters combined to offer only 7½d. a day, though house and grounds were added. They threatened eviction if these terms were not accepted. But under the apprenticeship system nearly three times this rate had been paid for the day and a half when the negroes had been able to earn money for themselves. A fortnight after freedom had come, one of the special magistrates charged with dealing with cases involving negroes, wrote: "Strange infatuation! Masters appear to think that they have them more in their power than during the apprenticeship, and some have had the folly to vaunt this in their presence." The spirit of spite and revenge was still powerful. On the other hand it is only fair to remember that a new social system had been suddenly brought into being with no laws to regulate it, and often no funds to meet its obligations. There had been no time to secure money for the payment of wages from the proprietors who were not resident in the island. Moreover, the new situation was grossly unfair to those negroes who had recently purchased their freedom at a high price.

As was to be expected, the Baptist missionaries took a strong line in defence of their

friends. By this time Knibb had earned for himself a unique position in the island. "King Knibb," his detractors sneeringly called him, "the Dan O'Connell of Jamaica." But he was not afraid of incurring displeasure. Indeed, he was at his best when confronting heavy odds and when resolute action was necessary. His influence during July and August, 1838, in discouraging the negroes from entering into contracts at the suggested low rates of pay—"the sixpenny plot" he called it—helped materially in the defeat of the planters, who were compelled to offer "a living wage." What Knibb did around Falmouth, Phillippo did in the neighbourhood of Spanish Town, and other missionaries in other parts.

The planters then discovered a loophole in the Act which would allow them to charge rent for the cottages and grounds occupied by the negroes. The most shameful exactions began to be made. The Governor, Sir Lionel Smith, wrote in September that the negroes were "patient and submissive beyond all praise," and the following January paid a warm tribute to the work of the Baptist missionaries. The Jamaica Assembly—"the pandemonium at Spanish Town" Knibb called it in a letter to Joseph Sturge—remained deaf to all conciliatory suggestions, and would probably have been suspended by the British Parliament but for a ministerial crisis. Rumours as to Knibb's hanging and murder were spread. They showed the hatred in



Facing p. 58 SKETCH MAP OF THE ISLAND, SHOWING THE IMPORTANT BAPTIST CHURCH CENTRES

which he was held in certain quarters, and also the desire to provoke trouble among the negroes. Slanderous attacks were made upon him, and a Jamaica Persecution Fund was raised in England to help defray the costs of the litigation in which he was involved. Now that a century has passed there does not seem need to revise the judgment which J. H. Hinton gave over eighty years ago :—" As Knibb was the chief instrument in Jamaica of obtaining emancipation, so he was its chief benefactor after liberty was won."

These were the circumstances in which Knibb and his friends conceived and carried through the statesmanlike plan of establishing free townships and villages where the negroes could have their own small-holdings, and so escape the tyranny of their former owners.

In the reminiscences he gave to his friends in 1868, Charles Stovel related the following incident :

" Knibb was describing the ruin of the great estates, broken down as to produce and value, and then sold by auction. I said, 'Buy them, lad! part them into little freeholds, sell them at a little, not much above the cost price, and create as many freeholders among the people as shall constitute a revolution in Jamaica.' He said, 'I cannot do it.' I replied, 'You must.' And after consultation with Joseph Sturge and others, Knibb did buy up the broken estates, and parcel them out and sell them, and to overpower the slanders of his opponents he said, 'If I live to finish the accounts of my last purchase, I shall die worth nothing but this watch, given me by the freed slaves on the glorious first of August.' "

Looking back, the old man may have exaggerated his own share in the original conception, but it was this buying up of estates, and selling them to the negroes, that saved Jamaica from further serious trouble. As early as 1835 a beginning had been made at a place named Sligoville—in honour of the Governor—where negroes who were already free or who purchased their release from apprenticeship were settled. J. M. Phillippo had a large share in the development of this township. "I was called," he said afterwards, "'the notorious parson Phillippo,' 'the principal adviser of the Governor,' 'the fabricator of apprentices' petitions,' 'the political parson,' 'arch-agitator,' etc., etc., all which, by the by, from the character of the sources from which they spring, I regard as the highest compliment I could receive."

When the struggle over wages and rent began, the idea was extended. In November, 1838, Knibb secured ground for the building of a village to be called Birmingham. Within four years there were little short of two hundred such settlements with a total area of 100,000 acres. Financial help came in the form of loans from the B.M.S. Committee, from Joseph Sturge, and from other English friends. Knibb, Phillippo, Burchell, Clark, Abbott and other missionaries took the lead in organising these ventures, and some of the names given to them are worth recording; Sturge Town (originally Birmingham), Clarkson

Town, Granville, Clarksonville, Wilberforce, Buxton, and Vale Lionel recall some of the popular heroes of the hour ; Kettering, Mount Carey and Hoby Town (after Dr. James Hoby, an English Baptist minister) have denominational and personal associations ; Victoria recalls the young Queen who had recently come to the throne ; Bethel Town, Bethany and Salem are of Biblical origin ; and there is music in names like Happy Valley, Pleasant Valley, Philadelphia, Harmony and Freedom.

In several cases the house on the estate was purchased, and together with a few acres of land conveyed to the Baptist mission. In almost all of the new townships and villages a chapel was erected. The negroes who secured the small freeholds had to supplement their incomes by working for neighbouring planters. The black population, under conditions of freedom and with an increasing number of marriages, was growing considerably. Those who supported the idea of the settlements maintained that they were not necessarily inimical to the interests of the planters. Nevertheless it is hardly surprising to find that satisfactory labour for the old sugar estates became increasingly difficult to secure. The planters had once more defeated their own object and contributed to their own ruin. When further trouble came upon the chief industry of the island through the ending of the West Indian sugar monopoly the free

townships were a great source of strength and stability. "Looking back," says Mr. Leonard Tucker, after describing the efforts of the missionaries for their establishment, "it is not difficult to perceive that these measures saved the situation in Jamaica, and that, not only for the emancipated black labourers, but also for the white owner, and for tradesmen and merchants who were dependent on the prosperity of both."

Not all the high hopes placed in the settlements were fulfilled. The lots were soon sold, and with an increase in population there was a general decline in prosperity, but Mr. Tucker, who knew the island well for forty years, says: "The average intelligence, industry and integrity of the dwellers (in the free villages) are higher than are found in the houses on the estates."

A contemporary picture is given by J. J. Gurney, another Quaker traveller and investigator, who visited Sligoville in 1840, and who thus described his impressions:

"(Here) we spent several hours. It is located on a lofty hill, and is surrounded by fifty acres of fertile mountain land. This property is divided into 150 freehold lots, fifty of which had already been sold to the emancipated negroes, and had proved a timely refuge to many labourers who had been driven by hard usage from their former homes. Some of them had built good cottages; others, temporary huts, and others, again, were preparing the ground for building. Not a hoe, I believe, had ever been driven into the land before. The people settled there were all married

pairs, mostly with families, and the men employed the bulk of their time in working for wages on the neighbouring estates. The chapel and the school were immediately at hand, and the religious character of the people stood high. Never did I witness a scene of greater industry or one more marked by contentment for the present and hope for the future."

Sir Charles Metcalfe, who was Governor of Jamaica from 1839 to 1842, judged the Baptist missionaries severely. "The good that they have done would have been done without them," he said. "The evil is exclusively their own."* The impression set down by J. J. Gurney in *A Winter in the West Indies* was, therefore, the more welcome :

"The Baptist missionaries in Jamaica, for many years past, have been the unflinching, untiring friends of the negro. No threats have daunted them, no insults or persecutions have driven them from the field. They are now reaping their reward in the devoted attachment of the people, and the increasingly prevalent acknowledgment of their integrity and usefulness."

* Cf. Edward Thompson, *The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe*, 1937, p. 352.

CHAPTER VI

The Year of Jubilee

"The aim of missions is not merely the conversion of many separate individuals, but the founding of independent national Churches, self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating."

Gustav Warneck, 1904.

In view of all that had happened, and of their championship of the rights of the negroes, it was natural that the Baptist missionaries should find their work as ministers and teachers almost embarrassingly successful for a while. All through the years of struggle for full emancipation, and to an even greater extent after 1838, congregations were crowded, large numbers applied for baptism, new chapels were built, old ones were enlarged, mission-houses and schools sprang up in every direction, fresh stations were opened in the free townships and elsewhere. An official Foreign Office despatch, answering a query by the Spanish Government as to the effect of the grant of freedom, said :—" Since the emancipation the negroes have been thriving and contented . . . have varied their manner of living and multiplied their comforts and enjoyments : their offences against the laws

have become more and more light and infrequent ; their morals have improved ; marriage has become more and more substituted for concubinage ; they are eager for education, rapidly advancing in knowledge, and powerfully influenced by the ministers of religion."

The missionaries had to make constant application to the Home Committee for reinforcements, and a steady stream of new recruits reached Jamaica, five in 1839, ten the following year after a visit by Knibb to England, four in 1841, and five in 1842. In 1838 the number of Baptist church members was given as upwards of 24,000, four years later the number had risen to 27,600 and there were a further 18,900 registered inquirers. It is hardly surprising that, with many public controversies engaging their attention as well, the missionaries found the sifting and instructing of candidates for baptism a very difficult task.

The liberality of the congregations was a striking feature of the time. For a few years after gaining their freedom, working at last for adequate wages and many of them with freehold plots of their own, the negroes enjoyed a hitherto unexperienced prosperity. They were most generous to their friends the missionaries and to the work of the churches. As soon as the Apprenticeship System was ended the church at Falmouth decided to provide for Knibb's support, that the Baptist Missionary Society might be thereby relieved,

and soon after the Spanish Town church undertook provision for J. M. Phillippo. Even under the Apprenticeship System, iniquitous as it was, the negroes had managed to make considerable contributions towards the mission. Knibb, speaking at the Annual Meeting of the B.M.S. in Exeter Hall, London, in 1842, testified that between 1835 and 1840 in the three congregations under his care no less than £11,800 had been received for chapel-building and education from the negroes—"and very little from anybody else," he added—and that in the whole of the Western Union of Baptist Churches the sum collected for these purposes amounted to £60,000. Eighteen chapels had been put up—some of them those that had to be rebuilt after the destruction of 1832; twenty-three mission-houses had been built or purchased, and also furnished; nineteen schoolrooms had been erected; schoolmasters and assistant missionaries had been supported. And these things had been done in no half-hearted or miserly fashion. One item in Knibb's list of expenses was "Library for the use of the minister, £200"! Further, considerable contributions were made to the Anti-Slavery Society, and when Knibb came to England in 1840 as the delegate of the missionaries to the great Anti-Slavery World Convention in London,* a large sum was raised for his expenses.

* For some account of this gathering see Sir John Harris, *A Century of Emancipation*, 1933, pp. 94 f.

This wave of prosperity proved to be brief and transitory, but in the circumstances it was natural that questions should be asked in England as to whether all these flourishing Jamaican churches should not support themselves instead of remaining in many cases a heavy charge on the Society. The Home Committee were going through a period of constant financial anxiety. In 1839 the income was £16,223; £6,514 was sent to Jamaica, and there was a deficit at the end of the year of £2,631. In 1841 the total income had reached £20,000, but Jamaica received £9,016, and there was a deficit of £1,958. India was the first and main field of the Society. The Committee were eager to develop work in other West Indian islands besides Jamaica, and the needs of Africa were being pressed upon their attention. Moreover, the voice of criticism was making itself heard in certain quarters. Slanders about Knibb were still being circulated in England by his planter enemies. Individuals connected with other missions joined the ranks of the critics. Knibb and his missionary-brethren were charged with indiscreet conduct, with carelessness in receiving people into the Church, and with personal extravagance. Few men of action have escaped such abusive charges. At the request of his friends in Jamaica Knibb visited England in 1840 and 1842, and so had opportunity of replying to criticisms, and of explaining the real situation in the island,

making effective and successful appeals for further help in the form of men.

The success of the work in Jamaica, the generosity of the negroes, the difficulties of the Society at home, the criticisms that were being made—all these things contributed to the bold decision that was come to in 1842. The Jamaica Baptist Association met at Kingston in January, and a momentous resolution was adopted that after August 1st of that year the work should be made self-supporting, and the Society be relieved of all responsibility for it, apart from one or two special concerns. Knibb and Burchell took the lead in proposing this step, and it was agreed to without a dissentient. J. M. Phillippo desired that the Home Committee should retain some control over the direction of affairs, and afterwards was decided in his opinion that the decision had been premature, yet immediately after the meeting he wrote to John Dyer, the Secretary: "Although I and others of my brethren who are not in the secrets of the Western Union had some cause to complain of the circumstances under which this resolution was proposed, yet so glorious in all respects would be its results, if carried into effect, that, deeply involved as I am in a pecuniary way, I not only cordially approved the resolution, but publicly expressed the honour I felt in presiding on the occasion. I therefore, as the senior missionary here, on the assurance that the

Committee would not object to the grant of a loan in relief of present liabilities, at once set the example to the brethren similarly circumstanced with myself, of entirely relinquishing all further drafts on the Society, except under very peculiar circumstances, from the commencement of the present year."

What made some of the missionaries hesitate at first at the resolution was their commitments in the matter of chapel-building, and also certain debts remaining on some of their properties. It was resolved that an account of all outstanding obligations should be sent to England. Many were moved to keen enthusiasm for self-support by their concern for two new projects which were much in the mind of the denomination in Jamaica at the time—the establishment of a training college for a native ministry, and the starting of a mission to Western Africa, from which the slaves had come. Some of the money released by the Kingston decision would, it was hoped, be diverted into these fresh channels.

It was a brave step to take. Only ten years before the island had been in turmoil, the missionaries in danger, and the chapels in ruins. We who know what happened subsequently may wish that more caution had been shown. Unfortunately no careful consideration was given to the question of the future relationship of the missionaries to the Society which had sent them out. Many questions of detail were left undiscussed. In truth men's minds

were taken up with other issues. Their hopes and their purposes were high.

At that same meeting in Kingston the Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society was formed, with the object of extension both in Jamaica and in other West Indian islands. Through the subsequent years fine work was done, and the influence of the Society can be traced not only in the island, but in Hayti, in Cuba, in the Bahamas and in Panama.

The year of the decision for self-support and independence was the jubilee year of the B.M.S. This striking change of policy in Jamaica coincided most happily with the end of half a century's endeavour. Knibb was able to be present at the chief celebration of the anniversary at his birthplace in Northamptonshire, where the Society had come into existence in 1792. He and his friend, Charles Stovel, were among the chief speakers, and he also attended jubilee celebrations in other towns.

On his way back to Jamaica he visited some of the other West Indian islands, arriving at the free township of Kettering in August, 1842. There, two months later, the jubilee was celebrated. A temporary meeting-house 200 feet long and 150 feet wide was erected, and into it 9,000 people are said to have crowded. At the "Great Jubilee Meeting," which lasted four hours, Thomas Burchell presided, and Knibb was one of the twelve missionaries who spoke. He gave one of his vigorous harangues, drawing attention,

incidentally, to the evils of American slavery. The gatherings came to an end at a great Communion Service at which 4,000 negroes were present. The numbers would have been considerably larger, but that the food supply in the village had given out, so that many of those who had come long distances—some as far as seventy miles—were compelled to begin their journey home before the service began.

CHAPTER VII

EASTWARD HO!

> "True freedom is to share
> All the chains our brothers wear,
> And, with heart and hand to be
> Earnest to make others free!"
>
> J. R. LOWELL.

THE story to be told in this chapter is one of the most moving of those connected with Baptist work in Jamaica. During the first twenty-five or thirty years of the mission political and economic struggles played so large a part in its history that it was not always easy to discover how deep an understanding there really was among the negroes of the message of salvation in Christ. The enthusiasm and self-sacrifice with which a mission to Africa was planned and carried through supplied the answer to those who questioned the real devotion of the converts.

In one of his poems Longfellow tells of a slave's memories of his old home:

> "Wide through the landscape of his dreams
> The lordly Niger flowed."

One of the first concerns of the emancipated Jamaican negroes was for their kinsmen in Western Africa. The venturing first of Thomas Keith, then of the large party in the *Chilmark* and later of other individuals, is

something to be treasured proudly in the records of the young Jamaican Baptist Churches.

In this matter, as in so many others, honour is due to Knibb for his leadership. As early as 1834, when he took leave of his English friends after the emancipation struggle, he declared : " I love you much, but I love Jamaica more. And if my labours are so blessed to the sons of Africa as to cause them to go forth to their countrymen with the glad tidings of salvation, then I shall think that Africa is about to be repaid for all her wrongs." Through all the subsequent controversies Knibb never lost sight of the idea of a mission to Africa. His son William, though but a boy, declared his intention of giving his life to the venture, and when he died this added to the grief of his father.

The first beginnings of the fulfilment of Knibb's dream are best told in a vivid letter which he wrote in the spring of 1839 to his friend Dr. James Hoby :

" We have had some very interesting meetings in Kingston and St. Thomas-in-the-Vale respecting Africa, which have rejoiced my heart, and which will, I hope, lead to some triumphant results. But what will my brother say, how will his heart expand, how will he bless the Lord, when I tell him that the first missionary is *now in Africa*, proclaiming salvation through the blood of Christ ? O, it is glorious ! It is glorious ! Yes, my dear brother, while we have been talking, a beloved brother, one of the despised, traduced black Christians, an African by birth, has left this island, taking with him only a letter of recommendation from his late pastor, brother Gardner, has worked his passage

to Africa, and without any support or countenance, except from God, is now on the spot from whence he was stolen when a boy, telling his fellow-countrymen the name of Jesus, at one of those mighty rivers where that name is unknown. O my soul, bless thou the Lord! My heart is too full. I can scarcely write for tears of joy. May God bless Thomas Keith! for that is the honoured man's name. He has written one letter which I have seen. . . . And now, my dear brother, I implore you, with all the affection of a brother, to undertake this mighty work at home. God has given you the ability. You can plead for Africa, and I do most earnestly beg you not to let this subject drop. Think of Africa, her wrongs, her sins, her openings. O my Heavenly Father! work by whom Thou wilt work, but save poor, poor, benighted, degraded, Europe-cursed Africa! My affection for Africa may seem extravagant. I cannot help it. I dream of it nearly every night, nor can I think of anything else."

This passionate yearning over the Dark Continent throws a fresh light on Knibb's character. In it he was far in advance of the general feeling of his time, but how he would have rejoiced to know that in England the London Missionary Society was already engaged on the training of a young Scotsman, David Livingstone, born the very year the first Baptist missionary had been commissioned for Jamaica and destined to blaze a trail for the preaching of the Gospel right through the heart of Africa.

A few years later a French general, watching the Charge of the English Light Brigade at Balaclava, made a remark which has become historic: "C'est magnifique, mais ce

n'est pas la guerre." The same comment comes to mind at the story of Thomas Keith. Nothing more was heard of him. But his enthusiasm, and that of Knibb, bore other fruit.

The members of the Home Committee, when the matter was first brought before them, did not feel able to move in the matter of a mission to Africa. Knibb was disappointed, and the following autumn returned to the subject in a long memorandum. He urged that a small group of negroes should be got together, given a brief training in England, and then sent out to Africa, led by one of the English missionaries, who should stay with them for a year or so, and then return to report progress. In spite of his own commitments in Jamaica, Knibb was himself prepared to volunteer, and also to find half the cost of such an undertaking. The Committee still felt unable to proceed, but in 1840 Knibb was sent to England by his fellow-missionaries, as has already been told, and one of the tasks committed to him was the advocacy of an African mission. For it he pleaded with tremendous earnestness at a meeting at Exeter Hall in May of that year. Joseph Sturge was in the chair, and Knibb told again the story of Thomas Keith, and spoke of the eagerness on this subject in Jamaica. "We have been made slaves for men, we can be made slaves for Christ" was the answer given to the warning that slave-trading was still carried on in

the region of the Niger. As to the money needed, Knibb said: "I pledge my church to £1,000, and I will get it in a week. I will pledge Mr. Dendy's church for £500 or £600, and he will get it in a few days. I will send to Jamaica, and I am sure we will get our money as soon as you get yours."

The rugged, burning eloquence of the man, and his persistence, won the day. At a meeting of the Committee held early in June, 1840, the following resolution was adopted:—"That, in compliance with the representations of our brethren in Jamaica, and following what we apprehend to be the clear indications of Providence, we determine, in reliance on the divine blessing, to commence a mission to Western Africa." Knibb spent the summer in rousing enthusiasm, and appealing for funds throughout Britain. It was estimated that in five months he travelled 6,000 miles, chiefly by coach or on horseback, and addressed 200,000 people. The veteran, Thomas Clarkson, and T. F. Buxton were among those who showed a practical interest in the new venture.

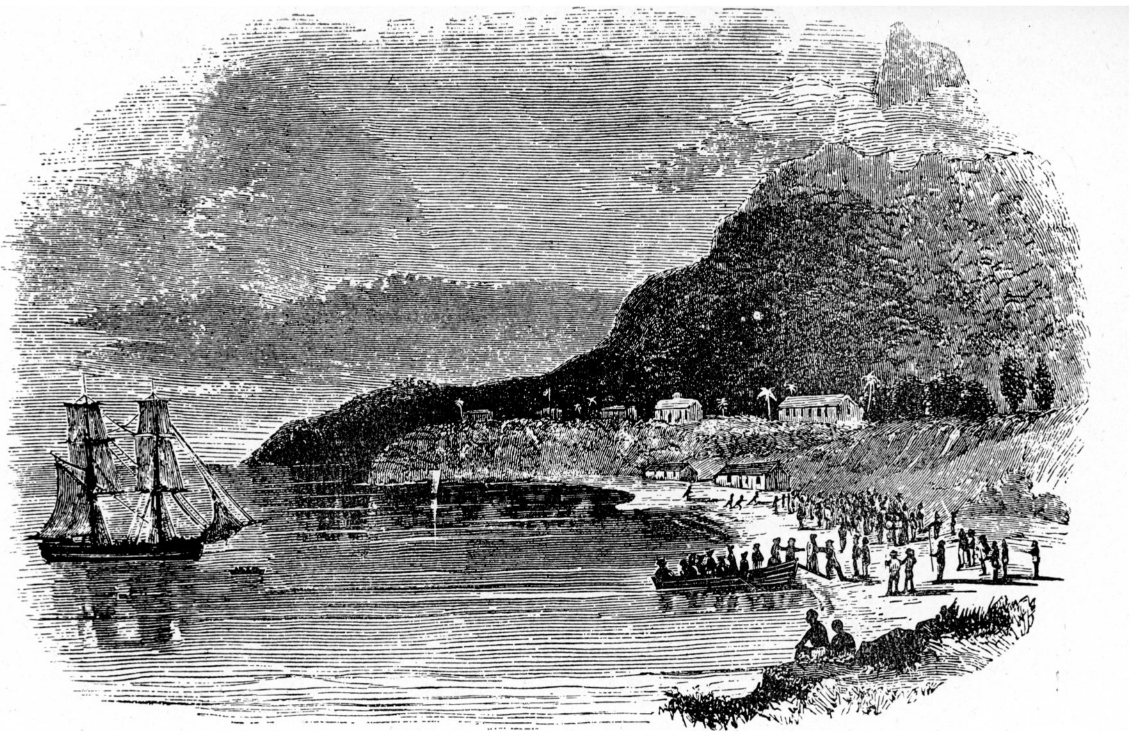
It was decided to send as an exploratory expedition John Clarke, a missionary who had served some ten years in Jamaica but who was at the time in England, and G. K. Prince, a doctor, who had originally been a slave-holder and had had a practice on the sugar-estates, but who had come under Baptist influence, being baptized in 1830 and subsequently rendering many services to the missionaries

before his wife's health compelled their settlement in England. Clarke and Prince reached the island of Fernando Po in January, 1841, and received a warm welcome from the rescued slaves who were settled on the island, and who had already heard the name of Christ from a passing missionary. They were able eventually to form a small church, and after visiting a number of places on the mainland, set sail for England to make their report to the Society. Terrible storms were encountered. The vessel on which they were was driven from her course, injured, and for two days was at the mercy of the waves. A temporary mast had to be erected, and the ship could then only run before the wind. Eventually Demerara was reached. Clarke and Prince resolved to spend a while in Jamaica before starting again for England, making known the opportunity in Africa and preparing for meeting it. Gatherings were held at most of the mission stations, and great enthusiasm prevailed, money and lives being freely offered.

Among the volunteers were a young man, Joseph Merrick, who had been assisting in the superintendence of the church at Jericho, on the North side of the island—he and his father were the first two Jamaicans to be called to the Baptist ministry—and Alexander Fuller, of Spanish Town. They went with Clarke and Prince back to England, and after a few months there Dr. and Mrs. Prince and their eldest daughter, Joseph Merrick and his wife,

and Alexander Fuller proceeded in the *Marys* to Fernando Po, while Clarke, together with Alfred Saker and his wife, who had volunteered in England, went to Jamaica to pick up others of the proposed missionary band.

The *Chilmark* left Portsmouth for Jamaica in July, 1843. She was a small sailing vessel of only 179 tons, and took eight weeks to cross the Atlantic. The accommodation provided for the passengers was totally inadequate, and Saker had to sleep on the floor of the saloon. In Jamaica some weeks were spent in getting together and sorting out those who offered to join the party. Some were to be preachers, some teachers, some settlers. One Knibb had himself trained; another was the superintendent of the Falmouth Sunday School. At last all were ready. They numbered, including women and children, forty-two, and among them were Alexander Fuller's two sons, Samuel and Joseph. Final leave was taken of them at a great Communion Service at Falmouth on November 28th, when Knibb gave a farewell address. A few days later he wrote :—" The *Chilmark* sailed yesterday, and is now in sight of Kettering. She carries a noble band of missionaries. If ever I wished to have my likeness taken, it was when I requested and obtained permission to steer her out of harbour, which, under the directions of the captain, I accomplished." Many besides Knibb were deeply moved at the setting



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THE ARRIVAL OF THE *CHILMARK* AT FERNANDO PO

From an old engraving

out of the vessel on such an errand. The *Missionary Herald* published verses on the occasion by one of the members of the Committee:

> "Spread wide the flowing canvass! Soft
> As music's breath the favouring breeze
> Wakes from its mountain rest, to waft
> The *Chilmark* o'er those distant seas
> 'Tis hers to traverse, ere her crew
> Shall Afric's rising headlands view."

It was eleven weeks before the ship arrived at Fernando Po, and during that time great hardships had to be endured. Joseph Fuller, who was eighteen years of age and had only agreed to join the party at the last moment, wrote afterwards in his autobiography:—"We had a wicked captain and crew, and our sufferings were very great. We had to drink stinking water, our fare was hard biscuit and heavy flour roasted on the hearth as best we could get it, while they swore at us on every side." Clarke and Saker, however, held regular classes and services on board. When the vessel was almost at her destination a tornado swept down upon her. Journey's end came at last in February, 1844, when they reached Clarence Cove, and received a warm welcome from their friends.

The high hopes entertained for this expedition were not all fulfilled.* The difficulties

* Cf. the misfortunes of the Niger Expedition of 1841, organized under Buxton's influence. See Coupland, *British Anti-Slavery Movement*, pp. 174f.

had been under-estimated. Missionary pioneering cannot be sustained by enthusiasm alone. Those so recently delivered from slavery, though they were many of them back in their native land, had not the background or training necessary. Knibb had suggested that the volunteers should spend some time in England before going to Africa. Something of the simplicity of many of those in the party may be gathered from the fact that when naked native fishermen came alongside the *Chilmark* the ladies were made to stay in their cabins. After five months in Fernando Po, John Clarke wrote to England : "I think most of our Jamaica friends will turn out well, but they need at present constant watching, directing, instructing. They, in Jamaica, have not been called out to act for themselves. They are in a new situation altogether ; and if we view their former state, opportunities, habits, etc., we shall not expect too much at first. Indeed, some of them are noble men, and showing themselves truly devoted to the Word of God." Two years later, after praising those working in the mission, Clarke has to refer to certain "painful exceptions from Jamaica." By then the tremendous difficulties of the undertaking were more apparent to all. The climate was taking its toll of the workers ; the first Jamaican died in June, 1845. The inhabitants of the interior of Fernando Po were savage and unresponsive. Slave-trade ships were still a danger in the

neighbouring waters. The establishment of work on the mainland was proving unexpectedly hard. Of medical knowledge and provision there was little or none. Personal dissensions sprang up. Then came government hindrance.

When the Spanish authorities interfered and restricted missionary work on Fernando Po a number of the Jamaicans at once returned home. A few, however, went across to the mainland and settled at Bimbia, an unwholesome spot a little to the north of the Cameroons River, and so difficult did the staffing of the mission become that the station and church there had often, even in the early days, to be left in their charge. As the years passed some died, others went back to Jamaica. John Clarke returned with quite a party in the 70-ton mission schooner, the *Dove*, and later Samuel Fuller left the mission as well.

Nevertheless, it was no inconsiderable part that the Jamaicans played in the development of the work, both at Fernando Po and in the Cameroons. One or two of them made their names inseparable from the story of the mission.

In his reminiscences, *These Seventy Years,* Thomas Lewis, who served the B.M.S. first in the Cameroons and then on the Congo, has drawn a picture of " Mammy Johnson " as he knew her in the eighties of last century. This negress had come with her husband in the *Chilmark*, and made it her business in life to care for the white missionaries, particularly

the ladies, often ordering them about as if they were children, and yet a constant encouragement and inspiration to them.

Joseph Merrick had had experience in a printing-office in Jamaica, and he was able to assist with the press at Bimbia. He mastered the Isubu language and produced many useful books in it, working always with great ardour and faithfulness. He made a number of valuable journeys of exploration into the interior, but slowly his health was undermined, and in 1849 failed. A voyage to England was arranged, but soon after leaving Clarence he passed peacefully away, only thirty-one years of age.

Three generations of the Fuller family were connected with the mission. Alexander McCloud Fuller, who had been one of the party taken out to Fernando Po by Dr. Prince, had a knowledge of building that was most useful both on the island and the mainland. He proved himself a staunch and valued colleague, but died, after only a brief spell of service, in 1847. His earlier story illustrates the conditions under which the slaves grew up. He was a slave on a sugar-estate, and had children by a female slave who belonged to a Jewish family. Marriage not being recognised, children were claimed by the owner of the mother. Alexander Fuller became a Christian, and separated from the mother of his children. They were brought up in the care of their grandmother, who was also a

Christian. After emancipation Fuller married a Christian woman, who, however, did not live long. Then came his joining of the African expedition. A Miss Davis was of the *Chilmark* party, and out in Fernando Po she married the widower, who had been joined by then by his two sons, Samuel and Joseph. Meantime the mother of these boys had become a Christian, and she married a Jamaican who became a deacon of the Baptist church at Spanish Town.

Joseph Jackson Fuller, the younger son, was one of the most trusted and distinguished Cameroons missionaries, facing difficulties, personal sorrows and dangers with courage, humour and resource.* He early had to assume full responsibility at Bimbia, both for Merrick's press and for the general work. He mastered Isubu and tried his hand at translation into it. He showed constant eagerness to penetrate into the interior. Later, after his transfer to Victoria, he planted a sub-station at Hickory and worked there most devotedly. In 1872 he visited Jamaica again and was given a great reception, receiving considerable sums of money for the building of his chapel. In all he served nearly forty years in Africa, and had an arduous part to play in the handing over of the work to the Basel Mission, before retiring to England. There are still many who can recall "Daddy Fuller's" descriptions of Emancipation Day in Jamaica. His

* See Robert Glennie, *Joseph Jackson Fuller*, 1933.

son, J. A. A. Fuller, was for six years an assistant missionary on the Congo, serving at San Salvador and Underhill, and later rendered valuable service at the Baptist Mission House in London.

Two generations of Pinnocks were connected with the Society. Francis Pinnock was trained at Calabar College, and the Jamaican churches raised £100 for his outfit and passage. After a few months in England he joined the Cameroons staff in 1857, and worked at Victoria for over twenty years. His son, John Pinnock, who was born in West Africa, became acquainted with Thomas Lewis in the latter's Cameroons days, and in 1887 joined the Congo mission, serving at Underhill, Kibokolo and Matadi.

The list might be added to. There have been Jamaicans in the service of the B.M.S. until quite recent days. The death in 1932 of S. C. Gordon, who was for fifteen years at Stanley Pool and for twenty at Matadi, severed the last link of this kind. The Jamaican Baptist churches have found other ways of helping the B.M.S. In more recent times their own direct missionary work has been done chiefly in the West Indies. The mission to Africa was a magnificent unforgettable gesture by those who had suffered the curse of slavery. It was perhaps premature, but it is increasingly clear that the real evangelization of Africa will be done by men and women of African race.

CHAPTER VIII

The Morant Bay Tragedy

" There can be no doubt that the dramatic and heightened fashion in which the Mutiny has been pictured to us has been responsible for deeds that would have been impossible to Englishmen in their right frame of mind."

Edward Thompson.

These next pages must be sad ones. Twenty unhappy years passed in Jamaica after the *Chilmark* sailed with high hopes eastwards across the Atlantic. They were years of growing depression and difficulty. The wave of economic prosperity came speedily to an end. The burning interest in England in the slave question declined. The Free Trade controversy had begun, and before long it had been decided to end the West Indian sugar monopoly. The result was that Jamaican sugar had to enter into competition with that of foreign slave plantations, and disaster came upon the chief industry of the island. In the opening chapters of his striking novel, *A High Wind in Jamaica,* Mr. Richard Hughes has pictured the general conditions. Many of the estates had to be abandoned, buildings fell into disrepair, work became scarce, and

taxation increasingly heavy. Drought and epidemics added to the tale of woe. The effect of these things on churches was most serious. They had now to find their own means of support. Building and other debts reached an alarming total, pastors' salaries were reduced, several of the missionaries were compelled to return to England, and the work rapidly declined. Within two years of the Jubilee, Knibb was again sent to England to seek help from the Committee, and £6,000 was voted towards the pressing needs of the Jamaica missionaries and their churches.

Further troubles were close at hand. Knibb had been little more than three months in the island, after this trip to England, when he died of the dreaded yellow-fever. "Death came with rapid strides upon a strong man armed, and the contest was sad and terrible," wrote his wife. He was only forty-two years of age, but into a brief span of life had crowded memorable achievements. Burchell, his companion in arms, gave an address in the Falmouth chapel at the funeral, and returned to his home at Mount Carey, a sick man. After a few weeks it was possible for him to journey to England, but there he died in May, 1846. The removal of these leaders, and the acknowledged difficulties under which the churches were labouring, moved the London Committee to send out the Secretary, Joseph Angus, together with one of the most trusted English Baptist ministers, on a deputation of

inquiry. Phillippo and some others of the missionaries were urging the resumption of support or control of the work from England. The deputation reported against this, though they were deeply impressed by the need of the island and by the difficult financial position of the English missionaries, and urged that special help should be given them.

Then in 1850-51 there came cholera, which "swept over the land sparing neither sex nor age." Three months of its ravages caused 20,000 deaths, and before it finally spent itself a tenth of the population of the island had been wiped out. So dark was the outlook in those years, and so discontented was almost every section of the inhabitants, that there was again talk among the planters of substituting the Stars and Stripes for the Union Jack, though the British Government had loaned half a million pounds in 1853 to save Jamaica from bankruptcy.

In 1854 Sir Henry Barkly, then Governor of Jamaica, referred to the Baptist missionaries in a communication to the Duke of Newcastle. What he said deserves somewhat full quotation and may be compared with the criticisms of Sir Charles Metcalfe a few years earlier :—

"Whatever may have been the case in past times, the advice now given by the Baptist Ministers to their flocks is sound enough ; and I should be very sorry to see the decline of their influence over them, perceiving as I do that no other would replace it, and that left to themselves

in remote localities the people must inevitably retrograde. As a member of the Church of England, I, of course, should prefer to see the spread of her communion ; but, supposing it for a moment possible for her ministers to acquire that influence over the negro which the traditions of the past, no less than the jealous solicitude of the present, confer on these missionaries, it would be obviously impracticable for the rector or the curates of a parish containing some three hundred square miles to leave the localities to which their duties tie them down for the purpose of following these settlers into the wilderness and urging them to the erection of chapels and schools, as the Baptists invariably do. That their teaching has, on the whole, been productive of great good, is now, I think, all but universally admitted ; and I am bound to state that I have found their congregations well dressed and orderly, and with every appearance of being, as I believe they are, the most civilized portion of the emancipated population."

In 1857 ten of the most influential missionaries wrote home urging a further deputation from England, and stating their inability to carry on in existing conditions much longer. E. B. Underhill, who had succeeded Joseph Angus as Secretary, and J. T. Brown, of Northampton, went out to investigate the situation. They spent five months in Jamaica. The seventy-seven churches had only thirty-six ministers, European and native, and there could be no doubt as to the unsatisfactory condition of much of the work, but the deputation did not feel that the established policy of the independence of the Jamaica churches should be reversed.

The next year, indeed, saw the outbreak of

a remarkable spiritual revival, general throughout the churches of the island. It began in a Moravian church, and spread from the south coast to the central provinces, to Spanish Town and Savanna-la-Mar, from Montego Bay to Ann's Bay, and finally right through the country. Chapels became once more crowded. There was a widespread conviction of sin. Crime diminished. Ethical standards were raised. There was renewed generosity. Old superstitions which had reasserted themselves once more declined in power. As the movement spread, unhealthy excitement and religious hysteria showed themselves in places, but the testimony of almost all observers, of whatever denomination, was that the revival was a real blessing from God and did permanent good. "It was," said sturdy J. M. Phillippo, who by then had seen nearly thirty years' service in Jamaica, "like a tempest passing over, and with one blast purifying the atmosphere, and calling into new life a thousand beauties over the Christian landscape. It was, indeed, a dispensation which, with all its attendant evils, there are few ministers and churches who would not wish for its recurrence. It gave a higher tone of piety to the churches generally, it excited attention, induced prayer and unwonted zeal. In one word it was an awakening from spiritual death."

Inevitably there came reaction. Moreover, poverty and distress continued, exciting increasing concern among thoughtful and sen-

sitive men both in Jamaica and England. "There was hardly any employment for labourers on the sugar estates, through the failure of crops. The provision grounds of the people scarcely afforded any subsistence. For food, such as corn-meal or flour, all classes were mostly dependent on supplies from abroad. To obtain it the poor had to run into debt at the stores, thus entailing difficulties which for years crippled their resources." So David Jonathan East, the Principal of Calabar College, who had been in the island since 1852, described the condition of things. Unfortunately no help was. forthcoming from the Jamaica Assembly. Lord Grey had once said of them : "The House of Assembly have ever used their power to spare their own friends, and to burden severely those who were opposed to them. The affairs of the Administration were distinguished by corruption and jobbing, and they exhibited a total want of judgment in the local authorities in adapting their measures to the existing state of things." It is perhaps hardly to be wondered at that theirs was class legislation of the worst kind, seeing that the forty-seven members were elected by less than two thousand voters out of a population of 436,000 persons, and that many of these voters were the agents of absentee proprietors. So great was the distress that in 1864 the B.M.S. Committee sent £1,500 to Jamaica, and early in 1865 a further £2,500.

The year 1865 saw the tragic climax of this sad story. The Civil War in America, fought on the slavery issue, was nearing its end. E. B. Underhill, the Secretary of the Society, had followed events in Jamaica closely since his visit there, and in January he addressed a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies calling his attention to "the continually increasing distress of the coloured population," due immediately, he urged, to a severe drought, but in fact to deeper causes which needed remedying, namely, poverty and lack of employment. "If their provisions fail, as has been the case, from drought, they must steal or starve," he said. His practical proposals were an inquiry into the legislation passed since emancipation, the encouragement of marketing schemes for the export of the produce of the small freeholds, and the securing of new settlers who had capital.

The letter was a private one, but demanded careful consideration by reason of its source. The Secretary for the Colonies very properly sent it out to Jamaica to Governor Eyre that he might comment upon it. At first the Governor seems to have contented himself with a few private inquiries, but in March he sent out to all the public officials, magistrates, clergy and ministers a copy of the letter with a request that they furnish him with materials for a reply. On March 21st the letter was printed in the *Jamaica Guardian*, and at once it became the subject of widespread interest

and controversy. In many places what were known as "Underhill Meetings" were held, at which resolutions were passed by the negroes and some few of the white population who attended, approving the statements made in the letter, and calling attention to the failure of the Assembly to deal with the situation. At Savanna-la-Mar, at Montego Bay, at Kingston, at Spanish Town and at other places these meetings were held, presided over and taken part in by a number of leading Jamaican citizens. They were orderly, enthusiastic and unanimous. The Baptist ministers had little share in them, and in some cases actually declined to take any prominent part.

The effect of the Governor's methods had been to call forth a widespread popular movement. The negroes had at last an opportunity of calling attention to their condition, and as the months passed excitement grew. Then there was issued by the Governor a reply to a petition to the Queen from the parish of St. Ann's. It had been presented some months earlier, and dealt with the prevalent distress. The reply was in official and curt language, so devoid of real understanding and sympathy that many refused to believe it had come from England at all. It was issued broadcast throughout the island under the title, "The Queen's Advice." Clergy and ministers were instructed to read it from their pulpits, but this many of them wisely refrained from doing, knowing that it would

only aggravate the situation.

The rising tide of dissatisfaction made Eyre fearful of a rebellion, and H.M.S. *Bulldog* was sent round the western and northern shores of the island. When he replied to the Secretary of State the Governor endeavoured to put the blame for the obvious discontent on to the missionaries, and urged that the "Underhill Meetings" were the work of "political demagogues ready to stir up the people to a belief in imaginary wrongs" and that they came "from an amalgamation (for political purposes) between a portion of the country party, who are opposed to the present Executive Committee, and a portion of the Baptist ministers who desire to back up Dr. Underhill." He ordered the letters of the missionaries to be seized.

In October, 1865, an outbreak did occur, not however in the north, but at Morant Bay in the south-east, in a neglected and backward part of the island. Here an "Underhill Meeting" had been held in August, and a deputation had been appointed to convey the resolutions to the Governor. The deputation walked forty miles on foot to Spanish Town, but were refused an audience. Feeling was in consequence further embittered. Already the corrupt local government, the partial administration of justice, and the cruelty of certain persons with authority in the neighbourhood, were causing great dissatisfaction.

At the Petty Sessions Court on Saturday, October 7th, there was interruption, followed by a riot. The following Monday those charged with having taken part in the disturbance resisted arrest, supported by an armed crowd of some hundreds. They appeared at the court-house two days later to state their grievances, and found the building guarded by the Volunteers, and the Custos ready with the Riot Act. Stones were thrown, and the Custos, without further warning, gave the word to fire. There was instantly the cry of "War" and the rioters rushed forward, overwhelmed the Volunteers and set fire to a neighbouring building. The fire spread to the court-house, and in the ensuing darkness, confusion and terror, those who were the special objects of popular hatred were sought out and put to death. Eighteen people were killed in and about the court-house, including the Custos and an Anglican clergyman, and thirty-one persons were injured.

The cry "There is war at the Bay!" quickly drew the negroes from the mountains around, and in a few days the insurgents are said to have spread themselves over some thirty miles of country. Some of the leaders entertained wild notions of securing control of the island. But after the first fury had passed they did not kill their adversaries, nor were many of the estates plundered. The superior forces called into action by the Governor, and the fearful retribution which fell

upon the rioters, speedily crushed the movement. In three days the rebellion was at an end.

The spirit in which the white planters and the soldiery suppressed the outbreak can hardly be understood unless the previous history of the island is borne in mind, and the disappointment, anger, hatred and fear, of which other evidences have been given, are remembered. It has also to be noted that only eight years before the Indian Mutiny had occurred, with its many horrors and atrocities. "The Mutiny-trained or Mutiny-obsessed mind," as Dr. Edward Thompson has called it, has been guilty of many dark deeds. This generation has had its Amritsar. In Jamaica in 1865 not a single soldier was resisted, killed or wounded, but martial law was continued from October 13th to November 13th, and was a veritable reign of terror, inaugurated by the Governor himself.

All rebels who were captured were, after a brief trial, shot or hanged. Many who had no proved connection with the outbreak were shot down without resisting. Prisoners were forced to hang one another, and one was set up at four hundred yards distance as a mark for the riflemen. The floggings of some six hundred men and women were "needless" and "barbarous"—to use the words of the Royal Commission of Inquiry which was later set up. Over a thousand negro homes were plundered and burned. It was afterwards

ascertained that, in all, 439 persons were put to death, more than a quarter of the number after October 25th, when all necessity for speedy punishment had ceased. The Governor even made use of the Maroons, those wild people of the "cock-pit" country in the mountains of the centre of the island, descendants of escaped slaves of the old Spaniards, who for many years plundered the white inhabitants and had to be kept in special reservations.

Nor were these things all. Arrests were made and threatened in other parts of the island, and prisoners, in order to secure their conviction, were carried into the districts where martial law was in force. Most notable of these cases was that of George William Gordon, a half-caste of property and education, married to an Englishwoman, the representative of St. Thomas-in-the-East in the Assembly. He had been baptized in 1861 by J. M. Phillippo, though of Presbyterian connections, and had an independent chapel of his own in Kingston. There he surrendered, knowing that charges were being made against him. He was illegally taken to Morant Bay at the Governor's orders, and on a slight pretext was declared guilty of treason and executed. J. H. Crole, a native Baptist minister of Kingston, was another of those transhipped to Morant Bay, where he was cruelly flogged. Yet another Kingston Baptist minister, Edwin Palmer, was arrested,

confined on board ship in irons, then transferred to Morant Bay, and though no charge was preferred against him, was kept in confinement till the end of December. When finally tried at Kingston the original charge of conspiracy completely failed, though a partial jury secured him two months' imprisonment. James Service, another coloured Baptist minister, was arrested but soon released.

The Assembly met on November 7th. The Governor pointed out that " the entire Colony has long been, and is still, on the brink of a volcano which may at any moment burst into fury," and persuaded the members first to alter their constitution and finally to surrender it altogether, thus giving up in panic an independence that had been Jamaica's since the days of Cromwell. In their last few debates the members considered a number of Bills characteristically hostile to the black population and to the Baptist missionaries.

In England news of the revolt caused horror and alarm. Governor Eyre's first dispatch spoke of widespread rebellion, of murders in cold blood, and of the most barbaric atrocities, and sought to fix responsibility on Dr. Underhill, G. W. Gordon, and a number of Baptist missionaries. Meetings in England demanded a full inquiry, and in December the Government decided to suspend Eyre and to send out to Jamaica a Royal Commission. The findings issued in April, 1866, stated that the reports of the rebellion itself had been grossly

exaggerated ; the outrages were non-existent, so far as the negroes were concerned, save on that one day at Morant Bay ; the punishments inflicted were excessive and inexcusable. The desire to obtain land free of rent, want of confidence in the administration of justice, and hostility to the white inhabitants were given as the causes of the trouble. The Commission did not find it necessary to inquire into the conduct of the Baptist missionaries—Eyre did not repeat his original accusations. It was generally regretted that, as thirty years earlier, no real opportunity was given the missionaries of demonstrating the hollowness of the charges. Perhaps their real vindication came in the encouragement officially given them to open up work in the Morant Bay area. Charles Stovel, by this time an elderly man, wrote to the B.M.S. Committee urging the resumption of control over the Jamaican churches, but his views did not commend themselves to the majority.

Eyre was dismissed. A "Jamaica Committee" in England, supported by men like John Stuart Mill and Thomas Huxley, though opposed by Thomas Carlyle, tried to bring him and some of his assistants to trial for their cruelties and injustices, but failed, though the Chief Justice gave a seven hours' charge to a Grand Jury at the Old Bailey which left no doubt as to his view of their guilt. Eyre's personal responsibility for what occurred remains a matter of controversy among historians. Of

recent years, Lord Olivier has judged him severely, Dr. Mathieson more leniently.* For our purposes here, what subsequently happened is of more importance. Jamaica became a Crown Colony, and before long conditions had markedly improved. In 1870 the Anglican Church was disestablished and disendowed, and two years later Kingston became the seat of Government instead of Spanish Town.

Once more the Baptist missionaries and the negroes had passed together through a fiery furnace.

* In *The Myth of Governor Eyre*, 1933, Lord Olivier describes Dr. Underhill's letter as "well-founded and wisely conceived," commending its "modest and unprovocative language." "The suggestions made for assisting progress towards greater prosperity among the peasants were," he says, "well considered, appropriate and desirable."

CHAPTER IX

EARTHQUAKE AND WHIRLWIND

> " God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform ;
> He plants His footsteps in the sea,
> And rides upon the storm."
>
> WILLIAM COWPER.

CLIMATE has its own effect on history. For one thing it determines the vegetation of a land, and so the chief occupations and industries of the people. It plays a large part in the formation of their habits, and so of their general characteristics and outlook.

The island of Jamaica, 146 miles long and 49 miles broad at its widest part, is the centre of a semicircle of tropical islands lying between the continents of North and South America. Its physical features have led to its being compared to a great turtle, the mountain ridges in the centre representing the back-bone. It is a land of great beauty and rich tropical vegetation, but subject to Nature in her catastrophic moods. All through the years there is record of periodical pestilences, earthquakes, and hurricanes. In a short time terrible damage is done, and yet, so fertile is the soil, it is quickly hidden in new

beauties. The stormy history of the island, and the passionate moods which men have often shown there, are better understood when the scene is kept in mind.

Mr. Richard Hughes, in that novel of great distinction, *A High Wind in Jamaica,* the early scenes of which are set in the country behind St. Ann's on the north of the island, has described with skill and vividness a hurricane, which followed a slight earthquake shock and a heavy thunderstorm :

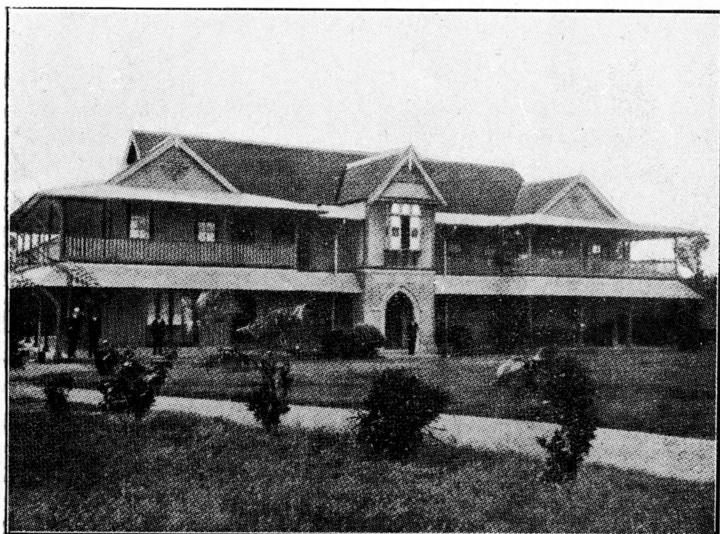
" The wind by now was more than redoubled. . . . The creepers, which before had looked like cobwebs, now streamed up into the sky like new-combed hair. Bushes were lying flat, laid back on the ground as close as a rabbit lays back his ears. Branches were leaping about loose in the sky. The negro huts were clean gone, and the negroes crawling on their stomachs across the compound to gain the shelter of the house. The bouncing rain seemed to cover the ground with a white smoke, a sort of sea in which the blacks wallowed like porpoises. One nigger-boy began to roll away : his mother, forgetting caution, rose to her feet : and immediately the fat old beldam was blown clean away, bowling along across fields and hedgerows like someone in a funny fairy-story, till she fetched up against a wall and was pinned there unable to move. . . . The country was quite unrecognisable, as if it had been swept by a spate. You could hardly tell, geographically speaking, where you were. It is vegetation which gives the character to a tropic landscape, not the shape of the ground : and all the vegetation, for miles, was now pulp. The ground itself had been ploughed up by instantaneous rivers, biting deep into the red earth."

One of the most terrible of earthquakes was that of 1692, which destroyed Port Royal, the fine harbour of Kingston, then the resort of adventurers and pirates, and famous for its wealth. The ground heaved, the houses trembled, and great waves overwhelmed the land, lifting a frigate right over the ruins and casting it up high and dry. In 1780 Savanna-la-Mar was overwhelmed by the sea during a hurricane, leaving "not a vestige of man, beast or habitation." The philanthropists of the eighteenth century were quick to interpret these things as signs of God's displeasure at slavery. A few years after the Savanna-la-Mar tragedy, Cowper wrote in *The Negro's Complaint* :

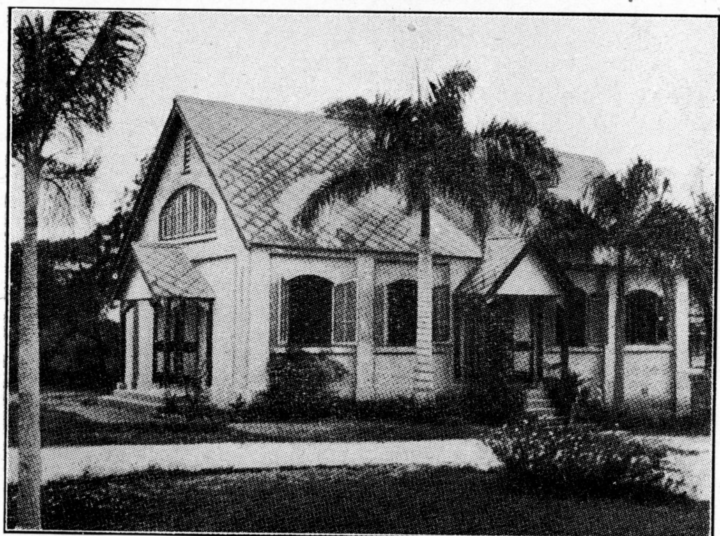
> "Hark! He answers! Wild tornadoes
> Strewing yonder seas with wrecks,
> Wasting towns, plantations, meadows,
> Are the voice with which He speaks.
> He, foreseeing what vexations
> Afric's sons should undergo,
> Fixed their tyrants' habitations
> Where His whirlwinds answer—'No.'"

But the facile optimism of this theology breaks down on the facts. These natural calamities did not cease with emancipation.

Reference has already been made to the terrible cholera epidemic of 1851 and to the fearful droughts. In 1880 a tremendous cyclone swept over the greater part of the island during August, destroying thousands of houses, killing or injuring many thousands of people,



CALABAR COLLEGE



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THE CHAPEL, CALABAR COLLEGE

and doing great damage to the crops. Several of the chapels were involved in this calamity, and since the resources of the members were too slender to meet the cost of rebuilding, funds were sent out to David Jonathan East from England.

In his lively book on Jamaica, entitled *Bananaland*, Principal Price has told the pathetic but inspiring story of Knibb's grandson, Ellis Fray, minister of the church at Kettering on the north side of the island. The mission-house where he lived had become very dilapidated, and shortage of money made even the clothing and schooling of his children a difficult problem. But a new church was needed, and led by their minister the people heroically put their money together bit by bit. Slowly the new building was completed. The task took sixteen years to accomplish, but it was done at last, and the building ready for dedication. Then on the night before the opening there came a hurricane, and the new church was laid in ruins. The tears streamed down Ellis Fray's face as he gazed at the wreckage, but he crossed the yard and stood under a tree, and said to the people who had gathered: "Friends, we had better sing a hymn. Let us dry our tears and sing, 'O God, our help in ages past.'" Such spirit can overcome temporary defeat. Six years later, with help from England, a new chapel was opened.

This cyclone of 1903 which destroyed Ellis

Fray's chapel was one of the most terrible in the history of the island. It struck the north-east coast, and swept up the fertile hill-sides of the centre, doing great damage. Baptist property suffered severely. In all sixty-five lives were lost and £2,500,000 of damage was caused; so far as Baptists were concerned, thirty-three chapels were blown down and another twenty damaged, and the total loss was estimated at £15,000. Only slowly could repairs be carried out.

Then in January, 1907, came a devastating earthquake. Without any warning the island quivered from one end to the other. Under Kingston the ground is said to have swayed and rocked like the waves of the sea. In a few seconds substantial buildings were laid in ruins. 1,400 persons lost their lives, fire among the debris adding to the horrors, the gruesome task of locating the bodies of the victims being greatly assisted by flocks of vultures from the mountains inland. The East Queen Street Chapel, one of the strongest of Baptist properties, was severely damaged and its minister permanently injured. The Hanover Street Chapel, in the same city, was completely wrecked. Distress was so widespread that the Government was unable to give help with the rebuilding of churches and chapels. Another appeal had, therefore, to be made to English Baptists, and was, as on previous occasions, generously responded to.

Two years later a deputation from the

B.M.S. again visited the island, the first since that of Dr. Underhill, nearly half a century earlier, to include a Secretary of the Society. The Rev. C. E. Wilson and Mr. T. S. Penny found parts of Kingston still in ruins, but the Baptists pluckily facing their responsibilities both in the island and abroad.

In November, 1912, yet another severe cyclone swept the island from Savanna-la-Mar to Lucea, the wind reaching a rate of 160 miles an hour. Again some of the largest Baptist chapels were destroyed, others damaged, and the property of many of the members devastated.

The most recent hurricane disaster occurred in August, 1944, .and it was one of the most destructive in recent history. A wind with a velocity of more than 130 miles an hour struck the north of the island and brought terrible devastation to large areas. Many lives were lost. Thousands of houses were blown down and their inhabitants rendered homeless. Banana plantations were destroyed and thousands of cocoanut trees uprooted. Damage was worst in the parishes of St. Thomas, Portland, St. Mary, St. Ann and Trelawny—in all of which there has been important Baptist work. Chapels, mission-houses, schools and teachers' dwellings suffered very severely. Among the buildings completely destroyed was the Knibb Memorial Church at Falmouth. This imposing chapel, originally opened by Knibb in 1837 in place of the one wrecked by the rioters of

1832, had withstood many hurricanes and earthquakes. The total damage to Baptist property was estimated at some £30,000. But for generous help from Britain and America calamities like this cannot be met and overcome by communities largely agricultural.

These severe natural catastrophes may come at any time in the Caribbean area. During the summer months there is almost inevitably a sense of tension in the air. Will "hurricane weather" develop, and if so will the island be fortunate enough to escape damage? A familiar verse runs:

> "June, coming soon;
> July, stand by;
> August, come it must;
> September, remember;
> October, all over."

But even in the other months of the year one cannot be entirely free from anxiety.

There must be recollection of these things, as well as of the poverty and distress, due to economic and political causes, during the past hundred and thirty years, if the story here told is to be rightly understood. It is a striking thing that the faith of the negroes in the goodness of God has stood the strain of these events, difficult to understand as they are. With courage and patience, and with infinite kindness the one to the other, the Jamaicans, after each successive catastrophe, have set about rebuilding their homes and their churches.

CHAPTER X

CALABAR

"In the face of all the difficulties which have been encountered, the project has been successful, and its strongest opponents have practically acknowledged its wisdom by copying its example."

D. J. EAST, 1892.

ON October 6th, 1843, at Calabar, not far from the north coast of Jamaica, a public meeting was held in the open air under the trees. Probably not very many persons were present, but it was a memorable occasion. A college for the training of native ministers was being formally opened. The new President, Joshua Tinson, spoke on "The Advantages of an Educated Ministry," and William Knibb on "The Duty of Supporting Theological Institutions." Ten students were there, ready to begin their courses.

Such a college had been dreamed of and planned for several years. The early letters of several of the leading missionaries allude to the need of adequate training for native workers. The growth of the work made necessary the employment of Jamaican helpers to watch over and control the multitudes who crowded the mission stations. Phillippo wrote to the Committee at length on the

subject in 1837, and a year later Knibb was in correspondence about it with his friend, Dr. James Hoby. Resolutions in favour of the formation of a college were passed by the Jamaica Baptist Union in 1839, and a beginning was made by the placing of a group of young men under the tuition of Joshua Tinson, who was at the time minister of Hanover Street Chapel, Kingston. The African Mission was in the minds of men at the time, as well as the needs of the Jamaica churches. On his 1840 visit to England, Knibb made many references to the "academy." Before long, however, Tinson's health broke down, and he had to return to England for a while.

The need was increasingly obvious, and in 1842 Knibb discussed with the Home Committee more ambitious plans, and secured the approval and help of English Baptists. Although the Jamaican churches were becoming independent it was agreed that the staff for a college should be found in this country and supported by the Baptist Missionary Society. Tinson, who, with Knibb, was among the chief speakers at the Jubilee Meetings of the Society, was persuaded to return to Jamaica to become the first President. A site was secured at Calabar, and there at last in 1843, while the *Chilmark* was anchored off the island, the opening ceremonies took place.

Joshua Tinson was a tall, slender Gloucestershire man. He had been trained at Bristol

College, and had hoped to go to India. The need in Jamaica was represented to him, however, and there he arrived in 1822. Before long he found himself in charge of the church at Kingston which George Liele, the emancipated American slave, had gathered together, and he laboured there for many years with great faithfulness, partly supporting himself by a small school. He was far from strong and had many spells of serious ill-health. Sometimes, it is said, he required to be "cautioned against caution itself, lest he should be over cautious." Nevertheless, the memory that he left was a fragrant one.

His duties among his students fully occupied his time and strength. Writing in 1844 he said: "They had everything to learn, and this has rendered my labours heavy, both from the elementary nature of the instruction I have to give and the frequency with which it is necessary to impart it. I usually have the whole of them four times a day, so that it keeps me pretty closely confined. . . . I have a young Englishman . . . who comes once a week to teach some of the students arithmetic, as a remuneration for which I am teaching him to read his Greek Testament. Then I have another pupil . . . ; so that with these things, helping my daughter a little with Hebrew, cultivating a garden, and working a little as a mechanic, I have no time for complaint, if I had anything to complain of, but I really have not."

For seven years Tinson laboured on in spite of physical weakness, sometimes having to have the classes in his bedroom. He died in 1850 at the age of fifty-six, and deserves remembrance as one of the pioneers of African higher education.

As Tinson's successor there came out from England David Jonathan East, who by forty years' service in the island and by his personal qualities came to be known affectionately as "Father East." When a young man at Stepney College and then as a minister in England, he had eagerly followed the later stages of the anti-slavery struggle. Under his leadership the Calabar premises were enlarged and a Normal Department for training school teachers was added to the theological college. This raised the number of students to thirty-five, and widened the outlook and contacts of those who had the ministry in mind. Then in 1869 East transferred the institution to Kingston, where it had first been planned. The East Queen Street Church was passing through difficult times, and needed careful and strong oversight. The Baptists owned an extensive block of property, and East conceived the plan of housing the college there and linking it with the church. But the premises at Calabar were too good to abandon, so they were taken down. The wooden walls, roof, pillars and doors were carried across country on the backs of mules, and were made use of at Kingston. D. J. East had something of Carey's statesmanship, and developed the

Calabar College buildings into a little Serampore. His ability and integrity gave distinction to the institution he served. An efficient day school was added to the church and college. He himself always regarded Foster's essay on "Decision of Character" as a formative influence on his life. He was undoubtedly much helped by his wife, who before her marriage had been one of the Baptist missionaries at Fernando Po, and who had there come into close and friendly relations with Jamaicans. During East's Presidency, in spite of the difficult times through which Jamaica passed, a stream of men passed out to serve the churches on the island and farther afield.

When D. J. East retired in 1892 he was succeeded by Arthur James, who had been for twelve years a minister in Northamptonshire. In personality he was a striking contrast to his predecessor, being quiet and retiring, yet he was at the head of affairs when big changes took place, and the years have proved his wisdom and foresight. Early in the twentieth century the Jamaican Government undertook the training of school teachers and withdrew the grants which had formerly been made to denominational colleges. The Normal College connected with Calabar had therefore to be closed, and this reduced the number of students from thirty to about ten.

A few years afterwards, however, a new chapter in the history of the institution was

begun by its transference from East Queen Street to a new site north-west of Kingston. The old premises were antiquated and not worth further repair, and it was possible to erect fine new buildings. These were opened on April 13th, 1904, Charles Williams, of Accrington, representing the Baptist Missionary Society at the ceremony. In the 1907 earthquake they suffered little damage.

Arthur James retired at the end of 1910, and was succeeded by the Rev. Ernest Price, of Sheffield. For more than a quarter of a century, with the help of his colleague, the Rev. David Davis, he presided over the affairs of Calabar College and shared in many important developments in ministerial and missionary training. A number of European students took courses at the College, as well as men from other denominations in Jamaica. Close co-operation, including joint classes, was arranged with Methodists and Presbyterians.. And by the side of the College, there was established the Calabar High School for Boys. It was founded in 1912 in order to give a good literary education and careful Christian training to the sons of the Baptist ministers of Jamaica. At the request of other parents its scope was enlarged and it now receives the sons of ministers and laymen alike, of all denominations, without distinction of race or colour. Recognised since 1920 as a First Class Secondary School, it has made a name for itself throughout the West Indies by its academic record and by the fine Christian spirit inspiring

every side of its life. The School motto—"The Utmost for the Highest"—and the place of the beautiful chapel in the life of the school have helped to give Calabar a position of its own among Jamaican secondary schools. Over 800 boys have passed through the school, some becoming planters, some lawyers, some entering business, many taking teaching positions, and a fair proportion giving their lives to the Christian ministry. In 1938 one who had been both a pupil and a teacher in the school was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship.

It is more than forty years since Calabar College was moved to its present site. The neighbourhood where it is situated has greatly changed, and there is general agreement that the School, if not the College, requires to be moved. More modern and better equipped premises are needed, and, in particular, adequate facilities for the teaching of science. There is still great need for higher education under Christian auspices, even if much of the cost be met from public funds. The training of the Jamaican ministry, moreover, is still a most important responsibility, and Calabar College, by its history and position, should have a share not only in new types of course for Christian pastors serving in a predominantly agricultural community, but should also play its part in building up a theological faculty in the West Indian University which, it is recommended, should be situated in Jamaica.*

* See *The Report of the West Indies Committee of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies,* (Cmd. 6654) June, 1945.

Unfortunately, there have had to be many changes in the leadership of Calabar during recent years. The Rev. Ernest Price was succeeded by Dr. Gurnos King, who, after a most promising start, passed away following an operation. Then, for the six years from 1939 to 1945—the years of the World War—the Rev. A. S. Herbert was Principal, with the Rev. David Davis as Headmaster of the School from 1943. Mr. Herbert resigned owing to ill health in 1945. By then the Rev. Thomas Powell had been appointed by the Baptist Missionary Society as Special Commissioner for Jamaica and had gone out from England with the Rev. E. C. Askew as his colleague. The detailed planning for the future must rest largely in their hands.

CHAPTER XI

TODAY AND TOMORROW

> "It would be, to say the least, fitting that the B.M.S., whose agents mediated the grace of God so decisively in the last century, so that their work is gratefully remembered to this day, should once again, at a critical time in Jamaica's history, make manifest the Judgment and Salvation of God in Christ Jesus by the Power of the Holy Spirit."
>
> A. S. HERBERT, 1945.

The past fifteen years have been very difficult ones for Jamaica. Economic and social problems have been accentuated by neglect. Neither the British government nor the Christian Church can contemplate with any pride or satisfaction present conditions in the island. There is much poverty, educational facilities are inadequate, housing is notoriously bad, moral standards are low. There has been considerable labour unrest. In 1936 Jamaica Welfare Limited was formed, a semi-private agency aiming "to offset the monopoly of the great fruit corporations, to develop the small farmer, and to advance the progress and self-reliance of the rural community."* It has had

* J. Merle Davis, *The Church in the New Jamaica*, p. 72.

notable success in its social and economic experiments, and it is now clear that the government authorities realise that much more money must be spent on social and educational services in the island. The Royal Commission of 1939, the Stockdale Commission and a number of other official efforts and inquiries prove that there is a genuine desire to do more for Jamaica. The granting in 1944 of universal suffrage, without property qualification, for men and women over the age of twenty-one, is an indication of willingness for big political changes. Yet there remains a feeling of disappointment, due in part to hopes again and again deferred. " Too often," said a witness to the Commission on Higher Education, " these colonies have been inspected, dissected, probed, examined and reviewed with no result other than a voluminous report."

The Churches have their own problems, their own responsibilities and their own special opportunities. Between 1911 and 1938 the number of ordained foreign missionaries in Jamaica declined from 179 to 79.* There was an increase in the number of ordained Jamaican pastors, but the communicant membership of the main non-Roman churches seriously declined. Competent observers believe that there has been a revival of obeah and other superstitious practices in many places. Certainly the number of independent and largely irresponsible sects has increased. Yet the Christian forces are still

* *Interpretative Statistical Survey*, (ed. by J. I. Parker), 1938,p. 310.

in a strong position in Jamaica. No less than 80% of the elementary schools are on property belonging to, and in buildings partly contributed by, the churches. The Jamaican is still quickly responsive to the preaching of the Gospel. It is encouraging that a Jamaican Christian Council should have been set up in 1941 with ten Christian bodies as charter members.

Baptists have had their own serious internal troubles. They remain, however, the second largest religious community in the island. Though the membership of the churches of the Jamaica Baptist Union is now only some 20,000, at the census of 1943 no less than 319,000 persons were set down as "Baptist" in their religious affiliation, *i.e.*, some 25% of the total population. This is notable evidence of the continuing strength of the Baptist tradition, and it is to be understood only if the story told in these pages is kept in mind. The Baptist Missionary Society has already recognised that it must be ready to give additional help to the Jamaican Baptist churches. Many of the succeeding generations have been perplexed and troubled by the consequences of the break which came in 1842 when the Jamaican churches became independent. The Methodist churches were granted independence in 1880 but were ready to surrender it again in 1904. Without putting the clock back, British Baptists must now accept the challenge to help, for a time at any rate, with the development of a new "Calabar," with the supplementing of mini-

sterial stipends, with the training of women workers, with the organisation of a Baptist Youth Movement, and other greatly needed enterprises. They may gladly send to Jamaica men and women ready to share with the Jamaicans in social and educational service, and in the upbuilding of the churches.

"Freedom," said a visitor to Jamaica in 1938, "is a mere word to those whose social condition forbids any real appreciation of its meaning. The circumstances in which many of the people live make it impossible for democratic ideas to take proper root."* But when he came to consider ways of advance, the writer insisted that what was most needed, what was, indeed, essential, was "a wave of moral enthusiasm in England."

What the future holds in store for Jamaica none can foresee. There are rich possibilities by reason of its position, its fertility and its people. It is significant that, after a history with so much bitter strife in it, there is today practically no colour bar between white and coloured inhabitants. Little communities of Indians and Chinese have settled happily side by side with those of African descent, those of mixed parentage and those from Europe. Yet of the population of 1,200,000 about 95% are of negro stock. Baptists have played so large a part in the emancipation and training of the black people, and still have so wide an influence in the island, that it is difficult to believe that

* Hugh Stannard, *The Times*, May 25th, 1938.

their mission and responsibility are ended. When all is said, Schweitzer's reminder holds true here as in Africa, the home of the negro race : "We are not free to confer benefits on these men, or not, as we please : it is our duty. Anything we give them is not benevolence but atonement."

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