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# THE GREAT SUCCESSION

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SOME CHAPTERS IN THE STORY  
OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY  
SOCIETY

**THE FIRST GENERATION**

EARLY LEADERS OF THE BAP-  
TIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY IN  
INDIA AND ENGLAND

# THE GREAT SUCCESSION

LEADERS OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY  
DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

*by*

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## FOREWORD

THERE are those who object to any disturbing of the dust which has gathered about the Victorians on the ground that the men and women of the nineteenth century are now uninteresting and irrelevant. Others would uncover the figures of the past only in order to make fun of them, or to blame them for our present discontents and distresses. Neither attitude helps us today. I am myself growingly convinced that we cannot understand the present situation aright without clearer knowledge of the aims and achievements of the previous generation, and that we cannot too often be reminded of the facts, as distinct from later fancies, regarding our grandfathers and grandmothers. I have therefore made these brief biographical studies as simple and unadorned a tale as possible.

These were great men and women, great in their daring, their faith and their endurance, a very varied company, for whom life was often far from easy. They showed something of their greatness in their youth as well as in their maturity. Most of them had noteworthy

achievements to their credit by the time they were thirty years of age. Their true piety and their equally obvious humanity alike challenge us. Viewed as a succession of men and women linked in the service of the same enterprise they bear impressive witness to the shaping guiding hand of God. There again they have a message for us today. They left an unfinished task, which, relying on the same resources, it is ours to continue.

Selection was necessary for a volume of this size, but not easy. The nineteenth century was rich in missionary enthusiasm and enterprise, and Baptists had a notable share therein. I have chosen to write of those who were chiefly responsible for the leadership of the Baptist Missionary Society at home from the time of the jubilee in 1842 to that of the centenary in 1892, and of those who in the work abroad were specially outstanding by reason of their personality and achievements. The different fields in which they were engaged show how varied and far-flung the work of the Society has been. Of five of the main figures here described—Knibb, Saker, Wenger, Comber and Richard—there exist biographies. I have not confined myself to the material therein preserved, but it is the basis of what



I have written. For the five remaining studies I have had to gather the facts from a wide array of sources, not all of them printed or easily accessible. I have been encouraged by kindly critics, too numerous to mention by name, to embark upon this sequel to *The First Generation*. It is only right that I should specially acknowledge the kindness of Mr. Seymour J. Price in allowing me to reproduce the article on Comber which first appeared in the pages of the *Baptist Quarterly*.

E. A. P.

*October, 1938.*

“Let us have the decency to uncover before the great men of the last century; and if we cannot appreciate them, let us reflect that the fault may possibly be in ourselves.”

W. R. INGE: *Outspoken Essays* (Second Series).

“The great age is not so far behind us that we must needs have lost all its savour and its vigour.”

G. M. YOUNG: *Victorian England*.

CHAPTER I

DR. JOSEPH ANGUS

1816—1902

“He was neither superstitious nor an enthusiast. His mind was much too strong, and his habits of thinking and reasoning much too strict and severe, to suffer him to descend to the weakness of either character. His piety was at once fervent and rational.”

DR. SAMUEL HALIFAX on Bishop Butler.

## CHAPTER I

### DR. JOSEPH ANGUS

#### I

ON Wednesday, June 1st, 1842, the pleasant little town of Kettering was crowded with people from all parts of the country who had gathered there to celebrate the jubilee of the Baptist Missionary Society. There had been special services in both the Baptist and Independent chapels the previous evening, an early morning prayer-meeting, then a service in a great tent erected over the garden of what, fifty years earlier, had been the home of Widow Beeby Wallis, where the Baptist Missionary Society had been formed.

“After dinner,” says a contemporary account, “the interest seemed to reach its height—friends from the country still kept pouring in, till the streets were lined, in some places on both sides, with conveyances of all descriptions, and the centre was literally thronged with persons perambulating the town, previous to the evening meeting. A performance of sacred music took place in the afternoon at the Baptist meeting-house, and a meeting for prayer and addresses was held at the Independent meeting-house, but, though both places were nearly full, the

multitudes in the town seemed as great as before. The townspeople generally partook of the enthusiasm inspired by the meeting. The rev. incumbent of the parish courteously ordered the church, which is a fine structure, to be opened for the inspection of the visitors; the bells rang, and continued ringing at intervals during the day; while the town-crier was sent round to announce that the Baptist Jubilee was being held."

When evening came overflow gatherings had to be held in both the chapels, while the main meeting took place in the great tent, which was lighted by gas for the occasion and presented an extraordinarily brilliant spectacle, as amid the five thousand men and women packed into it there could be seen the trees and shrubs and the beds of gaily coloured flowers.

The Treasurer of the Society had come from London to take the chair. Beside him was ninety-year-old Reynold Hogg, the first treasurer and the sole survivor of the little company who had gathered in the neighbouring back parlour fifty years earlier. On the platform were honoured leaders from many parts of the country, missionaries like William Knibb of Jamaica, and Eustace Carey of India, and, last but not least, young Joseph Angus, who only two years earlier had been appointed junior Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, and who, by the unfortunate death of John Dyer, had been left with the full burden of responsibility at the early age of twenty-five. Enthu-

siasm, gratitude and expectancy ran high that evening. There was a young queen on the throne and a feeling of confidence had spread into almost every department of national life.

Half a century later the centenary of the Baptist Missionary Society was celebrated. Again there were gatherings in Kettering, crowds assembling from many different places. An impressive programme of speeches had been prepared. Once more a pavilion was erected in the garden of the old Mission House. June 2nd, 1892, was a Thursday, and the series of meetings commenced with a service in Fuller chapel, presided over by Joseph Angus. He was by then a bearded veteran of seventy-six, the most important personal link with the dim days of the jubilee. So many changes had taken place. To the responsibilities of the Society in India and the West Indies had been added work in Africa, China and the continent of Europe. Queen Victoria was still on the throne; the fiftieth anniversary of her accession had already been celebrated. The reign had been a period of striking achievement and expansion. Joseph Angus had touched the religious life of the country at many different points. Standing far above the average, he was yet a characteristic product of the age.

## II

He had been born at Bolam in Northumberland in 1816, of an old Baptist family, and came to London

in his teens with Dr. Mortimer, who had been his headmaster in Newcastle. For a time he studied at King's College, London, then only recently established. There came the chance of a scholarship to Cambridge, but the taking of it involved, as for all at that time, subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. Young Angus was already a person of conviction, ready to make sacrifices for what he believed. He surrendered his chance of Cambridge and returned to his home in the north.

Shortly afterwards Angus preached his first sermon at the historic church of Richard Pengilly at Tuthill Stairs, Newcastle. It happened that W. B. Gurney, treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society and of Stepney College, was present. The meeting had a decisive influence on Angus's future career. After a few months at Edinburgh University, he entered Stepney College. He was in his twentieth year. The Baptist Academical Institution was then under the presidency of "the sedate system-loving" W. H. Murch. After a year in its halls Angus, with the help of the Ward Trust, returned to Edinburgh to take his degree. He had shown an unusual combination of powers, and his friends had very high hopes for his future. Having secured his M.A. degree, he was ready to settle as a Baptist minister. An invitation to Oxford was declined and one to New Park Street, Southwark, was accepted. It was the church of the great Dr. Gill. Succeeding him, John Rippon had ministered there for sixty-three years, dying at the advanced age of eighty-five in 1836.



Sixteen years later young Charles Haddon Spurgeon was to come to the pulpit from Waterbeach.

Angus's pastorate at New Park Street lasted only two years, but he speedily made his mark as a teacher, and had in one of his Bible Classes Charles Williams, later the noted preacher of Accrington. In 1840 the able young minister was invited to become a secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society. John Dyer was obviously in need of assistance and the jubilee was approaching. Angus agreed to go to Fen Court, a "gloomy abode" in which the Baptist Missionary Society were the tenants of the Particular Baptist Fund. His appointment was announced at the Annual Meeting in Exeter Hall on the 30th April, within three months of the marriage of the young Queen.

### III

The nine years during which Joseph Angus served the Baptist Missionary Society were important but difficult ones. The sad and long drawn-out "Serampore controversy" had not been closed till 1837, and inevitably left behind it many wounds. For some years the income of the Society had been insufficient to meet the annual expenditure. There had been deficits and the naturally resulting controversies as to policy. The great William Knibb was in England in 1840, enthusiastically urging upon the harassed Committee and the churches a mission to Africa. Unexpectedly and in tragic circumstances, on July 22nd, 1841, John Dyer

passed away, leaving his young colleague with the full weight of responsibility upon his shoulders.

The committee felt that an additional appointment must be made. Frederick Trestrail, of the Irish Society, was approached, but declined. Young William Brock of Norwich was asked, but he also refused. Other names were considered. In the end, Joseph Angus had to face the jubilee and the years that followed alone. W. B. Gurney, the treasurer, was a tower of strength, and Angus had become his son-in-law. The celebrations in Kettering were successfully carried through. A Jubilee Fund of £32,000 was raised. The debt was thereby extinguished. Elegant new headquarters for the Society were built in Moorgate, and a generation later fetched nearly twice as much as they cost. The churches of Jamaica became almost completely self-supporting, commitments in the Dutch East Indies were reduced, and, after a journey of exploration to the West Coast of Africa by John Clarke and Dr. Prince, a new mission field was added to the Society's activities by the sending of settlers to Fernando Po in the *Chilmark*. A large missionary party was on board, and Alfred Saker was of the company.

In 1846 Angus went with C. M. Birrell to Jamaica on a delicate embassy. The stopping of grants from this country had proved very embarrassing to many of the missionaries. William Knibb was dead. The economic difficulties of the West Indies were great. Several of the churches were badly in debt. There was much to be discussed and arranged. Angus showed

such tact and ability that an old negro said of him: "His grey hairs must be inside."

During the years of Angus's secretaryship—which, it has to be remembered, included the events leading up to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and the Factory Act of 1847—not a large number of new missionaries were appointed to the older field of the Baptist Missionary Society, but those who were added to the staff included some destined to render notable service. John Parsons, C. B. Lewis and John Sale went to India, Allen to Ceylon, and Littlewood, Rycroft and Webley to the West Indies. New work was also undertaken nearer home. John Jenkins of Wales settled in Brittany and began there an aggressive Baptist witness.

These were years, then, of important promise; if not great achievement. The record of them was put together annually by the secretary with unusual literary skill. But it was in another direction altogether that he was to make his most memorable contribution to the life of the denomination.

#### IV

In 1838, the year he settled as minister in London, Joseph Angus had become one of the secretaries of his old college at Stepney. He held the position till 1844, when his multiplying responsibilities and the acute problems facing the institution made it necessary for someone with more freedom to give time to its affairs. London University had recently been established and

Angus realised the importance of the new opportunities it offered for a better trained ministry. The College was short of funds, however, and few shared the vision of the far-seeing Secretary. When W. H. Murch died there followed some years of great uncertainty and difficulty. At last, in 1849, Angus himself was invited to become President. His scholarship and his already proven administrative gifts marked him out as supremely suited to the position. When he left Southwark for Fen Court he had assayed a difficult task. When he left Moorgate for Stepney Green he set himself to an even harder one.

Joseph Angus remained the President of the College for no less than forty-four years. Even when it is remembered that he was only thirty-three years old when he was appointed, it was a remarkable period of service. In the closing period of his Presidency he was training the sons of those who had earlier been under his tuition, and might, indeed, have had three generations of one family under his care. He lifted the College from relative obscurity to a foremost place among the theological institutions of the time. His first care was to bring it nearer to London University. With the help of men like Sir Morton Peto, Holford House in Regent's Park was secured, and there the College migrated in 1856. The imposing premises, with their attractive situation, soon became a denominational centre. Benjamin Davies returned to the staff from Canada. He was a distinguished Semitic scholar and orientalist—"a great, rolling, lovable, elephantine

figure of a man . . . every man in the house would have laid down his life for Dr. Benjamin Davies."

Angus's learning had been recognised in 1852 by a D.D. from Brown University, the institution which, a generation earlier, had honoured itself by honouring William Carey. The President's main subjects were Systematic Theology and Biblical Exegesis. He was also an acknowledged authority on English. "It was part of the felicity of the fifties to possess a literature which was at once topical, contemporary and classic," says G. M. Young, "to meet the Immortals in the streets, and to read them with an added zest for the encounter." In the early years of Angus's Presidency handbooks and introductions came swiftly from his ready pen. They were, indeed, so numerous that the *Baptist Magazine* gravely rebuked him for attempting too much and prophesied that his life would be short if he did not restrain his love of work. His *Bible Handbook* and his edition of Butler's *Analogy* secured very wide circulation. The crown of his academic career came in the 'seventies when he was appointed one of the New Testament Revisers, his colleague Benjamin Davies serving on the Old Testament Committee. Work for the London School Board and the Indian Civil Service Examinations also occupied him.

Though he had an exact, well-disciplined mind, Angus was not an original thinker; perhaps his interests covered too wide a field or the years spent in the service of the Missionary Society were from the point of view of scholarship difficult to recover. He had received his

own training too early to be able to adapt himself easily to the changes necessitated by the new knowledge that came to men in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his closing years at Regent's Park College he was in danger of being left behind by the developments around him. He had become an almost legendary figure. But one who knew him well and could speak with authority has left it on record that two principles of abiding value underlay his teaching. All theological knowledge and progress, Angus held, must rest upon sound exegesis of Scripture, and men must think for themselves. He was "courteous, scholarly, saintly."

His services to the College were perhaps greater as an administrator than as a teacher. He had unusual business capacity and, aided first by Joseph Gurney and then by E. B. Underhill, he gained the confidence and support of men of wealth who helped him to place the affairs of the College on a sound basis. He opened its doors to lay-students, many of them men who hoped to pass on into the Indian Civil Service or the medical profession. There passed through his hands into the Baptist ministry a remarkable stream of scholars and preachers of whom only a few can be named. They included Samuel Cox, the expositor, Charles Vince, of Birmingham, Luscombe Hull, the preacher, Hunt Cooke, the editor, James Spurgeon, J. R. Wood, of Upper Holloway, Vincent Tymms, of the Downs and Rawdon College, the Medley brothers, F. B. Meyer, William Edwards, of Cardiff, T. H. Martin, of

Glasgow, Witton Davies, of Bangor, J. H. Shakespeare, maker of the modern Baptist Union, and W. E. Blomfield, of Rawdon. How large a part of Victorian Baptist history is called up by these names!

## V

Throughout his long life Joseph Angus remained keenly interested in the work of the Baptist Missionary Society, and closely in touch with its affairs. He was a cautious and judicious committee man. His wife and daughters were leaders in the Baptist Zenana Mission which was formed in 1867. Among the students of Regent's Park College a great missionary tradition was built up. To India went men of the calibre of George Rouse, J. D. Bate, Charles Jordan and Arthur Jewson; to Ceylon, Waldock and Lapham; to pioneering tasks on the Congo, Tom and Percy Comber, Herbert Dixon, Fred Oram and W. H. C. Doke; to the rapidly developing China mission, Arthur Sowerby, Percy Bruce and A. G. Shorrocks; and to Europe, A. L. Jenkins, W. K. Landels and J. C. Wall. Angus remained at the College till the year after the centenary of the Baptist Missionary Society. His last visit there from the Hampstead home to which he retired was undertaken for the unveiling of a memorial tablet to those sons of the College who died in the early years of the Congo mission. It was fitting that his last words should be about the Society and the cause for which it exists.

Angus retired in 1893, when he was seventy-seven years old, and lived on another nine years. He came of long-lived stock. Born under George III, he did not die till Edward VII was on the throne, so that his life extended through five reigns and included the whole of the lengthy Victorian era. His last years were given to the care and enlargement of his remarkable library of Baptist books. At last, on August 28th, 1902, he passed to his reward.

"He was a distinguished man, whose remarkable ability was equalled by his industry." So said those most closely associated with him in the work of the College. It was difficult to think of the denomination without him. Yet he had not great popular gifts. There was that "peculiarly slow and dry tone of voice." He remains a somewhat shadowy personality as one looks back across the years. "Dr. Angus, the truest of friends, froze you if he saw you were likely to be sentimental or expansive," said W. H. Makepeace. Yet a glimpse of the man himself is given by the following simple letter, written to a country minister unknown to fame.

Coll., R.P. Aug. viii, 1882.

My dear G——,

I was last Sunday but one at your old Quarters, and staid (*sic*) with the Miss W——s. It brought up sad as well as pleasant memories. I remember it in your days and in Mr. F.'s. I missed some old faces. On the other hand Mr. M. seems doing well, though the agricultural interest is suffering. We talked of



your bereavement, which I fear you find it hard to get over. 'The Lord gave' is easily said. 'The Lord hath taken away' is harder; 'Blessed be the name of the Lord' is hardest of all. And yet I have no doubt you have said it.

I hope things are brighter with you in the Church. Anyhow, God guide and bless you.

Yours very truly,

JOSEPH ANGUS.

CHAPTER II

EDWARD BEAN UNDERHILL

1813—1901

“He who is to be a really good and noble guardian of the State will require to unite in himself philosophy and spirit and swiftness and strength.”

PLATO, *Republic* II, 376c.

## CHAPTER II

### EDWARD BEAN UNDERHILL

"DR. UNDERHILL was much more than a secretary. He was the missionary historian, recording with a ready pen the careers of such men as Phillippo, Wenger and Saker, and the progress of missions in the East and West. He was the missionary philosopher, able to discuss methods and reasons, and with very definite ideals as to what the aim of such work should be. He was the missionary traveller. . . . He could be the missionary champion . . . and it was a surprise to discover what a fire of righteous passion could break forth from under the calm and diplomatic exterior of the man." So spoke his minister, William Brock the younger, when in 1901, at the advanced age of eighty-eight, Edward Bean Underhill passed away.

Like his contemporary and friend, Joseph Angus, Underhill had lived from the days of George III to those of Edward VII. For twenty-seven years, throughout the great central period of the Victorian age, he had directed the affairs of the Baptist Missionary Society, and for as many more he had been Honorary Secretary, following events closely, his mind alert and vigorous to the end. Even now there are those who can remember his rare visits to the Mission House in

his later days, when he had to be carried from his carriage in a chair. He still gazes down from his portrait on the walls of No. 1 Committee Room, the poise of his head and his old-fashioned white side-whiskers giving an air of somewhat pained surprise; and until recently there stood in a corner of the Library an interesting bust executed when he was in his prime, showing a face confident, shrewd and kindly. What was his story?

## I

He was born in Oxford in 1813, the year after Napoleon's disastrous Russian enterprise, the year after the fire at Serampore. Andrew Fuller was still alive, and heavily engaged in controversies regarding the charter of the East India Company. Underhill's father was a Baptist and connected with the strong church of which James Hinton was the pastor. In addition to his other duties in Oxford and denominational interests that took him far afield, Hinton carried on a widely-famed school, and to it young Underhill was sent. He was ten years old when the schoolmaster-minister died.

For two years Hinton had been associated with John Ryland in the secretaryship of the Baptist Missionary Society. From his earliest days Edward Underhill must have heard about the work of Carey and his colleagues in India, for, in addition to what he may have learned from Hinton, his own father had been an intimate friend of young W. H. Pearce, the orphaned son of

Samuel Pearce of Birmingham. After training under Collingwood, the University printer, Pearce sailed for India in 1817, but kept in constant touch with his Oxford acquaintances, and while on furlough in 1837 exercised considerable influence on the son of his friend. Speaking at one of the centenary meetings of the Society in 1892, Underhill said: "The last words of William Pearce to me in England some forty years ago, ring in my ears still, 'Edward, you must follow me to India.'"

Young Underhill was converted at the age of sixteen, and joined the Oxford church in 1831. Had his health permitted it, he would probably have entered the ministry, but he was never robust. For some sixteen years he engaged in business, and, when twenty-three years of age, married one of Samuel Collingwood's daughters. Contact with the well-known University printer, who is described as "a scholar, a Christian and a gentleman," gave Underhill the opportunity of seeing the proof of the first of the *Tracts for the Times* which marked the beginning of the Oxford Movement. Newman, Pusey and Keble were familiar figures to him, and though, as he was a Nonconformist, Underhill was barred from the University itself, he yet stood near enough to it to get much stimulus of mind from the stirrings of new life which were showing themselves, and to acquire a wide background of general culture.

In 1843, owing to the illhealth of his wife, who had not long to live, Underhill moved from Oxford to a country home near Stroud in Gloucestershire, and

began to indulge his taste for books by building up a considerable library and devoting himself to the careful study of Nonconformist origins. The establishment of learned societies was a fashion of the day, and Underhill took the lead in forming the Hanserd Knollys Society, precursor of the modern Baptist Historical Society. Seven of the ten volumes issued under its auspices were edited by the honorary secretary himself, and of one careful study he was the author. He became also the proprietor and editor of *The Baptist Record*.

His was not to be a literary career, however. His historical interests, his Oxford connections and his obvious ability brought Underhill into contact with the denominational leaders. In the spring of 1849 he was elected to the committee of the Baptist Missionary Society. Within a few months Joseph Angus left the Mission House in Moorgate to become President of Stepney College. It was decided that two secretaries must be secured by the Baptist Missionary Society, and Underhill was invited to become the colleague of Frederick Trestrail, with special charge of correspondence with the field.

## II

The development of a missionary society cannot be understood out of relation to the general history of the time. The repeal of the Corn Laws led to a period of prosperity and social peace. "From 1846 to 1866,"

says G. M. Trevelyan, "we have the period of quiet Whig-Peelite rule, dominated by the figure of the popular favourite, Lord Palmerston. . . . The main political interests of the period were those of Foreign Affairs." These two decades saw the continental revolutions of 1848 (when Nonconformist, and, indeed, most British sympathies were with the insurgents in Hungary, Italy and elsewhere), the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. Then from 1868 to 1874 came Gladstone's first and greatest ministry.

These events were the background of Underhill's term as Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society. The Indian mission was reorganised. Underhill found himself the storm centre in widespread controversy over the distress and unrest among the negroes and coloured people in Jamaica. The gallant but ill-fated Cameroons venture was continued. A mission was started in Norway, another in Italy, a third in China. The headquarters of the Society was shifted from Moorgate to commodious premises in what is now known as Furnival Street. In all these varied developments—some of them wise and some of more doubtful value—one can trace "the dignity and graciousness" of the Secretary with his "wide experience, varied culture and great business capacity." "With great delicacy and firmness," said the *Baptist Times* many years later, "he corrected abuses and made the necessary alterations and improvements."

Underhill had succeeded to no easy task. In 1849



the Society was faced with a large deficit. The missionaries in Jamaica, in considerable distress owing to the economic situation in the island, were making heavy personal claims on the Society. There were serious difficulties in the Cameroons. There were growing needs in India. Yet there was in regard to the affairs of the Society "a general distrust throughout the churches which even extended to the missionaries in the field." Joseph Angus had, in the previous years, been given a task far too big for one man, especially at a time of political and social unrest.

The new secretaries speedily made their presence felt. In the first five years much time was given to hard systematic deputation work at home. The year 1853, thanks largely to the munificence of the new Treasurer, Sir Morton Peto, was marked by the end of nearly a decade of deficits. At once plans were prepared for the extension and consolidation of the Indian mission. They were presented to and finally approved by the Committee at a sitting that lasted from 10 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. Then, leaving affairs in this country in the hands of Trestrail, Underhill set out for India in October, 1854, with his wife and eldest daughter. He had decided upon an extended and thorough visitation of the field. He went to every station and carried through a series of important regional conferences, remaining in India till the beginning of 1857. There was much to be done in the sphere of personal relationships as well as that of policy. Though the Baptist Missionary Society had been in

existence for over sixty years, no one concerned with home administration had ever before visited the field. It is hardly to be wondered at that Underhill was not universally popular, and that, later, certain discontentment in the missionary circle came to a head. The years have abundantly justified the main lines of his far-seeing policies. In his contact with Indians he seems to have been very happy, and his energetic championship set at rights a bad miscarriage of justice in the case of certain Christians at Barisal. The position he secured for himself in Indian affairs is proved by the call that came to him to give evidence before a committee of the House of Commons.

In 1859 Underhill set out again, this time westwards, visiting Trinidad, Haiti, Jamaica, the Bahamas and the United States. In his main survey of the stations of the Baptist Missionary Society in the West Indies he had J. T. Brown of Northampton as his companion. What he saw and heard on this trip coloured Underhill's subsequent attitude to the wider problems of these colonies and inspired his public intervention in political affairs in 1860 and again in 1865. Both before and after the unfortunate outbreak of violence among the negroes at Morant Bay in 1865, Underhill's name was bandied about, and is still the subject of controversy among historians.

The small mission to Norway was started in 1864. Additional commitments, the Jamaica controversies and a number of other circumstances combined to place the Society in considerable difficulties, and the

years 1866 to 1868 were of unusual anxiety. The failure of Overend and Gurney, the bankers, in the spring of 1866 involved a number of the Society's supporters. There was a large deficit. No new missionaries had been sent out for three years, and during the same period, for one reason or another, twenty-four had returned home. The desirability of a special class of unmarried missionaries was hotly canvassed. New regulations were clearly necessary, and difficult and protracted discussions commenced which ultimately led to the adoption of a probation period before marriage, and to careful restrictions regarding the employment of native agents. Linked with these matters were the discussions provoked by Hudson Taylor's proposals for missionary work in China. While these matters were still being debated Underhill had to undertake a further journey, this time to the Cameroons, where there had been differences among the missionaries. His mission was successful, but soon after his arrival in West Africa, with tragic suddenness, his wife, who was with him, died. She had been his companion in India and the West Indies as well as at home, and her death was a severe loss to the circle of the mission. The stained-glass window in the roof of the Library of the Mission House in Furnival Street commemorates her.

A few more years passed and the main work of Underhill's life was nearly done. The Society was in its new headquarters off Holborn. Trestrail had left its service, but Clement Bailhache had taken his place,

and an able young accountant, A. H. Baynes, was proving his unusual capacity in the office. There were signs of brighter times. The Baptist Zenana Mission had been formed in 1867. Underhill's outstanding services to the whole denomination were recognised by his election to the Presidency of the Baptist Union in 1873. A year or so later Rochester University granted him an LL.D. In 1876, with his bodily strength obviously failing, he retired, and was made Honorary Secretary of the Society he had served so long and so faithfully.

### III

There was granted Underhill a long and useful eventide. He lived to see striking new developments in the work of the Society. Timothy Richard, who had gone to China in 1870, settled in the interior of Shantung in the last year of Underhill's secretaryship, and so began the growth of British Baptist work in North China. Within a few months of his retirement from Furnival Street, the Congo mission was decided upon, and Grenfell and Comber were commissioned to be its pioneers. It was fitting that one of the first stations to be established should be named Underhill.

The aged Secretary followed the new developments with close, sympathetic and critical interest. He returned again to those historical pursuits that had occupied his early manhood, and wrote an important series of biographies, books which increase in value

with the passage of the years. Together they give a comprehensive picture of the main interests of the Baptist Missionary Society during the years of his secretaryship. First came a life of Phillippo of Jamaica, then the privately printed memorials of Edward Steane, then a life of Saker of the Cameroons, and lastly a life of John Wenger of India. Underhill was already well over seventy and in feeble health, but remained keenly interested in all that went on, and closely identified with the work of the Society, particularly with the Bible Translation Society. In 1879 he had become Treasurer of Regent's Park College, and in the closing years of the century he and Joseph Angus made a striking and venerable pair when they appeared together.

Following the visit of A. H. Baynes to India in 1889 controversy arose regarding Serampore College, and, scenting the battle from afar, Underhill, then nearly eighty, prepared a trenchant memorandum which did much to prevent the abandonment of the work. There seemed to come to him a renewal of energy. He prepared the article on Bible Translation for the volume issued for the centenary of the Baptist Missionary Society. He spoke at the celebrations in Nottingham, in Kettering, and finally in the Exeter Hall, London. Then in 1895 he published *The Morant Bay Tragedy*, a careful retelling of the events of thirty years earlier. The next year he issued a collection of papers and memoranda covering the whole of the long period of his connection with the Society. He entitled

it *Principles and Methods of Missionary Labour*, and it is a volume still well worth study by those interested in the affairs of the Baptist Missionary Society.

Slowly the years passed. He was devotedly nursed in his Hampstead home, and greatly honoured in the Heath Street church. The century came to an end. In December, 1900, he attended a meeting of the executive of Regent's Park College. He made a last journey to Furnival Street. On January 22nd, 1901, Queen Victoria died. An epoch seemed to have ended. For those of Dr. Underhill's years it was clearly time to depart. On May 11th he passed peacefully away.

"He always produced on my mind the impression that his convictions were determined by his knowledge and intelligence," said Charles Williams of Accrington, who knew him well. The Society has never had a Secretary of greater intellectual power nor one with a keener eye to missionary strategy.

CHAPTER III

ALFRED HENRY BAYNES

1838—1914

“ . . . the high traditions of an earlier Britain, dignity in speech and demeanour, subtlety and precision of thought, a passionate belief in an imperial mission, and a supreme administrative talent.”

JOHN BUCHAN, *The King's Grace*, p. 314.



### CHAPTER III

## ALFRED HENRY BAYNES

“To many in our churches Mr. Baynes has been the Baptist Missionary Society.” So said the *Missionary Herald* in 1906 when Alfred Henry Baynes retired from the Secretaryship of the Society after thirty years’ service. Even now, when another three decades have passed, the words are often echoed by those whose memories carry them back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early days of the twentieth. Mr. Baynes was the B.M.S. in the popular imagination. He personified it. He controlled it. Men thought of him as the chief, the commander, the leader who put heart into his men, ever setting them an example by his own incessant application and quenchless enthusiasm.

He was an outstanding personality. One has only to glance at his portrait in No. 1 Committee Room of the Mission House to see that. He looks down with authority on the scene where he ruled for so many years, and even in the changed conditions of the modern world seems like some presiding deity, watching over the affairs of the Society, ready to step down and once more take the helm should his successors bring the good ship too near disaster. He has quickly

become an almost legendary figure. It is the more necessary to outline his story as simply and straightforwardly as possible.

## I

Alfred Henry Baynes was born at Wellington, in Somerset, on April 11th, 1838, the year after Queen Victoria ascended the throne. John Morley and Viscount Bryce were his exact contemporaries. He was a son of the manse. Joseph Baynes, his father, was for forty years the minister of the Wellington Baptist Church and a trusted leader in the Western Association. As a youth he had hoped to go as a missionary to India, but his health had broken down while he was a student in Glasgow. He kept his missionary enthusiasm, however; published an early sermon on *The Paramount Importance of Communicating the Gospel to the Heathen*; and rejoiced that three of his sisters were connected with the Indian mission, one as the wife of W. W. Evans, who after six years abroad became Secretary of the Bible Translation Society, one as the wife of John Parsons, of Delhi.

Joseph Baynes married the daughter of a deacon of Broadmead Church, Bristol. Of their fourteen children, three daughters and eight sons survived infancy. The latter were all of them men of ability and strength of character. The eldest became a well-known Baptist minister in Nottingham. Thomas

Spencer Baynes, who was trained at Bristol College, became the Professor of Metaphysics at St. Andrew's University and one of the editors of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Another son, Robert Hall Baynes, entered the Church of England, becoming a Canon of Worcester and the author of the familiar communion hymn, "Jesus, to Thy table led." William Wilberforce Baynes attained an important position in the City. Alfred Henry came, therefore, of a race of strong men, and had been prepared by heredity for the work he was to do. He was educated at Devonshire College, Bath, and was intended for the medical profession. It seemed doubtful, however, whether his health would stand prolonged study, and accordingly it was decided that he should go into business.

As a young man of twenty, A. H. Baynes came to London and entered the service of Sir Morton Peto, of Peto, Brassey and Betts, a large firm of engineers and contractors, then at the peak of their fortunes. Sir Morton Peto was widely known in political as well as philanthropic circles. Since 1846 he had been the munificent Treasurer of the B.M.S. He took to young Baynes, and made him his secretary, and when, in 1861, the accounts of the Society clearly needed careful handling, and Dr. Underhill and Frederick Trestrail, the Secretaries, were heavily occupied with other affairs, he offered to send him to Moorgate as accountant. With not ill-founded pride, Sir Morton used to declare that "the best gift he ever made to

the Mission was the gift of his own private secretary."

The young accountant's business gifts were soon put to the test. It was decided that the Mission House in Moorgate must be sold. It was no longer adequate for the needs of the Society. For five years, from 1865 to 1870, cramped temporary premises were found in John Street, Bedford Row, and then new imposing headquarters were built off Holborn, in what is now known as Furnival Street. At first the property was held on lease, but after a few years the freehold was secured. During all these changes A. H. Baynes not only proved his capacity for his own particular tasks, but also made clear his ability to undertake further responsibilities. When Trestrail retired in 1870 it was natural that Baynes, then thirty-two years old, should be appointed Minute Secretary as well as Accountant. Some months later Clement Bailhache became Association Secretary, giving his attention mainly to deputation work and the raising of home income. The B.M.S. was increasing its commitments. The work in India was growing; the formation of the Baptist Zenana Mission and the opening of the Suez Canal were both new factors in its development. There were still many problems connected with the West Indies. The Cameroons Mission was in serious difficulties. Brittany and Norway claimed attention. China and Italy were soon to become fields of the Society. Dr. Underhill was nearing the end of his great Secretaryship.

Another six years passed, and when Dr. Underhill

retired Alfred Baynes was the obvious man to be the colleague of Clement Bailhache. He already knew intimately the working of the Society. Clearly a strong guiding hand was necessary. For nine years the income had been insufficient to meet the growing expenditure. There was an atmosphere of disquiet and depression abroad. It was no easy task that the new Secretary assayed, but he had been watching and waiting, and he knew that his hour had come.

## II

“We had begun to dream that we must equalise expenditure and income by spending less,” wrote Richard Glover, of Bristol, recalling the appointment of Alfred Henry Baynes as B.M.S. Secretary; “he taught us the more excellent way of giving more.” Within a few years great strides forward had been taken. In part they were forced by outside events. The long-closed door into China slowly opened. In 1875, Timothy Richard, of his own accord, hastened through it, and establishing himself at Tsingchowfu, commenced the Shantung mission. Almost before the home constituency had learned the new names, and before adequate reinforcements could be sent him, Richard was called on into Shansi. Concurrently, important events were shaping in the dark continent of Africa.

The name of A. H. Baynes will always be specially associated with the Congo mission. Humanly speaking,

he was its "builder and maker," and it lay very close to his heart. Stanley's discoveries and Arthington's generosity made it possible, but it was Baynes's courage and statesmanship that enabled the B.M.S. to take advantage of the new opportunities, that roused the interest and enthusiasm of the churches and stirred them to new giving, and that held men to the enterprise when many hearts were failing because of the early casualties and the long-delayed results. "Africa for Christ" became a slogan that for nearly a generation governed the growth of the B.M.S.

The opening of these new chapters in China and Congo was followed in 1879 by the death of Clement Bailhache. By then Baynes had so strong a hold on the affairs of the mission that it was decided to make him General Secretary. John Brown Myers, who was brought to Furnival Street from a Northamptonshire pastorate, was to be known as Association Secretary, and was to have no responsibility for policy or administration abroad.

Baynes had to give attention not only to the developing work in the Far East and in Africa, but also to the older fields of the Society. He went to India in 1881-2, and again in 1889. How different might Indian developments have been had Richard Glover accepted the invitation extended to him in 1879 to be Financial Secretary to the India mission and pastor of the Circular Road Church, Calcutta! Several of Baynes's proposals caused the aged but astute Dr. Underhill grave disquiet. It is now generally

recognised that it was a mistake to restrict the work at Serampore to that of "a native training institution." There is no doubt, however, of Baynes's sincere desire for greater and quicker results from all the efforts that were being made in India, and of the need for many of the changes he instituted with characteristic shrewdness and energy. He succeeded also in winning the confidence and regard of almost all the missionaries.

Soon after his return from his first visit to India, Baynes had to deal with the complicated and difficult situation which followed the occupation of the Cameroons by the Germans. Delicate negotiations had to be conducted both in Berlin and London, but in the end the work in the Cameroons was successfully handed over to the Basle Mission and fresh resources were released for the growing demands from the Congo. The European stations also claimed much of the time of the Secretary.

As the years passed Alfred Henry Baynes became an increasingly familiar and influential figure in this country. Not a few churches came to turn to him instinctively for advice when a new minister had to be found. The centenary of the Society was worthily celebrated in 1892. A large programme of meetings was carried through, many new recruits were secured, and a large thanksgiving fund was raised. At the same time the General Baptist Mission was merged into the B.M.S. Lytton Strachey, in his biography of Queen Victoria says that "the solid splendour of the decade between Victoria's two jubilees can hardly be

paralleled in the annals of England." Something of this seemed to communicate itself to the affairs of the Society. The spirit of imperialism was abroad. Britain's was a beneficent mission which she would worthily fulfil, and the B.M.S., led by Alfred Henry Baynes, would play no mean part. When Baynes retired in 1906 the *Baptist Times* used language which reads very strangely today: "Among the men who have done most to build up and establish on sure foundations the Empire of which we are rightly proud, there are few, if any, who have played a nobler or a more effective part than Mr. Baynes."

The last years of his secretaryship were not altogether cloudless. The Boer War cast its shadow over the opening of the century. The Boxer Rising in China in 1900 brought in its train a tragic tale of martyrdom. There were anxieties attending labour conditions on the rubber plantations in the Congo Free State. The Queen passed away, then Dr. Underhill, then Dr. Angus and the last survivors of their generation. In 1898 a young minister from Norwich had come to the Secretaryship of the Baptist Union, which was housed in a couple of rooms at the top of the Mission House, and it soon became clear that big changes were coming in the relationships within the denomination. J. H. Shakespeare established the Baptist Union at the Church House in Southampton Row. New men and new movements appeared.

In 1906, when he was sixty-eight years old, Alfred Henry Baynes laid down the burden of affairs he had



so long and so ably carried. To the end he had retained his confidence and enthusiasm. And he handed over affairs with thankfulness and satisfaction in the fact that Robert Arthington had left the B.M.S. nearly half a million pounds for the extension of its work. At the session of the Baptist Assembly at which public farewell was taken of him, Baynes was compared by Herbert Marnham to a war-worn veteran urging on his men to the very last.

### III

Alfred Henry Baynes retired in the spring of 1906, but agreed to be known as the Honorary Secretary of the B.M.S. He retained the Treasurership of the Bible Translation Society, the Chairmanship of the Serampore College Council, and of the Committee of the Arthington Fund No. 1. During his successor's absence in China in 1907-8, and again in 1911, he came back to Furnival Street for brief periods. Within a few months of his death he once more visited the Italian mission, and even talked of a third journey to India. But his work was done. Soon after the outbreak of the Great War, in October, 1914, he passed peacefully away.

It was an astonishing growth that had taken place in the work of the Society between 1879, when Baynes became General Secretary, and 1906, when he retired. In 1879 there were only thirty-five missionaries in

India, and two in China; the work in Congo had barely begun. In 1906 there were seventy-three missionaries in India, thirty-six in China, and thirty-five in Africa. How intimately Baynes himself was bound up with all this growth was recognised universally. Alexander McLaren, then a veteran of eighty years, came specially to the Baptist Assembly that he might eulogise his friend, uttering some of the tenderest and most eloquent words that ever fell from his lips.

Baynes was not drawn to literary work and always disliked public speaking, though he proved himself master of a simple, fervent, unadorned eloquence that was most effective. He rarely referred to the deep things of the soul, but men were in no doubt as to his personal faith. They knew he had declined many invitations to other tasks and they could tell many a tale of his private generosity. He was a hard worker, ceaseless in application, but John Brown Myers, his colleague through many years, applied to him Carlyle's words about the cheerful man; "doing more work in the same time than the man who is sullen, doing it better, persevering longer, wondrous being the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its powers of endurance." His friends had come to love his eccentricities, his vibrant, almost strident, voice, his special phrases—"My friends, we are saved by hope," "And time is of the essence of importance." They had come, indeed, to love the man himself, autocrat though he was. Thomas Lewis, who met him first in

1882, writing many years after his death, spoke of Baynes as "this giant among men, this prince of Missionary Secretaries. All missionaries loved him. He won our hearts at the first interview. When in trouble and difficulty it was the natural thing to turn to Mr. Baynes, and we never turned to him in vain." There could be no finer epitaph.

CHAPTER IV

WILLIAM KNIBB OF JAMAICA

1803—1845

“For he was Freedom’s champion, one of those,  
The few in number, who had not o’erstopt  
The charter to chastise which she bestows  
On such as wield her weapons; he had kept  
The whiteness of his soul, and thus men o’er him wept.”  
BYRON, *Childe Harold*, iii, 57.

## CHAPTER IV

# WILLIAM KNIBB OF JAMAICA

### I

ON September 7th, 1803, in the little town of Kettering twin children were born to the wife of Thomas Knibb, a sailor who made no profession of religion. The girl grew up to a comparatively uneventful life. The boy, William, became known throughout the British Isles, the West Indies and even further afield, and is still gratefully remembered. He was called "King Knibb" by friends and foes, and as the champion of the negro slaves crowded into forty-two years many exciting adventures.

It was in Kettering that the Baptist Missionary Society had been formed in 1792. Andrew Fuller, the first secretary, was Baptist minister there, but the mother to whom the Knibb family owed so much—a woman who had "a breadth and depth in her views on all subjects"—sent her children to the Sunday School connected with the Independent Chapel.

As a boy William was affectionate, generous and vivacious, famed for his skill at the game of marbles, quick and clever at his lessons, though not specially industrious. An elder brother, Thomas, became an

apprentice to Andrew Fuller's son, who was a printer, and when the latter moved his business to Bristol, he took with him not only Thomas, but thirteen-year-old William. There the two boys came directly under Baptist influence. William Knibb, a tall, fresh-complexioned lad of nineteen, was baptised in 1822 at Broadmead chapel by Dr. Ryland, who, thirty-nine years earlier, at Northampton, had baptised William Carey. Already the mind of Thomas Knibb was turned towards missionary service. The brothers were in an atmosphere where enthusiasm for the Baptist Missionary Society ran high. They had a share in the printing of the *Periodical Accounts*. Their talk was of what was happening to Carey and his friends in India, and to those who were laying the foundations of a mission among the West Indian slaves.

The year that William was baptised, Thomas was accepted for service as a schoolmaster in Jamaica. What would have happened had young Edward Irving accepted the invitation he received about this time to go out to the Presbyterian Church at Kingston, Jamaica? The thoughts of William Knibb were beginning to turn towards some kind of service abroad. Meantime he extended the range of his Christian work by interesting himself in a village Sunday School, by lay-preaching, and by visits to a rough slum district in the city of Bristol. To improve his vocabulary he studied Johnson's Dictionary at meal-times. Boldness, energy and devotion characterised all his efforts, though there was evident also some self-distrust. In

a letter to his brother regarding the possibility of joining him, William wrote:

“Should it be the will of God that I should go, I think it will be as a schoolmaster. . . . I do not feel that I could be ordained. . . . Preaching does not seem my element. . . . Search me, O my God! Enable me to try every motive which arises in my breast; and, if it is Thy will that I should go, open a way before me! O may I never be a cumberer of the ground.”

With tragic suddenness, after only four months in Jamaica, Thomas Knibb died. The climate took heavy toll of the early missionaries. When the news was broken to him by his employer, William stood up and said: “Then, if the Society will accept me, I’ll go and take his place.” The offer was accepted. He was sent for a brief training in London. A companion at the school wrote afterwards of his “incessant activity” and “exuberance of animal spirits.” His mother was in poor health, and her farewell words to him were from her bedroom window in Kettering: “Remember, I would rather hear you have perished in the sea, than that you have disgraced the cause you go to serve.” In October, 1824, he was married to a Bristol girl, his faithful companion through all the stormy years that lay ahead, and a month later they sailed for Jamaica. Knibb spent the three months of the voyage preaching to his fellow passengers, and arguing with them about slavery.



## II

For two hundred and fifty years the West Indies had been a slave centre. Negroes were captured in Africa, shipped across the Atlantic, and sold to work in the sugar plantations and mines. Cruelty, immorality and superstition reduced their numbers, but since the trade was a lucrative one a constant supply was maintained. Not till the latter years of the eighteenth century did English philanthropists awaken to the horror and iniquity of what was going on, and then they began their campaign against these things in the belief that the stopping of the trade would ensure better conditions for the slaves and that slavery itself need not be ended. The forces led by Wilberforce at last achieved their first objective in 1807.

Some few attempts had meantime been made to minister to the slaves. Moravians, Wesleyans and finally Baptists settled among them as missionaries. When William Knibb reached Jamaica, Baptists from England had been there for more than ten years. Most of the planters vigorously and bitterly opposed all religious work among the slaves, and for a time the Jamaica Assembly had been able to prevent all preaching and teaching on the plantations. Slowly but surely, however, churches were built up and schools opened.

After a brief stay at Kingston, working in the school there, Knibb was drawn into regular preaching and pastoral duties at Port Royal. The missionary band

was depleted, the need was great, and the difficulties and dangers made an irresistible appeal to him. Three strenuous years left their mark on his health, and he was moved to Savanna-la-Mar, in the south-west of the island.

Knibb had received instructions from the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society that as a missionary in Jamaica he must have "nothing whatever to do with its civil and political affairs," but he could not conceal his deepening distress at the results of the slave system. "The more I see of slavery," he wrote, "the more I hate and abhor it." Opinion in England was growingly in favour of an immediate and considerable betterment in the condition of the slaves, and of their ultimate and not long-delayed emancipation. The planters were alarmed, and many of them treated their slaves with an increasing callousness, showing also a growing hostility towards the missionaries. There was even wild talk of Jamaica's breaking away from the British Empire.

Knibb was a man whose strength and determination were called out by opposition. At Savanna-la-Mar he had some ugly incidents with which to deal. One of his negro deacons was shamefully flogged and sentenced to a fortnight's work with a chain gang for attending a prayer meeting. Knibb gave publicity to the case and secured money from England to purchase the man's freedom. He took a spirited part in the controversies over the Slave Code which the Jamaica Assembly tried to pass to stay the demands of the

anti-slavery party at home, but which would have made missionary work almost impossible. In 1830 he was called to the north of the island, to Falmouth. He had already three children and was loth to move, but felt the challenge of a new and larger sphere.

Serious trouble was at hand. From scraps of information they overheard, the slaves came to believe that freedom had been granted them by the British Parliament, but was being withheld by the planters. In the north-west of Jamaica, where Baptist influence was strongest, the rumour spread that Thomas Burchell, a missionary who had had to visit England owing to illhealth, was bringing back "a free paper." A passive resistance movement was organised. Work was to be stopped at Christmas, 1831. The unwise actions of the authorities provoked further bitterness, and in the last days of the year a revolt broke out, the wild forces being beyond the control of the leaders, and of the missionaries, who did their best to disabuse and quieten the negroes. Such an insurrection had small chance of success, and it was speedily and ruthlessly suppressed.

The infuriated planters then turned their attention to the missionaries. Knibb and others were arrested and charged with inciting the rebellion. They were treated with the greatest indignity and were in grave peril, but influential friends came to their aid, and no charges could be sustained against any of them. The disappointed mob then adopted a suggestion of the Colonial Church Union, whose aim was that

“every dissenting preacher, of every colour, should be sent off the island,” and began to wreck the Baptist chapels. Beginning with “that pestilential hole, Knibb’s preaching shop,” in Falmouth, within a week almost all the buildings connected with the Baptist Mission had been destroyed, as well as property belonging to other religious bodies.

### III

In the spring of 1832, when at last the harassed missionaries were able to meet together to take counsel, it was resolved that Knibb should go to England to make known to the denomination and the country what had been taking place. As he sailed up the Irish Channel the pilot came on board bringing news of the passing of the great Reform Bill. “Thank God,” cried Knibb. “Now I’ll have slavery down. I will never rest, day or night, till I see it destroyed, root and branch.”

He had need of all his resolution. By no means all Christian people—to say nothing of the others—were convinced that slavery was a wrong system. Many of the keen supporters of the Baptist Missionary Society feared that Knibb and his friends had been indiscreet and had broken the laws. There was talk of disowning him. But when Knibb told his story, before the Committee, at the Annual Meeting of the Society, above all at a great gathering in Exeter Hall, London, and

on many subsequent occasions, he was able to sweep aside hesitation, and to rouse overwhelming feeling by his passionate recitals of the wrongs done to the negro Christians and of the iniquities of slavery. "Whatever the consequences, I *will* speak," he cried once when cautioned. "At the risk of my connexion with the Society, and of all I hold dear, I will avow this. And if the friends of missions will not hear me, I will turn and tell it to my God: nor will I desist till this greatest of curses is removed."

When Knibb thus set about the education of public opinion he was not yet thirty years old. He was summoned before the Select Committee of the Houses of Parliament which were considering the situation in Jamaica, and subjected to a long and close cross-questioning. "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." He journeyed up and down the land, preaching, speaking and debating. The planters engineered many personal attacks upon him to which he vigorously replied. Owing largely to his efforts the first reformed House of Commons, elected that winter, contained a majority pledged to deal with the slave question. The following August an Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies received the royal assent. From August 1st, 1834, the slaves were to be free.

Knibb remained in England till compensation had been secured for the ruined chapels, and money collected for restarting the mission. The months of victory were saddened for him by the death of a baby boy whom he had named after Andrew Fuller. He reached Jamaica again in the autumn of 1834 and was tumultuously received: "Him come, him come for true. It him, it him for true," cried the excited negroes. "But see how him stand. He make two of what him was when he left."

## IV

The rebuilding of Baptist property and the re-organisation of missionary work proceeded apace, but it soon became clear that the Apprenticeship System of labour, by which the negroes were compelled to work forty-five hours each week without wages—with the object of gradually purchasing their own freedom—meant that their condition was little improved. The treadmill was introduced as a new form of punishment. Cruel floggings continued. Knibb and his fellow missionaries had to be constantly on the watch to prevent the shameless ill-treatment of their coloured friends. They were in touch with the leaders of the anti-slavery party in England and supplied incontrovertible evidence of what was going on. Many attempts were made to intimidate Knibb and often he was in personal danger from the violence of the planters. Stories are still told of how he was to be seen sometimes walking excitedly up and down, with his

coat-tails flapping behind him, as if to say: "Don't care! Don't care!"

Feeling in England at length compelled a further change, and the Jamaica Assembly, fearing it would be deprived of its authority, decided to give up the remaining years of apprenticeship and to allow 800,000 negroes to become completely free on August 1st, 1838.

There are many still living who have heard eye-witnesses describe the celebration of that day in Jamaica. Prophecies of riot and excess had been falsified four years earlier. Once more the chapels were crowded. At Falmouth, just before midnight on July 31st, among his own people, Knibb pointed to the face of the chapel clock: "The hour is at hand. The monster is dying." There was a moving 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 exultation. Knibb himself was deeply moved. Just a year before his loved eldest son had passed away. But he went outside with the negroes afterwards and helped to bury a slave whip, a chain and a collar, and to rear over the spot a Union Jack.

Not even then was there peace. Trouble arose regarding wages, and Knibb took the lead in preventing the negroes from entering into contracts at the shamelessly low rates which were at first suggested. "King Knibb," "the Dan O'Connell of Jamaica" the planters sneeringly and bitterly called him, spreading

rumours of his death to provoke disturbances, and embroiling him in lawsuits and public controversies. But he held on his way, and played an important part in the establishment of free townships and villages, new settlements where the negroes were independent of planter landlords. The Baptist numbers swelled rapidly, and difficulty was experienced in sifting and training the candidates for Church membership, in spite of additions to the ranks of the missionaries.

Knibb visited England in 1840 as a delegate to the great Anti-Slavery Convention in London, bringing with him two freed negroes, and again in 1842, when he was able to take part in the jubilee celebrations of the Baptist Missionary Society. He was still the object of abuse in certain quarters. Even in missionary circles there were some who charged him with being a demagogue, with carelessness in receiving people into the Church and with personal extravagance. Few men of action escape criticism, and it would be foolish to pretend that Knibb was always tactful. He was an ardent, impulsive fighter, but charges against his honour and sincerity could never be sustained. He took a leading part in the decision that the Jamaican churches in the year of the jubilee of the Society should become independent, but it was two other concerns that were chiefly on his mind—a mission to West Africa, and the establishment of an institution for training native pastors—both of which are evidence of his enthusiasm, his evangelical passion, his faith in his black friends, and his foresight.



## V

For many years Knibb had had the needs of Africa upon his heart and had dreamed of the freed Jamaican negroes carrying the gospel to the land of their origin. In a letter of 1839 he writes: "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 every night, nor can I think of anything else." At one time he thought of volunteering himself for service in the Dark Continent, and when, in 1840, it was decided to start a mission Knibb travelled up and down Britain rousing enthusiasm and appealing for funds, as only he could. Three years later a large party of Jamaicans set out in the *Chilmark* for the island of Fernando Po, which had been selected for the new venture. There was ever something of the boy in Knibb, and he obtained permission to steer the vessel out of Falmouth harbour, writing afterwards that he wished he could have had his "likeness taken" while at the wheel.

Closely linked in his thought with this gallant enterprise was the establishment of a college. Shortly before the *Chilmark* sailed a beginning was made at Calabar, near the north coast of Jamaica. At the opening Knibb gave an address on "The Duty of Supporting Theological Institutions." Some doubted the possibility, others the wisdom, of giving any kind of higher education to negroes. The years have shown

Calabar to be one of the most beneficent of the schemes in which Knibb had a share.

In 1845 he was once more in England. The wave of prosperity which had followed complete emancipation had soon passed. Disaster came upon the sugar industry, and there was widespread distress. Knibb appealed for help, making in various parts of the country vigorous and effective speeches, and securing a considerable sum of money from the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society. Recalling them afterwards, men detected in his words of farewell a premonition that he would not again visit his native land. He reached Jamaica on August 1st, 1845, and a great popular demonstration took place. A triumphal procession conducted him to his home. In the hearts of those whose cause he had championed he was securely throned. After a little more than three months in the island, however, he was stricken with the dreaded yellow fever.

“Death came with rapid strides upon a strong man armed, and the contest was sad and terrible,” wrote his devoted wife. But his heart was at peace, and in his last hours he quoted words that William Carey had chosen for his tombstone:

“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,  
On Thy kind arms I fall.”

On November 15th, 1845, he passed away.

A ruddy, open countenance, vividly expressive of his feelings, generally beaming with kindness, but some-

times glowing with intense indignation; a tall, athletic frame; a fearless, resolute will and singleness of aim and purpose; a clear, powerful voice and rugged, effective, excited eloquence; a sturdy faith and joy in God; a deep affection and tenderness towards children and those nearest to him; an ardent sympathy with the oppressed—these things went to the making of a man who was surely raised up for the situation he had to meet, and who played his part so bravely that his niche is ever secure not only in the gallery of Baptist worthies, but in the more spacious temple of the champions of human freedom.

CHAPTER V

ALFRED SAKER OF THE CAMEROONS

1814—1880

“Take it all in all, especially having regard to its manifold character, the work of Alfred Saker at Cameroons and Victoria is, in my judgment, the most remarkable on the African coast.”

DAVID LIVINGSTONE.

## CHAPTER V

### ALFRED SAKER OF THE CAMEROONS

FOR nearly half a century the mission to Fernando Po and the Cameroons occupied a central place in the interests of the Baptist Missionary Society. It began in 1840, and in 1885 was handed over to the Basle Mission. By then fresh enterprises had been launched in the Congo. The outstanding figure of the Cameroons work, so far as English Baptists were concerned, was Alfred Saker.

He was sent out to the field in 1843 during the secretaryship of Joseph Angus. It was E. B. Underhill who supported him throughout the arduous trials and difficulties brought by the years. Saker's return home from the field and Underhill's retirement from the secretaryship of the Baptist Missionary Society coincided in 1876. The veteran was constantly visited, during the last years of his life, by Alfred Henry Baynes. Saker was, indeed, the outstanding figure of the mid-nineteenth century, so far as Baptist missions were concerned, a gaunt spectre of selfless devotion and industry, lonely, silent, "strong in meekness, in patience, and in imperturbable quietness of spirit, and in his calm trust in God," one who played a notable part, not only in the opening up of Africa, but in

holding the purpose of the denomination fast to its missionary responsibilities.

David Livingstone was his contemporary, and testified to the worth of his service on the West Coast. Saker had to play his part on a restricted stage, with little popular applause and no spectacular results, but there is nothing incongruous in setting his name beside that of Livingstone, or, to take a contemporary from another walk of life and another continent, that of Abraham Lincoln.

## I

Alfred Saker was born at the village of Borough Green in the Weald of Kent in the year 1814. He was one of the many children of a mill-wright and engineer, "not worth rearing" according to an old nurse. He did survive, however, though always an exceedingly sensitive child, fonder of books than of games. At the age of six he could be seen, light-haired and blue-eyed, journeying to the National School three-quarters of a mile from his home on the back of his elder brother, John. After only four years' schooling he had to enter his father's workshop. There he found scope to develop his love of scientific instruments. Globes and telescopes were his delight, and he built himself a small steam engine, then a great novelty. Singing became his chief outside interest.

As a lad of sixteen young Saker was "lent" to a business in Sevenoaks, and while there drifted one

afternoon into the Baptist chapel. A young man named Amos Sutton had been connected with the cause there a few years earlier and had but recently begun notable missionary service in Orissa. The Sunday of Saker's visit a stranger was preaching. His words reached the heart of the young wheelwright and led to his conversion. On his return home he identified himself with the Borough Green Baptist church, becoming a teacher and later Superintendent of the Sunday School, and an enthusiastic member of the choir. After his baptism, which took place in 1834, the opinion gained ground among his friends that he ought to devote himself to the Christian ministry.

In 1838, however, Saker's father died, and to earn an adequate livelihood Alfred applied for work in the naval dockyards. He was appointed to Devonport and acquitted himself well. In 1840 he married. Helen Jessup came from Wrotham, near his home. Probably she was one of the decisive influences turning his mind towards missionary service, for it is recorded that she and a friend had offered themselves to the Church Missionary Society, but that they were rejected because, at that time, single women were not sent abroad. Shortly after this Helen Jessup came of her own accord to Baptist convictions, and her acquaintance with Alfred Saker ripened into an engagement and then marriage.

The unknown continent of Africa was exercising an increasing fascination over men's minds. The struggle against slavery in the British Empire had at last been



won, but there remained tragic consequences in other parts of the world, and the memory of the wrongs done to the land from which the negroes had been so cruelly torn. Thomas Fowell Buxton appealed for "overturning the Slave Trade by civilisation, Christianity and the cultivation of the soil," and the Prince Consort presided at a great meeting in the Exeter Hall, following which the ill-fated Niger Expedition was prepared under the auspices of the African Civilisation Society. At the same time, in response to the appeals of William Knibb and his Jamaican friends, John Clarke and Dr. G. K. Prince, two Baptist missionaries, were sent to the West Coast to discover whether a new mission could be established there. Their report was favourable. They selected the island of Fernando Po as the scene of operations, and after some preliminary work returned in 1842 to England to secure recruits. Both Buxton and Clarkson, the veteran leaders of the anti-slavery movement in England, were among the subscribers to this new venture of the Baptist Missionary Society.

At the end of his life Saker told Alfred Henry Baynes how obsessed he became, as a young man, with the thought of Africa's needs, and how, when at work in the dockyard, with almost every stroke of the hammer on the rivet, he fancied he heard the word "Africa" ring forth. On their return from Fernando Po, Clarke and Prince spoke in the Morice Square Baptist Chapel, Devonport. "Are you prepared to go to Africa?" said Saker to his wife on his return home.

Her thoughts went first to her children. She had two of her own, and was also caring for her youngest sister and for Saker's youngest brother. A week's careful consideration of the issues brought them to the decision to offer for service, and with the help of the Devonport minister they were accepted by the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society. On the eve of their departure from England their elder child, Sarah, died.

## II

The story of the voyage of the *Chilmark* from England to Fernando Po is one of the epics of the Baptist Missionary Society. She was a small sailing vessel of only 179 tons, commissioned to go first to Jamaica to pick up there a party of recruits for the new mission. Clarke and Saker and their families were on board. They left Portsmouth in July, 1843, and almost at once ran into bad weather. The accommodation provided for the passengers was altogether inadequate, and Saker had to sleep on the floor of the saloon. Eight weeks of acute discomfort were spent in crossing the Atlantic. The vessel remained off Jamaica for six weeks, and then the missionary party was made up to forty-two persons in all, including children. In the island enthusiasm for the new venture ran high, and at a farewell Communion Service at Falmouth, presided over by William Knibb, fifteen hundred people were present.

The voyage across the Atlantic again took eleven weeks. They were made miserable by the violence of the captain, the drunkenness and blasphemies of the crew, the scarcity and bad quality of the food, and the wretched state of overcrowding. It was an inauspicious beginning. Saker spent most of the time organising classes for the study of subjects likely to be useful later to the coloured Jamaican brethren. He was deeply pained at the scornful treatment they received from the crew, and anxious also about Mrs. Saker. Fernando Po was reached at last in February, 1844, and within ten days a little girl, who was named Mary, was born to the Sakers. She lived, however, for only a few months.

Saker plunged eagerly into the manifold tasks awaiting the pioneers. Wood-ants, tornadoes and fevers combined to hold up the work of providing houses for the settlers. Before long they were short of food. "No biscuit, no flour, no sugar, no butter, no meat of any kind, except sometimes a fowl, a squirrel, or a piece of good mutton," wrote Saker. "Yam, our chief dependence, is now getting scarce. But I do not complain. The host of self-denying men in ancient and modern days would at once reprove my earnest heart. Oh! for the zeal of an apostle, to spend my days in cheerful labour to spread the knowledge of the great salvation!" Slowly the settlement at Clarence grew, but the inhabitants of the interior of the island were savage and unresponsive, and most of the Jamaicans soon showed a lack of physical and moral stamina,

which added to the difficulties of the white missionaries.

On the arrival of a party of recruits from England in the *Dove*, a mission schooner of 70 tons, Saker went over to the Cameroons mainland with Horton Johnson, a faithful African helper who had been converted through Saker's first sermon at Clarence. In the face of many dangers and difficulties they established a settlement at "Bethel." Saker set himself to the study of the Dualla language and began the translation of the Bible. The country around was almost inaccessible, the inhabitants were wild, and the climate most treacherous. Before many months had passed Mrs. Saker and her little girl had to return to England, and loneliness was added to Saker's other trials. The shortage of missionaries at Clarence soon afterwards compelled his return to Fernando Po. "Our Jamaica band have almost disappeared," he wrote. Death and sickness had terribly thinned the ranks of the white men.

In 1850 Saker himself came to England to try to recruit his strength. E. B. Underhill had succeeded Joseph Angus as the Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society. The hearts of many at home were failing them because of the difficulties facing the Cameroons mission. Saker at length addressed to the Committee a letter that became historic. Its sentences clearly reveal the spirit of the man.

"I have a fear that some of you who wish well to Africa will be discouraged, and I think you ought

not to be. Let us review some of the facts. Ten years since you commenced the work. You sent many labourers and expended much treasure. Of those sent out, God has gathered to Himself Thompson, Sturgeon, A. Fuller, Merrick and Newbegin. Prince and Clarke have been driven from the field, and a small company of West Indians have fled, terrified by the toil and suffering. This suffering and loss of life show that the sacrifice you have made is large. But ought we to have expected less? Bloodless victories are not common. . . . There are now living in Africa about one hundred souls hopefully converted to God. . . . There are now eight native teachers engaged, more or less, in efforts for the salvation of souls. . . . In the colony of Clarence you have effected a transformation unspeakably valuable, and almost unprecedented. . . . On the continent souls have been brought to God, churches formed, and actually the wilderness is now being transformed into the garden of the Lord. . . . Brethren, I think you will feel with me, that we must not be discouraged. . . . You will doubtless conclude that I ought to return to Africa immediately; I can only say that I am ready."

Leaving his family in England Saker started out again. For two and a half years he had to be alone at Clarence. He was "in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in

weariness and painfulness," but nothing daunted him or damped his ardour. He paid a brief visit to England in 1855—wearsy and broken physically, but indomitable in spirit—and returned to Africa to face the complications which followed a Spanish edict, inspired by the Roman Catholics, which made Protestant missionary work on the island of Fernando Po almost impossible.

In company with Jackson Fuller, the finest gift of Jamaica to the Cameroons mission, Saker had explored the mainland, facing great hardships in the difficult and dangerous country. He decided to transfer the mission from Fernando Po to a new settlement on land secured from the native King of Bimbia. The new township was named "Victoria," and Saker hoped that it might ultimately be taken over by the British Government. It was beautifully situated in Amba Bay. The move there was made in 1858, and the regulations adopted for the colony may be read in Appendix I of Underhill's *Life of Saker*. They are worth study. Victoria was to have a Governor and Council. Freedom of worship and freedom of trade were safeguarded, the Sabbath was to be strictly observed, and the sale of rum and spirits was prohibited. As the British Foreign Office refused to take responsibility for the settlement, the government had to be carried on by the mission, the missionary-in-charge acting as Governor. "This was not an ideal state of affairs," said Thomas Lewis, recalling his own experiences there, "for the union of Church and State

does not find favour with Baptists." The settlement at Victoria was, however, an heroic, and for many years, not unsuccessful venture. Saker's leadership alone made it possible.

### III

Slowly the years passed. In 1862 Saker's translation of the New Testament into Dualla was completed. By then there were eighty-two settlers at Victoria, half of them children. The leader had spent nearly twenty years in Africa, and bore on his emaciated frame the marks of his privations. Armchair critics in England questioned some of his methods. Even within the ranks of the missionaries there were some who thought the range of his interests too wide. The Committee of the Society summoned him home in 1863. The inquiries made completely vindicated Saker, and after a round of deputation visits he turned his face once more to the Cameroons. At a Valedictory Service in Bloomsbury chapel he was farewelled, together with a new recruit, Quintin Thomson, afterwards to become his son-in-law. Mrs. Saker and her three daughters accompanied them to Africa.

The translation of the Old Testament claimed much of Saker's time. He completed it in 1868. The visitation of outlying tribes was also his constant care. "Under sunshine and cloud, in weariness often, disease ever haunting his steps, in the midst of dangers that

no human foresight could avert, this heroic man pursued the one great aim of his life."

A furlough in 1869 was occupied in many lengthy discussions with the Committee. Of all those sent to West Africa by the Society, only Smith and Thomson, of the white men, and Jackson Fuller and Pinnock, two Jamaicans, remained, beside Saker himself. So severe had been the losses by death and withdrawal. The younger white missionaries were still inclined to question Saker's absorption in the general affairs of the settlement at Victoria, where the inhabitants now numbered two hundred. On his return to the field at the end of 1869, Saker was accompanied by his wife and his daughter, Emily, and also by Dr. and Mrs. Underhill, sent out as a deputation to investigate conditions on the spot. Their visit was unfortunately inconclusive, for it was cut short by the untimely death of Mrs. Underhill.

By 1872 the whole Bible in Dualla had been printed. Two years later Saker took his last furlough. He had completed three decades of service in the Cameroons. It was a great joy to him to be able to take back young George Grenfell and a small steam-launch, the gift of Thomas Coats, of Paisley. He had become by then "the Shadow," worn to skin and bone, and emaciated to a degree scarcely conceivable. Clearly he could not spend much longer in Africa. In 1876 he turned homewards for the last time. On the way back, at Sierra Leone, he gave his blessing to Tom Comber, just setting out for the field.



A little over three years of life remained to Alfred Saker. Much of the time he was very weak and ill. But he was eager to give his experience and enthusiasm to the start of the Congo mission. "Would I were a young man again, or had a second life to live," he said to Alfred Henry Baynes. "I would be off to Congo tomorrow." He spoke at the Cannon Street Hotel breakfast in 1878, when the plans for the Congo were expounded. The following year he took part in the farewell to Comber, Crudgington, Bentley and Hartland. He was greeted with an upstanding welcome, but he reminded his hearers that "the enthusiasm of this hour will not suffice." In the autumn he spoke in Glasgow and rejoiced in the acceptance for missionary service of his daughter, Emily. Early on March 13th, 1880, he passed away.

CHAPTER VI

JOHN WENGER OF BENGAL

1811—1880

“Translation it is that openeth the window to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most Holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water.”

*Preface to the Authorised Version  
of the English Bible, 1611.*

## CHAPTER VI

### JOHN WENGER OF BENGAL

ONE Thursday evening in December, 1838, not many days before Christmas, the week-night service at Denmark Place Church, Camberwell, was visited by two strangers. The one was a frail man of forty-six, who had spent more than twenty years in India. The other was a young Swiss of twenty-seven. "The Chapel under the hill" was then in the first flush of prosperity, with Dr. Edward Steane as its minister. Many families of wealth and influence were connected with it.

The visitors had been spending the day at the home in Camberwell of William Brodie Gurney, the Treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society, and they came with him to the service. The address that night was on the apostle Paul at Athens. The young Swiss listened with close attention, for he had been living in Greece for the previous five years, part of the time on the island of Syra and part of the time in Athens itself. He had but recently come to England to offer himself to the Baptist Missionary Society for service in India. His name was John Wenger. His companion, William Hopkins Pearce, of the Calcutta Mission Press, was the son of that Samuel Pearce whose "seraphic" qualities so deeply influenced the enthusiasts of the first generation of Baptist missionary endeavour.

There are many unexpected features in John Wenger's story. Born on an August morning in a Swiss mountain village, he died on another August morning sixty-nine years later, in Calcutta, after forty-one years' service in India, during which he only twice returned to Europe. Intended for the ministry of the Swiss National Church, he became one of the most distinguished translators of the Bible into Bengali and Sanscrit, and a determined upholder of Baptist convictions. Of wide culture and erudition, and intense application, the chief memory in the hearts of a multitude of friends was of a man of singular gentleness and true piety, with an ever present sense of his personal limitations and unworthiness. The Bible Translation Society, with which he was specially linked, was, moreover, one of the major interests of the supporters of the Baptist Missionary Society during the Victorian era, and Wenger began a family tradition of service for the Church in India which has continued to the fourth generation.

## I

John Wenger was born in 1811 in the hamlet of Bruchenbühl, high up on the slopes of the Buchholterberg in the Bernese Alps. All around is some of the grandest of Swiss mountain scenery. The picturesque home, built largely of timber, with widely-spreading roof, housed his grandparents as well as his parents.

The family owned a small shop and three or four acres of land. There were many mouths to feed and it was not easy to get a livelihood. Once a fortnight a clergyman came up the valley on foot or on horseback to conduct a service in the little schoolhouse. Otherwise the little community was almost completely isolated and self-contained. On one side of Wenger's family there may have been Anabaptist ancestry, for that part of Europe had once been a stronghold of those radicals of the Reformation, but the memory of it had almost perished even in the family circle. His parents and their connections were all staunch and unquestioning supporters of the National Church.

When John was five years old his father died of consumption. His health had been undermined by his duties on the frontier with the local militia during the last years of the Napoleonic wars. Till he was twelve the boy had a broken existence with many changes. He was largely in the care of his uncles—now in Eriswyl, now in Berne, now back on the Buchholterberg—a few months here, a few months there—sometimes at school, sometimes helping on the farm, sometimes under the private tuition of the local pastor. It was a solitary life, throwing the boy in upon himself, but his uncles were devoted to him and were eager that he should have a good education with a view to training for the ministry.

When John was twelve years old he was sent for a time to the home of a French Protestant pastor that he might learn French. He had to walk by him-

self thirty-six miles over the mountains to get there. From his new friends he gained much companionship and affectionate encouragement and lost some of his country ways and his awkwardness. In 1824 he was ready for the grammar school at Berne, and three years later passed on to the Academy. He proved an apt pupil, receiving a thorough grounding in the Classics. While still in his teens he was able to take positions as tutor to children during the summer months, thus making the acquaintance of a number of interesting and influential friends.

At seventeen he was a clever and earnest youth. He had taken his first communion the previous year after the usual instruction in a catechumens' class, and then, largely through the influence of a young Frenchman, came to an understanding of personal religion and to a warm evangelical faith.

## II

The close alliance of Church and State led in Switzerland, as elsewhere, to much formalism. There was also a widespread rationalism in the ranks of the clergy and the university professors. As John Wenger proceeded with his theological studies—partially supporting himself the while by acting as tutor in a military family—he became growingly troubled at the lack of spiritual life in the Swiss Church. With a group of friends he was interested in the “Evangelical Society,” formed to quicken piety and zeal. He made

the acquaintance of a number of French-speaking Dissenters. The lack of discipline in his own communion troubled him. He shrank from the necessity of admitting to the Lord's Supper all who presented themselves, whatever their manner of life. Increasingly the question of the meaning of baptism exercised his mind.

In 1833, when his training was complete and he was ready for appointment as a pastor, he decided, after much searching of heart, to decline ordination. It was a costly decision, for his family had made considerable sacrifices that he might enter the ministry, and they found it difficult to appreciate his outlook. He knew that he might lose his position as tutor. Having made up his mind as to the right course, however, he held to it faithfully.

Within a few months, quite unexpectedly, he secured the position of tutor to the son and daughter of Henry Leeves, an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, a man of wide experience and culture, who had been commissioned to translate the Bible into modern Greek. The young man had to sell his university medals to buy his outfit. There were no railways in those days, and the family set out from Geneva in a large carriage drawn by four horses. They travelled through Savoy over Mount Cenis to Turin, then by steamer to Leghorn, and thence to the island of Syra, which for three years was to be their home.

The days that followed were lonely ones, and Wenger was often the victim of depression. In the



autobiographical fragment he quotes the lines of Crabbe:

“I loved to walk where none had walked before,  
About the rocks that ran along the shore;  
Or far beyond the sight of man to stray,  
And take my pleasure when I lost my way.  
Here had I favourite stations where I stood  
And heard the murmurs of the ocean flood.”

“By very slow degrees,” he says, “I began to obtain a glimpse of the lessons which God intended to teach me: that I was not the important person in His Kingdom that I had imagined myself to be; that He could easily dispense with my services; and that all my past mental conflicts and sacrifices constituted no merit for which I could claim a reward.”

Besides an understanding of these spiritual truths, Wenger gained an invaluable knowledge of English and English ways, a familiarity with Greece and its ancient culture, and above all an insight into the work of a translator (in addition to his modern Greek translation Leeves was busy with a Turkish version of the Bible in Greek characters). Further, Wenger made the acquaintance of a number of persons who helped in shaping his future plans, chief among them J. A. Jetter, of Smyrna, a German trained at Basle, who had been in the service of the Church Missionary Society in Bengal. A young student friend of Wenger's, Rudolphe de Rodt, had gone to Bengal in 1835 and three years later joined the London Missionary

Society. Wenger's own thoughts turned increasingly to service in India. His personal faith continued strong and ardent, and he conducted regular services in French and German during his years in Greece.

In 1838 Mr. Leeves brought Wenger on holiday to England. The young man obtained an introduction to John Dyer, the Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, and through him met Dr. Edward Steane, W. B. Gurney and John Mack, of Serampore, who only a few months previously had had a share in ending the schism between Serampore and the Society. It was not easy for Wenger to decide to leave the beauties of Switzerland and the prospects that might have been his in Europe for the uncertainties of missionary life in the East. A curious experience one Sunday helped him to choose his course. In the morning he went to hear Edward Steane at Denmark Place, and in the evening to Bedford Row to hear the Hon. Baptist Noel. Both preachers took as text the words from the Book of Jonah: "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?"

Wenger paid a lengthy visit to Switzerland and Germany, taking leave of his friends, and making many interesting contacts with Continental *savants*. Returning to England, he offered himself to the Baptist Missionary Society and was accepted. W. H. Pearce was home from Calcutta and saw much of him. It was during those same months that Pearce so greatly influenced young Edward Bean Underhill. On February 28th, 1839, Wenger was baptised at Den-

mark Place by Dr. Steane, and a few months later was valedicted from the same church, together with young Francis Tucker, who had just completed his training at Stepney College. They sailed with W. H. Pearce on the *Plantagenet*, and after a voyage made troublesome by the rough behaviour of the crew, reached India on September 25th.

### III

Wenger was twenty-eight when he arrived in Calcutta, and remained at work there till his death forty-one years later. He was appointed by the Baptist Missionary Society to be assistant to William Yates, who was carrying on with ability the great translation tradition begun by Carey. Yates had been a shoemaker in Loughborough and had wanted to go as a missionary to Abyssinia. He was a man with a ringing laugh, whose persistence and application enabled him to make notable contributions to the Bengali and Sanscrit versions of the Scriptures. Wenger, in addition to helping his colleague, undertook the supervision of two Indian churches in the district south of Calcutta, and within a few months became one of the editors of the Calcutta *Christian Observer*.

In 1842 he found a wife in the missionary circle, marrying Eliza, one of the eight children of John Lawson, who had been in Calcutta from 1810 till his death in 1825, a man of artistic and musical gifts, the first to suggest the cutting in India of types for the press.

Wenger's arrival in India coincided almost exactly with the formation by Baptists of the Bible Translation Society "to aid in printing and circulating those translations of the Holy Scriptures from which the British and Foreign Bible Society has withdrawn its assistance on the ground that the words relating to the ordinance of baptism have been translated by terms signifying 'immersion,' and further to aid in producing and circulating other versions of the Word of God, similarly faithful and complete." This action followed nine years of controversy in Calcutta and London. Echoes of it continued at intervals for many decades and may still occasionally be heard. For many years the Serampore versions had been universally accepted, but after a time pædo-baptists became uneasy at the translation of *baptizo* and desired its transliteration. When Baptists refused to concede this, several abortive attempts were made by the critics to prepare a new version in Bengali. None, however, could stand beside Yates' improved editions of Carey's translation. Finally—to use the words of the Bible Society itself—the Baptist missionaries, "with a liberality that did themselves honour," allowed the Bible Society to alter the disputed words as to baptism in their own reprints of the Serampore versions. At the same time the Bible Translation Society was formed for the objects set out above.

Yates, with Wenger's help, produced a revised Bengali Old Testament in 1844, and, the following year, on his way home to England, died. The revised

New Testament of 1845 and the issue of the whole Bible in one volume were therefore Wenger's own responsibility. He had quickly mastered the language, and proved his outstanding gifts for his life-work. He soon set himself also to the careful study of Sanscrit, that he might carry out plans for a further revision of the Sanscrit Bible. It was recognised that Yates' style in Sanscrit composition was not equal to his familiarity with Sanscrit texts. Wenger also launched a Bengali Christian magazine, of which he continued editor for ten years.

The way of a translator is often hard. Before long the Bengali version was the subject of attack by a group of High Churchmen connected with Bishop's College, Calcutta, on the ground that the rendering of sundry passages "interfered with the doctrine of the Church of England." Wenger was sensitive to criticism; he always replied to it fully and, at the same time, set himself again and again to the improvement of his work. He aimed at "faithfulness, perspicuity and acceptableness," and drew help from many different sources, but some sentences he wrote may be quoted to show his conviction regarding his own final responsibility:

"A biblical translator should not be compelled, merely by a majority of the votes given at a committee meeting, to translate the Word of God in a way which is not in accordance with his own conscientious convictions. In endeavouring to

ascertain the grammatical interpretation and the sense of the sacred text, opinions must be weighed, not counted, and they must be weighed by the man who has to execute the translation."

In 1852 Wenger issued a revised Bengali New Testament, the fruit of long and painstaking study. The following year his wife died, leaving him with the care of four small children. He gave himself to his work with even intenser application. When E. B. Underhill was in India he estimated that up to 1856 the Baptist Missionary Society had spent £132,000 in India on the translation and printing of the Bible. With the help of James Thomas and C. B. Lewis, Wenger extended the work, though it became increasingly clear that the wholesale distribution of the Bible did little good unless with it there went a growth of literacy.

Between 1860 and 1862, after more than twenty years in India, Wenger came to Europe. He spent some time at Oxford, and then went to Switzerland, reaching his aged mother the day before she died. Back in India, he took up his many tasks with all his old devotion. During the furlough of C. B. Lewis in 1866 he had in addition to superintend the Calcutta Mission Press. The development of Bengali as a literary language made a further revision of the Bible desirable, and in spite of failing eyesight, Wenger did not shrink from the task. His third revision of the Bengali New Testament was completed in 1872. The

same year saw also the issue of the Sanscrit Bible, which had occupied him for many years, and the first volume of some valuable *Annotations* to the Bible, the result of Baptist freedom from the regulations governing the Bible Society, which can circulate nothing but the text. There reached Wenger about this time the richly deserved honour of a D.D. from Rhode Island University, which many years before had recognised the learning of Carey and Marshman.

In 1874 the complete Bengali Bible appeared, and Wenger, feeling his work done, set out for England. His strength was failing. He had a happy holiday in Switzerland with his friend C. B. Lewis, and was well enough to speak at the Annual Meeting of the Bible Translation Society in April 1875, Edward Steane, his friend of many years before, being in the chair. Later in the year, after another visit to the Continent, he returned to India. With the help of a young colleague, G. H. Rouse, he set himself to further work on his versions. In 1878 he had to bear the sorrow of the death of his son, William. Early one August morning, in 1880, his own end came.

The *Missionary Herald*, after describing his last days, said: "So passed away one of the noblest, gentlest, most gifted and unselfish of men; a burning and a shining light; colossal in mind, but ever gentle and childlike in bearing, loved by all, and most by those who knew him best. Like a shock of corn fully ripe he has been gathered in the heavenly garner."

CHAPTER VII

MARIANNE LEWIS, ELIZABETH SALE  
AND THE ZENANA MISSION

1867



“thus  
Our weakness somehow shapes the shadow, Time;  
But in the shadow will we work, and mould  
The woman to the fuller day.”

TENNYSON: *The Princess*, 1847.

## CHAPTER VII

### MARIANNE LEWIS, ELIZABETH SALE AND THE ZENANA MISSION

THE real hero of the Crimean War, it has been said, was Florence Nightingale, and its most indubitable outcome—modern nursing, and a new conception of the potentiality and place in society of the trained and educated woman. Miss Nightingale was, indeed, a notable pioneer, but she had contemporaries, many of whom owed in the beginning nothing to her example, who yet played outstanding parts in the emancipation of women and in the opening up for them of new avenues of service. Historians have often been blind, for example, to the part played by the missionary movement in enabling women to show their mettle and to find scope for independent careers. It is a strange, yet fitting, coincidence that 1792, the year of Carey's *Enquiry*, the year of the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society, was also the year of Mary Wollstonecraft's remarkable and prophetic pamphlet *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

Among the many women of the nineteenth century who are worthy of honour for having broken new paths, two friends, Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Sale, deserve high place. They were the wives of Baptist mission-

aries and well illustrate the dictum of Mr. G. M. Young in his brilliant *Portrait of An Age*: "The outstanding Victorian woman is a blend of the great lady and the intellectual woman, not yet professional." They might have been seen together, in the early months of 1861, on board the *Newcastle*, sailing from Bengal to England. They were then in active middle life, and had their children with them. Both were in ill-health owing to the exhausting work in which they had been engaged in the trying climate of India, but their talk on board was not of their ailments, or of their family responsibilities, but of plans for new enterprises by and on behalf of women.

The year 1861 marked a dividing line in the great Victorian era. At its close came the untimely death of the Prince Consort. Earlier Elizabeth Barrett Browning had died, and George Eliot had published *Silas Marner*. In the affairs of India the year was to be memorable for the birth of Rabindranath Tagore.

## I

Mrs. Lewis was a native of Bristol. Her father, George Gould, was a prosperous tradesman, and a deacon of the Counterslip Baptist Church, then in its early years. Marianne had a brother a year or so older than herself who was destined to be widely known later as George Gould, of Norwich, a Baptist minister of outstanding power and the father of a

very distinguished family. This second George Gould was baptised in 1837 and the following year entered Bristol Baptist College. It was while he was a student there, on July 6th, 1839, that his sister was baptised. She became at once a Sunday School teacher, and before many years had passed had won the heart of a Bristol College student.

Charles Bennett Lewis was one of the most brilliant students of his generation. He had had training as a printer, and as soon as he entered college showed unusual literary and linguistic gifts. The college was under the presidency of T. S. Crisp, and gave a training of which it had no need to be ashamed. Charles Lewis acquired there a good knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and some acquaintance also with Syriac and Arabic. Among his student contemporaries were T. S. Baynes, later to be Professor of Metaphysics at St. Andrew's, and W. H. Webley, who became a missionary to the distracted island of Haiti. Young Lewis had set his mind on missionary service, and the B.M.S. decided that he was specially fitted to undertake the training of pastors in Ceylon. He and Marianne Gould were married, and in 1845 sailed for "the resplendent isle" in the company of older missionaries. The long voyage round by the Cape of Good Hope lasted six months. On arrival they set themselves eagerly to their new tasks.

Ceylon, however, was not to be their sphere of service. William Yates, of Calcutta, had died, and it was necessary to find a colleague for John Wenger

in the carrying forward of the translation work so amazingly begun by the Serampore trio. Charles Lewis seemed the obvious man, and he was therefore transferred to Bengal in 1847. He at once began to master Bengali and Hindustani. Later he was to add Persian to his many linguistic accomplishments. He was a man of tireless energy, and in addition to the growing responsibilities that came to him found time for research into missionary origins and the writing of books. Meanwhile Marianne took part in "the promotion of female education." The earlier missionaries had left their legacy of schools, not only those at Serampore, but also a number of institutions in Calcutta. The Indian climate tried her greatly, and she had also the care of a growing family, but Mrs. Lewis soon showed her unusual capacity, and when the Pearces left for England in 1852 she undertook the oversight of the mission school at Entally. Dr. Underhill, who was often in her house during his stay in India, spoke afterwards of "her amiability of character, her devotedness to Christ's service, and the zeal and assiduity of her endeavour to impart to the female population of Lower Bengal the knowledge of the Gospel, and to train the children for usefulness both in their homes and in the Church of God."

Charles Lewis had rapidly shown his aptitude for translation and literary work. In 1856 he became the financial secretary of the India mission. Two years later, on the death of James Thomas, he was appointed head of the Calcutta Mission Press. These things

meant multiplying responsibilities both for his wife and himself. They were called upon for much hospitality and gave it generously. The health of Mrs. Lewis began to give way, and at last a sea voyage seemed imperative. Her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sale, were going to England. So it came about that early in 1861 the missionary party set out homewards in the *Newcastle*. Mrs. Lewis had engaged in many useful activities. In association with Mrs. Sale she was to play a leading part in important new developments.

## II

Elizabeth Sale had been born in the south of France in 1818. Her maiden name was Geale, and her parents were members of the Church of England. She had been brought up in Devonshire, and early showed evidence of independence of mind and of depth of religious experience. In her teens she became convinced from a study of the New Testament of the truth of the Baptist position. Her father and mother found it difficult to sympathise with or understand her views, and after a time of argument and tension it was agreed that Elizabeth had better leave home. Mr. Geale was acquainted with Sir David Davis, the physician to Queen Adelaide, wife of William IV, and through his influence secured for the girl, who cannot then have been more than fifteen years old, the position of companion to the daughter of a certain Lady Harriet Mitchell.

The next fourteen years of Elizabeth Geale's life were spent mainly in London. She must have moved in cultured circles, and as she grew older showed increasing spirit and character. She came into association with the Baptist Church at Blandford Street, Marylebone, and was there baptised. She found opportunities of Christian service in work among the Welsh girls who at that time sold milk in London. In her early twenties, through the help of her old friend, Sir David Davis, she received some instruction in medicine and surgery at a London hospital. This was an unusual thing for a young woman in the mid-nineteenth century. It was some years before Florence Nightingale made nursing her vocation, thereby changing the whole status of that profession. It was many more years before the first woman became a qualified doctor.

In 1847 John Sale, a native of Wokingham and a student of Horton Academy, offered himself to the Baptist Missionary Society. The following year he and Elizabeth Geale were married, and a few months afterwards they set out for India. A free passage had been offered in a ship named the *William Carey*, owned by a Mr. Jones, of Pwllheli. The voyage to Calcutta took one hundred and five days. On their arrival in India the new recruits stayed with C. B. Lewis and his wife, then in their early Calcutta years, and thus commenced a close and fruitful friendship.

After a few months the Sales moved to Barisal, where they had charge of little groups of Christians

in a widely scattered area. While her husband was busy with the affairs of the Indian churches, Elizabeth Sale threw herself with enthusiasm into the work among the children. She started a tailoring class for boys. She engaged in elementary medical service. At first greatly surprised at the fewness of the women visible in public, she sought out the peasant women and helped them in a variety of ways. After four happy and busy years the Sales were transferred to Jessore, and within a few months Mrs. Sale had secured entry into a Hindu zenana, the closely guarded women's quarters of a caste family. It was a notable day in the history of Indian Christianity and of the women's movement generally, and the year 1854 should be remembered for this significant development. Up till then the wives of missionaries had been able to work only among children, girls in school, or the wives of Indians who had become Christians. Elizabeth Sale's zeal discovered a new and needy field, in which Hindu women were shut away and where they spent very restricted and unhappy lives, a field in which single women from Britain and America were to find rich opportunities of service.

The Sales were in Jessore during the dark and anxious days of the Mutiny. A local outbreak was feared, and signs of unrest were met with vigorous and stern repression. In 1859 the missionaries moved to Calcutta, and there they were able to co-operate with the Lewises again. Mrs. Sale helped in the normal school and taught in the home of Deben-



dranath Tagore, the Liberal Hindu, where soon Rabindranath was to be born. She also found opportunities of entering Calcutta zenanas, as she had done those in Jessore, teaching the women needlework and reading, and as opportunity offered preaching the word of life.

John Sale served on the government commission which followed the indigo troubles of 1860, and the following year it was necessary in the interests of his health and that of his wife that they have a holiday. So with Marianne Lewis and their children they sailed for England in the *Newcastle*. Already Elizabeth Sale had earned her title of "the first Englishwoman who gained a systematic entrance into the homes of the Purdah women in India, and by doing so established a form of missionary effort known as zenana work."

### III

Mrs. Sale and Mrs. Lewis must have talked together much of the possibilities of zenana work, and must have spoken of it when they reached England, but it was six years before what was to be known as the Zenana Mission was established, and then it owed its foundation to Mrs. Lewis rather than to Mrs. Sale. The latter, while in England, gave herself to the advocacy of a boarding school in Calcutta for the daughters of Indian Christian gentlemen. With the help of Lady Peto funds were secured, and on her

return to India Mrs. Sale established a school which from 1864 to 1877 rendered most useful service. It was known as the "Sale Institution," and during its last years was helped by a grant from the B.Z.M.

Mrs. Lewis had gone back to the many duties connected with her husband's position at the mission press. In 1866 a further furlough was necessary and it was then that she wrote her pamphlet *A Plea for Zenanas*, which had an important influence in the establishment of the Baptist Zenana Mission.

"There are already more than one hundred homes in Calcutta in which instruction is being given," she wrote, after a survey of the position of women in Hindu society, "and every one of these is a centre of influence promoting the future extension of the good work. . . . Up to the present time those engaged in zenana teaching in connection with the Baptist and London Missionary Societies have given their services to this work gratuitously; missionaries' wives and daughters being almost the only European agents employed. But now that this demand for instruction is growing very rapidly, it becomes necessary for us to emulate the noble example set us by our friends of the Church of England and Free Church Missions, in supporting ladies exclusively devoted to this work."

The time was ripe for a step forward. On May 22nd, 1867, a meeting was held in John Street, Bed-

ford Row, then the temporary headquarters of the B.M.S. Dr. Underhill, the secretary, presided, and his wife was present, together with Mrs. Angus and twenty-two other ladies. Mrs. Lewis spoke. That afternoon there was formed "the Ladies' Association for the support of zenana work and bible-women in India, in connection with the Baptist Missionary Society." It is worth noting that within two years John Stuart Mill published his important tract, *The Subjection of Women*.

The new society commenced operations in Calcutta and Delhi with two agents and half-a-dozen bible-women. On November 7th, 1869, as a result of the visitation that was carried on, three Indian women were baptised by John Wenger in the Entally compound. That same year Mrs. Angus became the foreign secretary. Within five years of its formation the Association had six centres, eight lady missionaries and fourteen Indian helpers. To the appeal for funds there had been a ready response both from men and women.

And the two missionary pioneers? Mrs. Lewis and her husband continued hard at work in Calcutta for another decade. An interesting old photograph shows Mrs. Lewis seated at a desk, her figure amply covered in the fashion of the period, with her two assistants beside her, and about them a circle of Indian women. There is something so quaint and "Victorian" about the scene that it is difficult to realise that to many of that generation it was startling and revolutionary.

Mrs. Lewis and her friends were pioneers, the fore-runners of the freedom and opportunity of today. In 1878 the health of Charles Lewis gave way completely. Return to this country was essential. For twelve years he bravely endured great pain and weakness. He was widely loved, and it was a great grief to his friends that he suffered so much. His wife nursed him most faithfully, in spite of increasing age and infirmity. Unexpectedly, on August 14th, 1890, Marianne Lewis died, and five weeks later Charles Lewis passed away.

The Sales had returned to Jessore for their last years of Indian service. In 1874 John Sale's health failed. With difficulty he returned to this country, and journeyed to Scotland to the home of his son-in-law, but died after only a few days there. Elizabeth Sale continued to live at Helensburgh. The eventide of her life extended over a further twenty-three years and was full of good works. She took an eager interest in the formation of the Scottish Auxiliary of the B.Z.M. She gave generously to a girls' school in Jamaica. She followed with great satisfaction the career in the Indian Civil Service of her son, Stephen, who had been trained at Regent's Park College. At last, in 1898, when she was in her eightieth year, she passed peacefully to her rest. She had showed to the end great power and quiet determination, much sanctified common-sense, an unusual combination of sagacity and piety.

When Elizabeth Sale died more than forty years had passed since she had first entered a Hindu zenana.

It was more than thirty years since the founding of the B.Z.M., which had grown to an organisation with an income of nearly £10,000. It had sixty-seven missionaries, all but nine of them single women and two of them qualified doctors. It worked not only in Indian but also in China. A new day had dawned for the women of Britain and also for the women of the East.

CHAPTER VIII

THOMAS JAMES COMBER OF CONGO

1852—1887

“Because of you we will be glad and gay,  
Remembering you, we will be brave and strong;  
And hail the advent of each dangerous day  
And meet the last adventure with a song.”

MAURICE BARING on Julian Grenfell.

## CHAPTER VIII

### T. J. COMBER OF THE CONGO

FIFTY years ago, on June 27th, 1887, in the very month when an enthusiastic England was celebrating the jubilee of Queen Victoria's accession, T. J. Comber passed away on a German steamer anchored off Loango, on the coast of West Africa, worn out by fever and the sad experiences through which he had recently passed. He was then only thirty-four years old, yet into a brief space of time he had crowded so many adventures, living so energetically and intensely, and with such devotion, that he had had an influence on his generation out of all proportion to his years. His dauntless spirit had stirred men's imaginations, his happy disposition had captured their hearts. He played a notable part in the establishment of the Congo Mission, not only because of what he did in Africa, important as that was, but also because of the effect of his personality in Britain. Something of what Samuel Pearce meant to the first generation connected with the Baptist Missionary Society, Tom Comber meant in the eighties of the last century.

The captain of the *Lulu Bohlen* was so impressed with the spirit of the dying man and what he had learned of his achievements, that, at the request of



young A. E. Scrivener, who had been Comber's companion on that last sad and fruitless trip in search of renewed strength, he ran his vessel into Mayumba Bay, one hundred miles north of Loango, and there, on the desolate shores of Gabun, the gallant pioneer was laid to rest. It was strangely appropriate that his last resting-place should be almost midway between the Cameroons and the Congo.

## I

Thomas James Comber was born in Camberwell in 1852. His father, a manufacturing jeweller, was a member of the Baptist Church at Denmark Place, a historic cause famed for its connection first with Edward Steane and later with Charles Stanford. Tom, who had an elder sister, Carrie, and two younger brothers, Sidney and Percy—all of them to be immortally linked in self-sacrificing service for Africa—went to a British school near his home, and left it, when he was twelve, to enter his father's workshop. He had not long started in the city when his mother died. He owed a great debt to his teachers at the Denmark Place Sunday School, particularly to Mr. Rickards. They were concerned for the spiritual, mental and physical growth of the boys in their classes, and it is not too much to say that contact with them was among the most formative influences in preparing Comber for the part he was later to play.

It was while he was in his teens that a missionary purpose formed itself in Comber's heart. His thoughts turned towards Africa. He must have heard much in the Denmark Place environment of Alfred Saker and the Cameroons mission. He must have been stirred also by the accounts of Livingstone's explorations. The better to fit himself for any future opportunities that might come to him, the young jeweller attended evening classes in Latin and Greek at Spurgeon's College. Always he was busy reading.

"Ah, me, yes!" he wrote later to his father from Africa. "Bow Lane, and that lazy son of yours who used to loiter along carelessly, linger at all the newspaper windows when you sent him on errands, and run hard back to try and regain lost time, and who was so seldom 'blown up' for it! Gracechurch Street, the Hall, Clerkenwell, the workmen's trains, Bryer's, coffee shops, etc. Dear me! how different is my life now; I wonder if I could fit a brooch, or estimate the weight and value of a diamond now."

In 1868 Comber, a youth of sixteen, was baptised at Denmark Place. Soon he was himself a Sunday School teacher, and busy in public-house visitation, tract distribution and ragged-school work. Three crowded, happy years were spent, and then, his purpose remaining clear and strong, he applied to Regent's Park College as a missionary student.

Comber spent four years at Regent's Park. They were important years. Gladstone was Prime Minister of his first and greatest administration. Sweeping reforms were being carried out in many of the principal departments of national life. In 1871 the religious tests which had excluded Nonconformists were abolished at the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Durham. In November of that same year Stanley found the lost Livingstone in the heart of Africa. Eighteen months later the great explorer-missionary died, and in April, 1874, while Comber was still at Regent's Park, Livingstone's remains, borne so faithfully over so many miles by his African friends, were buried in Westminster Abbey. Within the circle of the College, too, there were many important happenings. Those were the years of the Biblical Revision Committee, on which both Dr. Angus and Dr. Benjamin Davies served. The latter's powers were declining. In the autumn of 1874, the week-end before term commenced, there was an explosion in the neighbouring canal which wrecked the east end of the College and proved a severe shock to Dr. Davies. At the end of Comber's last session, to the grief of all his students, who were passionately devoted to him and shared the nursing duties at night, the old professor passed away. Comber's closest friend at Regent's Park was a Devonshire youth, Henry Wright, who testified to the fact that throughout Comber's course the sense of constraint for missionary service was constantly evident, though it was combined with

great cheeriness and a wide range of interests. Most of the students then took ale for dinner. Comber was an ardent total abstainer, and one day filled up the glasses of all his companions with water, suffering afterwards with imperturbable good humour the penalty of a ducking under the pump.

From the academic point of view Comber's college career was undistinguished, but when, in 1875, he offered to the Baptist Missionary Society he was eagerly accepted for service in the Cameroons. He was valedicted at the Assembly in Plymouth, but remained in England a further year that he might take medical classes at University College. During his last session at Regent's Park he had started a Children's Service at Camden Road Church. It met with remarkable success, giving an outlet for his fondness for children and his zeal to win disciples for Christ. Further, it brought him the close friendship of John Hartland, who was later to be his companion in Congo.

## II

An eager young man of twenty-four, Comber sailed for Africa in November, 1876. Quintin Thomson was his companion on board the *Ethiopia*. At the time of their sailing the students of Regent's Park College gathered for a prayer-meeting to commend to God's keeping the knight-errant setting out for the Dark Continent. The voyage of forty-one days was uneventful, save for a meeting at Sierra Leone with Alfred

Saker, the worn-out hero of the Cameroons Mission, who was returning to England for the last time. As he greeted the young recruit did he recall his own meeting with William Knibb in Jamaica thirty-three years earlier? Once more the torch was being passed on. Dr. Underhill had resigned from the Secretaryship of the B.M.S. and Mr. Baynes was taking control of affairs in London. The days of the Cameroons Mission were numbered. Already men's minds were concentrating upon the needs of the heart of Africa.

But Comber's immediate responsibilities and opportunities were in the Cameroons. He and Quintin Thomson landed at Victoria, and after a conference with the faithful Jamaican missionary, Jackson Fuller, and young George Grenfell, who had come out from England two years earlier, Comber found himself left for a while on his own. His burning desire was to get into the interior, and before many months had passed he made two important exploratory journeys behind the Cameroons Mountain, on one of which he discovered a lake to which he gave the name of his former Sunday School teacher, though it may well have been Mr. Rickards' daughter who was chiefly in his mind.

The year 1877 had not passed, however, before news reached Comber and Grenfell of the challenge which Robert Arthington had made to the B.M.S. regarding new work in Congo, and of the decision of the Committee that the two of them should go down to the mouth of the river to explore the possibilities.

Their first trip was a brief one. Their second, in the summer of 1878, took them with two African teachers, an Angola black as Portuguese interpreter, two Kru boys, three Cameroons boys, Jack the donkey and Jip the dog, right up to San Salvador, the capital of the old kingdom of Congo, where Don Pedro V welcomed them, and they carved their names on the great baobab tree. Both Grenfell and Comber were fired with the immense possibilities of a mission in this vast though dangerous field. It was Comber who came back at once to England to report, and, if possible, to secure reinforcements.

The young man reached home again within a few days of his twenty-sixth birthday. His return caused great interest and enthusiasm, not only at the B.M.S. headquarters, and among his personal friends, but in the churches generally. Had he not been in parts where no white man had before travelled? Was he not calling the denomination to a new enterprise? The Committee decided to go forward. A young Irishman, Crudgington, who had just completed a training at Rawdon College, was willing to go to the Congo with Comber. After the latter had spoken at a meeting at the Downs Chapel, Clapton, W. R. Rickett, who was later to become B.M.S. Treasurer, found him a second companion in Holman Bentley. Then, after a gathering for young men at the Mission House, John Hartland, of Camden Road, volunteered. By the spring of 1879 the party was ready to set out. Comber had been married to Minnie Rickards by Dr.

Clifford: their's was the first wedding in Westbourne Park Church. And at a great meeting in the Cannon Street Hotel they were bidden farewell. Alfred Saker, broken in body but indomitable in spirit, was present, and the whole audience rose to its feet to do him honour, as he gave his blessing to the new Congo mission.

The party sailed from Liverpool. On the quay a devoted and enthusiastic Welshman, John Parry, gave each of them a little packet containing a pound in sixpenny pieces and threepenny bits—"to spend on the voyage"—and at the last moment was so stirred that he pulled off his watch and chain and placed them in Comber's hand.

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very Heaven!"

### III

Comber and his friends reached Banana in June, 1879, and divided up into two parties for the journey to San Salvador. Hardly were they established there, however, before Mrs. Comber, a young bride of only four months, died of meningitis. It was the first of the tragedies that were to darken the early years of the Congo mission, and which were largely the result of enthusiasm, inexperience and ignorance. Comber was driven with greater intensity than before upon his missionary tasks. The foundations of the work at San Salvador were carefully laid. Long journeys were

made in the country around, often among hostile peoples. On one trip Comber and Hartland were attacked, barely escaping alive, and Comber only with a nasty wound in his back. Then, after several unsuccessful attempts, the difficult trek across country to Stanley Pool was accomplished. This opened up wide new possibilities. Crudgington was sent home for more reinforcements. Missionaries had to remain in San Salvador because of Jesuit opposition. But in the meantime Comber and Bentley, with the help of Grenfell, set about the planting of Stations on the Lower River.

The months passed amid many anxieties. Several times Comber went down with fever, but his energy and devotion carried him on, and slowly the mission began to extend. Grenfell had gone to England again and brought back with him a steamer, the *Peace*, and at length in 1884 it was successfully launched on Stanley Pool. But by then death had again been busy among the pioneers. Young Hartland was gone, and Doke, who had followed Comber at Regent's Park College, and Butcher and two engineers. And others had had to return to England. Comber had the joy of welcoming his brother Sidney to Africa, but he knew that there must be deep concern at home at what was happening.

“Do people fancy we have made a mistake, and the Gospel is not to be preached in Central Africa?” he wrote. “Let them take a lesson from the Soudan.



When Hicks Pasha and party are cut off, they only send out a bigger pasha and a bigger party. Gordon is coming out, we hear, in Stanley's place. We want some good men of Gordon's stamp, fearless and resolute, to whom death is not bitter, and whom trial and difficulty do not daunt. Men with unswerving purpose, who glory in the hard, fast bonds of duty; men to whom the Congo mission shall be the one thing in life—all-absorbing, all-engrossing, and who will be ready for any phase of its many-sided work."

Such he was himself, but clearly he must have rest and change, and the leaders of the Society wanted to confer with him. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1884 Comber left Congo, visiting the Cameroons on the way back that he might see his sister, Carrie, who had gone there as a missionary. He took with him two African boys, his faithful personal attendants, Mantu Parkinson and Lutumu.

England was reached in January, 1885. That very month the country was shocked by the news of the fall of Khartoum and the death of General Gordon. A Christian hero had fallen. And to Comber and his friends there came speedily fresh personal grief. Sidney Comber died in Africa, then Cowe, then Cruickshank. It was no wonder that the hearts of some began to fail them. The Annual Public Meeting of the Society in the Exeter Hall in the spring was unusually crowded. Not a few who were there are still living

and can recall the impression made by Comber's appeal for courage and persistence, and by his solemn quoting of the words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Comber was eager to return to Africa and his faith was infectious. Alfred Henry Baynes stood firm in the face of all criticisms of the enterprise. A breakfast was arranged at the Cannon Street Hotel at which H. M. Stanley and Comber were the guests of honour. A great valedictory service was held at Camden Road, then another in Liverpool. In spite—perhaps because of—the losses there was no lack of missionary volunteers, and Comber had with him his other brother, Percy, and Philip Davies, both of them fresh from Regent's Park College, and J. E. Biggs, and John Maynard, and Michael Richards. They made a gallant company. On the way to Congo they visited Cameroons. Young Thomas Lewis was there. "How bright and happy they all were!" he wrote.

The station at Underhill was reached in October, 1885. Almost at once the news of the death of his sister reached Comber. His wife, his brother and now his sister had laid down their lives for Africa. His heart was heavy for the Camberwell jeweller, who had thus seen one after another of his children stricken down. There were other deaths in the missionary ranks. Nevertheless, 1886 was a year of promise. Comber journeyed back to San Salvador, where eight

years earlier the work had begun, that Mantu Parkinson might there among his own people confess his faith in Christ in baptism—the first-fruits of the Congo Church. Then came some busy months at Wathen.

Early in 1887 Comber was at Underhill. The Cameroons work had been handed over to the Basle Mission, and Thomas Lewis and his wife were to join the Congo staff. Lewis has vividly described how he reached the mission station to find Comber and Moolenaar in the deepest distress, for shortly before Darling and Shindler had died there within a few hours of one another. In the little white bungalow on the hill was Mrs. Darling, a widow after only eight weeks of married life. "Comber in those dark days," said Thomas Lewis, "seemed to have done nothing but nurse the sick and bury the dead and comfort the bereaved." And the sad tale was not yet over. As he was about to escort Mrs. Darling to the coast, there came the news of the death of Miss Spearing at Stanley Pool.

"What has happened has quite unhinged me!" wrote Comber to his father. He was a man sadly changed from the confident leader of a few months before. Yet he thought of nothing else than a brief sea trip to set him up for further work. But it was not to be. On June 14th he was attacked by severe fever. When he was a little better A. E. Scrivener took him down to Boma. They embarked on the *Lulu Bohlen* on June 24th, and three days later brave Tom Comber passed peacefully away.

Paradoxical as it may seem, this new catastrophe finally secured the continuance of the Congo mission. Few after 1887 challenged the policy of the B.M.S. in this matter. Congo had become a sacred place for British Baptists, a place hallowed by the sacrifice of a goodly succession of men and women, of whom Tom Comber was the outstanding example, *primus inter pares*—"so universally beloved; he was one of the most winsome characters I ever met," said Thomas Lewis. The Africans had called him "Vianga-Vianga," the man who hurries about, but his was not just restless, purposeless movement. H. M. Stanley said: "Wherever your Comber went, there was life and activity. Again and again as I looked at him, he reminded me of the young man with the banner, on which was the word 'Excelsior.'"

That he had not lived in vain, though his years here were few, is shown by the Baptist Church on the Congo, which today numbers more than 24,000 members, and by the many men of Comber's own generation who faced their tasks and opportunities for service more bravely and eagerly because they could never forget his gallant example.

CHAPTER IX  
TIMOTHY RICHARD OF CHINA  
1845—1919

“Instead of writing goody-goody religious tracts . . . we decided to enlighten China on all the chief factors in the world’s progress, so as to put China in a fair way of saving itself. . . . We told them of a kingdom which embodied what is best in all earthly kingdoms, and which had other things besides, which transcends them all, just as the heavens are high above the earth.”

TIMOTHY RICHARD.

## CHAPTER IX

### TIMOTHY RICHARD OF CHINA

It is difficult to think of Timothy Richard as a Victorian. True he was born a few weeks before William Knibb died, a decade before Palmerston's first ministry, nearly a quarter of a century before Gladstone first came to power, but he outlived all the other main figures who have appeared in these pages, surviving until 1919, nearly six months after the close of the Great War. And there was something fitting in his living to see the beginnings of the League of Nations, for the cause of international co-operation and amity was very dear to him, and he had played no small part in the early discussions about peace leagues and federations. In this, and many other ways, he belonged far more to the twentieth than the nineteenth century.

Dr. Latourette, one of the most discriminating authorities on the history of missions, has described Timothy Richard as "one of the greatest missionaries whom any branch of the Church, whether Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox or Protestant, has sent to China." He was a great man, of whom it is no exaggeration to use the words "prophet" and "seer," certainly one of the three or four outstanding figures

in the history of the Baptist Missionary Society, worthy to be set beside Carey and Marshman. After his death the British and Foreign Bible Society said of Richard that "he had left the impress of his own strong personality on an empire embracing a quarter of the human race."

Many who have personal memories of Timothy Richard think first of his irresistible charm. In his later years, with his white hair and beard and his kindly eyes, he was a striking figure in any assembly. To the end there was much of the child about him. It was a simple hymn of childhood that he sang when he knew he might be near the end of his long journey:

"One there is above all others,  
Oh, how He loves."

## I

Like many others of these stories this begins in a village. Timothy Richard was born at Ffaldybrenin, six miles from Lampeter in Carmarthenshire, on October 10th, 1845, the year in which T. H. Hudson and William Jarrom of the General Baptist Mission went as Baptist pioneers to China. Timothy was the youngest of nine children and was named after his father, a blacksmith and farmer, widely known in the neighbourhood as a narrator of stories, a veterinary surgeon and a bonesetter. This versatility appeared



again in the next generation of the family. When Timothy was five years old a move was made to Tanyresgair Farm, on part of the premises of which a small elementary school met. The boy early showed a hunger for knowledge, but the chances of satisfying it were few, for his father needed his services. The boy is said to have made his first acquaintance with Latin and Greek while sitting on a gate engaged in scaring crows away.

What is known as the 1859 Revival swept through Wales when Timothy was in his teens and effected in him a dramatic change. His father was deacon of the Baptist chapel at Caio, and on the 10th April, 1859, the boy was baptised in the river nearby, with fifty-one other converts. The water was in flood, and John Davies, the minister, was uncertain how he would fare with the older candidates. Timothy Richard was, therefore, baptised first. A missionary purpose formed itself very early in his heart.

Further schooling was difficult to secure, and in his late teens he had to teach in the winter, attend a grammar school in the summer, and thus gradually prepare himself for the Normal College at Swansea. This period of his life, and his intense fondness for music—he introduced the Tonic Sol-Fa system into many districts where he taught—will remind some of the very similar experiences of Richard's distinguished fellow-countryman and contemporary, Sir Henry Jones.

In 1865 Richard preached his first sermon, and the

same year entered Haverfordwest Baptist College. He was very Welsh in speech and manner, "a thinker rather than a talker," said a student friend. Yet he soon came to a position of leadership, successfully supporting a demand for greater attention in the curriculum to modern languages. The greatest influence on the young man during his student days was that of G. H. Rouse, at the time acting as temporary tutor at Haverfordwest during a prolonged furlough from India.

An address he heard from Mrs. Grattan Guinness seems to have made him decide to offer for service in China. He had thoughts of going out under the recently formed China Inland Mission, but in 1869 applied to the Baptist Missionary Society and was accepted. In his statement to the Candidate Board he expressed "his preference for China and his determination to go thither even if he were not accepted by the Committee." There was much controversy in Baptist circles at this time regarding the most effective missionary methods. At his valedictory service Richard was charged to study the instructions to the twelve Apostles. One sentence from *Matthew* x became of decisive import for his thinking and action: "In whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire in it who is *worthy*; and there abide till ye go thence." The word gained in significance when, some time later, he read the sermon preached to the London Missionary Society in 1824 by Edward Irving, in which that eccentric genius, then at the height of his popularity

as a preacher, pleaded for a literal carrying out of the New Testament commissions.

## II

Timothy Richard reached Chefoo, on the coast of Shantung, in 1870. The door into China was still barely unbolted. The Treaty of Tientsin, concluded ten years earlier, had promised protection to missionaries and their converts. The beginnings of work on the coast under the auspices of the Baptist Missionary Society had not been very successful. The infant mission had found a home at Chefoo, but the climate greatly tried the missionaries. C. J. Hall, one of the pioneers, died of cholera. Kloekers and McMechan were driven home. When Richard reached Chefoo there was only R. F. Laughton, and in four months he was dead. Nor was the Society successful in its attempts to send out reinforcements. William Brown, a medical man, arrived a few months after Richard, but in 1874 he resigned, and the young Welshman was left completely alone.

He had thrown himself into his work with great enthusiasm and thoroughness. Having mastered the language, he made a number of journeys inland, the most important of them through Manchuria in the company of Mr. Lilley of the National Bible Society of Scotland. Richard had soon realised that he could not remain content with life at the coast. By hard

study of the New Testament, Comparative Religion, the sacred books of China and the various secret religious sects, he was preparing himself for his future work.

In January, 1875, he decided to move to Tsingchowfu, two hundred miles inland. The journey there was made very difficult by the heavy snow and by a terrible blizzard, but Richard had determined on his course and was not afraid of hardship and discomfort. He established himself in the city, soon gained a reputation for medical skill, and before long decided to adopt Chinese costume. A number of Government officials and religious leaders—Buddhist, Confucianist and Moslem—were soon among his friends.

Then came famine. The crops failed owing to a prolonged drought, and soon conditions for the poorer people in North China were desperate. Richard did what he could to relieve their sufferings. Twice he was pressed by Chinese to lead a rebellion against the authorities. A new missionary, Alfred Jones, had just reached Chefoo. He had left his business in Ireland in the hands of a manager that he might respond to the call to service in China, and he was to play a foremost part in the development of the Church in Shantung. When he joined Timothy Richard in Tsingchowfu he found that in a few months a church of seven hundred members had been built up, and that there were over a thousand inquirers.

News that the famine was much more serious in Shansi decided Richard to leave his Shantung work in

Jones's hands and to proceed to Taiyuanfu. The conditions he found there were appalling, and when information about them reached England help was forthcoming from a Mansion House Relief Fund. Richard, David Hill and others became the leaders of the relief work, and it was estimated that they aided nearly 160,000 persons. The official report to Lord Salisbury said: "Mr. Richard, whose Chinese name—Li Ti-mo-tai—is known far and wide among all classes of natives, stands out so conspicuously that he must be regarded as the chief of the distributors."

The worst of the famine was hardly passed when Timothy Richard married Mary Martin, of the United Presbyterian Mission, a lady whom he had first met in Chefoo. "I had come to the conclusion," he wrote in his autobiography, "that I could do more effective mission work in this newly opened service if I were married." Their only honeymoon was the journey back to Taiyuanfu through desolate Shansi, and within four months Richard had to be away in the south of the province doing relief work. But he had chosen his companion well. "No missionary ever had a more devoted wife," said Richard many years afterwards. Few missionaries, it may be added, have had such a gifted wife. Mary Richard was in charge of an orphanage in Taiyuanfu, and before many years had passed had four small daughters of her own to care for. Later she engaged in educational and literary work, ably seconding her husband in all his interests till her death in 1903.

As soon as he was free from the famine demands, Timothy Richard threw himself into a wide range of missionary activities, concentrating on apologetic and scientific lectures in an effort to reach the learned classes in Shansi. In the years succeeding the famine he spent nearly £1,000 on books and instruments, much of the money coming from friends in Pembrokeshire. Before long, however, he was in difficulties with some of the missionaries of the China Inland Mission. Hudson Taylor doubted the orthodoxy of this unconventional Welshman. To avoid open conflict Richard returned to Shantung for a time.

Between 1884 and 1886 he had his first furlough. He had been in China for fourteen years. At the Annual Meeting of the Society in the Exeter Hall in 1885 he had the unenviable task of following J. H. Shakespeare, then a rising young Norwich minister, and T. J. Comber, soon to set out again for Congo. Richard was not an easy speaker, and as he ploughed his way through his manuscript the company began to disperse. "Never mind," said Alfred Henry Baynes afterwards, "it will read well." But in truth Timothy Richard was already something of an *enfant terrible* to the Committee of the Society, whose main attention was concentrated just then upon Africa. Richard talked to them of combining with other missions to establish a Christian College in each province in China. He pleaded with them for special courses of study for missionaries. He was himself spending his furlough in taking a course of electrical engineering

and in learning about French and German educational methods. Baptists were hardly ready to understand or sympathise with all this. "I began to realise that God would have me bear my cross alone," wrote Richard.

Further difficulties awaited him on his return to Shansi. Some of his Baptist colleagues felt that he should concentrate more on the accepted lines of missionary activity. Further calls were made on him for relief work. He had a serious illness. When invited to settle in Shantung again, he pleaded to be allowed to establish a college at Tsinanfu, but the Home Committee refused permission. For a year he edited a Chinese daily newspaper published in Tientsin, aiming constantly at showing "how Christianity is the salvation of nations as well as individuals." Richard Glover, of Bristol, and T. M. Morris, of Ipswich, who visited China for the Baptist Missionary Society in 1890, ordaining the first six Chinese pastors in Shantung, came away with a tremendous admiration for Richard's achievements and his dreams, but they found it difficult to see how he could be fitted into the more humdrum and circumscribed activities of the average mission station.

Then, in 1891, came an invitation to Shanghai.

### III

The Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge amongst the Chinese had been

founded in 1887 by Dr. Alexander Williamson, "a gigantic man, physically, intellectually and spiritually," who regarded this Society as the crowning work of his missionary life. When he died the trustees in Shanghai turned for help to Timothy Richard. They had been much impressed, not only by what they heard of him, but also by one of his articles in the *Chinese Recorder*—"How one man can preach to a million." He was invited to succeed Dr. Williamson as Secretary of the S.D.K., which soon renamed itself the Christian Literature Society for China. He accepted on condition that the arrangement was approved by the Baptist Missionary Society and that he was supported by them.

For the remaining twenty-eight years of his life Timothy Richard was ceaselessly engaged in the stimulation of the Chinese Renaissance. His position at Shanghai gave him contact with all parts of China. He undertook literary work of the widest range, having a share in the production of at least three hundred books. His translation of Mackenzie's *History of the Nineteenth Century*, both in the original and in pirated editions, achieved a remarkable circulation, and many other of his publications were of decisive influence in opening China to Western knowledge. He was in constant touch with the Chinese government authorities and with the reform party. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894 revealed the weakness of China, and in the years that followed many changes took place. One of the most urgent problems was the



securing of recognition and safety for missionaries. Anti-foreign feeling was still strong in many places, particularly in the interior. Richard's advice was much sought after. He also interested himself in educational projects in Shanghai, in the first public school there, and in the Anti-Footbinding Society. In 1896-97 he was on furlough, visiting India with A. G. Shorrocks on the way home, and paying a brief visit to the United States. To the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society he brought a case of the books produced by the Christian Literature Society since 1891, exhibiting them one by one as the proof that he had been well occupied.

Outside recognition was coming to him. In 1900 both the D.D. and the Litt.D. were conferred upon him in America, whither he had gone to attend the Œcumenical Conference at New York. The gatherings were hardly over before the terrible Boxer outbreak took place, resulting in the martyrdom both of missionaries and of Chinese Christians. To Richard this was a tragic but not unexpected episode. His experience and authority led to his playing an important part in subsequent events.

The new Governor of Shansi summoned Richard to Taiyuanfu to advise him. It was there that the most wholesale butchery of Christians had taken place. Out of the negotiations as to fit reparation and re-organisation came the establishment of the Shansi University, with Richard as Chancellor and Moir Duncan, of the Baptist Missionary Society, as

Principal. This beneficent project had not long been carried through before Mrs. Richard died. Then came the reaction following the Russo-Japanese War, during which Richard became Secretary of the International Red Cross Society in Shanghai, which gave help to Manchurian refugees. All the while there was the developing work of the Christian Literature Society to occupy him.

In 1905-6 Timothy Richard was again in England. Three concerns were upon his heart. They were—to use his own words—“(1) To increase interest in the Christian Literature Society. (2) To help to reform missionary methods so as to get tenfold better results from present expenditure. (3) To help secure universal peace by the federation of ten of the leading nations, and thus remove the greatest curse which has ever fallen upon the human race—the curse of modern militarism.” He was able to attend the first Baptist World Congress in London, and a Peace Movement Congress in Lucerne.

The following year he was honoured by the Chinese authorities, and had the satisfaction of seeing the Rev. C. E. Wilson and Dr. W. Y. Fullerton in China for the purpose of establishing the Shantung Christian University in Tsinanfu, a project he had urged twenty years earlier. Soon afterwards a new Shanghai headquarters for the Christian Literature Society was opened. Richard was naturally one of those summoned to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910. On his return to China he laid down

the Chancellorship of Shansi University, receiving an unparalleled welcome and acclamation at Taiyuanfu. He and his ancestors for three generations were ennobled with the highest Chinese rank of the first button.

#### IV

The story of the remaining years can be briefly told. Richard deplored violent methods, but many of the changes made possible by the Chinese Revolution of 1911 he had long pleaded for. He continued busy with a variety of projects through the Christian Literature Society. In 1914 he married Dr. Ethel Tribe, of the London Missionary Society, and they made together a long trip to the Dutch East Indies. The publication of his reminiscences, *Forty-Five Years in China*, coincided with the conferring of the LL.D. upon him by the University of Wales. The European War brought him infinite and constant distress of mind and spirit. He was an old man when once more he returned to this country, but he set his heart on going back again to China to continue his service there to the end.

It was not to be, however. In March, 1919, his old friend, Richard Glover, of Bristol, died. As Easter approached Richard himself became unwell, and on April 17th he passed peacefully away.

One Christmas Richard had given Glover, as a hastily-bought present, an outline map of the two

hemispheres, under which he wrote: "The field is the world." To the end, as Dr. Latourette has put it, "he thought in terms of the entire (Chinese) Empire and of all phases of its life." One who knew him well spoke of his personality as "a remarkable blending of shrinking modesty and vaulting ambition, of benignity of expression interrupted by occasional flashes of flaming indignation; of self-abnegation approximating to servility, combined with a restlessness of contradiction and an indomitable self-will." "He is a great prophetic figure," wrote Mr. Wilson and Mr. Fullerton in 1909, "with thoughts greater than his speech, often saying things liable to be misunderstood because he takes so much for granted, and is so little careful to guard his utterance from misconception; childlike, with childlike egoism, simple-hearted, whole-souled, broad-minded. China is written upon his heart." They recalled how when they parted from him to proceed into Shantung he said: "If you see the Governor, do not look upon yourselves only as the representatives of the Missionary Society; remember that you are ambassadors of God." So he always thought of himself.

CHAPTER X  
A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE  
1836—1908

“. . . the Victorian public, once so alert, so masculine,  
so responsible.”

G. M. YOUNG: *Portrait of An Age*.

## CHAPTER X

### A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE

#### I

At the meeting in Kettering in 1792 at which the Baptist Missionary Society was formed, it was resolved "that Messrs. John Ryland, John Sutcliff, William Carey, Reynold Hogg and Andrew Fuller be appointed a committee, three of whom shall be empowered to act." Those named were all ministers, but before many months had passed they brought laymen into their councils—men like Thomas King and Thomas Potts, of Birmingham, and James Lomax, of Nottingham. They met as occasion demanded, and in different places—in Kettering, Northampton, Olney, Guilsborough and elsewhere.

As the years passed and the enterprise grew, membership of the Society's Committee became an increasingly serious and important matter. At first the parent Society had a number of semi-independent Auxiliary Societies associated with it. Slowly a more uniform and centralised organisation came into being. The headquarters were moved from Northamptonshire to London. By 1842, the year of the jubilee, there was a "Central Committee" of twenty-five

members meeting monthly. It was stipulated that, as a help to the securing of regular attendance by as many as possible, sixteen of the members should be resident in or near London. Five were to be laymen, and five were to form a quorum. There was also a larger "General Committee" of seventy-six persons, thirty-two of whom were laymen, but this body seems rarely to have met more than once a year.

By the time of the centenary further important changes had taken place. The responsibilities of the Society had increased. The Baptist denomination had become more self-conscious and united, and missionary work was recognised more and more as an essential part of Christian witness. In 1892 the Committee had grown to be an elected body of fifty-four persons, fifteen of whom were laymen, and to them were added twenty-three "honorary members," appointed for their special services to the Society, and also the Principals of five of the denominational colleges. There were no women on the Committee, the work of the Baptist Zenana Mission being independent. Laymen had a very large share in the direction of affairs during the nineteenth century. Since 1795, when Reynold Hogg resigned, the Treasurer of the Society has always been a layman, and until 1903 it was the Treasurer who, almost invariably, presided over the Committee. Moreover, from 1849, when E. B. Underhill was appointed, until 1906, when Alfred Henry Baynes retired, the chief executive officer of the Society was a layman.



In his interesting volume *Portrait of an Unknown Victorian*, Mr. R. H. Mottram has given a detailed picture of one whom he describes as "a humble, but almost central type," one who was a part of "that solid axle of ability and integrity around which the whole construction turned." It may help us better to understand the position and working of the Baptist Missionary Society during the nineteenth century if we try to picture one of its supporters, a member of the Victorian public, a typical lay member of its Committee.

## II

Like Mottram's "Unknown Victorian" he was of Norfolk origin, born in the remote hamlet of Saham Toney in 1836, the year in which *The Pickwick Papers* first appeared, the year before the young Queen came to the throne. Two miles to the south-east of his birth-place lies the little old market town of Watton, set in an inverted triangle formed by Swaffham, East Dereham and Thetford, on the edge of the so-called Norfolk "Breckland," thousands of acres of bracken-grown, heathery land, overrun with rabbits, the last haunt of the great bustard and other rare birds. Thetford was the birthplace of Tom Paine, that restless gad-fly of eighteenth century orthodoxy and conservatism. William Cowper spent the last years of his life in Dereham, and there grew up there in the early years of the nineteenth century two boys destined to

become widely known—James Phillippo, one of the most influential Baptist missionaries to Jamaica, and George Borrow, the writer,

The youth whose story is here told came of farming stock. At the age of twelve he was apprenticed to a widow who kept a draper's shop and general store at Watton. Weaving, which had been widely practised in Norfolk, was on the decline, but there were good prospects in trade. Watton must have had a secluded prosperity even in "the hungry thirties and forties," for about 1840 its parish church was considerably enlarged. In the centre of the town was the Clock House with its fire-alarm bell. To the south, near the ancient thoroughfare, Peddar's Way, lay Wayland Wood, the reputed scene of the tragedy of the babes in the wood.

Seven years in Watton proved an admirable training in character and in business, and in 1855 an eager young man of nineteen was able to secure a place in one of the leading draper's establishments in Norwich, the mecca of all ambitious Norfolk boys. The county town, twenty miles away to the east, was growing in importance, and the rise of the Gurneys as bankers was an index of its increasing prosperity. The Crimean War had broken out. Soon news of the mutiny in India was to disturb men's minds. It was a time of considerable political and intellectual ferment. The young countryman had come of Anglican stock, but many of his Watton friends were Nonconformists, and in Norwich he associated himself with the Baptist

church at St. Clement's, whose minister, young Thomas Wheeler, had already proved his power of vigorous and aggressive evangelism. He became the hero and friend of the young draper's assistant, and baptised him. George Gould was in those years establishing himself at St. Mary's Church, and there were the early rumblings of the storm over open communion which developed into the "Norwich Chapel Case." The youth from Watton must on occasion have heard Gould, but it was Thomas Wheeler who deeply and permanently influenced him.

Three years in Norwich were sufficient for him to prove his powers, and in 1855 he moved further up the ladder by securing a position in London, starting on a successful business association which ultimately led to his having a controlling interest in the firm. The village apprentice lived to become a familiar figure in the little world of the textile trade. The year after he came to London there was published Samuel Smiles' *Self Help*, upon which, like many of his generation, he may have modelled himself and which his career certainly well illustrated. It seems altogether fitting to discover that in the summer of 1861 he married one of the daughters of his Watton employer. She was a lively girl two years his senior.

### III

Marriage linked the rising young warehouseman with a family that included a large number of Norfolk

“personalities,” shrewd men and women of a fiery independence in politics and religion, and in their personal affairs. There was a brother-in-law who filled his garden with strange “Grecian” temples and grottos; a sister-in-law ran an independent Christian mission in Watton; another brother-in-law, “Radical Jack,” who called his house “Gladstone Villa” to show his political faith, and used to drive round the countryside in a dogcart, throwing out tracts on the one side and Liberal pamphlets on the other, had on one occasion at election time to be lodged in the local lock-up lest he should provoke his opponents to personal violence. In country districts the Nonconformist and Liberal had still to pay for his convictions. There was much petty persecution by squire and parson, and little docility on the part of the victims. There were often disabilities and indignities to be suffered, as “Radical Jack” discovered when his wife died and the parson made trouble about her burial in the churchyard.

The climax of all the excitement and controversy, which had become almost the breath of life to these men and women, arrived in 1885, by which time the Watton apprentice was in middle life and well established in London. A farmer uncle from Saham Toney, an old countryman of eighty-two, who had quarrelled with the local clergyman, was solemnly excommunicated by the reading of the commination service from the church pulpit. His friends and relations rallied round him; his great-nephews were sent down from

London to join the fray; and before long agitation compelled the public withdrawal of the excommunication, which was probably the last uttered in England from an Anglican pulpit.

This background, by no means exceptional in those days, needs to be borne in mind in following the career of our "unknown Victorian." On his arrival in London he had joined the Commercial Street church, erected only three years earlier to house the company which had so long worshipped at Little Prescott Street. Charles Stovel, the minister, was in his prime. He could pass on personal memories of the agitation which preceded the passing of the Reform Bill, and of William Knibb and the struggle against slavery. Ten years under Stovel strengthened and built up the convictions which had begun to take shape under Thomas Wheeler, and prepared the ground for what was to come later. When little more than thirty years old the rising young business man was elected a deacon at Commercial Road.

It was an era of church extension. New suburbs were being built, and Baptists were alert to the need of moving outwards. In 1869 a chapel was erected on the edge of Hackney Downs, and Charles Stovel encouraged two of his young deacons to move their homes into the neighbourhood that they might become foundation-members of the new cause. The Norfolk couple, with five small children, migrated from Victoria Park to Clapton, calling their new house "Wayland" to remind them of the wood near Watton

The family continued to grow until twelve children had been born, ten of whom survived infancy. In this as in other respects they may be considered a typical household. Large nurseries were the order of the day from royal circles downwards.

For forty years the life of the village boy was intimately bound up with the Downs chapel, with which there became associated one of the largest, most successful, and most cultured Christian communities of the day. For eleven years he was its secretary, then for more than twenty years its treasurer. He watched it grow. He spent himself in its service. He became its lay leader, and, in the Biblical sense of the word, very jealous for it. At the Sunday service he presided at the table beneath the pulpit, giving out hymns as well as notices, and just before the sermon walking solemnly down the aisle to his family in the pew at the back of the chapel. The years took the hair from his head, but gave him a long white beard which added dignity to his somewhat slight stature. He and his wife kept open house, and there were few denominational leaders whom at some time or other they did not entertain. Joseph Angus, E. B. Underhill, Alfred Henry Baynes and many others who have appeared in these pages came to know and trust him, and he was looked up to with respect and affection by many of the younger generation.

Victorian religion is often pictured as a solemn, dull and narrow affair. Baptist life in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is sometimes described solely

in Spurgeonian terms. At "the Downs" there was something very different. Under the brilliant ministry of Vincent Tymms the gospel was presented in terms of the most liberal thought of the day and was vigorously applied to ecclesiastical and social problems. R. H. Mottram suggests that one of the chief characteristics of Victorianism was "the power to do something new and do it right the first time." Not only in business, but in intellectual and spiritual alertness this unknown Victorian from the heart of Norfolk proved his capacity. Thomas Wheeler and Charles Stovel had prepared his naturally open and receptive mind for the new truth proclaimed by Vincent Tymms.

From the community at "the Downs" the Baptist Missionary Society received wholehearted and generous support. We have already noted how Tom Comber told his story there in 1879, and how afterwards Holman Bentley was led to offer himself for service on the Congo. Another young man, Herbert Dixon, followed shortly afterwards, and a few years later Fred Oram. By then W. R. Rickett, one of the deacons of the church, had become Treasurer of the Society. H. M. Stanley came to "the Downs" to lecture and more than one party of missionaries was valedicted from the chapel.

#### IV

As his business position became more secure and his family grew up, our unknown Victorian was able to

widen the range of his interests. Opportunities of travel came. Business had taken him to Paris, and he had seen something of the privations of the inhabitants at the time of the Franco-German War, had seen also the train leave with the tremendous indemnity exacted by the victors. Later there were visits to other parts of Europe, and at last a trip to the other side of the world. His help was sought outside his own church—by the London Baptist Association, the Baptist Union, the Baptist Building Fund, Regent's Park College, the Baptist Missionary Society and other organisations. He took all his public duties most seriously. Financial matters claimed his chief attention. He delighted in figures and used jokingly to declare that he should be restless and unhappy in heaven were there no books there to audit. The Baptist Missionary Society appointed him to the Finance Committee; he served also on the Western Committee, which dealt with Congo affairs; and, shortly before his death, was made an Honorary Member of the Society.

His convictions were held with tenacity and consistency and often at considerable cost. In his early years, following the custom of the time, he had been a moderate drinker of alcohol. One day, coming back from the investigation of the troubled affairs of some relation, he assembled the household in the kitchen and solemnly vowed that strong drink should never again cross the threshold. Once he had made up his mind what was right he was not to be shifted by appeals to his emotions. On one occasion in the



Congress Hall, after contributing to the collection for the Salvation Army, he stalked out before the whole company and in front of the great General Booth himself, protesting against the suggestion that the boxes should be sent round a second time. Strongly as he had come to hold to Nonconformist principles he was yet never a bigot, staunchly and generously supporting Bow Church, Cheapside, which was near his place of business.

“Leaving the city every evening with clean hands and a conscience void of offence towards God” (as Dr. Tymms said of him), he gave the rest of his time and his substance to the affairs of the Kingdom of God. The young minister of his closing years, to whom his staunch friendship meant much, said:

“He was a man of sterling integrity whose word was his bond; of wise counsel and mature judgment, whose advice was trustworthy and far-sighted; of large-hearted sympathies and generous nature, ever responsive to the claims of the needy; of singular disinterestedness and conspicuous consecration.”

The years brought their perplexities and sorrows, but he maintained his course unflinchingly to the end. The turn of the century saw many changes, but he was full of optimism as he thought of the future. Most of the disabilities and hardships of his boyhood and early manhood had been removed. The General Election of 1906 seemed to have established the Non-

conformist Conscience in power. Had he not with his own eyes seen "freedom broadening down from precedent to precedent"? One day at the Mission House in Furnival Street, where he spent so many happy and useful hours at the work he loved, he was taken ill and a few months later, in his seventy-second year, he passed away.

The words with which R. H. Mottram closes his book may well be quoted of this other Victorian: "The day will come again when people prefer to be honest, sane and tolerant—in a word scrupulous—and this portrait of an Unknown Victorian, a common type of a great time, will seem less remote than it does now."

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