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"*Climbing on track*" was the last message sent out from the Comet which crashed outside Calcutta early in 1953. This arresting phrase was singularly descriptive of one of the passengers, for it epitomised the career of Fred Mitchell. Whether as a business man, a preacher, a personal worker, a mission director, a Keswick convention chairman, or a family man; in season and out of season he was ever "climbing on track." This brief and moving story of his fruitful life will be a signpost to the serious reader.

CLIMBING ON TRACK



FRED MITCHELL

Climbing On Track

A Biography of
FRED MITCHELL

by
PHYLLIS THOMPSON

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PROLOGUE

“COMET MISSING. *Disaster feared on 'birthday' of Britain's jet air-liner.* AIR CRASH DRAMA”: The leading Sunday papers on May 3rd, 1953, had even more startling front-page headlines than usual. A Comet air-liner, bound for London from Singapore, was missing. All contact with it had been lost six minutes after it left the Dumdum airport outside Calcutta, at 11 a.m. on the previous day. Shortly after it had taken off, speeding along the wide runway and then soaring upwards with its deafening roar of engines it had disappeared in the banks of storm clouds that were already darkening the sky. Its thundering whine, following it like a belated fanfare, had died away, when the routine message from the radio officer, was received in Calcutta. “Climbing on track.”

“Climbing on track.” Calm and reassuring words. In spite of the threatening storm the powerful machine was well on its way, it seemed! Within six minutes it was already twenty-two miles along the unseen track in the air, headed for its next port of call—New Delhi.

That reassuring message was the last the Comet ever sent out. It failed to arrive in New Delhi at the appointed time, and the news flashed round the world that the Comet was “delayed.” A few hours later it was admitted that a mishap was feared. And by the time most of the Sunday newspapers had been delivered, the 8 a.m. Home News Bulletin from the B.B.C. had announced that “the missing Comet air-liner had been located by a B.O.A.C. aircraft at a point about twenty-two miles north-west of Calcutta.” There were no survivors. The great machine lay shattered and wingless in a paddy-field, with pieces of wreckage scattered for miles around. And on Monday morning the newspapers published the names of the forty-three people

who had been travelling on it. One of those names was Mr. F. Mitchell, and some newspapers gave a little additional information about him, explaining that he "gave up a chemist's shop in Bradford ten years ago to become director of the China Inland Mission. He was coming home from a Singapore conference to decide what to do with missionaries expelled from China. He lived at Southgate, London."

When the news became known in the world of evangelical Christians to whom the name Fred Mitchell was almost a household word, letters, telegrams and cables started pouring in to the home at Southgate, and the C.I.M. London headquarters at Newington Green. They came from all five continents, and no less than thirty countries. Representatives of over a hundred Christian organizations wrote, organizations that included Bible schools, orphanages, missionary societies, evangelical publications, slum missions and fashionable churches.

There was a strangely beautiful music about those letters—a music which came not from stringed and tubed instruments or metal discs, but from the varied emotions of human hearts. As the many instruments in a great orchestra unite to produce a swelling harmony that stirs the æsthetic sense almost to an ecstasy, so do deep feelings of gratitude, affection and love produce a music of a different nature that melts and inspires the heart. Words may seem heavy and inadequate to express those feelings, but the feelings themselves infuse the simplest words with life. So the messages that poured in from rich and poor, young and old, well known and unknown, combined to produce a rich and moving harmony of human grief ennobled by a strong confidence and hope.

The consciousness of a sense of personal loss was a constantly recurring theme. Not only were there many references to help received through sermons and addresses given by the one who was a well-known "platform man"; but a still deeper, tenderer note was struck time and time

again by references to sympathy and understanding shown in times of human distress, perplexity and need.

I feel as if my father had died. He has prayed for me, loved me, and led me to understand more of the Lord's dealings with me. . . . I just can't help the tears as I think of all his kindness to me.

I first met Mr. Mitchell a few days after I had lost my own father. . . . I shall never forget the help and blessing that the Lord brought to me through him. . . .

I shall always remember with gratitude the comfort he brought to my wife and me at a time when we deeply needed it.

I could never tell you what Mr. Mitchell has meant to me. . . . If there was a business problem or difficulty, I always knew I could turn to him and he would let me go and see him for half-an-hour. . . .

In an hour of deep personal crisis I turned to him for advice. . . . His counsel, given then, ultimately led me where I am now.

I felt I could talk to him about anything, and he entered into my interests and problems as perhaps no one else has done. . . .

His bigness, with time for everyone's affairs, is one of the great things I appreciate so much about him. . . .

So the testimonies flowed on as letter after letter was opened. There were, of course, numerous references to what his public ministry had meant in spiritual enlightenment and inspiration, not only in England, but in many parts of the world. The profound and lasting impression left in memories, however, seems to have been of the man himself.

"I have never met a man more about his Master's business," came in one of the many letters from America. "I have a vivid memory of him outside the Tent at Keswick, avoiding all the groups of gossipers and just looking for the lonely, needy souls." What he was spoke as clearly as what he said.

When with him I always felt near to the Lord Himself.
What impressed me was . . . radiancy.
. . . his gracious and humble personality.
. . . the most transparently good man I have known.
He made the Lord Jesus Christ more real to us. . . .
He showed me what my Saviour is like, and I shall never forget him.

Yet the music from the orchestra of many human hearts was not only in the minor key of sorrow and love for one who was seen no more. It swelled again and again into cadences of triumph as imaginations quickened by faith and fed by the Word of God pierced through the veil that hides the Unseen World from mortal eyes and followed that one through the dark valley that was made so short for him he surely never saw it.

"And all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side," wrote many, quoting the phrase of Bunyan's that he himself had loved so well and used so often. Echoes of celestial music! Glimpses of a heavenly pageantry as he passed on

To Mount Sion,
To the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,
To an innumerable company of angels,
To the general assembly and church of the first-born,
To God the judge of all,
To the spirits of just men made perfect,
And—to Jesus. . . .

It seemed that the very words with which he was greeted echoed back to listening hearts on earth. "Well done, good and faithful servant." So often those words appeared in the letters, as though the gracious, generous Master whom Fred Mitchell delighted to serve, could not restrain His welcome, nor confine His voice to heaven alone. And the wistful, wondering note that sounded in the orchestra, asking "Why—Why?" was answered over and over again as the letters were opened, and like a strong, reassuring

undertone the message came, "What I do thou knowest not now. But thou shalt know hereafter."

As the music flowed on, however, one theme predominated, a delicate, simple theme that brought every note into harmony. It was an ancient theme, echoing down from times long past, when in the dawn of history there was a man of whom it is written that he walked with God. Little else is known of him. He founded no race. He builded no cities. He led no armies into battle. He wrought no great deliverances. Only one of his sayings has survived the passage of the centuries, and stronger voices than his have thundered out his warning of a coming judgment. But the permeating fragrance of his life nothing could efface—for Enoch walked with God. And as those who sought for words to express their love sat back and thought of the one who had so recently moved about among them, it was this thought that came—"He walked with God; and he was not; for God took him."

And that, after all, is the abiding message of Fred Mitchell's life. He accomplished no great thing. His name was linked with many Christian organizations, but he was the founder of none. He turned the feet of many into paths of righteousness, but not more than others of his contemporaries. He made no spectacular and inspiring sacrifices. He effected no reforms. For the first forty-five years of his life the pathway he traversed was similar to that of thousands of other self-made, moderately successful business men. "From village school to chemist shop" would have been an appropriate summing up of his outward course. On that ordinary, hum-drum track, however, he walked with God, climbing steadily in spiritual experience. When unexpected, unsought prominence provided by a directorship in the China Inland Mission, and then the chairmanship of the Keswick Convention was given him between the ages of 40-50, he just went on, climbing steadily on this new track that was appointed as the other had been.

"I can't get used to the idea that he's famous," said a business friend. "I knew him as just an ordinary chemist in Bradford, and he's still the same. He hasn't changed a bit. Yet he's famous! I can't get used to it!"

This, then, is the story of an ordinary man from a village home with working-class parents, who spent the greater part of his life as a chemist in the provinces—and who walked with God.

CHAPTER ONE

ON THE SLOPES OF THE PENNINES

*E'en now by faith I claim Him mine,
The risen Son of God;
Redemption by His death I find,
And cleansing through the blood.*

THE main road from Sheffield to Bradford, winding along on the eastern slopes of the Pennine Range, at a point about seven miles south of Huddersfield, passes through a beautifully-situated village called Jackson Bridge. It is built on the sides of a deep, wooded gorge through which a mountain stream comes pouring down, and above it rise the grassy, tree-sprinkled hilltops of the Range. The road slopes steeply down to the bridge from which the village takes its name, then climbs again, past rows of square-built, sturdy-looking stone cottages, and continues on its way to Huddersfield and the north.

Jackson Bridge, where Fred Mitchell spent his childhood, is one of a group of four villages lying within a few miles of each other, and forming part of the district of Holmfirth. Viewed from a quiet spot on one of the roads between the villages, the area looks wholly agricultural, with its fertile fields and little woods sweeping up to the top of the Range. Narrow stone hedges run up and down the hillsides, forming boundaries, and scattered farmhouses can be seen, half-hidden by trees. Actually, however, the beautiful district is an industrial one, and the people who live in the sturdy stone cottages built close to the roads are, for the most part, employed in factories in the area. There are four of these factories in the village of New Mill, one in Scholes, and one in Jackson Bridge itself. It lies down by the rushing stream,

and sometimes the waters are stained with the dyes used in the manufacture of the woollen threads.

The little village of Hepworth, a mile or two away, is now a picturesque, quiet place, on the fringe of the open spaces of Low Common, mainly composed of farmsteads and labourers' cottages. Forty years ago, however, it was a mining village, and many of the people living in the Holmfirth district at that time could remember when little children were sent to the pits.

It was nearly all the ambition parents had for their children [Thirza Shaw, sister to Fred Mitchell's mother, said, reading a paper she had prepared for her family to listen to after midday dinner one Sunday—a weekly ceremony in which all had to take their turn!]. Work to them meant bread, and it took them all their time to get it. Three of my brothers went to the pit. They were seven and eight years old, and there were others as young. They had to go very early, and some had to be carried to the pit in very rough weather. Young as they were, they had to work in bare feet, and would come limping home at night with their feet bleeding, and very little life left in them.

Another brother of mine, whom I never knew, but of whom I heard a good deal, died at the age of six, and I have heard it said what a good bobbin winder he was. Fancy, six years old, and a good bobbin winder. He used to wind for father and mother and others who had looms in their chambers. Is there any wonder that he died? Now I could go on in the same strain, but it would only sadden you, but do you think children could be happy under such conditions? I don't. They were saddened and depressed, and made old before their time.

I remember those days with no pleasure. Hard-working people had enough to do to keep body and soul together. . . . It must have been hard for parents to see their children so badly off. I can remember mothers coming to our house, talking and wondering how their children were getting on at the pits. Where we lived we could see the pit where the boys worked, and your grandmother used to watch them "draw" in the afternoons, and wonder. . . .

Even if young Fred Mitchell had not heard these things from his original and intelligent aunt, he would have heard

them from his own father, for Brook Mitchell himself was a mine worker, employed as a coal-weigher at a pit-head in the district. For as long as Fred could remember, his father had risen at 3.50 each morning, and after lighting the fire and taking his wife a cup of tea, set off for the hour's walk along the country lanes to the pit. He usually arrived there an hour before work started, and this he spent largely in the study of his Bible, and prayer. Returning home from the pit in the afternoon, he had a short sleep, and was then ready to devote himself to his boys when they returned home from school.

The steadfast, hard-working, godly Yorkshireman and his wife loved their children with a self-sacrificing, undemonstrative devotion. They had had four boys, but the third had died before Fred was born, and his parents always felt that God had given him in place of the one He had taken. It was for the boys' sake that the parents left their little cottage in Scholes to go and live as caretakers in the flat under the Urban District Council offices in Jackson Bridge. The caretaker's responsibilities were not arduous, and the extra money would help when the boys started out in life. The four rooms under the offices, therefore, became home, and flagged stone steps led from the main road down to the garden and the living accommodation of Brook Mitchell and his family. The windows of two of the four rooms looked out across the gorge, so steep that the tops of the trees were but a stone's throw from the windows, and the sounds of rushing water, rustling leaves and the cries of birds were so familiar as to be unnoticed—as familiar as the rumbling of carts along the roadway above.

The Mitchells were Methodists, although they had not always been so. Brook had been a member of the Church of England since childhood, and he left it to join the Wesleyan Methodists, not because of any doctrinal convictions, but for the simple, and not less worthy reason that he saw greater opportunities for service in this nonconformist denomination. He became a local preacher, and he and his family took part

in the Saturday night "services of song" that were a popular feature in the villages at that time. The well-built little chapel on the hillside, with its gallery and choir-stalls of brown, brightly varnished wood, was an integral part of their lives.

As a stocky little schoolboy attending the Council School in Hepworth, Fred Mitchell showed ability above the average—and this characterized him all his life. In mental capacity he outstripped his fellows. To what extent this was due to natural brilliance, and to what extent it was due to an intense interest in everything, allied to a naturally industrious disposition, it is difficult to assess. One year he had progressed so well that he jumped a complete grade. He must have startled his teacher when he begged for more homework, and it is a tribute to his attractive, friendly personality that he apparently did not forfeit the good will of his fellows by so doing! Study was never irksome to him, and at the age of thirteen he won a scholarship which admitted him to the Holmfirth Grammar School. Here, too, he made his mark as a scholar. One who knew him described him as "self-confident and cocksure—but success never spoiled him. He was always humble."

Go-ahead and ambitious, ready to try his hand at anything, he certainly was. He did not always appreciate correction, however, and was apt to be resentful when his mother showed him a better way of doing things than his own. Perhaps it was over the innumerable rabbit hutches that he used to make (though he owned no rabbits!) that she was giving him some advice one day which he obviously had no intention of following! Even an explanation of her reason failed to affect him—his mind was quite evidently made up, and seeing it, she said in her forthright manner,

"All right! Go your own tin-pot way, then," and turned from him.

That arrested him. "Go your own tin-pot way, then!" Was his a "tin-pot" way? The boy considered what he had been planning to do, and decided to compare it with the

suggestion his mother had made, and saw that, after all, she was right. He learned a more important lesson than the immediate one she was trying to teach him that day!

At the time when our story opens, however, school days were already behind him. An unexpected vacancy for an apprentice in a chemist's shop in Huddersfield had seemed an opportunity too good to be missed, and although it necessitated leaving school early, Fred and his parents had agreed that he must take it. Behold him at the age of fifteen, therefore, clad in a well-brushed suit and a very stiff white collar, travelling by train the seven miles to Huddersfield each day, sweeping the shop front of Thompson and Cappers, running errands all over the town with its factories and warehouses, and learning all he could about pharmacy when he had the chance! And on Sunday taking his place solemnly in the choir-stalls of the Hepworth Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at the morning and evening services, and attending Sunday School with his friend, Walter Charlesworth, in the afternoon.

It was at Sunday School, in the summer of 1913, that Walter showed him a tract which had been given him that very afternoon by a mill-worker named Crapper, who had recently come to the district.

"He asked me if I was *saved*," said Walter, evidently impressed by the experience, and when Sunday School was over he took Fred into a field, that they might read the tract together uninterrupted. "Ye must be born again," it was entitled, and those five words, with their mysterious challenge, attracted Fred's attention. He did not remember having heard them before. "Born again." With the same wonderment with which Nicodemus must have heard them under the Judæan night sky when first they were uttered did the sturdy Yorkshire lad read them that sunny afternoon on the hillside with its fields of ripening corn rippling in the breeze, and the drone of insects sounding in his ears.

"Though the substance of the tract written by the author, J. R., did not affect us, the question of the tract distributor

'Are you saved?' did," wrote Fred Mitchell many years later. "Possibly this question troubled my chum most, while the text, 'Ye must be born again' troubled me. Blessed be all tract distributors," he added warmly, "but especially those who give them prayerfully, and seek to enter into conversation!"

The following morning, when the two boys met as usual on the station platform, to travel together to Huddersfield, the first thing Walter said was, "I say, Fred—are we saved?"

"Yes, of course we are," replied Fred emphatically. "We have never been bad." Did they not say their prayers every day, and were they not regular attenders at the chapel? Had not Fred himself already preached his first sermon, taking as his text, "Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man", and had he not, two years previously, written in the flyleaf of his little Bible, "given myself to the Lord"? That decision had made no noticeable difference in him, but he had made it! "Of course we are saved!"

Walter was still uneasy, however, and the next day, when they met as usual on the platform, he repeated his question. "Are you sure we are saved?" This time Fred was not quite so sure. "I think so," he replied. *Ye must be born again. Ye must be born again.* The third morning Walter asked again, "Are you quite sure we are saved?" and this time he answered "No, I'm not sure that we are," and then he added, with characteristic decision, "the best thing is to make sure. We must do something about it!"

What could they do? Walter remembered that the tract distributor had told him to come and see him if he was anxious about his soul, so it was decided Walter should approach him. Gladly he invited the two boys to come to his home, with the instruction they were to bring their Bibles with them. One evening, therefore, they made their way along the street overlooking the rushing stream, and knocked at the door of one of a row of narrow, three-storied houses built near to the road. Mr. Crapper, a fair-complexioned, blue-eyed man of about thirty-five, opened the

door. He knew why they had come, and without any preamble got down to the holy task committed to him. Explaining to them that unless God helped them to understand His Word, all would be in vain, he prayed, the boys standing beside him with heads bowed. Then he led them to the table asking them to sit down, and to open their Bibles.

"Turn to Genesis, chapter six, verse five," he said. "What does it say?"

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

"Continually pouring out filth—that is what the heart of man is like," said Mr. Crapper. "Isaiah sixty-four, verse six."

The boys turned their pages. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

"Romans three, twenty-three," said Mr. Crapper.

The leaves turned again. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", and as the scriptures were read, skilfully chosen by a workman who truly needed not to be ashamed, there came over the two lads a consciousness that one by one the props on which they had been building their hopes of salvation were being removed—"the sense of crashing down as the axe was laid at the root of any remaining self-righteousness" Fred Mitchell described it years after. Deliberately and without hurry the humble mill-worker who was regarded by most people in the district as being far too religious, led them backwards and forwards through the Bible, opening out with uncompromising clearness God's plan of salvation for fallen man. Not until he had proved the lost and hopeless condition of man, and the impossibility of his entering the holy presence of God in his own merits did he turn to the atoning sacrifice of Calvary. Then, as the leaves of the Bibles rustled from this scripture to that, slowly and surely the realization that they could receive forgiveness and acceptance with God on the ground of Christ's atoning sacrifice dawned on the two boys.

"And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

". . . righteousness . . . to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

"For he hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Yes, they understood. They sat with their arms on the table, eyes fixed on the face of the man before them, drinking it in as he spoke of the grace of God. "He is not willing that any should perish. . . . Oh, the grace, the mighty grace of God!" he exclaimed, carried away with the wonder of it. He prayed with them again before they left, and stood with them for a few minutes at the open doorway, the stream rushing below and the outline of the hills above dark against the evening sky. Walter had one more question:

"Mr. Crapper, we cannot understand that scripture, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' What does it mean?"

The man's eyes filled with tears. "He was forsaken because He was bearing our sin—our sin," he answered feelingly. "God cannot look on iniquity."

Until that moment Fred had acquiesced mentally with all that had been said; indeed, he believed, although conscious of no inward experience. But now came the moment of divine revelation, that "inner illumination of the Spirit" which the clearest, most painstaking explanation of man can never effect. "It was as if a blind had been drawn up in my soul. The light streamed in. I was saved, and knew it! Hallelujah! How I went home that evening I do not know, for my heart was so light that I never remember my feet touching the ground!" he testified when speaking of the experience later. "As I look back I am compelled to observe that no decision was made by me—the light shone in. I suppose the decision which was made two years before was related to the whole experience."

As the two boys departed along the lane, Mr. Crapper went back inside his cottage and closed the door. For him was the exquisite, inexpressible satisfaction that transcends any joy this earth can afford—the joy of the spiritual workman who knows that once more his Master has seen of the travail of His soul, and has been satisfied. He little knew how far reaching would be the effect of that evening's workmanship, however. Both boys were to cross the seas to carry the message he had so faithfully delivered to them, and one of them was to proclaim it in each of the five continents. But Fred Mitchell never forgot, and of all the men who influenced him so deeply, Hudson Taylor, Andrew Murray, Stuart Holden, none ever quite took the place in his heart of the unknown mill-worker in the village on the slopes of the Pennines. He always kept in touch with him, appraising him of his movements, and nearly forty years later, sitting in his large, book-lined office at the C.I.M. headquarters in London, wrote:

I still regard myself as your son in the faith, and continue to thank God for the tract you gave to Walter and which he shared with me, and then for your personal help in leading us to Christ, and for praying for us and helping us in other ways. . . . A line from you is like water to a thirsty soul, and I give God thanks upon every remembrance of you.

CHAPTER TWO

STARTING UPWARD

You will never lead souls heavenward unless climbing yourself. You need not be very far up; but you must be climbing.

BISHOP WALSHAM HOW.

IT would be interesting indeed to have a record of the conversation that took place when the two boys met on the platform to take the train to Huddersfield the next day! Did the friendly, humorous, winsome Walter pour out a rapturous recital of his feelings and experiences, and did the more dignified, grave Fred give expression to some of the deep, new thoughts that were already stirring in his mind? No record is left of that particular train journey, but there is a record of the spiritual progress of the two boys. Life cannot remain inactive, and Life they had both assuredly received. They must go on—but how? What was to be done now?

“Our hearts were strangely drawn to the man who had led us to Christ,” Fred Mitchell wrote. “He loved his Bible. He read it, prayed over it, *marked it* and knew it, and we wanted to know, love and mark ours. So we began our first studies.” Those studies were made, not in a Bible College or Theological Seminary, not in church or chapel, but in a bedroom in Mr. Crapper’s house, where he took them that they might be undisturbed by his children at their play.

“How thankful one has ever been for that first instruction in Bible study,” Fred Mitchell continued. “One of my earliest and most profitable was on *The Tabernacle*, the benefit of which I am receiving to this day. Doctrinal studies on sin, salvation, etc., were also pursued, and I still have the liveliest memories of my reading of dear old Mackay’s

Grace and Truth, for it gave me a clear conception of law and grace."

It was in those early, impressionable days that his life-long love for the written Word of God was born. What heart-stirring messages did he hear and read! How uncompromising was the teaching of separation from the world that he received! "The way to bless the world is to walk in separation from it. Abraham in the tent outside the city counts more for Sodom by his prayers than Lot by his practices inside the gate. Let every Christian contemplating joining some worldly society first study Abraham and Lot," he said to 5,000 people in the big tent at Keswick in 1951. It was in a cottage bedroom in Jackson Bridge, thirty-five years before, that he was first impressed by it himself! And not only with Mr. Crapper and Walter did he spend hours over the Bible, but alone also. There was a little room in the Urban District Offices to which he had access, and here he would retire evening after evening after his return from Huddersfield, to spend the time in prayer and Bible study before retiring to bed.

Quite soon after his conversion he made a public testimony to his new-found Saviour. His father had long been in the habit of attending a Sunday evening prayer meeting in the chapel on the hillside, and now Fred accompanied him. One evening his father announced that his son wanted to say a few words, and quietly he did so, telling of his experience, his faith in Christ and decision to serve Him.

There was one at least in that prayer meeting who took special note of his remarks. Nellie Hey had been in the habit of attending it for some time, and was also a member of the choir in which Fred sang. She lived with her parents in the neighbouring village of Scholes, where they had moved some time previously from Haworth, made famous by its association with the Brontës. A quiet, thoughtful girl, employed as a weaver in the mill at Jackson Bridge, she had not been very favourably impressed by what she had seen and heard of the prowess and boyish pranks of Fred Mitchell!

To her he had seemed rather too self-confident, and she had been quite annoyed at being paired off with him on one occasion to sing a duet at a service of song. To sing with that schoolboy! With his short, stocky build and frank, rather plump face, he certainly looked young, and she would have preferred to sing her duet with another girl! When he gave his testimony at the prayer meeting which he had so recently started to attend, therefore, she listened to it not without inward reservations. "Well, I'll just watch," she thought. "I'll watch—and see whether he goes on. . . ."

He did go on. The regular, intensive Bible study, allied to secret heart-searchings and prayer, produced unmistakable fruits in his life. It was not long before he and Walter were made aware of their personal responsibility to make Christ known to others. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" was a command which applied to them as to others, and the part of the world that was accessible to them was the district of Holmfirth on the slopes of the Pennines! The opportunity of preaching in the chapels was open to them, if they were prepared to become local preachers, and it is on record that Fred Mitchell

Came on note June 1914.

Came on trial September, 1914 in the Holmfirth Circuit.

Passed on Full Plan 1916.

The opportunity to lead a service, however, came to Fred much earlier than that. One Sunday the preacher assigned to Hepworth Chapel failed to turn up. In some consternation the stewards looked round hastily for someone to fill the gap. "What about young Fred?" it was suggested. So that Sunday "young Fred" was missing from his usual seat in the choir stalls, appearing in the rostrum instead, and preached, with little preparation other than that of a full heart, from the verse,

"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

But it was not only within the confines of the Methodist church that the two lads sought to witness for their Master. It was not long before they were following the example of their spiritual father, and going round the neighbourhood distributing tracts. Together they determined that a tract should be given to every family, if not every person, living within a five-mile radius of Jackson Bridge, and on their half-days and Sunday afternoons they would sally forth together, armed with tracts, to fulfil their self-imposed obligation. This more public and aggressive witness called, as it always does, for a willingness to "go unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." Warmth and enthusiasm for Christ within the four walls of the chapel was commendable enough but when it was carried outside it was viewed with misgivings by some, and indignation by many. Such an entry into the enemy's territory will assuredly provoke conflict, and one incident connected with it lived long in Fred Mitchell's memory.

Within the five-mile radius of Jackson Bridge was the large home of a well-to-do man. The boys had confined their tract distributing efforts mainly to the cottages and farmhouses in the area, so no tract had found its way to the owner of the big house. The two village boys had no way of access to him, and they might well have decided that someone so far removed from them socially was no responsibility of theirs. Fred, however, could not be satisfied that this was the case. That man, as well as the humblest cottager, had to stand before God one day—and Christ had died to justify that man as much as He had died to justify the humblest cottager! Therefore, he must be told. The question was, how to approach him? Then Fred had an idea. He could not get to him—but the postman could! So he decided on the simple expedient of sending him a tract through the post.

Still, however, he was not quite easy. He had sent that tract anonymously. His conscience told him that this was unworthy, dishonourable, cowardly, and eventually he

decided to send another tract through the post, but this time with his own name and address affixed.

Not many days later the irate landowner visited the Mitchell's home.

"Are you the young fellow who keeps sending me those tracts?" he roared when he caught sight of Fred. "How dare you! How dare you! Mind you never do such a thing again!" He grasped a heavy stick in his hand, and made as though he would raise it to belabour the lad. The presence of Brook Mitchell and his wife evidently deterred him, and he departed, leaving the family speechless with startled surprise! There was a solemn ending to that story, however, for within a month the man had died.

As time passed, the two boys extended their evangelistic efforts. Fred had been given a portable organ, and they decided to make use of it in open air meetings. Writing of these in later years, Fred Mitchell said:

Off to the villages and hamlets we went. The opening out of the folding organ and a few strains from it never failed to gather the children and to make the adults open the doors to see who and what had appeared. Whatever results accrued from these evangelistic journeys, and if anyone were blessed as we were enabled to fulfil a covenant freely entered into to visit every home within an area of three or four miles from our own homes I do not know, but of this I shall ever be convinced that it was part of the training for Walter Charlesworth and myself. I am reminded of Carey's answer to a statement as to what he had done for India, "I do not know that I have done much for India," said the famous missionary, "but I know India has done much for me."

If this sustained and fearless witness brought with it a measure of criticism and antagonism from those outside church and chapel circles, it was little compared with that which came from those within as a result of the stand the two boys took against worldliness. That they should not be found playing quoits and darts in the local public houses was right enough in those who were Methodist local preachers—

but that they refused to buy tickets for secular concerts to raise money for the chapel was deeply resented.

“What harm is there in it?”

“It’s for a good cause, isn’t it?”

Such arguments are never easy to answer, and it is probable that the two young men did not always temper their explanations with the grace and love they would have shown in later days, when experience had mellowed their judgments. They came in for a great deal of censure, and it is therefore the more interesting to learn that there are men and women in the district to-day who say emphatically that they did a great deal of good, and many were helped by them—“And *I* was *one* of them! It was then that I realized we could not serve two masters.”

Often God’s preparation for a life of widespread blessing and holy influence is a wilderness experience, a retirement from association with others which seems essential if the soul is to receive deep impressions of God. “If we are not ourselves living under the direct and strong influence of the unseen and eternal, we can hardly expect to impress them upon the hearts and minds of others,” wrote one who lived under that influence to an unusual degree. All who share such a desire must be willing for the renunciation of much that is natural, and there was another in the Holmfirth district who was learning to walk a lonely pathway.

It had long been the custom for the young people of the villages to go for walks after chapel on Sunday evenings, and in the summer groups of young men, and girls in twos and threes, would climb to one of the peaks of the range, Tinkers Monument, while in the winter it was their custom to stroll along to a nearby place between the villages called, for some obscure reason, Donkey’s Trot. It is not surprising that the groups of lads and lassies did not always return home in quite the same formation as they arrived! Many a romance which culminated in a happy marriage had its commencement in a Sunday evening stroll to Donkey’s Trot. “It’s the only way to get to know anyone!” said the more

frank maidens who did not attempt to disguise a natural desire for matrimony! For a time Nellie Hey also went there after Sunday evening service. But a strange, inexplicable disquiet began to disturb her when she did so. After the holy solemnity of the evening service in the little chapel which she loved, her soul could not quickly readjust itself to the laughter and chatter of youth, innocent though it be. Unknown to herself, she was being prepared for a pathway that should lead her into different spheres. She ceased to accompany her friends on their weekly walks after Sunday service, quietly returning instead to her home, where she sat with her parents, reading.

Many could not understand her yearnings for a closer intimacy with God. Perhaps she could not altogether understand them herself. Those Sunday evenings were often lonely, and gradually she dropped out of the swim of things in village life. The news that Nellie Hey no longer went with the other young people to Donkey's Trot reached the ears of Fred Mitchell—but it stirred admiration rather than criticism in his heart. At that time neither he nor she realized that their lives would be united, but a foundation of mutual respect and appreciation was being laid for the affection which ripened into a deep and lasting love as the years passed.

CHAPTER THREE

FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE

*I am young, happy and free!
I can devote myself; I have a life
To give. . . .*

BROWNING.

WHEN the World War of 1914-18 broke out, Fred Mitchell was barely seventeen, and at first it seemed unlikely that he would ever be called up for military service. Surely the war would be over in a few months—after the long years of peace it seemed impossible to contemplate the prospect of its lasting longer than that! Immersed in his pharmaceutical training in Huddersfield, and Christian witness in Jackson Bridge, the war did not interrupt the tenor of his life greatly during its first months. As the unsuspected strength and resources of the German war machine were revealed, however, and the Allied cause suffered devastating defeats, it became evident that if victory was to be won, it would involve a long and uphill struggle which might last for years. He was approaching the age of eighteen, and would soon be liable for conscription if he did not volunteer for national service, and he found himself faced with a grave problem.

The disruption of his plans for a career as a chemist was no worse than the case in which hundreds of other young men found themselves in those days. Had he felt that the path of duty demanded that he should enter the Army to fight "for king and country" he would not have hesitated for a moment. His problem lay much deeper than that. To become a soldier in a combatant corps meant that he would have to fight—and fight to kill. On this subject he had strong

convictions—convictions which were to involve him in public disgrace and humiliation as he stood by them.

Patriotic tension ran very high during the First World War, and it was heightened by the attitude of certain elements in the Press towards conscientious objectors. The C.O. became the target for many jibes and unjust condemnations. Public feeling ran so high that in some places local tribunals who would otherwise have granted exemption to men who were genuinely qualified to receive it on the ground of their personal convictions, were afraid to do so. The men who had the courage to stand true to their convictions and because of them refused to obey some order such as taking up firearms, were court-martialled and sent to prison.

When the time drew near for Fred to join up, he decided to try to gain an entry into the R.A.M.C. He had longed to be a doctor, and hoped that he might have the opportunity to do some form of medical work in this section of the services. When he applied, however, he was told that he was under age, so he waited a month, until he had celebrated his eighteenth birthday, and reapplied. This time his hopes were dashed again, for he was told there were no more vacancies. Reluctantly he had to abandon all thought of the medical service that so greatly appealed to him, and was drafted into a non-combatant corps.

He never forgot his first introduction into the Army—the great hangar full of men, oaths flying, drunkards staggering in reeking of smoke and beer. It is not difficult to imagine the jeers that must have been levelled at the youthful, innocent Yorkshire village lad with his Bible and his habit of kneeling by his bed to pray; nor the taunts that he must have heard. The time came when he felt uneasy even about being in a non-combatant corps, for it seemed to him there was fundamentally little difference between loading guns on to ships and firing them. Eventually he took the step which other conscientious objectors had to take. He refused to obey an order to load, was arrested, court-martialled, and sentenced to imprisonment in Wormwood Scrubs!

This was humiliation indeed. Locked in a cell alone, allowed little or no conversation with other men who were serving time for similar offences, even when they were working together in the big room set aside for making mail-bags, etc., he tasted something of the sense of shame which attaches to imprisonment, however unjustified that imprisonment may be. He suffered no ill-treatment, as some did, but the meals served in his cell were very sparse, and although all the warders were not contemptuous of their prisoners, some were, and took no pains to hide it. Fred Mitchell spoke little of the experiences of those days, and although he would not have hesitated to go through it again, rather than compromise against his conscience, his convictions regarding military service underwent a change in later years, when a different conception of Christian duty in loyal citizenship became more deeply impressed upon him. As far as he was concerned, the abiding impression of those days seems to have been that they provided a unique opportunity for undisturbed reading! "I learned to know my Bible then," he said. And, undoubtedly, something else was effected. The moral courage which those who knew him recognized and respected so deeply in the years of his maturity was put to its first great test, and came out the stronger then. If his convictions changed, his courage did not; nor did his respect for the sacred rights of the individual to obey the dictates of his own conscience, and also to develop his own personality. One of the noticeable things about his family in later years was that although each of his three children was converted very early in life, and brought up on traditional evangelical lines, there was nothing suppressed or uniform about them. Each personality unfolded quite naturally, and visitors to the home would comment, "You're all so happy together—yet you're all so different!"

Late in 1916 public opinion towards the conscientious objector had changed considerably as the injustice of an intolerant attitude towards many honest men became

evident. The Government took action at last, and prisons in various parts of the country, including Dartmoor, Warwick and Wakefield, were converted into work-centres into which the imprisoned men were drafted. Although the work they had to do was often extremely uncongenial and unpleasant, they were no longer treated as convicts, and during their time off were free to come and go as they would.

Fred Mitchell was drafted to the work-centre in Wakefield, and from the life of isolation in Wormwood Scrubs found himself thrown into the company of several hundreds of men of varying degrees of thought. He met not only Christians with the same outlook as himself, but also followers of various strange cults, heathen religions and some downright atheists. Among men whose convictions were strong enough to nerve them for suffering and humiliation it is not surprising that there was a great deal of discussion about their various points of view, and Fred found himself involved in many theological arguments, in some of which he came off worst! Years later he realized that it was as a result of the confused and varied thought which surrounded him at that time that he commenced his study of theology.

While in Wakefield he worshipped with the Brethren Assemblies, and spoke at a number of meetings in the locality. He was also near enough to his home to visit that district fairly frequently, and a glimpse into his spiritual life and activity at that time is provided by a letter which he wrote at the age of only twenty to a friend who lived near Huddersfield.

DEAR SISTER IN THE SOON-COMING LORD,—Thanks so much for your welcome letter—it did me good. You will notice I am now at home as I have been sent to work at Shelley. God willing I hope to see you on next Lord's day at Mrs. Pearce's. I thank God that you know the Lord Jesus as your saviour—may He have the true place of lordship in your heart and life. Never mind about knowledge. God only wants you to "know *Him*, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being made

conformable unto his death." Philippians 3. 10. This is a scripture particularly worthy of meditation.

I would like to bring before you the importance of meditation as God's only three promises of spiritual prosperity are conditional upon meditation. See Joshua 1. 8. Psalm 1. 2 and 3. James 1. 25. ("continueth therein"). Remember, one can never rely on feelings, but, thank God, on the Word of God (and the Lord Jesus revealed therein).

Now I want to give you a few thoughts on "Grace." Firstly we have both grace and truth meeting and being manifested in a Person. John 1. 17. The Common definition of grace is "the free unmerited favour of God." This is quite good—in other words, when God deals with us in grace, He deals with us not as we deserve (for that is hell) but because of what Christ is. Hence it is that it is quite impossible for us to be justified by works. Now a very common error I believe amongst Christians is the idea that we are saved by grace (through faith) but we become more perfect through works. This was the error into which the Galatians had fallen and against which the whole Epistle is written (see particularly Gal. 2. 16, 3. 1-3). We are therefore exhorted to "grow in grace"—not in works. In other words we are saved by grace, sanctified by grace and made more like Him by grace—in fact it is all grace from first to last—and grace is in a Person—the Lord Jesus. In the measure in which we "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3. 3.) but realise and appreciate His righteousness shall we become practically more righteous.

I trust it may please the Lord to teach us more on this subject when we meet together sometime. Meanwhile I commend for your prayerful and careful meditation John 10. 27-30, Coloss. 3. 3, John 17. 10 and 12 and 21, asking God what He has to teach you from them (and if you will please let me know). Trusting God will abundantly bless you and unfold to you the beauties of Christ in the Word that you may be attracted to Him there and be led more to "set your affections on things above" (Col. 3. 2).

I am,

Yours in Christ,

FRED MITCHELL.

On the envelope was printed a text, typical of the desire to publish abroad the news of the salvation—and perhaps it is an indication of the haste with which he had to work to accomplish all he longed to do, to observe that the two half-penny stamps were stuck on upside down!

During those years of war an apparently trivial and unimportant incident occurred which was to have far-reaching effects on his future pathway. How often the course of a life is directed by apparently casual occurrences! God's plans for His human servants are usually set in motion through every-day happenings, and in this case it was through the loaning of a book. It was entitled *1,000 Miles of Miracle in China*. Years later, he wrote:

I can never erase the deep impressions made on me by that book which has been so used of God to call so many to the mission field. The pathos, the courage of men, women and children of the C.I.M. in those terrible days of the Boxer riots stirred my youthful soul to the depths. The book, however, did more than that, for it introduced me to the spiritual principles of the C.I.M.—the way of faith and prayer, which through the years has been more and more confirmed to me as the way of service for God.

This introduction was followed up shortly by another contact with the Mission with which his life was eventually to be closely woven. Again it was in the shape of a book—this time the two-volume *Life of Hudson Taylor*,

which I still regard as one of the greatest of Christian biographies. The story thrilled me, the spiritual principles everywhere evident in the book inspired me, and from then to now I have loved the C.I.M.

It was about this time that his thoughts were directed in a more definite and personal way towards China. He had gone one Sunday to visit friends in the little town of Holmfirth, near his own home. After the pleasant, happy fellowship

around the table, lavishly spread for "high tea" with plates of bread and butter and cakes, and perhaps meat pie in honour of the guest, he accompanied his host and hostess to the Methodist chapel where a favourite minister was to lead the evening service.

I loved Mr. Davidson and ever enjoyed his ministry, but of the service and sermon that evening I remember almost nothing save the insistent voice in my soul, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" which repeated very many times made one deaf to every outward voice. Years afterward I can easily recall the clamorous thump of each syllable of that question from Isaiah 6 as it made its authoritative demand on me. And well do I remember the implication I then believed it to have, namely a willingness to go to the land which so filled my mind at that time, and has been in my heart ever since, the land of China. How long this went on during the service I do not now remember but after some time I was enabled to answer, "Lord, here am I, send me" and a great peace filled my whole being.

This experience undoubtedly had a deep effect upon him. He had a sense of vocation, of having been called definitely into the service of his King. The war was over now, and he was able to resume his work in Huddersfield, studying for pharmacy with keen enjoyment, as he prepared to sit for his exam. On Sundays he and Walter Charlesworth, their friendship as firm as ever in spite of separations during the war years, went out together as before, armed with tracts, to hold open-air meetings in the villages around. There was a new enthusiasm in all that he did, as he found his heart increasingly burdened with the spiritual needs of China. China! Did he not hope to go there one day as a missionary? In every way possible he wanted to train himself for a life of service, spiritual and practical, among the Chinese!

Then fell the blow which proved, perhaps, the chief deciding factor in keeping him at home. The influenza epidemic which swept across Europe after the cessation of hostilities, and which eventually claimed more victims than

the war itself, reached Jackson Bridge. One day in February, 1919, Brook Mitchell was taken ill. Within a week he died. And Fred at the age of 21 was not only bereft of the help of his father, but left with the responsibility of taking a share in supporting his widowed mother.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE OPENING WAY

The tendency has been to omit from the catalogue of desirable virtues such an ordinary grace as perseverance . . . but to what purpose are all the others, if we drop out before the goal is reached?

FRED MITCHELL.

In replying to an advertisement you are selling your services. If you cannot sell yourself you can sell nothing—that is obvious. And no employer is seeking a man who cannot sell. It is necessary, therefore, that you know how to sell your services. The following hints suggest what is reasonably expected.

The old-time quality of respect is fast disappearing. But it will pay any budding pharmacist to cultivate it. No one looks for a timid, bow-and-scrape manner—Uriah Heep is dead. An employer does look, however, for a respectful attitude, for finding it shown towards himself he reasonably concludes it will be manifested to his customers, and that is essential in business.

I am sure it is a financial asset to be able to write well. Bad writing is usually, not always, the result of carelessness, and when the choice lies between two applicants of similar capacities the writing will doubtless give the casting vote. There are those who read character in handwriting. The science, if science it be, may be exaggerated. Some characteristics are most certainly revealed. Let yours suggest care, at least.

Edgar Wallace says that he considers the good quality note-paper he used, when an aspiring journalist, as well-invested cash. Doubtless it has paid him well, so see to it that your application is not sent out in white demy.

Invest in a good photograph, one which will do you justice or even flatter you. Avoid a snap, even though it may be "natural." Your prospective employer doesn't want to see you in tennis attire. He will be more interested in your business capacity.

How much do you think you are worth? Then ask for it. Ask

a price which will make you do your best to earn it. The market is glutted with labour, but there is always plenty of room at the top for keen, conscientious, hard-working men. Be one of these.

Tell your future employer what you can do, how you can do it, and how gladly you will do it. And tell him just as plainly what you cannot do, but how willing you are to learn anything. He knows you don't know everything, and if you want to learn that is worth a lot.

The door of Opportunity is marked "push." You open it.

THESE extracts from an article on "Applying for a Post" appeared in a pharmaceutical magazine in the 1920's. They would be of little interest in this short biography were it not that the article was written by Fred Mitchell. Full of sound, businesslike advice, it gives us an unconscious picture of the young man himself as he set about applying for the position as manager in a chemist's shop in Bradford.

It was less than six months after his father's death. During that time he had spent three months at Chester Pharmaceutical College before sitting for the exam for which he had been studying. It had been one of his father's dying wishes that Fred should "go through with pharmacy," and he had done it. Now, a Member of the Pharmaceutical Society, he was qualified to be a manager of a chemist's shop, not merely an assistant, and he set about looking for such a position. There were three vacancies which attracted his notice, two in Sheffield and one in Bradford, but he decided to make no application for the first two, since both were in shops with licences for wines and spirits. The last one, Rogersons of Bradford, had no such licence, and his was one of about fifty applications for the post it offered—written in his own firm, clear handwriting on good quality notepaper, accompanied no doubt by a photograph which did him no discredit! The letter was followed up by a personal interview, and after the usual formalities the respectful, frank young Mr. Fred Mitchell, whose air of quiet assurance somehow conveyed an impression of maturity beyond his twenty-two years, was engaged.

That any immediate prospect of an early departure for China must be put aside probably did not cause him great concern. He had youth on his side; practical experience in dispensing would undoubtedly be an asset on the mission field; and the situation in which he found himself was so evidently one beyond his control that he could only accept it as the present will of God for him. To put aside his filial responsibility at the time of his mother's grief and need was unthinkable. Had she herself shared the missionary vision of her youngest son, and been willing to let him go, it would have been a different matter. But since she did not the only road open for him was to continue with his pharmaceutical career until such time as God should reveal a different course.

He was never one to indulge in fruitless repinings, and it was with cheerful enthusiasm that he entered upon his new life as under-manager of Rogersons. For the next three years he lived with an aunt and uncle whose home was in the city, only returning to Jackson Bridge for Sundays, and on his half-days. The factories' whistles became a sound as familiar as the rustling leaves and songs of birds had been, and instead of hilly horizons of moorland and trees, he saw hilly horizons of roofs and chimney stacks, where the city had grown up from the valley to cover the semi-circular basin in which it lay. And although the hope of one day going to China still burned in his heart, he soon came to love the world-famous centre of the woollen and worsted industry, with its factories and mill-pools, its soot-laden atmosphere and dark, cobbled side-streets, and its shrewd but warm-hearted people.

During those years he and Walter Charlesworth steadily maintained their witness in the Holmfirth district when home at week-ends, and it was there, amongst his own villages, that most of his Christian work was done. Extracts from a little 4 by 2½-inch diary give an insight into the experiences of those Sundays when the young chemist gave himself up to the service of his Heavenly Master.

Afternoon. Set off to H'firth. Had a hard time with tracts and invitations. I thought of the hymn, "Jesus, I my cross have taken." It was indeed a real cross, but oh, how one is led on thinking of His Cross, His wounds and shame. The Lord just opened the heart of H. H. I just wondered at His leadings. Never had such an experience with a soul. The Lord found us a place for tea and indeed it was the best place, because His.

A.m. Prayer meeting for blessing on gospel campaign at Holmfirth. 2 o'clock, marched with gospel texts through Holmfirth. Gave 4,000 tracts out. Open air service at night, but it was a hard meeting. The place was noisy with charabancs, and the weather showery and cold.

Afternoon went over to Holmfirth gave tracts on the way and after tea at Mrs. S. set off with organ to Choppards where we had service at 5.45 till 6.45 and Arunden 7 to 7.45. Never had such power—and such attentive audience. The Lord indeed moved some to tears and repentance.

Shepley a.m. John 1. 19. A precious time. Afternoon cycled home to be a little with mother. Evening a time of intense spiritual power. I am realising more than ever the need of preaching Christ and Him crucified. Lord, make me to become a fisher of men.

A.m. Brockholes. A time of God's presence. Satan tempted me sorely to refrain from preaching on 'the Blood' at night but the name of the Lord Jesus dismissed him. Never was I so upheld in preaching on this important theme.

So Sunday after Sunday passed as the months rolled by. The exertion and strain of spiritual ministry after a hard week's work often left him feeling weary, and several times an entry in his diary on Monday gave evidence of it.

Very tired after the hard day at Meltham. Too tired to pray really at night, but asked the Lord for special strength to intercede for needy ones. . . .

Returned to work almost broken down. I had almost fainted before the sermon, but God gave strength.

I am being taught about the care of the body, but oh, with these perishing ones around and so few to preach—Lord, raise up some to tell of Thy love—and strengthen and anoint me, unworthy as I am.

At one period he went to the doctor about his heart, and was advised to take more rest. Like many people with a strong constitution and good general health, he took quite a serious view of any feeling of weakness, and an entry in his diary about this time reveals his concern.

Very ill all day—suffering from a sense of being utterly worn out. Fearing a breakdown.

A breakdown was about the last thing those who knew him would ever have connected with the robust, cheerful Fred Mitchell, and his fear was not realized! By resting in Bradford on Wednesday afternoons instead of hurrying home to Jackson Bridge he soon recovered his strength, and a few weeks later his diary entry runs,

Afternoon a quiet read and nap. God is blessing this weekly rest to me in spirit, soul and body. Evening went to Tabernacle. Mr. Myers preached on "Sojourners, Pilgrims, Strangers"—a helpful and needed message. Spent time in prayer. . . .

He evidently indulged in no form of sport. He found his relaxation in reading, playing the piano, and occasionally going for a botany ramble, and to hear a good sermon was his chief delight. He got plenty of exercise walking to and from business and meetings, and could ill spare his time for anything else. Employed all day in the shop and dispensary, his evening hours were precious indeed. Apart from the fact that he was studying for a B.Sc. degree (for which he sat later, and failed) it was during the evening hours that he had his opportunity for Bible study and meditation, and this he treasured above everything. For Fred Mitchell had only one absorbing passion in life. He could derive enjoyment from many things—indeed, he brought a keen enthusiasm to everything with which he was connected, whether it be business, study, friendship, art, music, or a day's outing. But only one thing could satisfy him. He loved his Master. He must know Him, walk with Him, converse with Him in

an ever-increasing intimacy. The little black 4 by 2½-inch diaries in which he wrote his deepest thoughts and experiences breathe out the longings and adoration of his soul, and through them we get a glimpse into his inner life when, as a young man of twenty-four, he entered on a new year. The diary commences,

Closing thoughts in 1920. Hebrews 10. 5-7. At last there is a Man found Whose delight it was to do God's will. Is it not this which marks Him off from other men that they follow their own inclinations but He had the will of Another at heart so that He could say, "My meat and drink is to do His will."

12-1 a.m. The Lord graciously overruled for a season of waiting upon Him. How real His presence! His first promise to me was "But the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." So there's victory. He has promised and I must put Him in remembrance.

The following day was Sunday.

Afternoon spent waiting upon Him for the night's service at Wooldale Lane Bottom. Time too short for many subjects of praise and prayer. Oh, to catch a fresh vision of that Beautiful One before seeking to present Him to men! This was granted me.

This particular New Year held a peculiar joy for him, one which he had been anticipating for weeks. He and Nellie Hey were to go together to a short conference sponsored by the China Inland Mission at a beautifully-situated conference centre in Derbyshire. It was now some years since Fred had first visited Ivy Cottage to convey a message from his mother to Mrs. Hey, asking if she could entertain the local preacher on the following Sunday. That first visit had been followed by others which were made for a different reason, and after a time it became known in Scholes and Jackson Bridge that Fred Mitchell and Nellie Hey were keeping company! On this January day, therefore, they set off together for the first C.I.M. Conference they had ever

attended. With what hopes and expectations did they arrive with their suitcases at the spacious country house set in large gardens with lawns and wooded walks leading to a small lake, which was to become such a familiar and well-loved place to them both! How eagerly did they respond to the happy fellowship of the hundred or so other visitors who were attending the conference! And above all, with what a solemn awe did they quietly take their seats in the large, airy hall as morning, afternoon and evening the bell rung to announce that a meeting would shortly begin! Dr. Stuart Holden was one of the speakers at the conference, and as the young chemist from Bradford sat and listened to the great preacher who spoke so fluently, so naturally, and so positively and then saw him moving so freely and happily among the people, his heart was stirred with an admiration that almost amounted to hero worship. This was preaching indeed! Here was a man who by his approachability, his kindness and his sympathy exemplified the gracious Lord of Whose indwelling power he spoke! Stuart Holden became his ideal of a preacher and a Christian gentleman, and from that time he unconsciously moulded himself upon him. And when the conference was over, and he had to return to Bradford, instead of wistfully desiring that the blessed days might be prolonged, or that he might himself go into "full-time Christian service," we read in his diary,

Off to work glad of the privilege of putting into practice the great truths brought before us at Swanwick.

There were days when entries in his diary seemed to overflow with satisfaction and joy.

A very ordinary day, nothing apparently important, but how blessed His companionship and protection. . . .

His espousals—the day of the gladness of His heart. Song. 3. 11, 12. I have such a consciousness of His love for me to-day I can hardly contain myself. . . . Oh, Lord Jesus, do Thou have indeed the very first place in my heart. Let this be the day of Thy

espousals, the day of the gladness of Thy heart, as indeed it is of mine.

Off back to work to see His restraining and guiding Hand in ordinary hum-drum business life. He is so gracious in entering into the dull and prosaic of the secular and making it beautiful by His own companionship and spiritual by His presence. Every day surely offers the supreme possibility to us—i.e. of walking with Him.

Allied to the deep delight he experienced in the consciousness of his Saviour's presence, there was often a sense of personal failure and short-coming. An invitation to speak at special services provoked the fear

lest in me this evil heart which I seek to account dead should be delighted at the idea of the honour.

and on more than one occasion failure in personal relationships drove him to his knees

seeking His pardon and a deeper indwelling of His Holy Spirit. Sin becomes more detestable and I thank God that He will not allow us to sin with impunity.

But the conference at Swanwick which had deepened his spiritual life and quickened his conscience, had done something else. The earnest sessions of prayer for China that had been held several times each day had again brought the needs of that great land vividly before him. Talks with missionaries, men and women who had lived and worked there, deepened the impressions made and again he found himself faced with the challenge of the millions who had never heard the name of Christ Jesus. The conference at Swanwick ushered him into a new conflict.

"My heart was in China, but my body was kept in England," he wrote many years later. "Two diaries are still preserved breathing, as I see now, a grave disquiet. For two whole years the struggle continued until I was brought to

face a new challenge—was I willing to stay at home in England for the same Master? I had answered 'Yes' to a call meant, as I then believed for China, within the space of an hour. It took many months to say 'Yes' to a call meant for anywhere, including England. . . ."

CHAPTER FIVE

DUTY BEFORE INCLINATION

*Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out for me,
And the changes that are sure to come
I do not fear to see;
But I ask Thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.*

Happy indeed in sweet fellowship with my Lord. He is leading towards the formation of a prayer centre for China in Bradford, so I am about the business. Oh, Lord, make me business-like in all things, let me not be dilatory or slack, or on the other hand hasty or presumptuous. . . .

SO wrote Fred Mitchell in his little diary one Tuesday evening in March, 1921. It was typical of him that his deep desire towards China must find some outward expression in practical service, and now he saw a way in which he could do something to further the progress of the gospel in the land to which he longed to go. His intent and eager study of the *Life of Hudson Taylor* and other C.I.M. books had taught him that the China Inland Mission looked to God alone to bless its labours in China, and to provide its material needs. He knew enough about the efficacy of prayer in his own personal life to recognize that there was something eminently practical in the emphasis the Mission laid on prayer. An entry in his diary only a few days previously ran

I have to bless God for answers to prayer that my weak faith hardly expected five or six months ago.

If things could be effected in his own life through prayer, certainly the same means could be used to bring a release of spiritual blessing in China. At the Swanwick Conference he had heard about the little groups of earnest people that were formed in various places to pray systematically for the Mission. Could one not be started in Bradford? As he prayed about it, he was encouraged by a deepening conviction that such a move was in accordance with God's will, and eventually he wrote to the Mission asking for the names of any in the district who were supporters. With these names and addresses before him, he set about writing to each one, broaching the subject of a prayer centre in Bradford. A further diary entry a few days later runs

Wrote four more letters re C.I.M. Prayer Centre. The Lord seems to be giving tokens that this is according to His mind, and what do I want more ever than to do His will in His way at His time?

His letters evoked encouraging responses from several people, one of whom invited him to visit the home in order to discuss the matter further. He little thought as he ascended the steps of the solid-looking, square-built house in Melbourne Place, with its carriage drive and well-kept garden, that he would one day be living next door, and that the occupants would be numbered amongst his dearest friends. On this occasion he came as a complete stranger, and not without a sense of inward shyness did he give his name to the maid in cap and apron who answered his ring. He was ushered into a high-ceilinged, quiet drawing-room, and any sense of embarrassment was soon dispelled, for the entry in his little diary that evening ran,

What a refreshing time to see two dear children of God who have indeed tasted of the sweetness of His love and the fragrance of His moral glory.

and the memory of that visit filled his thoughts next day as he wrote at its close

Full of praise at the remembrance of the evening before. Oh, just to be in His sweet will in everything for all outside is barren, being untouched by the river of His Presence.

All his life he revelled in the friendships to which he brought such a wealth of affection and watchful consideration. "I believe in the communion of saints!" he would write warmly in his diary after a short record of a few hours spent in the company of those with whom he had talked of his beloved Master and His Kingdom. But in this particular instance there was an added zest in the fellowship, since it was for the purpose of doing something for the land he so much loved. Undoubtedly a prayer group in Bradford could be formed, and now he must get down to the practical details of arranging a time and a place for the first little meeting.

How much thought and prayer went into those arrangements! Having booked a room in the Friends Meeting House, he wrote,

I do pray God will give me but one motive in all I do for him . . . and deliver me from any ideas of greatness.

A few weeks later, after adding four new names to the list of those who could be invited his diary runs,

All were written. I seek God's blessing on this effort, not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end and that end the Lord's own glory in China.

It was not until four months after the idea of a Bradford C.I.M. prayer group had entered his thoughts and prayers that the first meeting was held. The evening before, as he was going to bed, he wrote,

Finished all preparation for to-morrow's prayer meeting. So then I can count on His blessing. My work for China so far has only been on my knees (and it must ever be) but God is

granting now a more tangible form of expression to my deep love for that dark continent.

That night he had a dream. He rarely had them, and if he did, they vanished with the morning light. This one, however, was so vivid and so significant that it dominated his thoughts as he rose to dress, and so deeply was he impressed by it that he made a note of it in his diary.

Had a strange dream. I was in heaven and I saw the Lord Jesus accomplishing His purposes. He did two things. First, he pleaded for its accomplishment, then laid it on the hearts of His people on earth, and they, too, besought the Father, and it was accomplished.

That evening, having closed the shop, he went along to the appointed place. Entering the simply-furnished little meeting room he sat down at the end of the front row of empty chairs to await the arrival of those who were to join him. He had prayed for eight persons to be present at that first prayer meeting, and waited quietly but eagerly for their arrival. At last he heard steps coming along the passage. The door opened, and a woman entered. A few seconds later another came, then another, then another. They entered quietly, and sat in two rows, facing the desk and chair placed for the speakers, waiting for someone to occupy that place. But no one went forward. The young man sitting gravely at the end of the front row did not move. The time at which the meeting was due to commence ticked past. Still no one moved. At last, when the silence had become embarrassing, one of the women turned to him and said,

“Mr. Mitchell, will you not lead the meeting?”

He rose at once. He had determined not to assume leadership unless asked to do so, but now that the invitation had come, he was ready.

“Shall we sing a hymn?” he suggested. Since no one present offered to play, he sat at the little organ himself.

Quickly his eye passed over those who had gathered—only six. He had expected seven. But his rising sense of disappointment was subdued, and turned to quiet rejoicing, when he remembered that Another was with them whom they could not see. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst. . . ." He had asked that eight persons should be present, and his request had been granted. And as the meeting proceeded, all sense of constraint disappeared. The prayers of those who had gathered revealed an intimacy with God, and a concern for the souls of men that warmed and cheered the heart of the young chemist who had drawn them together; and one at least returned to her home profoundly moved, conscious of a depth of spiritual fervour that she had never experienced in a meeting before.

When Fred Mitchell returned home that evening, with typical business-like thoroughness, he wrote a report of the meeting to C.I.M. Headquarters before he went to sleep. "The Lord has indeed set his seal upon our coming together for prayer for China," he wrote. And the next day he was further encouraged.

Received £1 for expenses of local prayer centre. God is undoubtedly manifesting His blessing on it, but this opens fresh responsibilities—pecuniary—which I seek to discharge properly as becometh the gospel.

From that time forward the monthly C.I.M. prayer meeting was one of his chief delights. A glimpse of its usefulness, both in training for his own future ministry, and in influence on other lives, is given in reminiscences of one who attended them, written thirty years afterwards.

The numbers soon grew, and the meeting became a centre of blessing to those who came, quite apart from the value of the prayers that went up for China. Mr. Mitchell would give in the course of the meeting a ten minutes Bible study, and how rich and varied were those studies. Later, Christian nurses attended

and were blessed—some of these found their way to the Mission field. . . .

At that time, however, his hopes of future ministry were still centred in China, and it was during the spring and summer of that same year that he appeared to reach the peak of his yearning desire to go there. References to it occur with increasing frequency in the little black diary as the months pass. The strong inward urge seemed to be accompanied by an indefinable sense of restraint, a lack of assurance that he should take any definite action. When he was confident that God was indicating a certain step should be taken, he took it, whatever the cost. In this one matter which was the deepest longing of his heart, that assurance was evidently not given.

“. . . the Lord spoke to me again concerning work abroad, and I asked Him afresh to open the way,” he wrote one evening in March. And later in the month, when he had broached the subject to his fiancée, he wrote,

At last I can say the most formidable barrier to China has gone—Nellie and I are one in the matter.

They had already come through one crisis, when differing personal convictions had been so strong that they had agreed they must separate unless God brought them into a closer unity. Neither was prepared to sacrifice conviction, even to the deep human affection which each felt for the other. A mellowing of rather rigid views on his part, and a clarifying of understanding of God's holiness on hers, had brought them, after some months, to a similarity of outlook which at one time seemed impossible. But in spite of the removal of what had seemed a formidable barrier, he still lacked conviction. During the months that followed, entries in his diary give an indication of the turmoil of alternating hope and uncertainty within his heart as he waited longingly for the Divine command to go forward which somehow never came.

May 10. The Lord is constantly impressing upon me the importance of His will. China's gospel work much upon my heart. Oh, to be there!

May 16. Gave myself afresh to the land of my affection—China. Oh Lord, do Thou who openest and no man shutteth open an effectual door towards that needy land to which Thou hast assuredly called me.

June 9. The day was marked by the Lord giving me such a consciousness that His purposes are being carried out and that what I have asked him to do relative to China He is able to do and is now doing that I just exulted in the sense of His infinite care and power. Why, if He has called to China it is certainly to His glory to open the way. . . .

June 20. Greatly burdened in prayer for those at home. God gave me to realize how intimately their blessing is bound up with my going to China. Had a calm and strong assurance that my prayers were to be speedily answered.

June 24. I seem to have lived this week in China. . . .

June 29. I am now feeling the need of definite preparation for future missionary work. I am therefore beginning to wait upon God for direction. I have a sum of money in credit . . . and wonder if this would be used well with an elementary Greek and Hebrew Course . . . my heart is still in China.

He was a great lover of hymns, and often a line of some favourite brought comfort and reassurance. "God is working His purpose out, as year succeeds to year" was one that often found its way into his diary, and now another became specially significant.

July 1. These last few days and especially in prayer to-night I was so conscious of my deep need of Him—I feel so strangely as though something—some great change—is to take place in my life in the near future. The hymn specially precious to-day was

"Father, I know that all my life,
Is portioned out for me. . . .
I ask but for a present mind
Intent on pleasing thee. . . ."

July 12. Had such a blessing from the word concerning all the future. "I am He that openeth and no man shutteth, etc." "My times are in Thy hand." So I can afford to quietly repose in His will and times. . . .

August 3. Had tea with Rev. Hope Gill. 21 years in China with C.I.M. and C.M.S. A dear man of God. He was a great encouragement and inspiration. China becomes more definitely engraved on my heart.

August 5. The challenge suggested by Rev. Hope Gill of now asking and receiving only handfuls of men for China instead of the 70 and 100 as in early days has become vividly real to me. . . .

August 8. Had a look at the map of China, and wondered where in His ordering I might sometime be found. Oh, to be there! . . .

August 15. Somewhat exercised on present position re China. Exercise very much deepened by receiving letter from Percy Horner asking me to be quite sure I was doing His will in waiting for parents' consent. Oh, Lord! Guide me!

The receipt of this letter perturbed him greatly. At the time of his mother's bereavement the path had been so clear as to create no perplexity of mind. Now, two years later, the question whether he should take some definite step seemed much more acute. His position was further complicated by the fact that his fiancée's mother, as well as his own, was unwilling for them to go abroad. Was it right for him to hold back on that account? He was probably unaware that the C.I.M. rarely encouraged young people to enter its ranks without the permission of their parents, holding the view that if the place of God's will for them was China He would, in answer to prayer, bring about a willingness to let them go on the part of those whom He Himself had commanded them to honour. Many who became missionaries looked back on that change of attitude as being one of the surest proofs that God had indeed sent them forth, and it is significant that in the case of Fred Mitchell's mother and future mother-in-law the change apparently did not come. The burning desire for the salvation of the Chinese was given him for a purpose other than that he should take

the message to them himself, but he had not yet realized it.

The day following the receipt of this letter was one of deep suppressed emotion and anxiety. In the morning he read Psalm 25, and his own heart echoed the cry of the Psalmist. "Shew me Thy paths, O Lord; teach me Thy ways . . . on Thee do I wait all the day." And then, as he read on, the reassuring words appeared, "The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way . . . what man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that He shall choose. . . ."

"He will guide . . . in the way that He shall choose." The promise seemed so appropriate to his immediate need, and that night, as he knelt by his bedside, he "pleaded God's promises for guidance in Psalm 25."

Who can enter into the sacred intimacy of the dealings of a soul with its Maker? Who can trace the exact point in a spiritual crisis at which the tide turns? These holy mysteries must remain concealed, it seems, and as far as we are concerned, we can only see the outcome. His prayers that night were for those most intimately concerned in his going to the mission field, but although no change was apparent in their attitude, the anxiety and tension seemed to pass for him. His intercessions had brought an answer of peace to his own heart. The following day we read "Went to bed sweetly resting that God is working" and during the next weeks, although the deep love for China remained, a greater calm and a more submissive trust are evident.

August 18. Returned to Bradford in the calm assurance of His will. . . . There came into the shop at dinner time a young man to whom I had failed to testify some twelve months ago. I had confessed it with a heavy heart to the Lord and asked for another opportunity. This was granted me. He is so apparently restless I just told him the secret of rest "Christ." He was so impressed. I thank God for the opportunity and just asked in Christ's name for his salvation.

August 19. Just rested in the Lord. Read a little about "Prayer Life" and received I think clearer guidance how to live it. But oh!

How little we do pray. The Lord make me above everything else one who can move God and the world by prayer in Jesus' Name.

August 20. I have read so much about crucifying self-life, etc., but never till to-day did its real meaning dawn on me. J. Russell Howden in his book "Victory in Life" says it is putting "duty before inclination." That was just what I was wanting.

August 25. Read J. Russell Howden on the lad's offering of the five loaves and two fishes. Such a helpful piece! Greatly encouraged. I believe I am beginning to realize the meaning of power of prayer in The Name. "Ask" and rely on this "and it shall be given." Dare I rest on that promise? . . .

The conflict of mind through which he had passed may have been partly responsible for the exhaustion he felt so often during the autumn of that year. References to his personal desire to go to China had grown fewer, however, and apart from the monthly C.I.M. prayer meeting, for which he made very careful preparation, his energies were concentrated on business, and especially on his week-end ministry in the Holmfirth area. Every now and then, however, the old longing reasserted itself, and an entry in his diary in October runs:

It is a growing desire, but I do long to know if it is of the Lord. Time is a great tester of purposes.

In his case, the allotted time for the testing of his purposes was over twenty years.

CHAPTER SIX

CALL OF THE CITY

The Spirit of God does not crush us with responsibilities and weigh us down with duties, but gently leads us in fruitful paths of service, and has a wonderful way of accomplishing the best results with the least fuss.

FRED MITCHELL.

IT is a strange fact that while evangelical Christians are at one regarding the matter of salvation, there is a great deal of confusion and divergence of opinion regarding the question of holiness. Probably the confliction of views is due more to the use of varying phraseology than a fundamental difference in faith and practical understanding of the subject. Like many other earnest young Christians, Fred Mitchell passed through periods of perplexity concerning the filling of the Holy Spirit. Joy and peace he knew, especially after satisfying periods of Bible study and prayer, or when in direct service for his Master; but was there something more, some greater spiritual power than he possessed, which he was missing? His own spiritual life since the memorable night when he had known himself to be "born again" had been without any startling or dramatic experiences or revelations, and if there was something that would bring him suddenly on to a higher plane, he longed to know of it. He read a great deal, and eventually thrashed out the matter in his own mind. Whatever might be the experiences of others, for him, progress in the spiritual life was a steady, upward climb. As he looked back over the years to his conversion, he could honestly say that he had yielded himself completely to God that night. He had not

wittingly held anything back, or clung to any known sin. He firmly believed that the Spirit of God had entered his heart to abide there, and there remained, whether he was conscious of His presence by inward motions of love or joy, or not. It was the natural tendency of the human heart to doubt and distrust that he came to recognize as his greatest hindrance to spiritual blessing and power, and more than once his diary bemoans his "evil heart of unbelief." The child-like yet practical faith of Hudson Taylor appealed to him greatly, and when he had finished reading *A Retrospect* he wrote:

How faithful God is. If we fail Him He cannot deny Himself. God has been leading me into a simpler trust of late, and the challenging question now is: I have rested on His Word alone for salvation. Am I prepared to rest on it for everything in life?

A fortnight later, although mourning "the very low level" of his Christian life, he wrote,

Had a day of real sweet fellowship with Him. He is all I want and all I need. He *is* dwelling in me by faith and He *will* manifest Himself through me. I count upon Him being there to control. I reckon myself as not in authority.

Whatever his feelings might be, after self-examination lest some sin had crept in unobserved to mar his testimony, he rested on the assurance that God remained faithful to His promise, "I will dwell in them."

His faith, however, was not a passive kind. He longed for the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, and exercised himself practically in godliness and self-control. So we find him "seeking to maintain a pure and holy courtship on which our God can smile"; "very much perplexed and troubled with a certain question of righteousness at the shop; looking to God for guidance to discharge it honourably, whatever the cost." And overcoming the instinctive unwillingness to witness to his faith in Christ before strangers when, cycling back to Bradford "in company with a man

from Sheffield, the Lord told me to speak to him. I fumbled it a while, but knew *it had to be done if I were to enjoy His Presence. . .*” To refuse to follow those gentle, inner promptings would, he knew, bring a cloud over his spirit.

Trust and obey,
For there's no other way,
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey

was a simple little chorus which aptly summed up his simple, uncomplicated faith.

One day, however, a Divine revelation was granted to him which made a profound impression on him. He was returning by train to Bradford one Monday morning, and alighting at that station he walked along towards the barrier, when the words came quietly but with overwhelming power to his mind. “Christ liveth in me.” For months, if not years, he had believed it, but this Monday morning, amidst the smoke and clangour and bustle of the station, the holy, awe-inspiring reality dawned upon him. Christ Himself, the Holy One of God, was dwelling in him. It was as though a light had been suddenly turned on in a room to reveal one whose presence thus far had been dimly realized, but now was seen. As he gave his ticket up at the barrier, and walked along the busy street to start another week's work at the shop, he was suffused with a deep, quiet joy. He realized as never before the meaning of the words, “The temple of God is holy; which temple ye are.” He rarely referred to that incident, perhaps because it was so sacred, perhaps because he feared lest others should seek such an experience for themselves, and thus be diverted from seeking the Lord Himself, who deals individually and differently with each one of His children. On one occasion, however, when broadcasting a message from the Keswick convention years later, he expressed it in these words:

Feeling acutely the difference between the life in the church on Sunday and the life in the world on Monday, the truth

suddenly laid hold of heart and mind, and life has never been the same since. I saw that "Christ was in me"; that He was not only my Saviour dying for me on the Cross, and my Lord risen from the tomb, but He was my Life dwelling in my heart, and that this was true just then in a smoky railway station, and everywhere else. It dawned upon me that Christ was in me then as I walked down the platform and afterwards down the street; it was true as I arrived at my place of business and began the work of the day. In short, wherever I was, He was there, in me as my Life. Whatever my need was, He was living within to meet it; whatever my temptation, He was there to defeat it. That was how I discovered how "He saved His people—and me as one of them—from their sins."

* * *

We come now to the second little black diary, that for 1922. On the pages marked Memoranda, are written prayer topics for each day of the week, ranging from private individuals to various societies, but with China and the Mission which he loved figuring prominently each day. The first page read:

1922

The Lord specially brought before me for 1922

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

"I will guide thee with mine eye."

"I will make thy feet like hinds' feet."

What a heritage with which to enter upon the unknown!

"I shall fear no evil; for Thou art with me."

Not by signs and wonders, but imperceptibly he was led into the pathway of God's will. An entry made one Wednesday in January seems of special significance.

To-day the Lord has been speaking to me about revival in Bradford. After tea had a special season of prayer in which I asked for guidance in this, as also in any move as to marriage or otherwise. Committed it all to Him and asked Him if indeed it be His will for me to go forward to send me a sum of money.

A few days later we read,

Holmfirth upon my heart for prayer, and *especially* Bradford and revival. Asked the Lord to guide me and in any small way to make me a stepping stone to this end.

Although he still cherished the hope of going to China one day, increasingly the immediate claims of the great city in which he lived were impressed upon him as he prayed each Wednesday for "Revival in Bradford." He had heard about the interdenominational Convention held each year at Keswick for "the promotion of Scriptural holiness," and learned that in years gone by a shorter Convention on similar lines had been held yearly in Bradford itself. Could it not be recommenced? Might not that be one way whereby the answer to the prayer for which he was looking should come?

And the Master who had prepared beforehand the good works in which he should walk led him so naturally that he was almost unaware of it.

One Monday, as he was busy in the shop, two of those who attended the monthly C.I.M. prayer meeting came in. Delighted, as always, to see friends, he greeted them cordially. As he stood behind the counter with its bottles and boxes of scented toilet soap, talking to them, his thoughts flew to the matter that was on his mind, and he spoke to them of it. With the same deep interest and sympathy which they had manifested when he came to see them about the formation of a C.I.M. prayer meeting they listened to this further project, and the following day his diary reads,

Received letter from Mrs. Craven containing three addresses of evangelistic ministers—so God is prospering this, I trust. Keep me obedient, Lord, to Thy heavenly vision.

Letters were written, and a month later he was able to write in his diary that he had got his first member of the Bradford Keswick Council. That same week, he went for a walk which led him up a steep hillside to a place where he could see right over Bradford. He gazed at the scene before

him for a while—the great, thickly-populated industrial city, with its wide main thoroughfares running up the surrounding hills; the narrow, cobbled side-streets where front doors opened right out on to the pavements; the tall factory chimneys belching forth clouds of smoke; the better-class residential districts where clumps of trees gave evidence of gardens and avened roads. His heart was stirred, and as he stood looking over the city he

prayed God for His children there, for richer lives for us all, and then for a mighty revival.

and his diary entry that day ends,

Never a day of such peace and joy in Him as to-day.

Wherever his future pathway might lead, the place where God had set him now was Bradford, and in that place, therefore, he would serve Him. He proceeded with his plans for forming a Bradford Keswick Council, and various ministers in the neighbourhood received letters, and later, visits, from an unknown, 24-years-old chemist's employee called Fred Mitchell, who invited them to join him in his project! Those interviews went well. The quiet, respectful young man with his clear brown eyes and untroubled expression and evident sincerity made a good impression. The ministers whom he had approached, some Anglican and some nonconformist, were all men who believed, as he did, that the Church of Christ is not confined to any one denomination, and welcomed any effort that would be for the deepening of spiritual life in the city. He had already obtained the promise of co-operation from several of them when he went to see Mr. Sleight.

Mr. Sleight was a well-to-do man who was in charge of a mission hall on the corner of Sunbridge Road, in one of the poorer districts in Bradford. Combining deep spirituality with sound judgment, his work in that neighbourhood had been manifestly blessed by God. Souls had been saved, drunkards reformed and a band of men and women gathered

together willing and eager to work in Sunday schools, Bible classes, fellowship meetings, and in tract distributing and open-air testimony. An interesting side-light on the life of this servant of God, and one which could not fail to be of particular interest to Fred Mitchell, was the fact that he had married a C.I.M. missionary! He had been in love with her before she went to China, but it was not until she returned home during the Boxer Rising after about six years in that land, that he married her.

"You ought to be very grateful to the C.I.M. for letting you have Miss Pickles," said Hudson Taylor to him smilingly when they met.

"The C.I.M. ought to be very grateful to me for letting it have her for six years!" retorted Mr. Sleight.

When Fred Mitchell first went to visit them, however, he knew nothing of this. His purpose was to enrol further co-operation for the Bradford Keswick Council, and his first meeting with the man under whom he was later to work in the Sunbridge Road Mission for twenty years brought him face to face with a set-back. Mr. Sleight did not respond as quickly and easily as others had done, to his suggestion. On the contrary, he put before him the difficulties and problems that he would probably encounter in organizing a convention of the type he envisaged. He was not encouraging. He had lived and worked in Bradford for years, and had himself been an organizer in the previous conventions he pointed out. He foresaw pitfalls of which the enthusiastic young man before him knew nothing. The entry in the little black diary that night was subdued—but undaunted.

Mr. Sleight put the situation as it is in Bradford before me, and I went home not discouraged, but more determined to walk near Him, and pray more, and see it through. This is the test, and it all depends which way one takes now.

He took new courage and hope as he meditated on the message he had read in *Daily Light* that morning. "The Lord is my Shepherd . . . He leadeth me." And he was wise

enough to benefit by the warnings he had received. Three weeks later, on the afternoon of his half-day, the first Council meeting was held. It was a success. It was decided that the Convention should be held in November, the dates were fixed, and £25 for expenses guaranteed. That night he wrote,

Very encouraged. Must go forward now!

and the next day, reading in the fourth chapter of Proverbs, he comments,

Proverbs 4 so helpful, particularly verses 11 and 12. "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble." The past and future are so wonderfully brought together. It is so helpful to remember He is "I am"—no tenses—and "I am" is guiding me.

Meanwhile, God's purposes in his own personal life were ripening. He and Nellie had been drawn into a deeper relationship in united service for their Master. Many were the Saturday evenings when they rejoiced together as young people from the villages around gathered for the little cottage meeting sometimes held in her home. Many were the Sunday afternoons when, with her sister and Walter Charlesworth, they went to a neighbouring workhouse to speak and sing to the inmates. The differences in outlook on spiritual matters had long since ceased to exist, and increasingly it was evident that they complemented each other. The walks they took together when she met him from the station on Saturday evenings, and after chapel on Sundays, were recorded in his diary as "times of sweet fellowship." "*We could* do no other and *we would* do no other than give ourselves to Him Who died for us, that we should henceforth live not unto ourselves, but HIMSELF." The date was fixed for their wedding, and in July his diary entries run:

The Lord has silenced every fear about the future. . . .

Full of praise after reflecting on His guidance in past days.

He is guiding now about marriage, and the price of proposed rooms dropped 5/- per week to-day.

Evening went to see house and rooms at 42 Grantham Rd. Saw the Lord's provision and engaged them. So He is leading us on indeed. The Lord has guided, and I am sure this is His next step for me.

July passed into August.

Received first wedding gift—a token of our prayers being answered for useful gifts, in view of our uncertainty. A travelling rug from Mrs. Craven. Thank you, Father! Thank you, Mrs. Craven! Went to register for marriage.

Busy packing up library for Bradford. . . .

The diary entries are erratic now, and written in pencil!

Making final arrangements re taxis, etc.

Left the shop loaded with presents for coming marriage. Very happy. Realized this way is His step. "This is the way, walk ye in it." So we move at His bidding, and look for His grace.

The day before the wedding the rain poured down,

but much prayer going up for the morrow "if it be Thy will". Very busy arranging with photographer, etc. . . . !

And prayer was answered. After blustery, rough weather the wind subsided, and on Tuesday, August 29th, the sun shone warmly down as Nellie, dressed in white gown and veil, stepped for the last time out of Ivy Cottage as "Miss M. E. Hey" and entered the square-built chapel on the hillside from which she emerged as Mrs. Fred Mitchell.

"And what a holy wedding it was!" wrote one who was present. "At the reception we heard nothing but testimonies and praises to our God for all His goodness." The same gracious One who attended a marriage in Cana of Galilee was surely present at that wedding in Jackson Bridge. It was with the consciousness of His blessing upon them that the young couple set off for their honeymoon.

But the day of joy was not untinged with sorrow. The

little black diary, besides recording that "everything passed off well, and with travelling mercies and sweet fellowship we arrived at Scarborough at 9.10," adds: "Bid farewell to dear Walter." The friend and companion of his youth was booked to sail in two days' time for America, where he was to enter the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. The parting of the ways had come. For one the pathway of renunciation of home and country, the call to what is known as "full-time service" in another land. For the other the road ahead was to take a simpler, more obscure course. Not for Fred Mitchell were the sacrifices and joys of a missionary's life, greatly as he had desired them. Christ was to be manifested through him as he earned his living in a chemist's shop, as the father of a family, in a town as provincial as Nazareth had been.

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to humble thyself to walk with thy God?

The Lord's voice crieth unto the city . . . who hath appointed it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE APPOINTED PLACE

Nothing so clears the vision and lifts the life as a decision to move forward in what you know to be entirely the will of God.

JOHN G. PATON.

MARRIAGE and the establishing of his own home in Bradford marked the commencement of a new era in his life. Hitherto his Christian activities had been focussed mainly in the villages around Holmfirth. As he looked back over the years, it may not have appeared that his work had been productive of many results in the conversion of souls. There was a young man whom he had led to Christ one Sunday in a village in which he had led the Sunday services; a woman dying of cancer whom he had visited, and who had made a clear profession of faith; a child; a mentally unbalanced youth for whom he had cherished a particularly tender, compassionate affection, and whose suicide had affected him greatly; a young man who had come to a clear point of decision during a train journey home one Saturday evening. He had learned to go on working and witnessing faithfully, whether he saw his efforts crowned with apparent success or not. Now that he was settled in Bradford, and no longer returned to Jackson Bridge for the week-ends, his active ministry there must cease, and his thoughts became centred more upon the city in which he now lived. Deep as his desire still was to go to the mission-field, it did not nullify his sense of responsibility to those in his immediate vicinity. Where he was *now* was the place of his Divine appointment, and one of the noticeable things about him was that he rarely, if ever, displayed dissatisfaction with his

circumstances or his lot. His life-long attitude could be summed up in the entry he made in his little diary on the day he returned to the shop after his honeymoon.

Back to work again.

“The daily round, the common task,
Will furnish all we need to ask. . . .”

Even so let Thy name be glorified in me at work, O Lord.

It was almost the last entry in the little black diary for 1922, except references to C.I.M. prayer meetings and Bradford Keswick Council meetings, and a satisfied comment, “my lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage.” Gradually his will was being weaned from the purpose of going to China as a missionary, and although he and his wife remained in rooms for two years, ready to go forward if an opening way confirmed his inward desire and early convictions, it eventually became clear that this could not be. In 1924 they moved into a home of their own, in Melbourne Place, a quiet road in a residential district, and he recognized that Bradford, not China, was to be the scene of their activities for their Master.

They had attached themselves to the Sunbridge Road Mission shortly after their marriage. Their first visit there took place on the Sunday after he returned to work. He had been invited to lead the evening evangelistic meeting there, and they walked together past factories and rows of small, narrow houses, public houses and little derelict patches of ground where dirty children played around advertisement hoardings, to the unimposing building on the corner of a main road with which their lives were so intimately connected later.

This particular engagement was one of special importance to him. Not only was it the first time he had preached in the well-attended mission hall run by Mr. Sleight, but it was his first preaching appointment since his marriage. Unknown to his wife, he had prayed that as a seal on their union a soul might be saved that night, and at the close of the meeting

he asked if anyone present wished to receive Christ as Saviour. No one responded. He waited a few moments, still expecting to see someone come forward, but no one did, and he closed the meeting. He went down to the door to shake hands with the people as they filed out, and although they were friendly and appreciative, none seemed concerned about his soul. The young preacher, though outwardly calm, was somewhat perturbed. Was his prayer for this special sign of God's smile upon his marriage not to be granted? The large hall, with its bare walls and glazed windows and heavy wooden benches was almost empty when Mr. Sleight came to him to say that a woman wanted to speak to him. She felt she should have responded to his invitation to come forward, but had lacked the courage to do so. His prayer had been answered, after all! With what joy did he later tell his young bride of this blessed confirmation. And it was not until she asked with some amusement, "But dear—what *would* you have done if there had been no one?" that he saw any humour in the situation!

After that first visit they went again, and eventually decided to join. They saw in this mission hall in a working-class district opportunities for service among needy people. Almost immediately Mr. Sleight invited him to become leader of the young men's Bible class held on Sunday afternoons. The older man, with his shrewd appraisal of character, had not taken long to recognize the gifts and spiritual maturity of the young chemist. Although only two or three years older than the members of the Bible class, he commanded their respect by the quite unaffected dignity which always characterized him, and neither he nor they seemed to feel there was anything incongruous in one so young being their leader.

He gave much time and thought to the preparation for that weekly Bible class. He made or obtained charts and models to illustrate his subjects, spent hours studying the Bible and the books which he loved so greatly, and to whose numbers he was constantly adding. He encouraged the young

men to read the Bible themselves daily, introducing them to the Scripture Union. At the close of each Bible study he left time for them to ask questions, and when the class broke up he would enter into conversation with one or another, tactfully trying to discover the personal spiritual condition of each one. Many a time he would be seen returning to the classroom with one of his members, for an individual talk and prayer, as he sought to bring to them a full assurance of salvation.

Nor was that sufficient. Once he was assured of their salvation, he encouraged them to witness, going with them in house-to-house visitation with tracts, and to open-air meetings. He revelled in open-air meetings, and particularly in one that was held at 10 o'clock on Saturday evenings at a junction of roads where there were several public houses and clubs. As closing time approached, and men and women, some half-intoxicated, emerged through the swing doors into the street, he would mount the stand and in clear and forthright words preach so fearlessly that some of those who accompanied him were nervously apprehensive of physical assault. No such fears daunted him, however, for when he made room for the next speaker on the stand, he walked across to the spectators and endeavoured to get into personal touch with some of them, and offer them tracts! The young men in his Bible class had a true leader—one who led the way. He expected no one to do what he would not do himself. It is worthy of note that although he called them by their Christian names, they always referred to him as Mr. Mitchell. Approachable and friendly as he was, there was something about him which made easy familiarity impossible. To the end of his days there were comparatively few people who naturally called him "Fred."

Another, and quite different sphere of service was a meeting for nurses in one of Bradford's big hospitals. The commencement and development of that meeting was so aptly described by a matron of an Infirmary near Leeds years later, at the meeting held in farewell to Mr. Mitchell

when he left Bradford to take the position of Home Director of the C.I.M. in London, that the report is included here.

“ . . . One Sunday evening in 1924 a gentleman could have been seen walking along Little Horton Lane in the direction of the St. Luke’s Hospital. Arriving at the gates there, he passed through and entered the hospital, though he was neither patient nor doctor. He was the messenger of the King of kings. Shown into the little sitting-room belonging to the late Miss Barker, he faced his congregation—four stiff and proper looking nurses.

“He smiled; sat down; prayed; read from the Word; spoke about what it meant to be a Christian; stayed for a cup of tea, then bidding them good night he went home. Seed was sown that night, the fruit of which will remain for eternity.

“That evening was the beginning of the nurses’ missionary meeting in the hospital. Many a Sunday evening Mr. Mitchell attended and addressed the nurses. The meeting grew and a larger room had to be used, until there was a regular attendance of thirty or forty nurses. God spoke through His servant there, and many lives were blessed as the result. To-day, there were several of those nurses on the mission field who received their call through attending those meetings.

“The speaker gladly acknowledged that her own conversion was due to this meeting, and went on to say how indebted St. Luke’s nurses had been, not only to Mr. Mitchell, but to his wife also. From the start, Mrs. Mitchell let it be known that her home was always an open house for any of the nurses at the hospital, and dozens of them had been there with problems and difficulties about which they wished to talk. Always, after their chat together, Mrs. Mitchell would say—‘And now we will talk to the Lord about it,’ together they would kneel and pray, and the nurse would return to her work refreshed and strengthened.”

Even after he left Bradford he occasionally spoke at that nurses’ meeting when he returned to the city on a visit, and

one Sunday evening in particular was a memorable one. At the close of the meeting several nurses remained behind, wishing to speak to him, and he discovered that each desired to know Christ as her personal Saviour. He spoke to them individually, showing them plainly the simple way of salvation through faith in Christ's finished work on Calvary, and each one responded. Just as he was putting on his coat to leave he heard a knock at the door, and on opening it he saw one of the hospital domestic workers standing there. She asked if she might speak to him, and he answered readily, "Yes, certainly. I expect perhaps you want to know the way you can be saved?" "On, no," she replied. "I don't want to know the way, because I was listening outside the door as you were speaking, so I know. I want to *do it!*"

In 1924, however, this work was in its infancy, and Fred Mitchell himself but twenty-seven. That year was one of special significance to him and his wife. They moved from rented rooms into the comfortable and spacious eight-roomed house in Melbourne Place which was to be their home for nineteen years; they received as one of their first guests Mildred Cable, whose wise and candid counsel had impressed them so deeply that they named their first child, born in March of the following year, after her; and it was in 1924 that they paid their first visit to the annual convention at Keswick, the little town by Derwentwater in the Lake District which is known and loved by Christians all over the world.

It would be interesting indeed to get a glimpse of him as he walked for the first time along the street that led to the great white tent, stopping here and there to look at the kiosks and bookstalls erected temporarily on the pavements, displaying evangelical literature and the publications of missionary societies; to sense the reaction of his friendly, appreciative nature to the groups of happy-faced people with Bibles under their arms who were making their way towards the tent half-an-hour before the next meeting was due to

commence; to know his thoughts as he took his seat on one of the hundreds of benches facing the long, simple platform with its green, wood canopy and the Convention text in bold white letters on red cloth stretched above it—"All One in Christ Jesus"; and above all, to read his heart as he listened to the practical, searching messages on the life of holiness available to all who will walk the pathway of faith and obedience. Had he one of those "Divine intimations" as he himself called them, which told him that he would one day be standing on that platform, sharing with thousands the teaching that he was now so painstakingly and faithfully imparting to the small groups in Bradford? Probably not. As a layman who had to earn his own living, with no college or theological education, the possibility of his ever taking his place alongside those famous preachers whose educational advantages were so much greater than his own was remote indeed. He was glad of the privilege of hearing them, learning from them, and absorbing that which would be profitable in his own life, and in the smaller spheres where he exerted his influence.

He returned to Bradford with a strengthened desire and will to serve the Lord in that city. The door to China was closed. How slowly the realization had dawned on him, and how deep the disappointment he had felt when he faced the fact that his life was to be spent in England rather than on the mission field can be in some measure appreciated by his own confession that it was many months before he accepted it with true willingness.

Grace was given me, however, to respond to this new phase of absolute surrender, and again peace and singing came into my heart. Well do I remember still how my heart expressed itself in singing in those days, and the hymns I most loved were those in Consecration and Faith, such as

"Like a river glorious,"

"Make me a captive, Lord,"

"Let me come closer to Thee, Lord Jesus,"

"I hunger and I thirst,"

and many from Alexander's hymns, especially, "Lie still and let Him mould thee," "When I fear my faith would fail. . . ." I observed also that the singing of these hymns from the heart as one sat down at the piano produced more sense of sin and lack in those about me than the singing of direct gospel hymns—an observation which is well worth noting still.

Although all hopes of going to China itself had been relinquished, however, his love for the people of that land, and his earnest desire for their salvation had not. "When I die, you will find China written on my heart," he said more than once. Not only did he continue to pray for China and the C.I.M., adding the names of Chinese Christian leaders to his prayer list as the years went by, but enthusiastically organized meetings in order to interest others and enlist their support and sympathy. Furthermore, he kept up a regular correspondence with the Mission's London Headquarters, reporting the progress in the prayer meeting for which he was responsible, and on occasion offering suggestions. Little wonder that the young leader of the Bradford prayer meeting, with his whole-hearted and businesslike interest came in for special notice at Newington Green, and that when the need was felt for someone on the spot to represent the Mission in Yorkshire, he was approached! His reaction to the invitation is described in his own words.

I had ever received so much blessing from God through the channel of the C.I.M. that quite early in my connections with the Mission I determined that whatever they asked me to do, if it were within my power, I would do it as one way of expressing my appreciation. In 1927 therefore, when I was asked if I would become a District Secretary and see to the Mission's interest over the West Riding of Yorkshire, I offered to assume the larger responsibility. I was invited to London to meet the Council, as District Secretaries were appointed by the Home Director and Council. I remember waiting in Mr. Willett's office until the Council called me in. That office, I was told, was the very one occupied previously by Hudson Taylor. When I went in, tremblingly I confess, I was invited to sit down at the end of the table,

facing the Assistant Home Director, the Rev. J. Russell Howden, who was in the chair in the absence of Dr. Stuart Holden, Home Director at that time. Mr. Howden welcomed me, saying how much the Mission valued what I had done. I briefly replied, a few other members made some remarks, and then General Mackenzie led the meeting in prayer on my behalf. A very real sense of God's acceptance and approval filled my heart. I doubt if any minister being ordained or bishop being enthroned was more conscious of a fresh infilling of Divine grace.

Returning to Yorkshire one took up with zeal the new commission, and before long we had regular prayer meetings in several towns and cities and a growing and regular fellowship of those who loved the Mission and its ministry in China.

During the same year the Mission started a short annual conference in Heightside, a missionary conference centre and Christian guest house for their supporters in the north of England. Fred Mitchell was one of those who attended regularly

the seasons of intense prayer as we prayed through the provinces before a large map can never be forgotten, and are among my high water marks of spiritual experience.

His attendances at these conferences had another effect as far as he was concerned, for it was largely through messages he gave at them that he began to be more widely known in the north of England as a speaker. His sphere of public influence was gradually widening, and invitations to speak at meetings in other towns became more frequent. He was beginning to prove the truth of something he had written in his diary some years previously,

I cannot but feel that God's purpose is not so much the negation of our ambitions as the consecration of them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHEMIST OF BRADFORD

*I want, dear Lord, a love that feels for all
A deep, strong love that answers every call,
A love like Thine, a love divine, a love for high and low,
On me, dear Lord, a love like this bestow.*

FRED MITCHELL loved his profession. He was a good chemist. He kept up to date with medical developments, attended lectures, visited hospitals, took a personal interest in his customers, and saw to it that the shop and the dispensary were always tidy, clean and attractive. He wrote once in a pharmaceutical periodical,

Most chemists believe in some form of advertising, and although I do not grudge those who indulge in press and direct-mail advertising the benefits that may accrue, it should be remembered that one of the simplest forms of advertising—a form that most women understand to a nicety—is a smart personal appearance; in our case, both of the pharmacist and the pharmacy.

Clean windows, clean floors, dusted shelves, the constant removal of those odd bits of paper and string which seem to accumulate so persistently throughout the day—these are little, but important jobs which can be done by a junior assistant without upsetting the routine of business. And for the pharmacist himself, a clean stiff collar (soft collars are not for business hours) well-brushed hair (if any remains) clean hands and finger nails, good shoes—because the pharmacist often comes to the customer's side of the counter—and a presentable suit . . . a pharmacy business should represent to its customers—cleanliness, dignity, refinement and tranquillity.

Whatever he did, it was with enthusiasm and thoroughness and he found nothing in his Bible to discourage his view that

a good Christian could also be a good business man. It is not surprising that with the happy responsibility of three children whose education would depend largely upon his efforts, the desire for a business of his own should be born. He had the capacity for leadership, but he had not hitherto much opportunity to exercise it.

"I wonder if I shall always be in the position of a buffer," he said rather wistfully to an old friend at the Sunbridge Road Mission one evening as he walked along with her towards a spot dubbed "The Boilers."

"Why, Mr. Mitchell, what do you mean?" she asked with surprise. It was not often that he gave evidence of feeling low-spirited.

"Well, I'm second in command to Mr. Sleight in the Mission, aren't I?" he answered. "And at the shop I'm second in command, too." In both places he had known the difficulties of the one who stands between the leader and the rank and file, and in both places he had had to check his natural enterprise. That the restraint on his ambitious impulses was all part of the necessary discipline for his future work he would readily have admitted in later years, and even at the time he accepted it with the loyalty due to those under whom he served. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that one of his ability should long to launch out on his own, and after praying for some time about the matter, the opportunity was granted. His employer decided to dispose of his business, and gave his young manager the chance of buying it from him. The price asked was far beyond him, and he had to refuse; but he decided that he would look out for a suitable shop, and start his own business. When a prospective buyer wanted to retain his services in Rogersons, therefore, he turned down the offer of a higher salary. He would continue with his present employer until the business changed hands, but after that he would leave.

Higher up the street, on the opposite side of the road, a grocer's shop lay empty. Fred Mitchell went to look it over. Great hooks on which hams had hung dangled from the

ceiling, old pieces of paper and heaps of rubbish lay around on the floor, and the walls were stained and dirty. But what possibilities the premises held! Upstairs was a large, airy room, admirably suited to house a chemist's stocks, while an equally spacious one in the basement would provide plenty of room for experimenting with the making up of mixtures himself, instead of buying quantities of finished preparations from manufacturers.

Those months had been a period of some exercise of mind and heart, for almost simultaneously with the decision to open a business of his own had come a pressing invitation from a minister friend to go with him to America and enter a full-time ministry. Was this a call from the Lord? Did it indicate that he should leave a business career, and give himself wholly to Bible teaching and evangelism? Not a few expressed the opinion that he should do so. But he had no conviction that his Master was calling him that way, and his heart was at rest as he proceeded with plans for opening his own business. This practical, hum-drum way was the way for him, he believed, and he would walk in it.

After becoming the tenant of the premises he had hoped to occupy almost immediately, a further test awaited him. His employer did not relinquish his business at the time he had expected and planned to do so. He had no idea of the difficulty in which this change of plans involved his manager. Fred Mitchell would not consider opening in opposition to his old employer, and for several months the premises for which he had to pay rent lay empty.

Eventually, however, Rogersons changed hands, and the time came for him to part company with his employer. Perhaps no more eloquent summing-up of the period he had spent working under him could be given than the few words inscribed in the gold watch that was presented to him on his departure

14 years
Loyal Service
Cheerfully Rendered.

The opening of his own shop involved months of economy, and many were the times when on his knees before God he prayed that the takings by the end of the week might be sufficient to pay his staff and clear his accounts. The business had to be built up "from scratch" and pessimists foretold failure, asserting that there were already too many chemist shops in Bradford. But he had felt so convinced that the step he had taken was in the divine plan for him he had no fears. He chose as his private code, by which the cost price of goods could be marked in such a way that only the initiated could understand them, the simple phrase "God with us." He sometimes said that he had gone into business "in partnership with the Lord," and he endeavoured to conduct his affairs in such a way that no discredit should be brought on the One whose Name he had taken.

The standard he set for the shop was high.

The quality of our products in all branches of the business must be of the highest, every care being taken to ensure the fullest confidence of both medical men and their patients, and our own customers.

The presentation of our goods is a matter of supreme importance and calls for the most dignified and impressive in bottles, labels, parcels, string, tallies, correspondence paper, etc.

In the pharmacy we aim at a courteous greeting to each customer on meeting and on leaving. A cheerful "Good morning" has many values.

The assistant should seek to give undivided attention to the customer. For the time being the customer is the only person in the world. There is much to be said for the old dictum "the customer is always right."

In cases of complaint, always, without argument, refund money or exchange the goods, unless our reputation is seriously involved. The apparent loss is trivial and is a good advertising expense.

And God, who is no man's debtor, but a kind and generous Master to those who serve Him was with him. The business prospered. Within six months it was a paying

concern, and before he left Bradford, had earned the reputation for being the best pharmacy in the city.

Success did not come without hard work, and the diligent application of business principles. His day commenced about 7 o'clock when he arose. Almost without exception breakfast was on the table at a quarter to eight, and when that was finished Bibles were opened and the Scripture Union portion read. Then he would lead his little family in a simple prayer, together they would repeat the Lord's prayer, and then, rising from the table, he was ready to set off to work. Often he walked part of the way there with the elderly friend who lived next door, and said once, to the great amusement of his children, that he "went to business each morning sitting at the feet of Mr. Craven"! The last part of his walk, however, was taken alone, and that time he usually employed in scanning the headlines of the newspaper! It was he who opened the shop door, and when his staff arrived at 9 o'clock they always found him there, going through his mail, cheerfully prepared to get on with the business of the day.

He became well known to doctors and surgeons in the vicinity, often spending his Wednesday afternoons watching one with whom he was particularly friendly performing operations. It was partly through these personal contacts, made outside the shop as well as inside, that he became well known as an up-to-date and reliable pharmacist.

It was not only medical men and customers who made their way up Darley Street to enter the glass doorway of "Fred Mitchell, Chemist," however. As someone said of him, "he gave more than medicine over the counter. The shop became a place to which many came with their problems. To the evangelicals of Bradford he was the one to whom to turn when they wanted information or advice. 'Ask Mr. Mitchell' was frequently on people's lips." Many were the conversations held and the plans discussed over the counter, ranging from the displaying of Scripture texts on hoardings and in buses in the city to arrangements for "Café Squashes"

and Young Life Campaigns. He was never too busy with his own affairs to talk of the matters which were "his Father's business."

Not only did the respected and self-respecting find their way to "The sign of the Blue Carboy." A steady stream of "down-and-outs" came in the doorway, and many were those who were invited up into the little office with its panelled walls and tidy desk with pigeon-holes filled with tracts, for a talk with one whose tender heart was always touched by the sufferings of others. His employees in the shop noticed that they invariably came down the narrow stairs looking happier than when they went up, no doubt for tangible reasons! "He never gave them up" one member of his staff observed—indeed, in one or two instances, he "took them on," and provided them with employment in his shop! "Herbert" was such an one, and Fred Mitchell never lost patience with him, even on the occasion when, seeing flames leaping up in the basement, he made no effort personally to put it out, but laboriously climbed the two flights of stairs up to the office, and then announced that something seemed to have caught alight down below! "I'd rather be taken in a dozen times than turn away a genuine case," he said once, when the man he had helped proved to be a rogue. Did not the God with whom he walked cause His sun to shine on the unjust as well as on the just? At the same time, he had little room for able-bodied young men who unashamedly came round begging, and when one such entered the shop one day, he found himself confronted by a stern-faced chemist with a glint in his eye who said grimly, "Young man, if you don't get out of this shop I'll give you not what you want, but what you deserve—the boot!"

He had a very clear conception of the "stewardship of money" and although as his business prospered, and he saw to it that his children had the educational advantages that he himself had lacked, he avoided the provincial tendency to extravagance and show, never feeling that he had discharged his obligations by merely giving away a tenth of his

income. The effect he had on other business men whom he met at that time can best be assessed by one of them who, already a keen Christian, saw a higher standard of discipleship in the chemist of Bradford than he had ever seen before.

"It was through a Methodist minister that I was made to realize separation from the world, and yielding my life to the Saviour, and knowing of my visits to Bradford on business he strongly urged me to contact a chemist in that city for fellowship; and so it was that I came to know Fred Mitchell as a very ordinary man. I had no idea until years after that he was a speaker, or that he was in great demand. As the months passed by, and we were now meeting regularly, I discovered that he led a disciplined life; rising each morning to have time with the Lord before starting his busy day, and never spending more than was necessary on himself. He never criticized my travelling first class and staying at costly hotels, but he often told me of saints of God who had travelled third class, because there was no fourth!

"I always used to look in at the shop first thing to announce that I was there and would be arriving for lunch, and although this was at an hour when harassed business men are not at their best, Fred Mitchell was always radiant. One day I was left alone with his manager, and I said, 'Is he always like this? Does not anything ever get him down?' 'He's always like this,' was the reply. 'Only once since I have worked for him has he been different, and on that occasion there was very good reason for it.' What a testimony! I thought of my own life, and the lives of Christians I knew intimately, and felt ashamed and rebuked.

"Only once was he unable to meet me for lunch. The secretary of a business men's luncheon club had asked him to speak on something helpful to business men. He said to me, 'I know what they want, but this is far too good to miss. I have only time to speak on one subject, and that is the most important of all to business men!'"

It was perhaps in the role of personal worker, in quiet

conversations with individuals, that his deepest work was accomplished. He loved people, and his warm tender heart went out to those who were in need, whether the need were material or spiritual. On one occasion, when he was returning from a Sunbridge Road Mission day's outing, where he had joined with boyish enjoyment in hastily organized football games, he led one of the men to Christ in the railway carriage. He was ever on the look-out for the opportunity to explain the way of salvation to those whom he met, and he always set out on a long railway journey well armed with tracts or Gospels, having prayed definitely and earnestly that he might be led to some to whom he could speak of Christ's power to save. More than once he knelt beside a penitent man in a railway carriage, as stumblingly he sought and obtained forgiveness from the One of whom he had just heard. "All should experience the joy of soul-winning," he used to say. "There is no joy like it. God uses preaching to bring in souls, but more often personal work. . . . There is a way into every human heart if we are prepared to pay the price. You may have to go round the walls of Jericho day after day with prayer and kindly deeds till at last you find an open door—but the door is there, somewhere."

Not only did he know how to lead souls to the definite step of accepting by faith Christ's finished work on Calvary, but he knew how to lead them into the fuller, deeper life in Christ which he himself enjoyed. One incident will serve to illustrate how he did it.

A young nurse in the St. Luke's Hospital was conscious of a lack in her spiritual life, and longed to know how she might be filled with the Holy Spirit. She wondered to whom she could turn, and then realized that there was one person, at least, in Bradford, who could tell her what she wanted to know. Her thoughts turned to Mr. Mitchell. The opportunity to speak to him came one day when she was at his home for tea, and she was left alone with him for a few minutes in the dining-room.

“Before I left the room I was quite clear that as soon as a full consecration was made, God was waiting and willing to bestow the Gift I was seeking. . . . In the wisdom God gave him Mr. Mitchell didn’t press me to take the step of faith right then. Whether he discerned that there were yet reserves, I do not know. He didn’t probe—he wasn’t one of those who try to do the Holy Spirit’s work for Him! He had pointed the way, given me his testimony, which was confirmed by the testimony of his life, and he left it at that. During the days or weeks that followed the Holy Spirit Himself showed me what it was which was hindering His taking full possession of me. One day, while I was waiting in a room by myself for a friend, I let the last hindering thing I knew of go. God’s answer was immediate. I knew ‘He had come to His temple.’ A group of us nurses came into this blessing about the same time in different ways. There followed a period of blessing and witness, not only in the hospital, but in various chapels and missions in the town, which I shall never forget.”

During the years that followed the opening of his own business he gradually became known in wider circles of the evangelical world, and his association with the China Inland Mission grew more intimate. In 1937 he became a member of the London Council of the Mission; in 1939 he received an invitation to sit on the platform and to lead in prayer at the Keswick Convention planned to be held in 1940—an invitation which conveyed an obvious indication that he was marked as one who might speak there later; and in 1941 he was asked to accept the position of a Trustee of the Convention. Gladly, and with a sense of privilege, he accepted these responsibilities, and the added labour and expenditure of time that they involved. Nevertheless, he was by this time completely reconciled to the fact that his real life-work was in Bradford.

“Business was interesting and prospering. Our hands were full with Christian work in connection with the Bradford Convention, China Inland Mission interests in the north,

Scripture Text display, etc., and more especially with the Sunbridge Road Methodist Mission, where there was a fruitful field of service. It was an honour to consider ourselves the helpers of Mr. and Mrs. Sleight, who efficiently maintained the work on spiritual lines for about 50 years, and in the possible event of succeeding them we would be assured of a fine field of service, for the membership was about 250 and the Sunday School numbered several hundreds." Their children were happily settled in good local schools, they themselves were in the middle forties, and the path ahead seemed clear. As 1942 dawned, he little knew how significant to himself were some words which he had read once on the subject of *The Middle Watch*:

We live our lives under the discipline of uncertainty. We never know what emergencies may be approaching, what commissions may be ripening, what chances may be on the way, what temptations are ambushed, ready to spring on us unawares. What I say unto you I say unto all—Watch.

CHAPTER NINE

THE MIDDLE WATCH

Time is a great tester of purposes.

FRED MITCHELL.

ONE day in February, 1942, among the letters which the postman brought to the Mitchells' home in Melbourne Place was one from Bishop Frank Houghton, General Director of the C.I.M. It was a duplicated letter, a copy of which had been sent to each member of the London Council, drawing their attention to the fact that the Rev. W. H. Aldis, Home Director, was already due to retire, and asking them prayerfully to consider the matter of appointing a successor. The letter ran on:

As to the qualifications to be desired in a Home Director, I need hardly remind you that above all we look for a man of God, living in intimate touch with Him, one whose spiritual experience is obviously growing, and whose wholehearted loyalty to the Word of God and to the principles of the Mission is not in doubt. He must be a man of vision, with a passion for God and for the souls of men, and also of executive and administrative ability. I believe all the members of the Mission would add that they would much prefer as Home Director one of our own number, one who has had actual experience on the field, and can therefore appreciate their problems, and present the facts to our constituency, from personal knowledge, rather than any Christian leader, however eminent, who has not that particular background. If possible, he should be a man with a fairly long expectation of life. He should be one who can adequately represent the Mission, both in public and in private. Some gift of public speaking would, of course, be an advantage, but is not among the first essentials.

Fred Mitchell read the letter, after thought and prayer wrote to the Bishop "making the only suggestion that occurred to me," and went about his business. Obviously that was all that was required of him, and when, two or three months later, he had a presentiment that something was going to happen to disturb the even tenor of his life, he in no way connected it with the matter raised in the Bishop's letter. When he spoke of this strange sense of an impending change to his wife he was surprised, and further impressed, to discover that she too, had a similar inexplicable conviction. Neither had any idea to what it might refer, however, and since the future was in God's hands and out of their own control, they let the matter drop.

His mind at this time was often occupied with the forthcoming "Keswick" meetings which, on account of the war, were to be held in London instead of in Keswick itself. It was his first appearance on the Keswick platform, and, as always, he felt keenly the responsibility of speaking. He prepared carefully for any meeting at which he knew he would have to address people in the name of the Lord. It could never be said of him, as of some, that "his greatest hindrance was his own natural ability. He found it too easy to rise to the occasion unprepared." That he had natural ability none would deny, but he did not rely on it, and when he spoke that July in the bombed and battered city that wrote defiantly on its pavements, "London can take it," his solemn, searching addresses gave clear evidence of the divine unction.

It was while he was staying in London for these meetings that the letter arrived which was to change the whole course of his life. It was from Bishop Houghton, saying that his name had been mentioned by a number of staff and Council members as one suitable for the office of Home Director.

His letter asked if this were even a possibility on grounds of business or home engagements, as he did not wish to pursue the matter further if there was no likelihood. . . . My first reaction

was to return a polite refusal, for I considered myself permanently engaged in Bradford. However, one could not dismiss a letter from such a person and such a Mission in that way, and after verbally acknowledging its receipt from the Bishop, I sent the letter to my wife telling her "I felt no call from God in it." The matter rested there, but we mentioned the subject in prayer. From July to September I wrote to the General Director but once, apologizing for the delay, but giving no hint as to how we were being led except that we had no light.

If he felt that the call was not from God, however, his wife was not so sure. Years before, when his heart was set on going to China, it was she who had been doubtful of the call. Although they had lived in rented rooms for the first two years of their married life, in readiness to go, she knew in her heart that she completely lacked the inward urge to do so. Many times she must have prayed that she might feel about it as her husband felt, and during their happy life together the one cloud that often cast its shadow over her spirit was the fear that it had been she who had held him back. Now, however, when this totally unexpected request came, it was she, and not he, who first recognized that it was from God.

It was on September 8th, several weeks after the letter had been received, that her uncertainty crystallized into conviction. The Mitchells had never been ashamed to display tangible witnesses to their discipleship in their home in the shape of Scripture texts. In a prominent place in their dining-room was placed a scroll given them by a friend on the previous Christmas bearing the words "If God command thee . . . thou shalt be able." Half-way up the stairs was a little verse commencing

"Every window, every nook,
Every picture, every book. . ."

which indicated simply that all in the house was consecrated to the Lord. Photographs of Hudson Taylor, Alexander the

Gospel singer and others were to be found on the walls, for Fred Mitchell had said, "Let us have the pictures of good men in our home—they will inspire us," and he had framed some of them himself. He loved the one word "Redeemed." It always reminded him of the Israelites' homes on the passover night, and he rejoiced in the assurance that was his that his whole family, too, was sheltered "under the Blood." He not only had that one word over a fireplace in his home, but had it painted on polished wood and hung under the clock in his shop. Many were the puzzled customers who enquired, "Has that clock been redeemed from the pawnbrokers?" and who then found themselves listening to a clear, confident testimony from the chemist himself, as to what that word meant to him!

Yes, Fred Mitchell's home was one that bore unmistakable signs of the allegiances of its inmates, and its effect on those who spent an evening in it can best be described in the words of a young man who went there often, and himself became the pastor of a large church,

"... as I walked home I used to say 'Lord, make me a better man, and enable me to make my home like his.'"

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the choice of calendars the Mitchells showed a preference for the "tear-off" type with Scripture texts, and it was through one of these that the Voice of the Lord was heard. As Mrs. Mitchell, on the morning of September 8th, tore off the slip for the previous day, the words that met her eyes were

I CALLED MY SERVANT AND HE GAVE ME NO ANSWER.

Job 19. 16.

And underneath was printed the little verse,

When 'Thou art pleased to call for me
 Let me not unresponsive be
 Give me Thy holy will to know
 Shew me the way that I should go.

"The text and the verse struck me a terrible blow," she said afterwards. "God had called for two months and more, and we have given no answer." The connection between that message of rebuke and the request which still remained unanswered was too evident to overlook, and earnestly she prayed that if it were truly God speaking, her husband might notice the text and be similarly impressed. What happened can best be described in his own words, written two years later.

Having left the house for business both morning and lunch-time, I returned thence twice still without observing the calendar. My wife had carefully avoided any mention of the matter, but, like Mary, had kept these things in her heart and pondered them. Later in the evening, having occasion to pass the place where the calendar hung, incidentally, as I then imagined, I turned aside to see this great sight. The text and verse struck me most forcibly, and I knew instantly that God had spoken. . . .

In *Springs in the Valley*, a compilation of meditations from various sources by Mrs. Charles Cowman, the message for the day had impressed me, and now the two together seemed overwhelming. The text in "Springs" was "Thy bondman for ever." Deut. 15, 17, R.V. margin. This is the comment, which I had read earlier in the day, "No man ever makes Him supreme and suffers loss; For Jehovah will not be left in any man's debt. When a man holds on, God takes away; when a man lets go, He gives, and that liberally. Touch with Thy pierced Hand the hidden springs that will cause every part of my being to fly wide open to Thee, my Lord and my God." And the page quoted in full the hymn by George Matheson:

"Make me a captive, Lord.
And then I shall be free."

The full force of that will be understood the better when I record the fact that I received during the day a draft balance sheet of my previous year's trading—a good year's business—and now the call had come to leave it.

In spite of the growing conviction that this unexpected call was, after all, from God, the letter he sent to Bishop Houghton was cautious.

MY DEAR BISHOP,—I am very sorry to have kept you waiting so long for a reply to your kind letter addressed to me when in London in July. The delay has been partly due to my having interpreted your letter as containing more than a preliminary enquiry, and partly to my caution that the matter should not proceed further if impossible.

Even now I can only say that I can see no reason why you should not discuss this matter with the Members of Council and others concerned, but I am anxious not to commit myself beyond that at the moment. When and if you take this matter further we can then seek the Lord's further guidance. . . .

A Council meeting was called, to be held on October 16th, to consider the matter, and the Mitchells waited.

During September our hearts were kept in peace, quietly waiting. . . . Many confirming signs came, to my wife through her daily reading, to myself through *Daily Light* and "Springs," and especially to us both through the Scripture Union portions for the days. One notable evening I attended an evangelistic service in Sion Baptist Church conducted by the Rev. Geoffrey King. His subject was the call of Matthew. . . . "And hearing the call he closed his books and his till and followed," concluded Mr. King. Returning home I rehearsed the message to my wife who laughingly commented on its obvious application to me.

There were times, however, when his feelings fluctuated. Early in October, he attended a small conference arranged by the Keswick Trustees of St. Abbs, in Scotland, and here he met personally two of the C.I.M. Council members. With one of them he was particularly intimate, and this man talked to him quite freely about the matter which was so much on his own mind.

He told me that he himself felt China experience was necessary. I replied that I thought so, too, and left St. Abbs glad to feel that

we might even at last be left in Bradford. And, in any case, assured that if the minds of those who thought thus were changed, it would be doubly clear that we were being called.

At last the day on which the fateful Council meeting was to be held dawned. Before leaving Bradford for the long train journey to London, he opened *Springs in the Valley* to read the selection for the day,

to find the scripture which for ten months had been looking down on us from the calendar, "If God command thee . . . thou shalt be able." I travelled up to London during the morning when the Council was sitting, with my heart much subdued, but sure that God would guide. After the Council meeting the Bishop invited me to his room, where he gave a personal invitation to the office of Home Director, having had the unanimous approval of the London Council.

The way he must take seemed clear. The Word of God, inward conviction, and now the unanimous approval of his colleagues left him in no doubt but that the track on which his life had hitherto been run was changing to this new pathway. It was in October, 1922, that a little entry was made in his diary, a few weeks after his marriage, when he and his wife had returned home from a missionary lantern lecture they had attended.

Greatly stirred and greatly exercised. Nellie and I felt the weight of it all, and gave ourselves to Him again to go where He should clearly appoint.

It was in October, exactly twenty years later, that they were taken at their word, and they could not draw back, even if they would. The letter of acceptance was sent to Bishop Houghton, and a telegram received in reply, quoting the words from Psalm 68. 28. "Thy God hath commanded thy strength." Fred Mitchell's private record continues:

So the guidance was given. But now certain moves were necessary, for many were concerned in this drastic change in

life and circumstances, and our hearts had shrunk from disturbing some of our loved ones, and those with whom we were engaged in Christian service.

Among the first to be told were their children, and the news which might be somewhat of a shock was broken to them with truly fatherly wisdom.

"Let's have a fish and chips supper to-night!" he said one morning at breakfast. Delightful prospect for healthy schoolchildren with good appetites! Oh, yes! Let's! So a fish and chips supper they had; and during the course of it they learned that they were going to move. What fun! Where? They must guess! Several months previously the family had discussed the idea of moving to another house in Bradford, and guesses were made of this house or that to which they might be going. But no. The guesses were wrong. Was it not to be somewhere in Bradford, then? No! And suddenly, Mildred, who from the age of about five had set her heart on going to China as a missionary, guessed. With her face alight with excitement she exclaimed, "Why then, if it isn't Bradford—it's C.I.M.!" Her reaction, at any rate, was one of delight.

The Sunbridge Road Mission must be told, too, and well he knew how keen would be the disappointment to Mr. Sleight, now over seventy, who had so confidently rested on the assurance that Fred Mitchell would continue his work there when he was gone. This was the second time in his life that he had seen the C.I.M. carry off one on whom he had set his heart, and it is to his credit that in the kind and appreciative letter he wrote to his younger friend he limited himself to one acid comment: "I assumed that the C.I.M. had on their staff some one or more of the 1,200-1,400 with ability and experience to fill any position that fell vacant. Evidently this is not so!"

Arrangements for his business, which he decided to retain, were facilitated greatly by the fact that for some years he had had a Christian as manager. That his own departure

must of necessity have its effect on the business he realized, for one man already fully occupied could obviously not do the work of two. Nevertheless, he could confidently leave matters in his hands, while himself retaining final responsibility and oversight. And so he found that as he obeyed the Divine indications for the course of his life, help was given in the ordering of his affairs. One matter in particular gave him great comfort and reassurance, and that was concerning a man who had been nervously affected during the 1914-18 war, and had been able to do scarcely any work since.

Often at the end of himself, he had come for fellowship, and on some occasions he had arrived by 6.30 a.m. almost in a disturbed mental condition. We felt responsibility for him, and wondered who would care. On November 3rd, my wife accompanied by her mother went to see the man's family. After a pleasant social time and when preparing to leave, the friend about whose health we were concerned said to my wife aside, "That's a remarkable text in your home." "Which one?" she asked. "The one in the dining-room, 'If God command thee, thou shalt be able,' " he answered. My wife, all intent, listened as he continued, "It means if we are called, we shall be equipped, and with it I have been linking Psalm 68. 28, 'Thy God hath commanded thy strength.' Further," he added, "I want to thank you for all you have done for me these years, and to say now I shall not need to disturb you again, for God has drawn near to me and taught me how to come to Him when weary and oppressed, and I am happy in Him."

Imagine my surprise when it was told me, and I saw these texts he had written for me, Exodus 18. 23 and Psalm 68. 28, with his comments—the text on the dining-room wall, and the one given us by Bishop Houghton!

By the end of the year all necessary arrangements had been completed, and on January 4th, 1943, he arrived in London.

CHAPTER TEN

IN ROYAL SERVICE

*What shall I render to my glorious King?
I have but that which I receive from Thee;
And what I give, Thou givest back to me
Transmuted by Thy touch; each worthless thing
Changed to the preciousness of gem or gold
And by Thy blessing multiplied a thousandfold.*

THE London Headquarters of the China Inland Mission is situated in north London, at the corner of a tree-fringed square called Newington Green, which is linked with the city and the West End by a constant stream of 'buses which pass by at the rate of about one a minute. In years gone by the neighbourhood was one where trim, white-capped maids answered the bells in the respectable, double-fronted, basemented houses, and their mistresses could be seen of an afternoon sallying forth to pay a round of social calls. Its proximity to Clissold Park, with its old hunting lodge and quaint, fourteenth-century church made it a pleasant and congenial neighbourhood in the days when Hudson Taylor chose it as a suitable district in which to build the Mission Home. Like most places in London, however, its character has changed considerably since the early part of the century. Most of the erstwhile homes of the middle classes are now let out as flats or tenement houses, and on an evening's stroll along Newington Green Road the nostrils are assailed by the odours that emanate from public houses and fried fish shops. It is not without a sense of relief that one passes through the wide, arched entrance

under the front buildings of the C.I.M., where the words "Have Faith in God" stand high across the pillared frontage, to the compound behind, with its old fruit trees and long, four-storied Mission Home, and general air of seclusion from the bustling world outside.

In 1943, when the war was still at its height, the neighbourhood was uninviting indeed. The tree-fringed "green" presented a dismal picture of corrugated iron and asphalt air raid shelters, and many of the buildings standing around were windowless and battered by bombs. The preservation of the Mission premises through the months of almost nightly air raids was a matter of much thankfulness and rejoicing to its inmates. Fred Mitchell loved to tell of the night when the bombardment of the neighbourhood was particularly fierce, and a bomb actually landed on a neighbouring building, but miraculously failed to explode. It lay there harmlessly until removed by the marvellous A.R.P. men who at that time were occupying Mission premises. So impressed were they that it was at their awed suggestion a special service of thanksgiving was held in the Prayer Hall.

It had been arranged that Mr. Aldis, the retiring Home Director, should continue in office until September, in order that his successor should be initiated into the work. The Mitchell family was still in Bradford, so Fred Mitchell lived in the Mission Home, and as the offices are on the first floor of the building, his time was largely spent on the premises. A fortnight after his arrival he wrote to Bishop Houghton, who had already left the country again on his long and round-about journey back to China:

MY DEAR BISHOP,—As I have now been in residence at Newington Green almost two weeks, I felt it would be good if I wrote to you, firstly to let you know that I had actually entered upon this important work, and secondly to assure you that I have been given by all a warm welcome.

The Lord has been very gracious . . . the following well-known verse sings itself over and over again to me,

“Peace, perfect peace, the future all unknown
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.”

For the time being I am living here with occasional visits home for week-ends, and using any opportunities of exploring north London for a possible home. After visiting several, Southgate is the district which most attracts one, though I am keeping an open mind for guidance. . . . The more I pray and think over the matter the more I am convinced I should not disturb the children's educational year, and I do not propose to bring them up to London until the end of July. This will afford time to wait upon God for His choice of a future home—and I feel this is important.

I am made very comfortable here. There is a very blessed atmosphere, and morning and evening prayers are very precious. My free evenings, too, are giving an opportunity of reading and prayer such as one much needs and has long desired.

Now I am here I realize something more of the magnitude of the task, and I am driven hourly to the Throne of Grace. “Thy God hath commanded Thy strength” is what you sent me on accepting the call, and “strength” I interpret as “strength of every kind”. . . .

Day by day Mr. Aldis and I meet together for an hour to go over some feature of the work, and the Lord is drawing us, if possible, closer together. I am sure we shall be preserved from misunderstandings in this delicate process.

That the process was a delicate one there can be no doubt. The background and experience of the two men were vastly different. One was an ordained Church of England clergyman; the other was a nonconformist layman. One was a missionary, with many years of experience in China on which to draw; the other had never even been abroad, and practically his whole life had been lived in one provincial town. In the case of Mr. Aldis, he had been a well-loved member of the Mission for some forty years, and was long accustomed to working in co-operation with colleagues. Fred Mitchell for the past ten years had been owner-

manager of his own business, and in that position had grown used to making his own decisions without feeling it necessary to consult others. Furthermore, as he was reminded in more than one of the many letters he received welcoming him to his new position, "you are coming to office in what might be called a very inopportune time. There is nothing normal nowadays, and we sometimes long very heartily for the time when we could look forward with some certainty as to what would happen next. . . ." The situation in China was in some ways worse than it had been at any time since the Boxer Rising in 1900. Not only were all the children from the Mission's School in Chefoo interned under the Japanese, but over two hundred missionaries as well. Many of those still in Free China were in famine-stricken areas, finance was chaotic, and the remittances they received were almost invariably "below normal." In England the regular routine of missionary meetings, conferences, etc., was constantly disrupted by the war, accommodation for old and retired workers of the Mission was difficult to obtain, and the serious problem was arising as to whether or not candidates could still be accepted for missionary training. Well might Fred Mitchell's confidence and optimism have failed if it had reposed only on his own qualifications for the position he was now called upon to fill! But one of the outstanding things about him was his absolute assurance that it was God who had called him to it, and that therefore God had equipped him. He was very conscious of being a servant of the King of kings, and the thousands of letters that he wrote during the period of his directorship were almost invariably signed "Yours in Royal service." He had a poise, and a quite unself-conscious dignity which commanded respect, and he gave no indication of suffering from a sense of inadequacy.

He rarely made reference to his early life, although he made no effort to hide it. He lived in the present, and it was the present, with its responsibilities and opportunities, its interests, joys and sorrows, with which he was occupied.

"This is the Day" was one of his favourite sermons, and perhaps contains one of the secrets of his success. He wasted no time on repinings over the past or dreams about the future, but he filled each day as it dawned with enthusiastic and duty-ful living.

In September Mr. Aldis retired, and Fred Mitchell became Home Director. His family moved into the newly-acquired house in Southgate, and the large, airy room marked "Home Director" on the office floor at C.I.M. in Newington Green became his. "Beware of the barrenness of a busy life" was the motto on the desk before him as he dictated letters, prepared for committee meetings, answered the telephone, and interviewed missionaries and prospective candidates. The scroll "If God command thee . . . thou shalt be able" was pinned on the wall above his head, and on a little card which he kept under his blotter were the words "God hold us to that which drew us first, when the Cross was the only attraction, and we wanted nothing else."

He brought to the work committed to him now the same business-like efficiency that had characterized him in Bradford. Although the offices did not officially open until nine o'clock the Home Director was invariably there at least twenty minutes before, looking through his mail and preparing his work so that he could commence dictating letters immediately after the short prayer meeting at nine o'clock which staff and stenographers attended. Before he started to dictate, however, he and his secretary knelt in prayer when matters that had to be dealt with were mentioned specifically. Only once in the ten years she worked for him did he fail to remember that sacred appointment with his Master, and when he realized that for some unaccountable reason he had forgotten it that day he was quite distressed.

On special occasions, notably at the New Year and the day following Methodist dedication Sunday, he sang Wesley's famous consecration hymn:

O Thou Who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to impart
Kindle a flame of sacred fire
On the mean altar of my heart. . . .
Jesus, confirm my heart's desire,
To work, and speak, and think for Thee.

Always in his prayer afterwards he reaffirmed his dedication. The freshness and earnestness of the lad in a Pennine village who had offered himself to be a living sacrifice still characterized the middle-aged man with greying hair. Holy moments were they, when the radiant yet invisible God with whom he walked drew near to suffuse His servant anew with quiet power and Divine love. "What a man is on his knees alone before God, that he is, and no more," he often said, quoting from Robert Murray McCheyne. And in his own case, as always, the Father that seeth in secret rewarded openly.

Although during the early period of entering on his new appointment missionaries returning from China naturally turned instinctively to the man whom they had known and loved as Home Director for years, and the new, untried one found himself to some extent by-passed, he soon won their confidence; and in Council meetings, after the first few sessions when he sat back rather quietly until he had "got his bearings" he guided discussions with patient, courteous firmness. Committee meetings usually ended on time, with all items on the agenda dealt with, when Fred Mitchell was in the chair!

"He had a great gift of leadership, in that he never interfered with those who worked under him," wrote a member of his staff. "If a person were missing from his office he would never dream of enquiring where he was. Everyone was left to do his own work, and he was always available to give advice if he was asked for it." While another observed that he "knew what people could do, and saw that they did it," leaving them then to make the best of their opportunities, and only investigating if things went wrong. "Like

any other man, he made his mistakes, though they were few," said one who worked with him in the administration for years. He found it difficult to recognize his tendency to act on his own initiative without consulting others, and this occasionally resulted in difficulties which might have been avoided. Long before the war eventually drew to its close, however, those who had wondered whether the appointment of a business man to the position of Home Director in the C.I.M. would work were agreed that it was amply justified. His position was assured, not only in the Mission itself, but in the wider realms of evangelical life throughout the country.

With the longed-for termination of the war came the first of the journeys abroad which were to be so important a feature of his ministry, and which were to bring him into world-wide recognition as a preacher. It had long been decided that as soon as was practicable after the cessation of hostilities, a visit should be paid to the home centres of Continental missions associated with the C.I.M. with which contact had been interrupted during the war. On a Wednesday evening in May, 1946, therefore, Fred Mitchell set out on his first journey abroad, as with Mr. E. Weller, a China Deputy Director of the Mission, he boarded a boat bound for Denmark.

"Mr. Hudson Taylor travelled third-class, so we do likewise," he records in his journal, proud to have the opportunity of emulating his hero, but adding, "with the result that there is not much room and no privacy." The journey indeed proved rather an unpleasant one, and he remarks of a cup of coffee which he obtained in the hope that it would revive him that he "only paid for it and then added it as a contribution to the mighty deep!" However, later in the day, "anxious to conquer any thoughts of failure," he visited the dining-saloon, had a good meal, and sat triumphantly on deck, even able to appreciate the prospect of "miles of blue sea meeting an equally blue sky at a lovely pale grey-blue horizon."

When they arrived at Esbjerg in Denmark they were met by a smiling, active director of a Danish missionary society, and then commenced a full and busy three weeks' tour of associate mission centres in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In addition to conferences and interviews with Mission leaders, he addressed a large number of meetings, speaking for the first time by interpretation. He was encouraged several times to learn that the message he had given to a congregation of whose language he could not speak a word had met a real need, and one Sunday which included speaking at a morning service, discussing mission problems and then addressing an evangelistic meeting in the evening, his journal concludes joyfully

Several decided for the Lord. . . . Thus concluded, at 11 p.m. a long, busy, happy day in Copenhagen.

The last part of the Scandinavian visit was spent in Stockholm, where a missionary conference had been arranged. How he enjoyed his stay in "this beautiful city of islands and bridges"! After thousands of miles' travel, in which he saw many famous cities, he always declared that Stockholm, to him, was the most beautiful of them all. It was here, too, that he was introduced to Prince and Princess Bernadotte. "I have often thought of the promise to stand before princes—this was my first occasion," his journal records. "They made the most kind and appreciative remarks about the Mission. Very many said to-day that the old spirit remains in the Mission. No greater encouragement can be given me than that."

Before he returned to England, among so many new experiences, was included his first trip in an aeroplane. "I feel it was the right thing," the journal runs, "for should a Home Director encourage missionaries to take plane journeys and refuse to fly himself?" but he also adds, with naïve enthusiasm, "It was a grand experience, perfect flying on a moonlight night with no bumps. . . . I confess

that I had looked forward to it, and enjoyed every moment!" He was solemnized a few days later, however, and was brought face to face with the hazards of air travel when, on a visit to the airport in Stockholm, the news was received that the plane which was expected from Oslo had crashed, and all the passengers save one had been killed. On at least one other occasion such news reached him as he was embarking on a 'plane journey, and it was only a few months later, during a visit to associate mission home centres in Germany that he was travelling in a 'plane which was diverted by bad weather from its course. It had nearly run out of fuel, and those travelling in it sat silent, realizing that if an airfield were not soon sighted, the machine must crash. The airfield was sighted in time, and the machine landed safely—but perhaps the many 'plane journeys he was to take during the next six or seven years required a greater measure of faith and courage than anyone knew.

It was during this year 1946, that he spoke for the first time at the Convention in Keswick itself. As he stood on the platform of the great tent, facing a congregation of some 5,000 people in what is perhaps the best-known gathering of its kind in the world, he must have shrunk from delivering the message he had prepared. It required no little moral courage for a newcomer to speak as he did on the subject of worldliness, striking well-timed blows at habits into which he well knew many of his hearers had slipped. His address created a deep impression—"startling" was the adjective used of it in one Christian periodical which printed it in full. How much easier would it have been for him to give the type of devotional address which concentrated on the excellencies of his Master, which he himself so delighted to proclaim! But he knew the time had come to speak out, and he could not be dumb. It was this quality of moral courage which cannot remain passive when a situation calls for action that caused him some of the deepest sorrows of his life, for there were times when by his action he caused grief to those he loved and would fain have spared.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

VISIT TO CHINA

*God doth not bid thee wait
To disappoint at last. . . .
Thy heart's desire shall be fulfilled,
Wait patiently for Him.*

FRED MITCHELL'S early desire to go to China had long since been relinquished, and throughout the years in Bradford, although he continued to pray as earnestly as ever for its peoples, it probably did not enter his thoughts that he would ever go there. But he was to know the fulfilment of the promise, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart." It was felt necessary that the Home Directors from England, North America and Australasia should visit China to see for themselves the openings and opportunities that existed for missionary work in that country. The long drawn-out war was over, and everywhere except in the north-east, where Communist forces were entrenched, the doors stood open for wide-spread evangelism. The need for the home constituencies of the Mission to understand both the opportunities and the difficulties of the situation in the new China was apparent, and so, on the last day of July, 1947, we find him starting out on a journey which was to take him first to America, and then across the Pacific to the land which, he said, "has been on my heart as a chief concern for thirty years. The anticipation of seeing some of my Chinese brethren and sisters for whom I have prayed so long thrills me with joy."

He set off with a deep assurance of God's presence with

him, as he records on the first page of his journal the verses of Scripture that had come to his heart with quiet power during the preceding days. "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." "The Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest." And a telegram from Mr. Aldis quoted Exodus 33. 14. "My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." The journal continues,

My desire in going to China is that the Lord may make me a blessing to some and also that I may see with my own eyes something of what God is doing, as well as to "feel" something of the need of souls in that great land. I have placed myself in God's hands to be used to any needy soul en route. The Lord will guide me to those in whose heart the spirit is working or preparing to work.

And on the very first lap of the journey, by 'plane across the Atlantic, we find him in conversation with an American sailor who proved to be a Christian, and having "a really good talk about spiritual things" with a Scot travelling to Bermuda. It was not only on the platform or in the pulpit that he loved to speak of his Master, or revealed his deep love for those who shared with him allegiance to that One. A little incident which occurred a few days after his arrival in Philadelphia, where he stayed in the C.I.M. Mission Home, is recorded,

I took morning prayers again, speaking on "My cup runneth over." At breakfast, and for prayers, we had a dear negress with us, with her bright testimony and shining Christian face. It was a great delight to me to meet her. I also went into the kitchen to meet the coloured lady who cooks. She, too, is a fine Christian character. . . . After lunch and a short rest, I had a Bible reading and prayer with Mrs. Carter, the coloured cook. She . . . greatly appreciated my going to see her in her private apartments, and I greatly enjoyed hearing her story, too.

The daily record of his six weeks' stay in North America, where he visited the Mission centres in Philadelphia, Toronto, Chicago, Vancouver and Los Angeles is full and varied, reflecting his interest and reactions to new surroundings and experiences. His journal contains some quite unconscious touches of humour as he comments,

For supper we had "hot dogs," a sausage inside a hot bread roll smeared with mustard. I am anxious to increase my experience and knowledge of the affairs of other countries.

. . . I had my first drink of Coca-Cola.

He took a keen interest in all that he saw and heard, as well as in what he tasted, whether it be "one of the loveliest butterflies I have ever seen—a Monarch," or "a long anticipated opportunity of hearing the Gospel broadcast. For an hour the straightest, clearest Gospel preaching was given. These broadcasts are by various ministers, whose churches or listeners help pay for the renting of time on the air, and I understand many have been converted. I thank God for this great ministry in North America." And after visiting a Bible Training Institute with over 700 students which he observes is more than are to be found in all similar institutes throughout Great Britain, and a Guest House run by Christian business men, he exclaimed admiringly, "How full of initiative the Americans are!"

During the few weeks of his visit he addressed a number of meetings—not without some inward trepidation on at least one occasion, when he learned of the presence of one of America's leading preachers and scholars in the congregation. "But I sought a quiet heart," his diary runs, and later that same man "approached me and gave me his personal reiterated thanks for the blessing he had received in the service." On other occasions he observes,

These dear friends are so appreciative and I marvel that they find help in my simple messages to the heart.

I was much affected by a woman thanking me for my writings,

especially for my Keswick addresses in London in 1942. Everywhere I find someone who has been helped by addresses given at Keswick, and I can only humbly thank God if he has used me in any way. There is no place for pride.

The following day his journal commences,

It is four years since I took up office as Home Director, and naturally my mind was much exercised, and after a time of confession of failure I rededicated myself to the Lord for His work in the Mission. . . .

That was not the only anniversary to observe privately during those full and happy weeks, and we find him remembering:

This is dear Grandma's (his mother-in-law) birthday—God bless her! I could wish my postcard of greetings sent from Philadelphia might have reached her.

To-day is our silver wedding day, so my mind has continually reverted to that day, 25 years ago, and my heart has been lifted up in thanksgiving for the best of wives and the happiest of homes.

To-day is my spiritual birthday. It is 34 years since God met me in His grace as we pored over His Word in Mr. Crapper's house in Jackson Bridge. Walter Charlesworth and I both began our new life then and there. . . . How good God has been to me! And yet how slow to learn I have been!

His hope of meeting Walter Charlesworth, now a Lutheran minister in America, was not realized until two or three years later, on a subsequent visit to the Continent, but he had the joy of meeting one whom he had known and loved even longer—his own brother! How earnestly had he prayed for his salvation years ago! An entry in the little diary for 1921 runs,

Spent the afternoon praying for H. Oh, the agony of soul! Travailing in pain until he be born again. But by His grace I shall hold on, and he shall be besieged by prayer . . . the Lord give the grace of holding on and praying through.

For years he had prayed, continuing to do so after H. had left for Canada. And eventually faith and prayer were rewarded, and the glad news was received that his brother had been converted at a Salvation Army meeting whither he had been led by his own little daughter! And when Fred Mitchell went to visit him, the two brothers stood side by side at a Salvation Army open-air meeting, "which H. loves to do!"

At last the time came to leave for China itself. The journey across the Pacific was taken in company with a group of C.I.M. workers including Mr. J. R. Sinton, Deputy China Director, the Rev. H. M. Griffin, Home Director for North America, and Mr. J. O. Sanders, Home Director for Australia. In addition to discussions about the work with them, and an almost daily lesson in Chinese, he was ever on the look-out for opportunities to witness for his Master. A significant little entry made in his journal two days after he had preached a very impressive sermon at the Sunday morning service runs,

I am still looking for personal contacts following Sunday.

He did not feel he had discharged his responsibility by preaching at a meeting. He sought the individual soul. But it was apparently not until Friday that any such contacts were made, when his journal reads,

I had a blessed time with God before breakfast. Afterwards I held myself in readiness for meeting Mrs. — the wife of a prominent Chinese lawyer. . . . I encouraged her to make a clear-cut decision and this she did. . . .

The next day,

I met two Chinese Christians returning from North America. . . . The message last Sunday morning had troubled them and they wanted to know the secret of the spiritual life for they were manifestly failing. I found that true, secret prayer had gone. . . . So we covered the following ground with illustrations and Scripture references.

The Secrets of a healthy Christian life.

1. Regular Bible study and systematic secret prayer.
2. Obedience to God in matters of behaviour and service.

They, at any rate, were the secrets of his own Christian life, and throughout the arduous travels of the next few months we find them still faithfully observed. He travelled 6,000 miles in China, on crowded jolting Chinese 'buses, in cramped river boats, by rickshaw, mountain-chair, on horseback, amidst sights and sounds that were unfamiliar and often under conditions of hardship against which his former life had done little to inure him. But time and time again simple references are made to that secret prayer and Bible study which nourished his soul.

I woke early as usual. I am usually awakened by the excited procession of a rat which comes noisily up the stairs exactly at 3 a.m. each morning and does several tours of the building; though I often have short periods of sleep after that. From 5 a.m. I was mainly engaged in prayer, and rose at 6 a.m.

Time is an hour late here so I had an extra hour's needful rest and still rose at 6 a.m. My meditation was on the Transfiguration which was much blessed to me. I never knew before that it probably occurred in the night.

This morning I read through very slowly the first chapter of Bonar's *God's Way of Holiness* with much profit. I want to make that good little book my own as we travel on.

After spending a few days in the Mission Headquarters in Shanghai, the three Home Directors set out on their travels. The itinerary mapped out for F. M. was to commence in Chungking, the great city in the west which had been the wartime capital of China. The journey there was easily and quickly accomplished by aeroplane, and when it landed and he disembarked, he records that not only was the missionary there to meet him, but that he was

accompanied by Mr. Marcus Cheng. It was a special joy to see the latter for whom I have prayed for so many years.

There were several similar entries in his journal, as here and there he met people for whom he had prayed personally, or saw for himself things in which he had taken a special interest.

I was introduced to Miss Yuan for whom I have so long prayed.

We visited Mr. Grant's printing press where he is busy producing a Lisu Hymnbook, Mr. Metcalfe writing the stencils. I have prayed so often for this, that it was good to see it.

. . . from there we made our way down a street behind the Drum Tower, to see Pastor David Yang for whom I have prayed so long.

. . . So ended a full and happy day in the Holy Light School, for which I have prayed since its inception.

With what reverence did he visit some of the places of which he had so often read!

Changsha. Here it was that Mr. Hudson Taylor was called home in 1905. . . . Our next visit was to the last remaining bit of the city wall. It was on this piece that Mr. Taylor walked with Dr. Keller only a few hours before his death.

Wantsai. To this city Mr. William Taylor came for a visit 60 years ago—the first foreigner ever to enter its walls. . . .

Nanking . . . took me to the Drum Tower, famous in C.I.M. history as the place where George Duncan found a room when he could obtain no other home in this city. That was in 1867. We climbed the Tower and thought of George Duncan climbing the same steps 80 years ago.

And when staying in a particularly unsavoury inn, he reminded himself that Mr. Hudson Taylor had probably often stayed in inns that were even worse! He probably had!

For so long and with such interest had Fred Mitchell loved China and the Chinese that he early commented on the fact that none of the sights and sounds seemed strange. Those who travelled with him observed the ease and

enjoyment with which he adapted himself to unusual conditions. Nevertheless, they made a deep impression on him, and he kept full records of his journeys, and experiences of breakdowns in the mud, hairpin bends on dizzy heights, and navigations in the dark!

Perhaps the most outstanding one to him was a journey on horseback taken among the mountains of tribesland in Kweichow. Had he been accustomed to riding it would have been sufficiently unusual for one who had lived all his life in England—but the last time he had essayed to mount a horse had been as a daring ten-year-old! No wonder, therefore, that

I confess I faced the long day's ride over rough country with some misgivings, and to begin the ride by crossing a river was a fair test. However, I soon felt at home on Danny Boy, and looking back over the way he has carried me to-day, I can only marvel at the horse, and at the Lord's peace in my own heart. On many occasions we have ridden along narrow ridges overhanging deep ravines or gone down to a river at 45 degrees slope and climbed the other side at the same angle. I did not think I could have faced such an experience.

That very journey of three days on horseback, however, took him to the region of which he had written years ago, "My heart is so set on tribal work in South-west China." Now he was to see it with his own eyes. That first night he was vividly reminded of colleagues at Newington Green as he rested "in the home built by Mr. and Mrs. Norman Baker when they came over from Kopu to open up the work among the Nosu here." The next day he arrived at Kopu itself, a centre for work amongst the attractive Miao tribespeople, and those travelling with him little realized what it meant to him as

About 4 p.m. some one and a half miles out of Kopu we heard singing, and there were the school boys and girls, mostly Miao,

in their white and colourful dresses out to greet us, forming a guard of honour and singing us a welcome. Half a mile further on we came across the Bible School, also singing a welcome. Then the Blind School, and lastly, as we approached the Church, a large representative group of Christians. They sang a hymn of Alleluia, thinking we should at least have that word in common, and we greeted them with Alleluia. What a moving welcome! . . . A hot cup of tea, a bath and an evening meal prepared us for the welcome meeting which one can never forget. . . . Perhaps the crowning item was the singing of their favourite hymn, "Will there be any stars in my crown?" It was like the chorus of heaven singing in full praise.

As his journeys continued, punctuated by missionary conferences in which he took a leading part, he began to feel very weary. The constant hard travel, unaccustomed diet, and disturbed nights were telling even on his strong constitution. He had visited prisons, churches, Bible schools, heathen temples, spoken many times by interpretation which he always found a strain, and talked for hours with both missionaries and Chinese. All the time he had been on the alert to memorize new impressions in order that when he returned to England he would be well equipped with factual material to present the needs of China's unreached millions there. It was not without a sense of relief that he eventually arrived back to the comfort and relaxation afforded in the spacious Mission Home in Sinza Road, Shanghai. But his desire had been fulfilled. He had seen with his own eyes something of what God was doing in China and had tasted the inestimable joy of fellowship with Chinese Christians. He had been burdened afresh by the sense of the great need of millions still in darkness—he had been amazed to learn that in one province, where missionaries had worked for decades, only about six million out of the twenty-six million people living in it had heard the Gospel. And he had been "made a blessing to some." In at least one of the evangelistic meetings he addressed there were those who responded openly to the invitation to trust in Christ;

a wealthy Chinese in Shanghai was so affected by his contact with this humble, friendly business man from England that he followed up what seemed a sincere confession of faith by inviting a number of influential friends to his home that they might hear the Good News; and many of those who attended the missionary conferences will never forget that they heard God's Voice speaking as His servant ministered the Word at Bible Readings, or spoke solemnly on "Grieving the Spirit," or "He must increase, but I must decrease." Of these things he knew, and rejoiced that God had answered his prayer.

But perhaps the most widespread blessing he brought was that of which he himself was unaware. Missionaries and Chinese alike were melted and humbled at what they saw in the short, smiling Home Director from England who had prayed for China for thirty years. They saw the sympathetic, courteous manner in which he listened to people as they talked to him. They observed him as he spent an afternoon cheerfully repairing a church organ "which seemed to be suffering from almost every organ affection and on the point of collapse." They noticed that he offered to stay in one evening to "watch the house so that the mothers could go to the service without anxious thoughts about their sleeping children." Clinic workers with bottles of valuable medicine they could not use because the labels had come off gratefully accepted his offer to put his pharmaceutical knowledge at their disposal and tell them what the medicines were. It was all so simple and ordinary and natural that he thought nothing of it. But as he passed on his way, those with whom he had come in contact realized that he had left "a sweet fragrance of Christ." He so rarely seemed to fail in the little courtesies of life—the appreciative letter of thanks, the fulfilment of a small commission which he might so easily have forgotten, the quick, kind observance of a need. Many were those who would have agreed with the words quoted of him in a letter from a member of his Bible class at Bradford,

For me 'twas not the truth you taught,
To you so clear, to me so dim,
But when you came just now, you brought,
A sense of Him.

* * *

In one of his sermons on the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Fred Mitchell introduced his subject with words which so aptly seem to fit his own case, that we quote them here:

"We have sometimes, perhaps all too rarely, heard the most ordinary message clothed with the most extraordinary power. The thoughts expressed and the words used to express them were devoid of special brilliance, but the message came home to us with such grace and quiet strength that we knew instinctively that God had spoken. The treasure was in an earthen vessel, but it was a treasure and possessed an excellency. . . . What was it which man and message possessed that, had it been absent, would have left the word cold and formal, or at best merely clever and interesting, but devoid of power? The simple answer is—*a holy unction*. . . . It is the blessed effusion of the Holy Spirit into the whole of our inner being, making God's presence manifest, and giving freshness and fragrance to both public ministry and private conversation, and adding its benediction to the very presence of the man of God who possesses it."

It was the holy unction which clothed him, an ordinary man, with an extraordinary power.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WIDENING INFLUENCE

*For only work that is for God alone
Hath an unceasing guerdon of delight,
A guerdon unaffected by the sight
Of great success, nor by its loss o'erthrown.*

IT was less than six months after his return from China that Fred Mitchell found himself suddenly, and wholly unexpectedly, in the position of Chairman of the Keswick Convention. Rev. W. H. Aldis had been the Chairman for a number of years, and there had seemed good reason to believe that this virile and greatly-loved man would continue to fill the position for some time to come. Quite suddenly, a few weeks before the 1948 Convention was due to be held, he died, and the one who had succeeded him as Home Director in the China Inland Mission was now invited to succeed him in his position at Keswick. That one of the few laymen on a body mainly composed of ordained ministers should have been chosen must have surprised many to whom his name was still comparatively unknown, but among the trustees themselves there was no doubt that he was the one who should lead the Convention so shortly due to take place. His poise, his dignified precision of expression so coloured by the style of the old writers whose books he continually studied, and above all, his evident spirituality made him one well-fitted to guide and control the meetings. Many who had become accustomed to seeing Mr. Aldis in that position commented on the evident worthiness of his successor, and when the trustees met in council later in the year there was unanimous agreement to the proposal that he be invited to the three-years appointment of chair-

man. Not surprisingly, it was with much diffidence that he accepted.

I could easily be overwhelmed when I think of those who have gone before me. Names like those of Mr. Robert Wilson, Mr. Albert Head and Dr. Stuart Holden make me feel how ill-equipped I am to succeed them. Quite naturally, also, I contrast my small gifts with those of my much-loved predecessor . . . who was conspicuously gifted as a chairman.

Then again my hands were already full, and I had no desire for more work. I have lived long enough, and already had sufficient responsibility, to know that it is not to be sought, for it is usually carried at a heavy price. But . . . believing the Lord has called to the office, I take it up. . . .

A heavy price. The discharging of his responsibilities often involved absence from home, and he realized that not only he, but those he loved best, were called upon to pay part of the price. He wrote once to one of his children.

I have had many a sorrow of heart, and it still remains one of my chief regrets that I have not been able to give myself to mother and you children more. The harvest is great and the labourers are few, which means that there have been many calls on me. I do not justify my negligence . . . but any sacrifice made by you for our dear Lord Jesus' sake has not been unrewarded.

How great a joy and satisfaction it was to him as each of his children took a definite stand with the I.V.F. groups of keen young Christians in the colleges they attended. And as the time approached for one of them to decide the pathway she would launch out on, he wrote,

Regarding your future I am in the most perfect peace—the Lord who has so wonderfully guided so far will lead us on. If we are desirous of living in His will, He will not allow us to get out of it by a small mistake on our part. Rather He will move heaven and earth to prevent such a calamity. . . . As you look out into the future, so blissfully hidden from us, rest quietly in Him

who has promised to open up the way, "As thou goest step by step" before you.

Responsibility demanded more of him than the sacrifice of time spent away from home and family, however. Perhaps what he felt most was making decisions that affected other lives, particularly when he knew those decisions would cause misunderstanding and disappointment. He was an unusually tender-hearted man, and felt deeply for those in sorrow. Yet this sensitiveness did not prevent him from speaking frankly when he felt it his duty to do so, and he did not delegate the unpleasant task to others. Where he believed someone was at fault, he would seek an opportunity to point it out privately; and he usually did it so lovingly and tenderly that the one rebuked "felt melted to tears." Most people respected his frankness and profited by it, although there were those who, while accepting it meekly, felt they had been misjudged. There were no doubt a few occasions when it caused a real estrangement between him and others. When he realized this had happened he would go to almost any lengths to heal the breach, especially if he felt that he had said too much. And if his own efforts failed, he still continued to pray, earnestly and urgently. How thankful he was when, on one occasion, he was greeted cordially by someone who had avoided him for months! The relief and joy that meeting afforded him was immeasurable.

That he had to suffer from adverse criticism at times was inevitable, but the quality of reserve in him which, in spite of his warm-hearted friendliness, was so marked, prevented him from speaking of such experiences. Only indirectly do we get a glimpse of his reaction to some matters which affected him most deeply. In a letter to a young minister friend, he wrote once:

I am glad you are taking any blessing there is about the criticism brought against you by — in which case even his bitter attack will yield sweetness. A sentence which has become a

great help to Mrs. Mitchell and myself is, "It does not matter what happens to us, but our reaction to what happens to us is of vital importance. . . ." I think you must expect more and more criticism, for with increasing responsibility this is inevitable. It causes one to seek to walk humbly before God, and to take such action as He desires. Even the small decisions regarding the work, therefore, need to be soaked in prayer.

For all his undoubted spirituality, he was intensely practical. His messages at Keswick spoke to the hearts and consciences of his hearers, not only because he had evidently come from the presence of God, but also because he saw to it that he was thoroughly acquainted with the subject on which he spoke. Months before the Convention the meetings he had to address would be in his mind as well as in his prayers.

"I'm preparing for Keswick," he said one day to a solicitor friend of his. "And I realize I need to get in touch with people as they really are. So many of us Christian workers talk about sin without having any real touch with it."

"Why don't you go to a police court?" suggested his friend. "Or what about Bow Street? That would give you an idea of what is going on right here in London."

Fred Mitchell went to Bow Street. What he saw and heard there cost him sleepless nights as the memory of it burned into his heart. And when, four months later, he spoke at Keswick, his words burned into many another heart, as he said,

I came away feeling I had been living in a fool's paradise, in a world that was unreal. Twenty-five girls and young women came in and went out in quick succession, girls of 18 and 19 with the bloom of their young maidenhood hardly brushed off as yet, and older women. . . . I had been living in a world where I never thought of such things; and here in London, a mission field at hand, sin was stalking unabashed in our streets, and many of us passing by without even the knowledge that women were living such a life as this. They were somebody's daughter,

somebody's sister. . . . I think you will understand a little of my feelings as I sat there and watched the proceedings, and wondered about some of the niceties of certain of our theological arguments and whether we are spending our time to the best advantage.

Little wonder that with his deep compassion for the down-and-outs slum missions had a special place in his heart. The leader of one such mission wrote:

"I was amazed at his up-to-date grasp of prayer needs for the work. . . . I think too of his wonderful interest and prayers for two of the men here, how he had them in his office and gave them of his time as though he had no other interest or demand. . . . Then, someone wrote to ask if he could find a home for a girl who had got into trouble. He felt guided to contact me, and very soon the lass came to our home. . . . And quite simply, without any words from us, her heart opened to the Lord. . . ."

As the opportunities for serving God and his fellow men increased, it seemed that his capacity for work and for practical demonstration of love increased correspondingly. Here again, there was something eminently practical about him. His friends became accustomed to the sight of the little notebook he produced on all occasions, in which he jotted down names and addresses, and commissions which he undertook to fulfil, as well as ideas that occurred to him. And when, after a period away from the office he returned, one of the first things he did was to go carefully through that notebook, ticking the items off one by one as they were dealt with. A donation to a small society; an order of I.V.F. books for a student; a telephone call to deliver a promised message; a letter. . . . He had a good memory, but he did not depend upon it. In matters relating to the Mission the same characteristic was revealed. On one occasion the tennis court in the Mission Home garden was in danger of being requisitioned for building purposes—and he was warned that if it was wanted by the housing authorities, nothing he could do would stop them! The sacrifice of a tennis

court was not of such great importance, but the realization that the small amount of open space surrounding the Mission Home to which so many came for rest and refreshment after strenuous days abroad was to be further reduced galvanized him into action. Not only did he solicit earnest and widespread prayer that that piece of ground should be spared to the Mission, but he did everything possible to prove that the plans for building that were on foot would in no way be hampered if that ground were not used. He even enlisted the help of a Christian architect, who spent hours drawing up plans to show how it could be done! And when the case eventually came up for consideration, the Mission was allowed to retain the ground.

By the middle of 1950 he was conscious that the burdens of work and responsibility were ageing him prematurely, a fact that was evident to all, if in no other way, by the fact that his dark hair had turned almost completely grey. He wrote once to a friend,

The demands on my time are beyond me, and especially am I being made aware of the fact that I must do less for my health's sake, and also for the work's sake here.

But before six months had passed it became evident that there was to be no respite. The situation in China which had appeared so promising when he was there three years previously, had completely changed. The Communist forces that were then entrenched in the north-east had now spread over the whole land. Doors that had been wide open for the preaching of the Gospel were now almost entirely closed. The liberty of missionaries was hampered; by the necessity and difficulty of obtaining permission to travel about; many were not allowed to move off their compounds; and a few were suffering imprisonment. A manifesto issued from Peking had made it quite clear that missionaries must leave the country, and pressure was being brought to bear on the churches and Chinese Christians with whom they were associated to see that they did so. The decision of

the Mission leaders, made earlier, that the Mission would remain on under the Communist Government had to be reviewed in the light of this manifesto and the reports from mission stations all over the land that it was being put into effect. The realization that Chinese brothers and sisters in Christ were suffering, and would do so increasingly if missionaries remained in China, altered the situation. Not only were the missionaries themselves unable to preach the Gospel they had come to proclaim, but their presence was only making matters worse for the very people they most desired to help. Christian leaders were accused of being spies because of their association with those who came from the 'Imperialistic' countries of the west, and those who remained loyal to them were in danger not only of imprisonment, but of death itself. Slowly but reluctantly those at Mission Headquarters in Shanghai were forced to the conclusion that to remain in China would frustrate rather than further the cause of Christ in that land. In December, 1950, the fateful decision was made to withdraw, and the Mission entered upon what was, perhaps, the biggest crisis in its history.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CRISIS IN CHINA

Vocation brings us into the battlefield, but only a constant vision of the unseen will keep us there.

A. E. THEOBALD.

Monday, January 22nd, 1951.—It is almost 7 p.m. and we are airborne. The first thing I did in taking off was to read *Daily Light* evening portion. . . .

In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul.

I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. . . .

Who is sufficient for these things?

My grace is sufficient for thee. . . .

These, both as revealing one's own insufficiency and then the sufficiency of God, are my thoughts as I set out. . . . The journey has begun, which in the providence of God will carry me so far and which is fraught with such issues.

FRED MITCHELL, having written the first entry in his new journal, sat back in his seat in the air-liner. He was bound for Australia, where Bishop Houghton, the General Director of C.I.M., had called an emergency conference of Mission leaders that they might face together the situation that had arisen. Kalorama, near Melbourne, was the place that had been chosen for the conference, and from such widely-separated places as North America, Britain, South Africa, New Zealand, and China itself, the seven men came who, by virtue of their positions, had to make decisions affecting the future of the hundreds of missionaries who were already starting to emerge from China.

On the face of it, the financial aspect of the decision to

withdraw from China might have been thought dark enough to deter them from any plans for advance in other directions. It was estimated that it would cost about £100,000 to bring the Mission as a body out of China, over and above the amount required to maintain the missionaries when they had emerged. Past experience, however, had too often proved the reliability of the promise of material provision for those who seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness for them to entertain any doubts but that in this case, as in all others, the needs would be met. The question of finance was not of primary importance—for money, after all, was no problem to Him who claims that the silver and the gold are His. . . . The possibility that some missionaries might not be permitted to leave China was a far greater cause for concern. Some had already endured months of strain in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, accentuated by the knowledge of accusation meetings, public trials and mass executions in their districts. The prospect of the suffering that might be awaiting them if applications for exit visas were rejected could not be contemplated without soul travail even on the part of those who really believe that “prayer moves the Hand that moves the world.”

But these were not the reasons for bringing men from the four corners of the world at a few weeks' notice to the beautiful spot among blue gum trees on the Dandenong Range for a special conference.

There was a reason of even wider significance. The very existence of the Mission was in jeopardy. Unlike other Protestant missions withdrawing from China, the C.I.M. had no other field but China itself. Missionaries coming out of China could not be transferred to some mission station in another country—there was nothing else for it but to send them to the homelands, and the question that now arose, and demanded a rapid solution was this: Had the time come to dissolve the Mission? If not, if God still had a purpose for the body of men and women whom He had

brought into its fellowship, then what was that purpose? As Fred Mitchell journeyed towards Australia, his mind and prayers continually reverted to this problem. Nor was it the only one. Bishop Houghton on medical advice had been compelled to leave China in order to recuperate in Australia, and in consequence of his absence difficulties of administration had arisen, accentuated by the present crisis. The situation was further complicated by the fact that correspondence with those in Communist China must of necessity be guarded in expression, and it was therefore impossible to write as freely and clearly as usual. Little wonder, then, that those who were gathering for the conference in Kalorama were deeply impressed by the seriousness of the decisions which they must make.

Fred Mitchell's journey was to take him first to America, and less than twenty-four hours after he had left London airport he arrived in New York—but not before he had had interesting conversations with two of his fellow passengers.

. . . an affable fellow of about 35, an Oxford graduate and a political correspondent. We had a good talk, and since he knew Oxford and lived in Bristol, I introduced C.I.C.C.U., Hugh Redwood and Muller's Homes, and recommended "Christianity and History." . . .

I engaged in conversation as best I could with a Polish Catholic whose difficulty with English did not hinder him expressing himself on Russia. When I spoke of being a Christian he showed me his card of the Sacred Heart, but I explained we needed Christ in the heart.

It was typical of him that as he travelled across America he was on the alert to glean information and impressions from all sources that would the better equip him for what lay ahead.

As we have passed through the country, meeting and praying with the friends (at Mission centres) one's mind has become more and more clear of certain facts which help to prepare one for the coming Conference.

On Monday, February 12th, the seven directors gathered in Kalorama commenced the discussions which were to prove a turning point in Mission history. The conference had been preceded by a day of earnest prayer as the men who were to steer the Mission into new and untried channels met to seek wisdom and direction from God. It is interesting, from the vantage point of the present, to trace the course of the decisions made during the five days of that conference. Fred Mitchell wrote up his journal every evening, and from that fuller account we take extracts:

Monday. It was generally agreed that there was no possibility of the Mission's work being recommenced inside China in the foreseeable future, but recognizing the fact that God may work and work more quickly than we expect, it was unanimously felt that as a Mission we should be ready to return when the way opened. That means that the Mission must be kept intact as a missionary body.

Tuesday . . . therefore for its continuance some spheres of active service are necessary. It was unanimously decided that our first responsibility was to Chinese in other lands, but some serious doubts were expressed concerning Japan which has been forced upon our notice from many quarters. As though God would speak clearly to us on the subject, the morning mail brought two letters addressed to the General Director which contained a promise of 1,000 U.S. dollars and a gift of £250, the former for *work in Japan* and the latter towards the expense of sending a team of exploration to enquire into the possibility of work. There was something awe-inspiring as this news was read. . . . The decisions of the day have been radical, widespread and unanimous and deeply satisfying, covering such subjects as *work among Chinese in Formosa, Malaya, Ceylon . . . and Singapore.*

Wednesday. . . . to consider *work in the Philippines* and adjacent islands with a view to translating and giving the Gospel to some of the many tribes without the Scriptures. A letter called for help among the *8,000 Chinese in Calcutta.* . . .

Thursday. Indonesia . . . in view of the one and a half million Chinese as well as other peoples it was decided that a survey team should visit there. . . .

Friday. During the afternoon Bishop Houghton had private

interviews . . . we begged him not to consider laying down his office.

So began the new chapter in the history of the Mission, as its eyes were turned to the countries of South-east Asia. The direction had been determined, and before the end of the year C.I.M. missionaries under the additional heading of Overseas Missionary Fellowship were at work in Japan, Formosa, Philippine Islands, Malaya, Singapore and Thailand; and although in November Bishop Houghton relinquished his responsibilities as General Director, it was not before all but about forty members of the C.I.M. had safely emerged from China, and the work in the "new fields" was well under way.

In retrospect it is easy to sum up in a few words the major happenings and accomplishments of a year. From the point of view of Mission history, 1951 marked a crisis safely passed through and the pathway for the immediate future clearly indicated. History, however, is made by human beings constantly beset by the problems, sorrows, joys and labours of personal life. The year was one in which many members of the C.I.M. passed through deeper waters than they had ever yet known—and proved correspondingly the sufficiency of the One who has promised, in such circumstances, "I will be with thee." For Fred Mitchell it was a year of abounding labour, exquisite joy and deepest grief.

Before the conference in Kalorama he had been asked to take the Bible readings at the Convention in Keswick—and in some respects he felt that was the highest honour ever conferred upon him. What an inestimable privilege to minister the Word of God for four consecutive mornings to such a company as gathers at Keswick! He early knew what should be his theme. It was, after all, the study of a lifetime. At the age of 21 he had written:

Who can read the latter chapters of Revelation without seeing the position assigned to the Son in the future eternity? So we see that in the past eternity, while the Lord Jesus passed through this

scene, in heaven now, and in the coming eternity, the object of God's thoughts and delight is Christ. . . . Nothing but Christ can satisfy God, and that is why we are being conformed to His image. . . .

Years later, an entry in a journal expresses a longing to understand better the message of the Book of Revelation. Little wonder that as this man, whose mind to an unusual degree was focussed on Christ, went evening by evening to his study to prepare for those four addresses, the message that emerged was "The Lamb upon His Throne." And when the time came to deliver the Bible readings, it seemed that the veil was drawn aside and the glories of the enthroned Lamb were revealed to the hearts of the silent company in the great tent as they listened to the layman standing on the platform before them. They were supreme moments for him as he proclaimed to that large company of God's children the pre-eminent position, the beauty and the majesty, of his Master. He was marked out then as one who would surely, in years to come, often give those Bible readings, for he spoke not only to intellect. "God has called me, as I believe, to speak to the heart and conscience of His people; and if these Bible readings have been used to that end, then my joy is fulfilled." And he ended them by quoting with unconscious significance:

The sands of time are sinking,
 The dawn of heaven breaks,
 The summer morn I've sighed for,
 The fair, sweet morn awakes;
 Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
 But dayspring is at hand,
 And glory—glory dwelleth
 In Immanuel's land.

The year which was so full of labour and responsibility for him as a stream of missionaries and children returned from China, held an even sorer grief as a situation arose which could not but bring a cloud between him and one

whom he had loved and respected for years. The Hand of the heavenly Artist, who chisels and polishes the stones for His temple, held many through a painful, refining process in those days. But "He which hath begun a good work in you *will* perfect it. . . ." It was observed of Fred Mitchell that after that period, "he changed considerably. He consulted others more readily when important decisions had to be made, and although he did not avoid performing an unpleasant task when it was necessary, he would spend more time in prayer beforehand." Often, when he had to rebuke people, or cut across their known desires, he would write a letter and then keep it for several days. Sometimes, on rereading it, he was assured that it was right to send it, and it would be posted. Sometimes it would be destroyed, and another one written.

The maturing process revealed itself in other ways. He had always regarded his possessions as being given him "in trust" for his Master, and he must often have given at sacrifice. During the period of evacuation from China, and then the entering into new fields, the Mission was naturally faced with bigger expenses than ever before. Several times special periods were set aside for prayer for funds at Mission Headquarters at Newington Green, and after one of these a large gift was received. The donor wished to remain anonymous. It is doubtful whether more than one person besides himself knew where that money came from. Certain financial readjustments had been necessary—for, after all, the Home Director and his family were still dependent on a comparatively small chemist's business in Bradford. But—"Shall I offer to the Lord my God that which cost me nothing?"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

VISIT TO AFRICA

*Measure thy life by loss instead of gain;
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth.*

HAMILTON KING.

DURING the last nine months of Fred Mitchell's life, months of almost unremitting labour, when he travelled thousands of miles, addressed numbers of meetings, wrote innumerable postcards and letters, the holy power of his inner life became increasingly evident. "Lord, make me as holy as a ransomed sinner can be" was one of his frequent prayers, and his earnest desire "I long for souls" expressed often in his journals, became intensified. It was in the latter part of 1952, when he visited South Africa to speak at a number of special meetings in the big cities of the Union, the answer to these two great yearning prayers was granted in a marked degree. He wrote in his journal as he set out:

With the passing of the years any natural longing for travel tends to diminish greatly and the shrinking from separation from home, office and routine correspondingly increases. Never have I shrunk from a journey as from this one, but as a compensation the Lord has given me a quiet assurance that the blessing will be altogether disproportionate to the cost. So I have found myself strangely bold in prayer and asking for more souls than I have yet seen. . . .

Several times the fact of physical and mental weariness is revealed in entries in the very full journal he kept of the experiences and impressions of his three months in South Africa.

I found it not too easy to speak again to-night, and I can only pray and believe . . .

. . . it may be I am suffering some reaction from the busy days in Capetown.

I felt somewhat laboured in speaking . . . feeling limp and fighting against depression for the rest of the evening.

Undoubtedly the weariness that seemed to assail throughout the whole of that South African trip was partly caused by the long period of mental exertion through which he had passed, but he was engaged in a spiritual conflict for souls which must inevitably take its toll of his strength. During the three months in the Union he spoke at about 100 meetings, at which many received Christ as Saviour, and numbers of Christians entered into a life of new liberty and blessing.

. . . about 12 decided for Christ and walked out boldly in front of the whole concourse of people. . . .

I spoke under an evident sense of the power of God, and afterwards I made an appeal for decision. Five stood to their feet, though I believe more was accomplished.

A fine young woman came to me for consecration and seeking the fulness of the Spirit of which she was consciously in need. I believe she came through.

. . . an old Scottish woman . . . spoke to me a few days ago in great perplexity, now she tells me she is through into real liberty.

I was greatly helped in my message, and at the close . . . quite a number of young men in their twenties came out to seek the Lord . . . also a few young women. . . .

Yet there was a sensitiveness, a fear of "plucking unripe fruit, and grieving God," which often restrained him from making an appeal for open decisions at all.

I had some little concern afterwards as to whether the friends responsible would have wished me to have given people an opportunity of registering their decision, but I had no such leading, and I found afterwards that this commended itself to their judgment.

There were times during his visit when the Spirit of God worked with him in a marked way, and one Sunday in particular stands out. In the morning he led the service and preached in a Methodist church. After lunch and a short rest—his friends noted that he had disciplined himself to sleep for ten to fifteen minutes, and arose “as fresh as a daisy!”—he was taken to a prison.

We were admitted through the prison gate by a native warder, and made our way through an inner wall to a large courtyard, and finally arrived at the chapel. . . . I spoke to the men for 20 minutes with great joy, and after the meeting two prisoners came to me. The first had been truly converted in July; he has a real knowledge of the Lord and is accepting his eight years' imprisonment manfully, as he deserves it. . . . Then, another young man of 30 sought me out; I had noticed him looking very hard during the meeting, but he was softened and ready to be saved. He took a definite step of faith, and I believe is now trusting the Saviour.

. . . it had been arranged for me to go and see a man condemned to death for murdering a woman in drink. I had five to seven minutes in which to lead him to Christ. . . . I found him broken and bruised and he told me he had been seeking forgiveness and peace from God all day. I tried to lead him step by step and he ultimately followed me, most sincerely, as I led him in prayer seeking Christ as his Saviour. I left him *Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment* and promised to pray for him.

From that interview, the solemnity of which he could never forget, he was taken to a Dutch Reformed boarding school.

I had naturally shrunk from this service, being the third of four services to-day, but the invitation to speak to 150 boys and girls between 11 and 16 seemed a call from God, so I accepted. . . . I prayed, read John 3, and spoke on the Second Birth with manifest help. I closed in prayer, suggesting that any who wished for further help should remain behind, and can only say I was completely taken aback when two classes (about 25 boys and seven girls) remained. I asked the master the meaning, and he

said, "They have remained in order to be born again." So I led them step by step, and finally we all prayed together, asking the Lord to save, and enter into each heart. They seemed bright, intelligent and definite, and we were humbled at the Lord's mercy.

The memorable day was not finished yet. At 9 o'clock that evening he spoke at the big Rally which had been convened, and

after the meeting two fashionable ladies came boldly up to seek my help. . . . I believe they passed from death unto life. . . . What a day this has been, seeing souls saved from among children, youth, middle-aged, prisoners, etc. All praise to our Redeeming Lord for the joy.

He longed particularly for news of the condemned murderer, and some time later received a letter in answer to one he wrote to a friend.

You will be pleased to know that various people saw him two or three times after you had that talk with him, and they seem satisfied that he was truly converted. Then, the Sunday before he was executed Mr. — of our Assembly conducted the prison service. On arrival at the gaol nearly every European prisoner was in the chapel, and one of the men said that Cawood had asked for special hymns, and that he had been given permission to stand on the steps opposite the chapel door. I understand it was a very moving time, and created quite an impression in the gaol, which has lasted up to now. Mr. — saw Cawood after the service and had a long talk with him. . . . Cawood had no doubt as to where he stood. He said the only thing he feared was the physical pain, but his heart was at peace with God. Before they parted Cawood asked if the church would remember him especially at the evening service, and if the congregation would sing "What a Friend we have in Jesus" at 8.15 p.m., when he would be reading the words. . . . Cawood paid the extreme penalty at 6 a.m. the next morning.

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As Fred Mitchell travelled about the Union, staying in various homes, he was seen by many people off, as well as on, the platform. One who acted as his host wrote:

His manner in the home was delightful, and he had the knack of never "being in the way." . . . It was my custom to take his early morning cup of tea, and to my knock there would come a bright "Come in" and "Good morning"—something in those two greetings themselves was uplifting. A quick glance round the room showed everything in its place, his curtains drawn to let in the morning sun, his bed neatly made, his open Bible and notebook on the bed and a small stool alongside. Fully dressed, not a hair out of place, but a wonderful glow on his face was evidence that he had already at that early hour been in the secret place of the Most High. . . .

Out driving in the car, first of all he would lapse into quiet meditation, and then out would come his pocket book and one or two insertions made. Sometimes they were his own thoughts, but on others one would realize he had made a note to remind him to do something, "I would like to send you so-and-so. . . ." and he had jotted it down.

One morning at breakfast he commented on the small appetite and colour of my youngest son, remarking to my wife "I think he is suffering from his liver." We told him we had been concerned about the little lad and had had medical advice to no avail. Out came the pocket book—and a prescription was quickly written out! . . . a subsequent visit to another child specialist proved that Mr. Mitchell's diagnosis was correct.

After his departure for England my wife handed me a letter stating, "I found this on your desk after Mr. Mitchell had gone." It was a letter of thanks, of promised remembrance in prayer, of hopefulness that I should visit England one day. He was not, so I found, given to eulogy or flattery, but what he said, he meant. . . . This letter I shall cherish until I see my beloved friend face to face in the Glory of His Presence. . . .

One of his great desires was to preach from a pulpit that had been occupied by Andrew Murray, whose writings he so much revered. This desire was granted him on two occasions, both in Wellington and in Cape Town. "He stood

there as though expecting some new sensation as the mantle of Andrew Murray fell upon him," wrote one who was with him! Although most of the meetings and conventions he addressed were for white people, however, he was particularly delighted when he had the opportunity of preaching to the African and coloured, or half-caste, peoples. "Oh, the joy to speak of the Lord Jesus to those of other races!" his journal runs after taking morning prayers with a group of African servants. It is interesting to note that the first meeting at which he spoke on arrival was in a mission among coloured people.

To me, as a Christian, they were brothers and sisters, for most of them were keen Christians, with a real Hallelujah experience. Their singing was simply magnificent, and the whole service hearty. After the meeting we remained to remember the Lord in a free but reverent service, to which about 80 remained. How blessed to me to begin my South African service in this way!

There was one African pastor of whom he heard whom he was particularly eager to meet, and while he was in Durban this desire, too, was granted. He had been invited to the home of a family who had been at Keswick when he gave his Bible readings "The Lamb upon His Throne," and during the course of the evening, who should call but the African pastor himself! With what delight did Fred Mitchell meet him!

It is a long time since I was so blessed and humbled as I heard his stories of his own conversion, of blessing on his ministry. He is a true man of God with a deep knowledge of prayer and God has used him to the conversion of hundreds. To-morrow, at the Government's invitation, he goes to see three Africans who are to be hanged on Monday. . . . He often leads such men to Christ. . . .

The little group sitting together that evening must have been very conscious of the Presence of One whom they could not see. Fred Mitchell's heart was deeply stirred. He

longed for a still closer walk with God, a still greater effectiveness in the service of his Master. The man who had been chairman of Keswick, who was acknowledged as one of the leading evangelicals in England looked into the eyes of the African brother with whom he had been talking, and said, "I want you to lay hands on me, and pray for me. . . ." There was a holy stillness in the room as he knelt before the son of Africa, and two black hands were laid gently on his head. And to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, at any rate, was shown the simple solution to all racial problems. . . .

Perhaps the greatest impression made on him during his visit to South Africa, however, was what he saw and heard of the conditions under which many of the natives and coloured people are living. He was taken to many beautiful places, to game reserves where he saw lions, to the Victoria Falls, to magnificent parks. He enjoyed them all—but it was the human beings for whom Christ had died that concerned him most, and that old compassion for the "down-and-outs" was stirred by what he saw as he went to a location where 26,000 were living in squalor and vice such as he had never seen before.

Here in this one area there is one murder a week. To describe the housing is quite impossible, but most of the people are living in shacks . . . one which we examined measured 6 feet square and 5 feet high. The side and roof were broken pieces of corrugated iron with gaping holes everywhere. There was in it a small table and a bed which, following the rain, was both damp and dirty. In this lived a man and a woman, though unmarried, and who curse each other. He loafs about and drinks while she earns a little by charring somewhere. . . .

After driving in and out of these depressing, dismal streets . . . we visited "The Stockade." Each house is perhaps 8 feet by 6 feet, and inside a family lives—the family may consist of 2 or 10. There are no windows and no chimney. Washing and cooking are usually done outside and in the middle of the square was the refuse heap, the one tap of water, while all slops are just poured

out on the ground. . . . 300 people live in this dreadful housing arrangement.

The more one hears of the colour problem, the more one realizes how intricate and difficult it is. How careful those who are not here should be in their speaking and judging. . . .

Almost the last thing he did before leaving South Africa was to go with one of the missionaries to visit this region again.

. . . She is apparently known, loved and trusted everywhere, so it was comparatively safe to go anywhere with her. We kept parking her small car while we walked up and down the smelly roads between the most wretched of hovels. We went into many of them and saw the terrible conditions under which human beings live . . . one wonders there are not more deaths from burning and suffocation. Families were anything up to 10 children and few girls reach the age of fifteen without being the mothers of illegitimate children. Disease is everywhere. . . .

It is difficult to think calmly in such surroundings. The ease-loving Christian Church prefers to sing rather than to save men. Yet here are thousands, many of whom would respond to love and the Gospel. I return home with a chastened spirit, saying again, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do. . . ."

He did something, of course. An article and a letter in the *Life of Faith* drew the attention of many people to a situation hitherto unknown to them, and practical help came from some to cheer those who were working in the locations themselves. He had plans to do more—but his course was nearly run now. The year 1953 dawned, and less than four months after returning from South Africa he was on his way to Singapore.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE LAST PHASE

*I am leaving, I am leaving
For the country of my King;
Let not words of grief be spoken,
Let not loving hearts be broken,
Rather let the joy bells ring;
For earth's wintry life is changing
Into everlasting spring.*

WE come now to the final stage of Fred Mitchell's pilgrimage. There is a sense of treading ground that is sacred in following him over that last part of the track. It is the more poignant and significant because at the time none who were involved had any thought that the end was so near. Though several observed that he seemed aged and tired, he was in good health, and he was embarking upon no journey or project that appeared particularly hazardous. Even the possibility of being ambushed by terrorists in Malaya was very remote on the routes he travelled. Those whom he met, therefore, in no way had their emotions stirred or observations quickened by the realization that he was soon to leave them.

The primary reason for his visit to Singapore, where Mission headquarters were now established, was to attend a conference at which not only the directors, but also the various field leaders would be present. The Mission had been at work for over eighteen months in the lands to which it had been led as the door closed in China, and plans must be made for advance. And so in early April, 1953, Fred Mitchell once more boarded a 'plane, this time bound for Singapore. Three days later he wrote:

Sunday. 5-4-53. We have just had a most terrific thunderstorm, the second since I arrived here a little over 24 hours ago. The weather is very hot and humid . . . when driven out to a meeting we sit on a towel which is stretched over the seat of the car, so that the perspiration doesn't make shirt and trousers sodden. . . . The Mission Home and Headquarters is a delightful place with verandahs, while the doors of all rooms are only half doors so that air circulates. Windows are all open, and there is little privacy. . . . I arrived here yesterday after a good trip. . . . The plane was about one-third full only, for many travel by Comet.

After a short rest Mr. Lea drove me to a meeting, where in common with others they are holding their Easter conferences. The chairman, a Chinese, showed me my booklet *The Christian and His Bible* and advertised it well in the meeting. A young fellow (formerly in my Bible class) from Sunbridge Road Mission, in the Army here, was present.

On Easter Day, the day after his arrival, he spoke at two meetings—first at the Easter conference, and later to the new missionary recruits in the language school. He knew many of these young people, and had prepared an address which to him seemed eminently suitable—but unaccountably he felt unable to deliver it. Another message was impressed upon him, and that he knew he must give. When he announced his text, it was,

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. . . .”

Paul was not perfect, he said, but he fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith to the end. There is a wonderful power and charm in the first things. The C.I.M. he continued, was not born in a conference, but in a heart, in principles exemplified. What *is* the first principle? Amy Carmichael said “God hold us to that which drew us first with the Cross as our only attraction.” Our first instincts are the most trustworthy. God cherishes our first love, even though immature. Paul had the same message, the same burden, the same passion, the missionary zeal, the tireless prayer life, to the end! And then, as he looked across at the young faces upturned towards him, Fred Mitchell said,

"Let us brace ourselves for the last phase of the battle. . . ."

It had been arranged that the three Home Directors should visit Malaya, before the conference started, and on Monday of Easter week Fred Mitchell was on the railroad that is slashed through the steamy jungles, setting out to see some of the missionaries he had met six years previously in West China, who were now living among the Chinese settlers in the New Villages. He travelled on the night mail, and we get a glimpse of him as his train arrived at a station early in the morning, where missionaries were waiting to have a short chat with him. Crumpled and unshaven after his journey through the humid, tropical night, he looked very different from the tidy, spruce Home Director they had seen last at Newington Green—but it was the same gracious smile that greeted them as he saw them standing on the platform. How thankful he was for the thermos of tea, and the biscuits they had brought for him! Then the train puffed away from the station, to carry him further through the jungle. A few hours later he reached the station at Bidor, and, suitcase in hand, alighted on the platform to be greeted by two of the missionaries working in the New Village. With what interest did he go with one of them on a walk through the village which, although so different in appearance from those he had seen in China, nevertheless stirred him just as they had done—for were not the inhabitants here also Chinese? "When I come in contact with Chinese, my heart goes right out to them," he told one of his companions. "I seem to experience a special overflowing of love towards them."

That evening the missionaries gave a little supper-party to the three Home Directors. The dining alcove of their small bungalow was rather congested with eight people, and they had "to place people carefully in order of size, not importance, in order to fit them in!" The missionaries had no paper serviettes, but one of them had the sudden inspiration of cutting squares of white crepe paper, and sticking a little cut-out golden crown in a corner of each,

since it was Coronation year! On each of the serviettes was placed a Bible reference, just chapter and verse, which must be quoted in full before supper could be eaten. One of the guests created quite a diversion by being unable to repeat his! Fred Mitchell looked at his, and recognized it immediately. "Thank you for my text," he said, smiling at his hostess. And when his turn came, he repeated with the reverence he always manifested towards the Word of God:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing."

He spent a week in the Federation before returning to Singapore. He drove along the beautiful winding road between tall rubber trees to the Cameron Highlands, noticing some of the neglected little aboriginals who live in the Malayan jungles; he sat in missionaries' dwellings in the New Village, smiling at the Chinese children who crowded around him; he spoke by interpretation to a newly-organized little church group in the village of Cha'ah, first-fruits of the Mission's witness in the "new fields"; it was there, too, that at morning prayers he spoke on one of his favourite themes, "Rabboni—My Master." He loved to quote George Herbert's lines

How sweetly doth "My Master" sound! "My Master!"
 As ambergris leaves a rich scent
 Unto the taste;
 So do these words of sweet content,
 An Oriental fragrancly, "My Master" . . .

With these all day I do perfume my mind.

"My Master." There was something in the way Fred Mitchell repeated those words that morning in the drab

surroundings of the Malayan New Village that those who heard him could not forget. "As he repeated the words several times one could sense his whole soul going out to his Lord in adoration and worship. . . ."

After that little service, he returned to Singapore, and the following day the Council meetings commenced. Writing to one of his daughters, he said,

This is the day marked in many diaries and we are about to meet for our first session. There is a good spirit, but we face many great problems. . . .

It is good to confer with 17 men so prayerful, alert and keen. . . . The days are so full . . . on Saturday evening I speak at a university Christian Union evangelistic meeting, then on Sunday I am due at the Methodist Church. . . .

I have refused three large public meetings which Calvin Chao wanted to arrange for me, as I feel I shall be too tired at the end of the conference.

I am due to fly back on April 30th by Constellation, or on the 2nd by Comet.

The Council meetings were due to last for ten days, for problems of administration had been multiplied. The Mission which in the past had operated exclusively in China was now spread over several different countries. In China it had been a pioneer mission—now it was entering fields in which others had been working for decades. In the past the final responsibility for making decisions had rested in one man, the General Director. Now, until the man of God's choice for that office was revealed, responsibility must be shared by eight directors, three in Singapore, and the other five scattered in North America, England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa!

During the first few days matters were raised about which Fred Mitchell felt keenly, and on one occasion at least he spoke with some vehemence. He later expressed regret for having displayed such feeling, but he was obviously burdened, and discussions were adjourned. "The Council

wheels were dragging," he wrote to a friend, "but prayer was our resource. . . ."

The special prayer of that week-end was answered abundantly. Not only did the Council meetings move forward smoothly and with unanimity, when they were resumed, but Fred Mitchell's spirit which had been so burdened, was lightened and renewed. On the Saturday evening, speaking to a group of over a hundred students which included Mohammedans, Buddhists and Roman Catholics, it was with unusual liberty and joy that he preached the Gospel. There was an evident response to his message, and he returned to the Mission Home radiant. The next day he preached twice, and at the latter meeting, which was in English, he had an experience which was the crowning joy of that week-end. A soldier, slightly drunk, had been persuaded to come into the hall, and at the close of the meeting he remained behind. Someone brought him up to Fred Mitchell, and he said, "I can't accept the Lord. . . . I've been drinking." The chemist of Bradford, accustomed to dealing with such cases at open-air meetings, looked at him keenly. "But you are in command of your senses, aren't you?" he said kindly, and when the man agreed, sat down beside him. With what assurance did he introduce this man, whose sad story touched his tender heart, to his Saviour. The man accepted Christ then and there, and almost immediately turned to two other soldiers who were also in the hall and urged them to accept Him, too! "So my cup was full!"

Perhaps it was the exhilarating effect of that fruitful week-end ministry that caused him to change his mind about speaking at the three big meetings he had been asked to address; perhaps he found the Council meetings less exhausting than he had anticipated; perhaps, when he was approached again about them, he felt he could not refuse the request to minister the Word of God to a large company of his beloved Chinese, especially when the man who made the request was one for whom he had prayed for twenty years. On 22nd April, he wrote:

Next week I have three important public meetings on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings (really convention meetings) arranged by Calvin Chao, and at which he expects many pastors and a large congregation. I am therefore flying back by Comet on Saturday. Time is passing swiftly, and we should soon be back in harness again. . . .

During the days of conference in Singapore, he rarely went out. Mission Headquarters are about three miles from the centre of Singapore city, and he spent most of his time within walking distance of the Mission Home.

The weather is hot, but I like it. As I write it is 9.15 p.m. and I am sitting on the verandah listening to gramophone records—we have had Beethoven's Appassionata Sonata, etc.—and around the balcony and on the roof small lizards are running about. One dropped just near me when I was speaking at the prayer meeting on Tuesday evening.

In addition to the public meetings he addressed he had been asked to speak twice a week to the leaders and workers at the Mission home. During those Bible readings he gave quiet revelations of some of the lessons he himself had been set.

It is the quality of leaders that they can bear to be sat on, absorb shocks, act as a buffer, bear being much plagued. . . . Moses put up with the complaints and the waywardness and revolt, and he pursued a steady course, he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. . . . The wear and tear and the continual friction and trials which come to the servants of God are a great test of character.

God speaks of John the Baptist as the greatest born of women. Wherein does his greatness lie? When young one would have said it lay in his fierce denunciation of sin and pride and self-satisfaction, eloquent preaching in withering words that revealed the true heart of so many of his own day. Yet perhaps as one goes on, one tends to see his greatness in another direction. I have chosen for my text, my own special one—"He must increase, but I must decrease." . . . It was in that moment that John's

spiritual stature was revealed . . . he had seen our Lord, and so makes place for Him, prepares himself to pass off the stage that it may be occupied by One who is greater and worthier than he. . . .

"He saved others, Himself he cannot save." Is it not true that our Lord hung there not for Himself, but for us? He not only carried our sins to the cross, but He was our Substitute and our Representative. We may see not only Him there, but me there. And the old temptation comes again and again, to save myself and come down from the cross. Martin Luther said, "It is the continual purpose of the flesh to come to the Throne without being crucified." Only as we die daily do we reign. . . .

I used to be looking for a series of experiences . . . of dying with the Lord, hoping that I would have done with that lesson and pass on to the next, that I would be able to appreciate I had risen with Christ and then pass on to know what it is to reign with the Lord. These are true together, they are always true and they are only true as they are held together in one complete identification of the sinner with the Saviour. Only as we die daily do we reign. We are never more reigning on the throne than when we are dying on the cross.

Daily we, too, are invited to save ourselves and come down. Whenever we do, we cease to reign and we cease to bless. Some small trial of daily routine, a crossing of personal preference in a very little thing, an accumulation of duties, unexpected interruptions, unwelcome distractions. . . . These things naturally fret us and upset us. Let them be a call to deeper death. The cross never grows easier, but it is inseparably linked with spiritual power.

The busy days passed on, Council meetings, meal-time conversations, prayer meetings, correspondence. One who did stenographic work for him wrote:

I couldn't help but be impressed by the way he paid attention to letters received during those very busy days. . . . One to a young lady who had been blessed under his ministry at Keswick and was about to start missionary training; a young man in South Africa who was interested in revival and wanted information for prayer; an elderly donor who received a specially gracious reply, two or three members of the Mission in whose affairs he

showed great concern. . . . He put himself into his letters as he put himself into his messages.

And even in those days there were practical personal actions of one who never lost touch with human needs. He was not too busy to talk to the children. "He heard a little girl say she wanted a bicycle for her birthday, and later he handed her a Malayan dollar to start her 'bicycle account.' He did not forget the other children around, but saw to it that each one received a dollar. Mr. Mitchell was one of the visiting group that is always remembered by the children!" Nor was his fatherly observation confined to the little ones. One of the younger missionaries, who had just heard of the death of a loved one at home, developed a painful little boil on her face. "He not only noticed it, but just as my father would have done, sent someone to buy a certain medicine I needed. As young people, we all looked upon him as a father. . . ."

On April 24th, the Council meetings concluded. The decision to advance had been made. The needs of the countries of South-east Asia which were still unmet could not go unheeded. After careful consideration and definite planning, it was decided that 225 additional workers to join those already on the field were needed by the end of 1954. To this end, prayer began to ascend for the sending forth of "skilful, willing workers"—225 of them within two years. It would be mainly the task of the three Home Directors to present these plans to friends and supporters in the homelands, on whose co-operation the fulfilment of the plan, humanly speaking, largely depended.

On the last three nights before he was due to set out on his journey back to England, Fred Mitchell was the speaker at the Convention in which 33 Chinese church groups joined. The well-known Keswick speaker had already endeared himself to many in his big audience during his short stay in Singapore, and as he spoke, clearly and distinctly, waiting after each sentence until the interpreter had

translated, there was a deep silence in the great hall. For those three nights he spoke on Obedience to the Will of God. Obedience to Wait, Obedience to Go, Obedience to Come. And in his closing appeal he urged his listeners to surrender, unconditionally and finally, to the Lordship of Christ. "The whole of history might rest on one person's obedience to the will of God."

When he returned from that last meeting, he was filled with joy. He did not usually enjoy speaking by interpretation, but on this occasion he had felt the interpreter was so at one with him in delivering the message, that it had been sounded forth really clearly. With his long experience in preaching, he knew that his listeners had heard God's message and understood it; and he believed that some, at any rate, had responded.

"But . . ." he said to the group of friends waiting for him at the Mission Home. "How I wish I could have made a direct attack!" With the best of interpreters, he still felt the limitations of preaching through another. And as he said it, he raised his arms and shook his fists, as one eager to get at personal grips with an adversary. Then he paused, dropped his arms, and his face relaxed into a rather thoughtful smile. "No, perhaps not," he said with a little shake of the head. "That would have been of the flesh—and it is the work of the Spirit alone that can touch hearts."

It was not long now before he must depart. He rose at 4.30 the next morning, for he was to breakfast at 6 o'clock, and he usually allowed one and a half hours to dress and spend time in the presence of his Master. He said goodbye to the group waiting on the wide porch of the Mission Home, shaking hands all round, smiling and thanking them all for their kindness. They had given him some "ammunition" for presenting the new advance at home—a map of the Philippine Islands painted on a mat, the minutes of the meetings, information, statistics. He had it with him now, in a brief-case, and dressed no longer in his light worsted suit, or white trousers, but in a dark suit, and with a coat over

his arm, he looked ready for the next stage in the journey and the next piece of service. Goodbye . . . goodbye. . . .

He went with two of the Singapore directors to the airfield, and was photographed with some of the Chinese friends who were waiting with gracious Oriental courtesy, to see him off. He stood beside them, smiling, with his face towards the rising sun, as a photograph was taken. Then the moment came to leave, and with a last turn of the head and a smile, he was gone.

The plane was due to land in Bangkok, and when he disembarked there, he found a group of missionaries waiting eager to hear his news of the conference. He told them what he could in the few minutes they had together, adding with a significance of which neither he nor they could have been aware then,

“We have pledged ourselves to go forward, and we must expect severe testings.”

As always, he spoke to them personally. One missionary mother was sending her schoolboy son home soon, and the Home Director for England assured her all would be done to make the boy's stay in that country a happy one. Another had ageing parents to whom he promised to write when he arrived in England, to tell them how well their daughter was looking. He was far too eager to talk to them to go in the airport to rest, so they persuaded him to eat a banana as he stood there with them. Then the signal came for the Comet passengers to board the 'plane. Smiling cheerfully as one of the young workers took his photograph, he mounted the gangway again.

That is the last authentic glimpse we have of him. The 'plane landed again in Calcutta, but although there were two members of the Mission working in the city, they did not know he was travelling by Comet, so were not there to meet him.

The clouds were already banking up high in the sky when the call sounded through the great white Dumdum airport for the passengers on the Comet bound for London to

embark. The pilot, with a 1,000,000 mile flying record entered his cabin, and the smiling air stewardess stood inside the passenger doorway. The passengers came in a straggling group across the hot concrete, and climbed the little gangway into the machine. Some Asiatics; a 13-year-old schoolgirl; some business men; an Australian politician; a scientist; an engineer; a chemist of Bradford. . . .

He was so accustomed to air travel by now that he would fasten the seat belt around himself almost automatically as the machine turned into the broad runway. With that intense interest in everything that always characterized him, he would almost certainly look out of the window as the 'plane soared off the ground, to get a glimpse of the land over which they were passing. But the swirling misty clouds would soon blur that view, and he would sit back in his seat, appreciative of the cheerful, calm comfort of the large passenger cabin. The storm might break outside, but in there all was relaxed and restful. Perhaps he leant back and shut his eyes, preparing to sleep for a while; perhaps he began "a session of prayer"; maybe he pulled out his pocket book to remind himself of the commissions he had promised to fulfil when he arrived, or opened the brief-case to study the information about the needy new fields. He may have opened his Bible. We do not know. The Comet sped on; the calm, reassuring message flashed out "climbing on track," as it entered the cloud. And then,

HE WAS NOT. FOR GOD TOOK HIM.