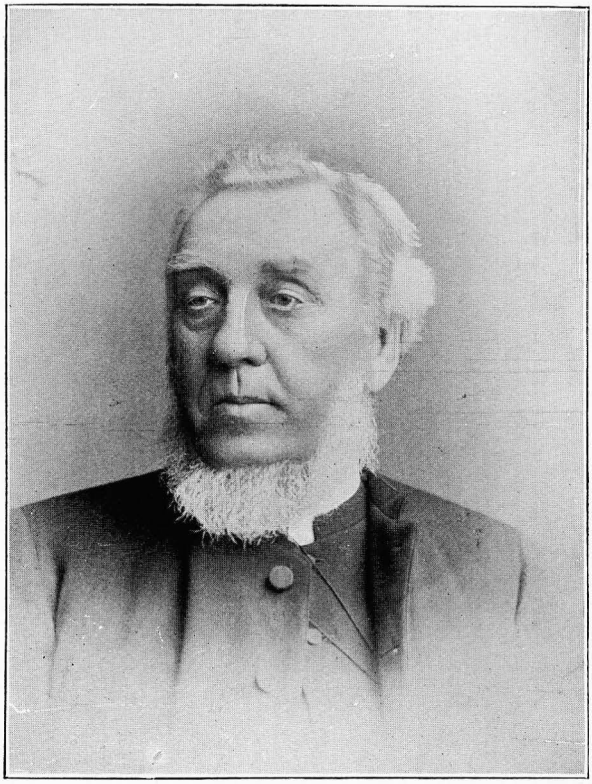

REV. GEORGE SARGEANT.

LIFE OF

GEORGE SARGEANT

WESLEYAN MISSIONARY AND
FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE
WEST INDIAN CONFERENCE

BY

REV. F. ROUGHT WILSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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1901

TO

MY MANY FRIENDS IN THE WEST INDIES

THIS MEMOIR OF MY FRIEND AND THEIRS

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

PREFACE

THIS memoir of the Rev. George Sargeant has been written amid the stress of garrison duties by the request of his widow. No one is more conscious of its defects than the writer, but he has striven to make the most of the few materials that were placed at his service. As far as possible, by means of his speeches and addresses, he has let Mr. Sargeant tell his own story, but even materials of this kind were few. The writer knew Mr. Sargeant for nearly ten years, and as part of that period was spent as a member of his household in Barbados, he was able to appreciate thoroughly his rare character and gifts. The esteem he felt for his venerable friend, and the reverence he holds for his memory, have made the compiling of this memoir a labour of love.

CHATHAM GARRISON,
October 1901.

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INTRODUCTION

IF our West Indian Missions do not occupy the space they once did in the thought and sympathy of the Methodist people, it must not be accepted as a sign of declension in missionary zeal. The countries in which we labour rise into commanding notice through some political event, and sink out of sight when such event disappears. Missionary work does not come and go with observation, but moves straight on, the world knoweth not how. All eyes were turned to the West Indies during the early years of the last century when the struggle began for the freedom of the slave. The argument for emancipation was eloquently reasoned in Parliament by Wilberforce and Pitt, and slavery as a recognised institution was abolished as early as 1807. But slavery died hard even in the home of freedom. The emancipation of the negro was not finally accomplished until 1834. Meantime a battle was to be fought against the tyranny, the oppression, and the cruelty of the laws and customs of the West Indian colonies relating to the govern-

ment of slaves. The conduct of the missionaries at this crisis deserves an imperishable record: they contended nobly, they suffered heroically. In representing to the Government the wrongs of their native churches they maintained their ground with courage, wisdom, and statesmanship. Mr. Sargeant arrived on the field after the Emancipation Act had taken effect. This was a critical period in the history of the West Indian Missions. The negroes were masters of their freedom. The enemies of that freedom were not slow to predict its failure, and they did their best to make their prediction true. The slave would be incapable of civilisation without the discipline of the fetter; with every element of restraint gone his nature would go to pieces. Even Christianity must fail, and miserably fail, in attempting to make the negro a responsible citizen. The missionaries would soon find out that they had cherished a mistaken estimate of the powers and resources of their converts. The task of exposing the prejudice and refuting the errors of these views would have been easy enough as a matter of argument, but the answer must come from the lives of the liberated slaves. The missionary pastors were on their trial; they had to prove that the native churches could pass into the new position not only without using their freedom for a cloke of licentiousness, but that, with enlarged opportunities of culture, they would develop a stronger character and attain a higher moral

standard. Mr. Sargeant found his brethren engaged in leading native Christians through the temptations of licence and bringing to naught the reproaches of their enemies. For this work his sympathy, his imagination, his robust common sense, and his commanding personality admirably qualified him. His love for the native was based on his esteem for the man; he treated his converts as brethren. This is the true missionary policy in all lands and among all races. His singular success during these eventful years is delineated in the chapters of this book. As the work grew he seemed to grow with it: his great abilities were not narrowed to a particular range of duty. He was equal alike to the calls of the pulpit and to the cares of the pastorate. When the Missionary Committee entrusted him with the administration of his District, the business of the Synod at that time was not simply a routine of record; the comparatively new position into which the Societies had been inducted discovered new situations in which the brethren had no precedent to guide them. Through these intricate channels of procedure they found a safe pilot in the Chairman: his wisdom won their confidence, his genial spirit their affection. During Mr. Sargeant's first visit to England, his public addresses made a profound impression on the Methodist people. A recent work on the West Indies by Mr. Anthony Trollope had given a novelist's statement of the moral condition of the

black people: "They have no religion of their own, and they can hardly be said to have one by adoption." It is only fair to Mr. Trollope to suppose that an author who wrote novels innumerable might unconsciously write fiction when he thought he was narrating fact. The merciless satire and indignant eloquence of the missionary's reply will be found in the speech which Mr. Wilson has quoted at length in his third chapter. We will not further anticipate details in the life of the subject of this memoir, except to notice two events which reflect the admiration and esteem of his brethren in the ministry. In 1884 he was elected a member of the Legal Hundred, and in the same year he was unanimously appointed the first President of the West Indian Conference. This latter position was the crowning honour of an eminent career. He brought to it the wisdom of a long experience in the mission field and in home circuits. During two presidential terms, extending over a period of six years, he filled the office with great ability. I believe this Life of Mr. Sargeant will revive our connexional interest in the great West Indian Mission, and encourage those brethren who are striving hard to solve the difficult problems which just now invest it.

E. E. J.

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS — FIRST EFFORTS AT CHRISTIAN WORK — AFFECTION FOR HIS NATIVE COUNTY—IN BUSINESS—OXFORD—CALLED TO THE MINISTRY.

LIFE OF GEORGE SARGEANT

CHAPTER I

Early Days—First Efforts at Christian Work—Affection for his Native County—In Business—Oxford—Called to the Ministry.

GEORGE SARGEANT was a native of Staffordshire, and was born at the village of Forsbrook, about two and a half miles from Cheadle, in the year 1817, being the youngest of eight children. When he was about twelve years of age, his father (Charles Sargeant) bought a piece of land on the outskirts of what is now the populous town of Hanley, and built a house there, but soon afterwards died. George was then apprenticed to a cousin, Mr. Thomas Sargeant, carrying on business in Hanley, and this cousin, being a Methodist, took his young relative to the Charles Street Wesleyan Chapel in that town. There, under the preaching of the Word, he was converted, and became a member of Society, and, afterwards, at the early age of eighteen, a local preacher. His first effort

at preaching was at the village of Milton, in the Hanley Circuit, where he, with a band of young men from the town, began evangelistic work. There was no chapel in the village, and the services were held in a cottage. The occupier of the cottage got into bad odour for allowing the Methodists to hold meetings under his roof, and was threatened with notice to quit. Rather than the good man should so suffer, George Sargeant and his fellow-labourers turned out into the street, and held the service there. It so happened that the spot they selected was not far from the residence of the owner of the cottage, and it is said that his wife, throwing open the window, heard the Word, received it "with joy," and afterwards assisted in building the first Methodist chapel in the village.

We have very little information about Mr. Sargeant's early years beyond what is contained in the above brief outline. At the time of his death he had outlived most, if not all, of his contemporaries, and the interesting reminiscences he poured forth to his friends in his latter years had reference more to his life and work in the West Indies than to his personal history. We know, however, that he came of a good yeoman stock. For generations back his ancestors had been farmers, and to this day a farm at Millwick, Staffordshire, which has belonged to the Sargeants for over three hundred years, is held by one of the family.

BIRTHPLACE AT FORSBROOK.

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He had a great affection for his native county, and loved to talk about incidents that had happened in his youth. He remembered the first lucifer matches being sold in Hanley market, and used to give, with great gusto, the words in which he heard the seller of them describe his wares. "Strike a light where you like, 'gen a wall, 'gen a post!" Another story he used to tell was of a "longshoreman," who, with the model of a full-rigged ship made to rock upon his head, tried to evoke the practical pity of the passers-by with the refrain—

> She may look, she may weep with her watery eye,
> She may look to the bottom of the sea-e-e,
> She may look to the bottom of the sea.

He was fond of recalling the almost obsolete words still current amongst the rural populations of Staffordshire and the Midlands, but which, alas! are rapidly disappearing. Amongst these were such words as *nesh* meaning susceptibility to cold, *clemmed* or starved, *throng* or busy, and others which education and the breaking down of barriers by railways and other means of communication will fast bring into entire disuse.

After completing his apprenticeship, George Sargeant commenced business for himself at Newcastle-under-Lyme. About the same time he married, his wife being a Miss Matilda Machin, daughter of Mr. Cornelius Machin, of Hanley. It

appears to have been a very happy marriage, and many testimonies are borne to Mrs. Sargeant's sweetness of character. Her piety was deep but unostentatious, and through the long years of companionship, at home and abroad, she was the true help-meet of her husband. She died "peacefully resting upon Jesus," in the year 1881, at the age of sixty. They had one son born to them, George, who lived to manhood, married, and, a short time after his mother, died, leaving a widow and two sons to mourn his loss.

After a period of business in Hanley, Mr. Sargeant removed to Oxford, and it was there he became a candidate for the Wesleyan ministry. It is said that a clergyman in that city, being impressed by his talents, sought to gain him ordination in the Church of England, but his own Church also had recognised his talents and ability, and he was induced to offer himself as a candidate for the foreign field. Among his papers I came across an interesting souvenir of those days, in the shape of a small account-book, dated Oxford 1847 (the year he entered the ministry), in which, showing the two ways in which his mind was looking at that time, along with certain business entries are theological definitions, scriptural proofs, and extracts from eminent divines!

Like so many of the men who have achieved eminence in the Methodist Church as administrators, Mr. Sargeant owed much to his business training

and experience. He was ever most careful and exact in the keeping of accounts, and his successful management of the great financial affairs which fell to his lot as the chairman of large missionary districts, supplied an emphatic contradiction to the idea commonly held that clergymen and ministers are not good at business. In his relations with mercantile houses over property and other business matters, it was generally recognised by merchants and others that in dealing with Mr. Sargeant they were dealing with a man who knew what he was about, and his fairness, promptitude, and punctuality were proverbial in the stores and offices of the colonies where he laboured.

We have no portrait of him at that early period of life, not even a daguerreotype—then so much in vogue—but we can well imagine him to have been a striking figure. His tall, well-built frame, elastic step, his blue eyes and curly hair, made him to be admired in his old age, but with the added charm of youth they must have formed a striking personality. And when to these outward distinctions there was allied an affectionate disposition, and splendid gifts of mind and heart, we do not wonder that the Methodist Church, ever so ready to find a sphere for the talents of its sons and daughters, should have laid its hands on George Sargeant, and encouraged him to devote his talents to the ministry of the gospel of Christ.

He appears, when quite a young man, to have

acquired a reputation for piety among the members of his own family, and to the younger generations especially he was a sort of patron saint. A nephew remembers when a boy being adjured by his mother (Mr. Sargeant's sister) not to curl himself up in bed lest it should hinder his growth. "Shall I grow as tall as Uncle George?" he asked, stretching himself out with the energy of a newly-awakened hope. "I cannot say, but I only hope you may be as good," was the reply.

CHAPTER II

APPOINTED TO THE WEST INDIES—THE VOYAGE OUT—ST. KITTS—THE FIRST WESLEYAN MISSIONARIES—EFFECTS OF EMANCIPATION.

CHAPTER II

Appointed to the West Indies—The Voyage Out—St. Kitts—The First Wesleyan Missionaries—Effects of Emancipation.

ACCORDING to that eminent authority, "Hill's Arrangement," Mr. Sargeant received his first appointment as a Wesleyan missionary in 1847. An account of a valedictory service to himself and others is contained in the "Missionary Notices" of that year. A course of training in a theological institution was not regarded as a *sine qua non* in those days; and Mr. Sargeant being above the average age, and a married man, it was dispensed with in his case. There was no occasion for regret in this fact. Whatever he may have lost in the way of technical training was more than made up by the independence of thought it gave him. There were no uncultivated tracts in his mind. From boyhood he was an omnivorous reader and by nature a clear thinker, and as his mind became stored his religious convictions were strengthened, and his theology became woven into the texture of his mental constitution. There was an air of clear conviction in his utterance of divine truth, and as

regards those things "hard to be understood," one felt that in days gone by he had "fought his doubts and gathered strength," and his own firm faith was an inspiration and strength to his younger brethren. In his examination of local preachers and candidates for the ministry, he always showed himself to be a sound and up-to-date theologian. His library contained some of the most recent books, and he looked at new phases of thought, and particularly those of an "advanced" character, with a jealous eye. He was essentially a self-made man, and that sturdy independence of mind and self-reliance he had gained in the "pursuit of knowledge under difficulties," were just the qualities needed at that time in the West Indian mission field to which he was appointed.

Had Mr. Sargeant's early letters been preserved, we should doubtless have had from his own graphic pen a description of his first voyage to the West Indies; but, unfortunately, no letters have come to light. He frequently spoke, however, of his experiences on the sea, and contrasted the comfort and luxury of his later voyages with the inconveniences of his first. The screw steamer had not then been invented, and even the paddle steamer was in its infancy, and probably the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, as it is still called, had been but recently established. At anyrate, Mr. Sargeant and his wife travelled in the apostolic way — by sailing vessel. The voyage occupied

several weeks, during which they were becalmed for some days, but nothing more serious happened to them, and perfectly safe and sound they landed on West Indian soil in the beautiful island of St. Christopher, or, as it is more generally called, St. Kitts.

The feeling of the English traveller on first beholding tropical lands is one of intense delight. After some days at sea to suddenly come upon one of the West Indian islands is like a descent upon Paradise. The rich green of the foliage, the graceful palms standing out in relief against the blue sky, the red roofs and green jalousies of the houses peeping out from among the trees, the air so still that you can hear the waves of the sea washing upon the white shore—all of this experienced for the first time makes a sensation that can never be forgotten. Hartley Coleridge thus describes it—

> Beautiful islands, where the green
> Which Nature wears was never seen
> 'Neath zone of Europe; where the hue
> Of sea and heaven is such a blue
> As England dreams not; where the night
> Is all irradiate with the light
> Of stars like moons, which, hung on high,
> Breathe and quiver in the sky,
> Each in its silver haze divine
> Flinging in a radiant line
> O'er gorgeous flower and mighty tree,
> On the soft and shadowy sea!

We can imagine how Mr. Sargeant's poetic soul

would revel in the tropical glories of St. Kitts. The aspect of the island as it is approached by way of Basseterre, the chief port, is exceedingly beautiful. Stretching away from the seaboard is a richly cultivated valley, bounded in the distance by a semicircular range of hills. It presents the appearance of a veritable garden of sugar-cane, the estates being marked off by fringes of stately palm-trees. The poet's phrase "living green" alone describes its loveliness. When Columbus discovered the island in 1493 he gave it its name because the shape of the central peak of its mountain range, Mount Misery, rising 4100 feet above sea-level, suggested his own tutelary saint, bearing upon his shoulders the infant Christ. The island is described as the oldest of British colonies in the West Indies, for whereas Barbados was colonised in 1624, St. Kitts received its first colonists the previous year. But, unlike Barbados, which has remained a British colony from the first, St. Kitts frequently changed hands between England and France. Early in its history it was the scene of the exploits of the buccaneers, those piratical adventurers of different nationalities, who roamed the Caribbean Seas, and whose adventures in fiction and in history are still the delight of the British schoolboy.

As the scene of Wesleyan missionary labour, the history of St. Kitts is similar to that of the other islands of the West Indies. It was among the slaves employed on the sugar estates our history as

a missionary Church began. The story of Dr. Coke's landing in Antigua on Christmas Day 1786, in company with two other Methodist missionaries (their ship, which should have conveyed them to Nova Scotia, having been carried out of its course by bad weather), is too well known to be repeated here. It is one of those " stories of the Providence of God illustrated," in which, told in the pages of the old Methodist *Magazine*, our fathers so much delighted. Suffice it to say that one of the islands visited by the worthy doctor after his eyes had been gladdened by what he had seen of unofficial Methodist missionary work in Antigua, was St. Kitts. Here he left one of the two brethren who had accompanied him from England, and on revisiting the island three years later he was delighted to find that this missionary's labours had been very successful, and over seven hundred black and coloured people had been gathered into Society. In a very few years Methodism had taken deep root, and substantial places of worship were erected in all parts of the island.

As in the other islands, so in St. Kitts, the first Wesleyan missionaries met with much opposition and discouragement. Methodism was looked upon with suspicion by planters and officials, who probably saw in the Christianising of the black people a menace to slavery. To them the slaves were little more than beasts of burden, but valuable assets all the same; and these men, who taught the

equality and fraternity of man in the name of Jesus Christ, were looked upon as anarchists secretly undermining the established order of things. Some of these godly and devoted men were most harshly and cruelly treated, and the names of some may rightly be enrolled in the "noble army of martyrs."

At the time of Mr. Sargeant's landing in St. Kitts, the beneficial effects of the first ten years of emancipation were being experienced. The labours, prayers, and pleadings of Wesleyan, Moravian, and Baptist missionaries, backed up by those of noble-minded men and women in England, had borne fruit in that grand Act—the most Christlike which we as a nation ever performed—by which, at a cost of twenty millions of British money, eight hundred thousand slaves on British territory were given their liberty. The period that followed was an anxious one for the friends of the black man. How would he behave under the new conditions? Would he be industrious and self-reliant? Would he recognise proper authority and prove a law-abiding citizen? There were plenty who, in the sceptical spirit of jesting Pilate, asked these questions "and would not stay for an answer," but the missionaries were full of faith and hope. The four years of "apprenticeship," as it was called,—a period of modified bondage decided upon by the British Parliament as a preparation for entire emancipation,—was attended by most encouraging results, and during that time

large numbers of missionaries left this country, many voluntarily offering themselves for the work, to look after the moral and religious welfare of the freed people. To quote Mr. Sargeant's own words: "With that mighty change came new wants and new temptations, and a demand for the application of old truths to new and untried conditions of life. A faith has sometimes been strong enough to resist the devil of persecution, but has yielded to the insinuating and seducing form of another tempter. Never in the history of Christianity had Churches of various denominations, numbering hundreds and thousands of members, been suddenly ushered into battle with new foes. What was specially needed now was wise and patient guides, who should sympathise with the earlier struggles of the emancipated, and, in a kind and fatherly manner, point out the dangers of that new sea of life upon which they were launched. Outside the Church, how rarely could a man be found that would lend a helping hand or speak a kindly word to the struggling thousands amid the dangers and trials of their new position! But there was a marvellous readiness to take advantage of their ignorance and to magnify their failings. But as we look back to-day and think of the men that God raised up to meet the special needs of these Churches, how constrained we should feel ourselves to praise Him."

CHAPTER III

FIRST MISSIONARY EXPERIENCES — ANTHONY TROLLOPE'S MISREPRESENTATIONS—SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF SUCCESS.

CHAPTER III

First Missionary Experiences—Anthony Trollope's Misrepresentations—Some Illustrations of Success.

AS regards Mr. Sargeant's first missionary experiences we are glad to be able to give some of them in his own words, uttered in the form of speeches, and delivered during his furloughs in England. Although, as we said before, he always forbore speaking of himself, his private letters even being full of the work, yet we are fortunate in possessing, carefully written out in his bold and somewhat graceful handwriting, many of his speeches and sermons, and by these it would be easy to form an estimate of his character and work. He believed with Bacon that "writing maketh an *exact* man," and as one who always held a brief for the much maligned black man, and proved his doughty champion on many a platform, where the tendency was to prejudice and abuse, he ever sought to be careful in regard to facts and sober in statement. Hence these carefully prepared speeches, the reading of which to those who knew him will recall the rich voice and gesture of the orator, and to those who had not this privilege they will be

sufficient evidence of his high qualities as a missionary and a man. And the charm of these speeches is, they are thoroughly characteristic, for they are for the most part an impassioned defence of the black man against his white and often ill-informed critics, and a complete vindication of the benefits of emancipation. It may appear strange that these things should have been called in question, and especially by Englishmen, after what the nation, after much deliberation and at so great a cost of money, had done. And yet in regard to so beneficent a work as the freeing of the slaves, there were plenty of men and women in this country, having no commercial interests in the West Indies to consider, and who might be regarded as sensible and God-fearing people, who strongly deprecated giving liberty to the "black-a-moors," as they were contemptuously called. The expression of pro-slavery opinions was always Mr. Sargeant's opportunity. What holy passion would blaze from his eyes as he hurled his artillery against the enemies of his friends! Thrusting his fingers through his curly hair, and with the colour mantling his cheeks, his tall figure erect, his voice quivering with emotion, he made an inspiring figure on the platform. Woe betide the luckless traducer of the black man when George Sargeant took him in hand and sought to improve his deficient education! The patriotism of a Hampden withstanding the tyranny that would oppress his

countrymen, pales away before this, for that was inspired by the love of an Englishman for England, but this was the love of an Englishman for those whom we, in our pride and arrogance, are inclined to regard as an inferior race.

As it happened, a favourable opportunity for the display of that special power of oratory and appeal which he possessed presented itself on his first return to the old country. Mr. Anthony Trollope had just published his *West Indies and the Spanish Main*, being the literary result of a visit he had paid in his capacity as an official of the English Post Office Department; and like the books of many other globe-trotters before and since his time, the work was full of opinions and theories based upon the merest superficial acquaintance with the colonies and their peoples. In the very first meeting Mr. Sargeant addressed on his return to England, held at Great Queen Street Wesleyan Chapel, London, he dealt in his most characteristic fashion with this work. After speaking of the delight he experienced, after an absence of thirteen years, in witnessing the interest and zeal of the Protestant Churches in his fatherland in the cause of Christian missions, he said: "But I am quite aware that there are men in this country who do not hesitate to write down Christian missions as a great failure. I took up a recent book of a great and I think a good man, and he seemed to me to question very seriously the reality of our success among the dark races of men

to whom we have carried the gospel. The leading paper of this country some few months ago, when calling attention to the present condition of the emancipated black and coloured men in the West Indies, did not hesitate to state that every effort to civilise them had proved abortive, and that they were as much beasts as ever they were, only that now they were 'beasts without burdens.' Another writer visited the West Indies last year on business connected with the Post Office. He seems to have passed with all the rapidity of a post-boy through Demerara, Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica, Cuba, and the Spanish Main, and then to have considered himself quite qualified to write a book, for which the reader should be made to pay fifteen shillings, and that should furnish an answer to the question, What is the present social and religious condition of the emancipated people of the British Colonies? And I have been foolish enough, instead of waiting to get it through the trunkmaker or butter shop, to pay fifteen shillings and two shillings commission to the Jamaica bookseller besides. Now when an author makes a book, crams it with the grossest misrepresentations of the real state of things in the West Indies, and gets his writings endorsed and pushed into prominence by the leading paper of the country, you will, I am sure, bear with me in my attempt to remove any wrong impressions that may have been made upon any mind regarding the present aspect of the West Indian mission field.

I have spent almost as many years in that part of the world as the author spent weeks, and I claim to know more of the social condition of the people than he could possibly know from his flying visit. A man, I maintain, can no more sketch with accuracy the intellectual, social, and religious state of a people from such a flying visit, than he can make a pencil sketch of a country which he passes through in a fast railway train. Before I went to the West Indies I had read of them as the

> Eden islands of the blest,
> In floral pomp and verdure drest;

and my mind was quite prepared to wonder at the grand and to admire the beautiful in nature. And as opportunities offered I have climbed the mountains, wandered through the plains, descended into the glorious ravines, followed the winding rivers, and plucked the gorgeous flowers and luscious fruit. But I confess the moral aspect of the country had a charm infinitely greater to me than any scene that nature could present. I do not mean to say that under the preaching of the truth the black people had started into an angelic state of existence, or that I found no indications of the terrible usurpation and power and curse of sin. But what I mean to say is that I found innumerable traces of the vitalising and saving power of the gospel of Christ. I saw that other men had laboured, and that it was my

privilege to enter into their labours; that the gospel I was sent to preach had not, in the hands of my predecessors, lost its ancient power, but was still the power of God unto salvation. I found thousands of people with faces black as ebony in Church fellowship, and thousands more crowding the various places of worship and listening with devout attention to the preaching of the Word of Life. I saw the Sabbath kept with a sacredness that I have never seen surpassed or equalled in any part of the world. Allow me to give a few facts. Mr. Trollope says that the black people 'have no religion of their own, and they can hardly be said to have one by adoption.' Now, in the little island of St. Kitts, with a population of about twenty-three thousand people, we have nine chapels at distances of from three to five miles, and connected with eight of these we have day and Sunday schools. We have nearly five thousand members and scholars, and a total of ten thousand hearers, and that mission within a comparative trifle is self-supporting. Its church property has been paid for and kept in repair mainly by the hard earnings of the black people. When I resided in Antigua I found signs of a similar success in connection with our own and other Churches equally large. And so in Jamaica the same facts stared me in the face. Now I maintain that the people in the West Indies no more give their money and their time to the support of the gospel until they have

felt its influence upon their own mind and hearts than the people of this country do; and that these places of worship, built and kept in repair mainly by the voluntary contributions of the emancipated classes, and which I only select as a faint specimen of what in this respect the various Churches have done, stand as a plain and unmistakable refutation of the wholesale slanders that it has become the fashion to heap upon the black people of the West Indies. These facts may be nothing to Mr. Trollope and *The Times*, but they are something to us, and in them we rejoice and take courage, yea and we will rejoice. But I fancy I hear some captious gentleman say: 'Yes, these figures may sound very well, but what good has religion done the negro if he won't work, if, as some writers say, he prefers to lie down in the sun and wait for the plantain or breadfruit to drop into his mouth; or if, as *The Times* says, no effort has availed to civilise him?' Now, these questions assume to be true what I know to be absolutely false. Go, for instance, to the island of Antigua, and you will find that instead of the wattle-and-dab huts in which the negro once lived, with dirt for the floor and with a mass of damp dirty 'trash' on the top, called a roof, but in reality a sort of dunghill, they have good shingled houses, built upon substantial stone foundations, and containing two or three apartments. Large numbers contain modern furniture, the house,

land, and furniture costing the owner from fifty to a hundred pounds. Besides which, many of the men who own these little properties possess also a horse and cart, and in some cases a cow and some pigs. All this is a result of the black man's labours since emancipation, and is proof not only that he will work, but he will economise, as far as he knows how, the fruit of his industry, and that he has yearnings after a higher civil and social state. And what is true of Antigua is to a great extent true of every colony where I have laboured. In the mountains of Jamaica there are thousands of men who have left the lowlands, but they are not squatters upon other men's land, as some would try and make you believe, but in every case I have met, the land has been bought by them at several pounds an acre, and they have, in many instances, several acres. They have cleared away the trees, fenced in their little property, built themselves houses, small sugar works and mills, producing from ten to twenty and even forty or fifty barrels of sugar a year. They bring yams, coffee, and ginger in vast quantities to the markets, and are thriving and happy. But I must hasten to a close, and I may say I have only extended my remarks on this subject because of their bearing upon the religious and social state of our West Indian colonies. Mr Trollope may 'distrust the negro's religion' and affirm he has no spiritual perception, that the doctrines and commandments

of the Bible have no hold upon his heart and conscience, but I bless God that I know from indubitable evidence that he is mistaken. Just one or two facts on this point and I am done.

"On the shores of one of the West Indian islands some time ago there might have been found a somewhat deformed boatman, a black man who had once been a slave, the property of a tyrant, who after various cruelties perpetrated upon his slave, kicked him down a lofty staircase and maimed him for life. After emancipation, Providence smiled upon the poor cripple's labours, but in the meantime his once proud and tyrannical master was reduced to beggary. But the first one to lend him a helping hand was the victim of his cruelty, who allowed him out of his hard earnings a weekly sum to support and comfort him in his vastly altered position. That poor deformed boatman was a member of our Church, and had learned through the gospel preached by our missionaries that whilst it is fiend-like to retaliate, 'tis God-like to forgive. That is how religion can teach a negro to live. And now an instance to show how under its power they can suffer and die.

"On my first station I was called to visit an old woman about a hundred years of age. She had spent nearly eighty years of her long life in slavery. She had outlived her children, her grandchildren, and nearly all her great-grandchildren, and to all human appearance she was in a state

of the most utter desolation. A recent gale had blown the thatch from her poor cottage, and the rain had soaked the dirt floor. She sat clothed in rags upon a bench, the picture of utter wretchedness. As I spoke to her of Christ, her withered face brightened, and, expressive of her faith and hope, she clasped her fingers together and said, 'Massa, me hold Him fast.' Soon after my first interview I saw her upon her deathbed, and, expressive of her calm resignation, she said, 'Massa, me no want die, me no want lib,' and then again she raised her wasted arm and grasped her bony fingers in token of victory, and soon after passed away.

"Such are but specimens of the triumph of the gospel in the hearts and lives of thousands in those sunny lands of the West, and I maintain that if but one such case of success had occurred it would have been ample recompense for the prayers and toil and tears and money spent upon that mission field. May God help us, undismayed by the fears of friends, undaunted by the opposition of foes, to urge on the glorious work to which we have put our hands."

I have given this speech of Mr. Sargeant's somewhat fully, because it is so thoroughly typical. In it he stands forth in the rôle which so became him, and which, indeed, would become any Christian man, but which he seemed divinely called to assume —that of the champion of the emancipated race.

It was a pleasure to hear him and to see him engaged upon that theme. The subject called up all the passion of his soul. Others than the writer of this memoir may be able to tell of his oratory in earlier days: to me he comes to recollection as the "old man eloquent." He could not help being eloquent as he spoke of the people with so dark a past but with so bright a future, amongst whom he had spent the happiest years of his life.

CHAPTER IV

ANTIGUA—BEGINNING OF METHODIST MISSIONS—JAMES COX.

CHAPTER IV

Antigua—Beginning of Methodist Missions—James Cox.

MR. SARGEANT spent four years altogether in St. Kitts, but in between his first sojourn in the island and his second appointment there he spent two years in the island of Antigua. As we have already indicated, this was historic ground from the point of view of Wesleyan Missions. Here in 1757, Nathaniel Gilbert, Esq., Planter, and Speaker of the House of Assembly, who that year had visited England, and been converted through the instrumentality of John Wesley, began himself to preach to the slaves on his estate that truth which had made him free. That was the beginning of Methodist missionary work. In a very short time hundreds of these slaves entered into the liberty of the children of God, and made the plantations vocal with their joy. For about a quarter of a century Mr. Gilbert continued his happy toil, undaunted by the sneers of many that looked scornfully upon him and his work, and the societies grew in size and influence. When he died the work was kept going by the black people themselves, until there came out from

Chatham, to work in His Majesty's dockyard at Antigua, a godly shipwright, John Baxter by name, a Methodist local preacher, who naturally stepped into the vacant leadership. Thus, when Dr. Coke and his companions on that memorable Christmas Day, 1786, driven by what appeared to them as contrary winds, but which were seen afterwards to be the veritable winds of God, found themselves in the harbour of St. John's, they discovered, on going ashore, Methodism already firmly established in the island, and before them and round about them in the other islands a field truly "white unto harvest." "The future of these islands," to quote Mr. Sargeant's own words, "grew bright before the heroic doctor, and like the angel ministrant having the everlasting gospel to preach, he rested not until he had preached it in nearly all the islands of the seas. Success attended his labours everywhere, and the wilderness and solitary place became glad, and the deserts rejoiced on every side. At length the call to Continental India terminated his West Indian toil, and the work of these churches came more systematically under the British Conference, and to extend it and consolidate it became the one great reason for the formation of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, a society which, from that time to this, has been the glory of the Methodist Church, and an untold blessing to the world."

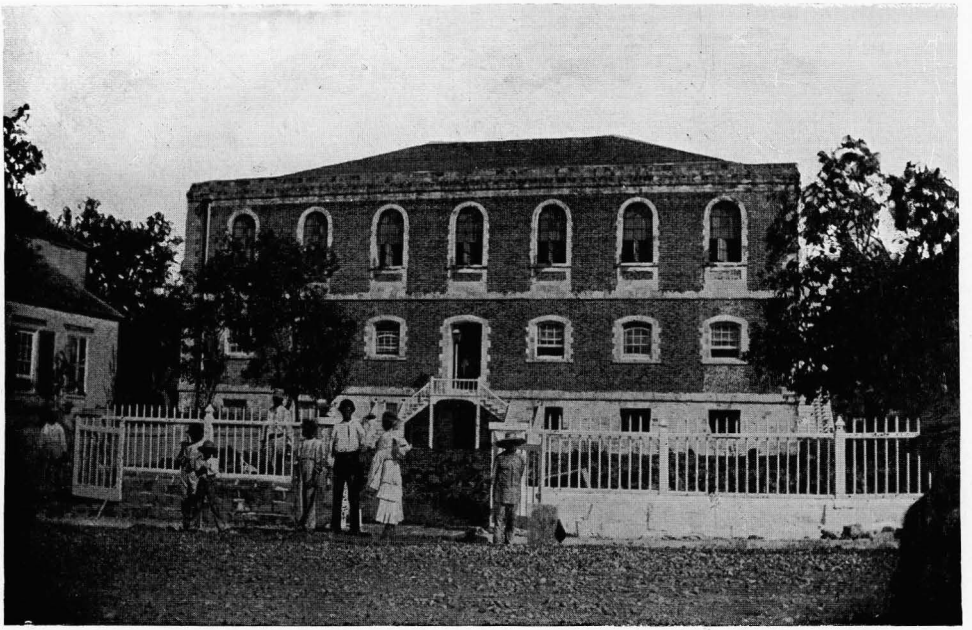
Antigua is the most important island of what

is known as the Leeward Group, and is situated fifty miles east of St. Kitts, with an area of one hundred and eight square miles, and a circumference of about fifty miles. Like Barbados and St. Kitts, it is a great sugar-producing country, and like all the islands, it has suffered from the general commercial depression which has thrown such a dark cloud over the West Indies in recent years. The island was discovered by Columbus in 1493, and named by him after a church in Seville, called Santa Maria Antigua. It, however, remained uninhabited until 1632, when a body of English settlers took possession of it, and in 1663 another English settlement was effected, under the direction of Lord Willoughby, to whom the entire island was granted by Charles II. It was ravaged by the French in 1666, but was soon afterwards reconquered by the British, and was formally restored to them by the Treaty of Breda. Since then it has been a British possession. Its high and rocky coast is much indented by bays and arms of the sea, several of which form excellent harbours. That at English Harbour, where Mr. Sargeant first resided, is capable of receiving vessels of the largest size, and was in the days of Nelson (who often visited the place) a great naval base.

On taking up his duties as a Methodist missionary in the island Mr. Sargeant entered into the labours of a succession of apostolic men from Nathaniel Gilbert downwards, the fruits of whose work

were seen on every hand. "I found," he says, "that Methodism had taken a noble stand and assumed a commanding prominence, and was exercising over both natives and Europeans a mighty power for good. I saw these men, who in the days of Dr. Coke were a proscribed race, now under the influence the Mission shed upon them and the colony generally, occupying some of the highest places in the government of the colony. Methodism, I found, had erected ten chapels in the island, at distances of from three to four miles, established eight day schools, built four mission houses, and the work had become so settled, and the church so ordered, that it bore the stamp more of home than foreign work. I have had an opportunity, extending over many years, of making myself acquainted with the Christianity of these Antigua churches, and in no part of the world have I seen evidences of a more vital piety than there. The Christianity of the island is gradually permeating the whole mass of the once enslaved population, and lifting it up from the low level of slavery to intelligence and social comfort."

Mr. Sargeant loved to dwell upon his life in Antigua. It was there he served his apprenticeship as a missionary, and where he "lost his heart" to the black man. With some of the black and coloured people he formed lifelong friendship, corresponding with an old woman, who had been nurse to his little boy, up to the time of her death.



EBENEZER CHAPEL, ANTIGUA.

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When in later years, as President of the Conference, he paid official visits to the island, it was a great delight to meet old friends and to recall happy memories. In his centenary sermon already quoted he refers to his first superintendent. He was very generous in his tributes to old friends. He never forgot them, and carried with him a perpetual memory of kindnesses done to himself or the work he loved so well. "Can the people of Antigua ever forget James Cox, the Chairman of that District, when I first entered it? He was my first superintendent, and his fatherly advice, his intelligent cheerful intercourse, his pulpit power, and his example as a pastor can never be forgotten by me. He had gifts and graces that eminently fitted him for what would be considered higher and more inviting spheres of toil, and that in England or America would have placed him in the foremost positions in the Church, but to him there was nothing nobler than to labour for the extension and consolidation of the Methodism of these islands. How largely does that fine and spacious structure, Ebenezer Chapel, St. John's, owe its existence to his ceaseless labours and indomitable zeal. To pay off the chapel debts, to look after the country churches, to foster, strengthen, and enlarge the Sabbath and day schools, to fill the houses of the poor with useful religious literature, to be found at the bedside of the sick, to speak, as few can speak, words of tender warning to erring and wandering

ones, to train young men for spheres of usefulness, to plead from the platform and by the Press the cause of the orphan, were at once the labour and pleasure of his life. To find time for these things every working-hour was passed in the Master's service. How slothful one felt in the presence of his activity! Rising when in his house soon after six, I would generally find he had preceded me by a couple of hours, despatched his correspondence, anticipated all my wants, and stood ready for the duties of the day. And all this with untiring zeal to the end of life. On the very day of his death, with fever upon him, he rose and performed a ministerial duty, lay down again, and in a few hours joined the general assembly and church of the first-born. Such was James Cox. Can these West Indian churches ever forget their deep obligation to him whose loving fidelity placed him among the most devoted missionaries ever raised up in this or in any land?" It is fitting this tribute to the memory of a good man should be enshrined in the memoir of him who wrote it, for not only would it accord with his own wishes, but it is not too much to say that the qualities which adorned the life and character of James Cox were in no small degree perpetuated in George Sargeant himself.

CHAPTER V

ST. MARTIN—"UNDER THREE FLAGS"—MODIFIED SLAVERY —THE ESCAPED SLAVE GIRL—METHODISM AMONG THE WHITE COLONISTS.

CHAPTER V

St. Martin—"Under Three Flags"—Modified Slavery—The Escaped Slave Girl—Methodism among the White Colonists.

AFTER spending two years in Antigua, Mr. Sargeant returned to St. Kitts, where he laboured for three years more, and was then stationed in St. Martin. This little island (one of the group called the Lesser Antilles) has the unique distinction of belonging to two nations, Holland and France. Twenty square miles of it belong to the latter, and the remaining eighteen square miles to the former country. One is a dependency of Curaçoa, and the other of Guadeloupe. Until recent years, with the adjacent island of Anguilla, it formed one circuit, and the ministers labouring there could boast of serving under three flags, the last-named island being a British colony under the Leeward Islands Government. During the writer's residence there, it was possible to conduct service in the morning in the Dutch quarter, and offer prayer for Queen Wilhelmina; in the afternoon in the French quarter, with prayer for the President of the Republic; and over in Anguilla in the evening, with

prayer for Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria! (Anguilla is now a separate circuit.) For an account of our work in this unique station I cannot do better than give Mr. Sargeant's own words:—

"From St. Kitts," he says, "I removed to the Dutch and French island of St. Martin, and with that I had the English island of Anguilla. In these two islands, forming one circuit, we preach the gospel under the flags of England, France, and Holland. For many years, through the influence of Jesuit priests, our missionaries were denied the right to exercise their ministry in the French part of St. Martin, although we had some scores of members residing there, and hundreds desired the services of our missionaries. It was nothing uncommon after a Methodist missionary had been asked to pray with a sick person in the French quarter, for him to be given to understand politely that he must not do so again under penalty of finding himself in the prison at the fort. And a gendarme has taken the bridle of his horse and conducted him to the frontier of the Dutch quarter.

"With the French Revolution of 1848 came the abolition of slavery in all French colonies, and with that the introduction of a more liberal policy. The privilege of the services of a Protestant missionary was granted, but it was jesuitically hinted that he must be a Frenchman. A missionary was appointed, but whilst he could scarcely

utter a sentence in English, his congregation for the most part were English-speaking people. Being, however, appointed by the French Government, and paid by them, the people bore with him for years, until at last it became obvious that he either could not or would not learn the language. He persisted in attempts to read printed English sermons and Wesley's *Abridgement of the Liturgy*, and in using our hymns, with results that were often ludicrous. He read the burial service at a baptism, and instead of calling on the congregation to join in prayer, he told them to 'crow'! The Protestant portion of the community at length requested his removal, and asked that the English missionary labouring on the Dutch side of the island might be allowed to exercise his ministry there. To their joy and astonishment they succeeded, and in 1856 I received a communication through the Commandant from the Minister for the Colonies of France, not only granting me permission to minister to the Protestants, but stating that an allowance amounting in English to thirty pounds per annum would be paid for the rent of a place of worship. The result was, that in a very short time, instead of a congregation of ten or twelve people, which the French-speaking pastor had, we had sometimes two and three hundred, and always a sprinkling of Roman Catholics amongst them.

"After the Act of Emancipation, slavery in a

modified form still continued to exist in French St. Martin, and in that modified form it was a hateful thing. I was called upon to witness incidents, sometimes amusing, and at other times deeply affecting. About the time I went to live in the island, a coloured girl was living as a free servant in the house of a French Protestant in the town of Marigot, in the French quarter. I was told she was an escaped slave, the property of a gentleman I knew in the Dutch quarter, where slavery had not yet been abolished. She had escaped some months before, and was now neatly dressed, and bore the stamp of a happy servant girl. Happening to hear that her mistress was about to visit the Dutch quarter for the purpose of attending a public tea in connection with our church, she thought how delightful it would be if she could just take a run over, get there about dark, see her friends, enjoy the meeting, and hasten home again under cover of night. She made known her wish to her indulgent mistress, who readily gave her permission. She arrived at the meeting and took her place at one of the tea-tables, where she thought she could see without herself being discovered. But it so happened the table she selected was arranged for the principal visitors of the party, who were soon gathered about her. During the tea an amiable young gentleman (the cousin of her former owner) was making himself useful in handing refreshments to the ladies of

his party, and was just about to hand her a cup of tea, when he started back and then went across the room and said something to a gentleman, who turned out to be none other than her former master. The poor girl realised she was veritably in the lion's den, and terrified and trembling she fled through the back of the building. But she was too late. Her master and the police were on her track like bloodhounds, and in a few minutes, the evening, so joyously begun, closed around her in the darkness of a prison cell. Whilst this capture was taking place I was engaged in another part of the building, and knew nothing of it until I entered the mission house after the meeting, when I received a request from the poor girl that I would intercede with her master for his merciful treatment of her. I saw him the next morning, and after reasoning with him on the matter for some time, got him to promise he would take her out of prison in a day or two and put her back to work on his estate without inflicting the dread penalty of working her in chains!

"Our mission in the West Indies is not simply one to the black people. Considerable numbers of educated, wealthy, and influential white people have come under its influence. An incident or two in connection with the early history of our mission in these tiny colonies will illustrate this fact. A poor coloured local preacher, named Hodge, possessed of the true missionary spirit, came over

from the island of Anguilla, six miles distant, to preach in the French quarter. We had then no place of worship in either part of the island, and he preached in the open air. Being very much opposed by the priests he crossed the frontier into the Dutch quarter and continued his efforts. One day a French lady and her sister happened to be passing along the street where Hodge was preaching, and one expressed her desire to stay and listen to what he had to say. The other declined the suggestion and passed on. The one who stayed out of idle curiosity had her attention rivetted by the message of the gospel, and the truth smote her heart. She became a sincere Christian and a devoted Methodist, and asked her husband, a wealthy English merchant, to allow their large house to be used for the holding of services. That was the beginning of Methodism in St. Martin.

"Some time after this, a nephew of this merchant came out from England to assist his uncle, and he too became the subject of the saving grace of God. But he was not long spared to bear witness for God, for he was soon afterwards taken ill and died. A young lady belonging to one of the old families in the island, happening to visit him on his death-bed, was so impressed by the value of true religion shown in his calm triumph over death, that she resolved to be a Christian, and gave herself then and there to Christ and His Church. She after-

wards became the wife of the President of the Court of Justice, who was a member of my class, and ultimately became Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony. The other young lady referred to, the one who would not stay and listen to the coloured preacher, also became a Christian, and married an officer in the army of the First Napoleon. One of the first members of my class was a fine young fellow, speaking English, Dutch, and French fluently, the son of a lawyer and slave-holder. After his conversion he became a local preacher, and subsequently entered the ministry. He occupied some of the best stations in the West Indies and in the Bahamas, and was for several years Chairman of District. These facts show something of the influence of Methodism upon the higher classes of the West Indian community."

After Mr. Sargeant's time, and largely through his influence and that of other Wesleyan missionaries, slavery was abolished in the Dutch West Indian colonies, and when in after years as President of the Conference he revisited the scenes of his early labours, there was no place where he was received with such enthusiasm by rich and poor alike as in the little island of St. Martin.

It should be added, to make this history more complete, that the first Wesleyan missionary, the Rev. Jonathan Raynar, was appointed to St. Martin in 1819, and from that time to this our work has enjoyed almost uninterrupted prosperity. To-day,

both in French and Dutch St. Martin, our missionaries receive an annual grant from the respective Governments, and, on the Dutch side, Methodism is practically the established church of the colony. A Roman Catholic priest exercises his ministry there, but his following is but small. In the neat little Methodist chapel at Philipsburgh, the capital, there is a pew set apart for the use of the Lieutenant-Governor, and several of the Dutch officials are pewholders and communicants. A zealous Anglican bishop has once or twice visited the colony with a view to establishing a church there, but he has returned somewhat discouraged on being informed by the leading colonists, "We are all Methodists here."

A story Mr. Sargeant used to tell with huge delight is worth recording. It was customary, when he first went to the island, for the missionary to hold services periodically on the various estates for the benefit chiefly of the slaves. But the colonists used themselves to attend with their families and friends, and after the service the missionary would be hospitably entertained, and the proceedings would often take a social turn as evening came on. On one of these occasions it happened that some French naval officers from a ship in port were visiting an estate where Mr. Sargeant was to preach, and they were invited to join the family at the service. They seemed to enjoy the hearty singing of the hymns, and were

very attentive during the sermon, although they were not able to understand very much of it. The transition from the service to the conviviality took place as usual, and a very lively evening was spent. Before the party broke up, Mr. Sargeant was startled by one of the French officers expressing himself to the effect that he considered "ze Metodist religion ze best religion. You have ze liturgy, ze *chantant*, ze predication and ze vine and ze fun, all very nice. I like ze Metodist religion best of all." A story which illustrates the necessity, as regards the relation of the Church to the world, of "drawing the line somewhere,"—a moral Mr. Sargeant never failed to enforce.

Although well-nigh half a century has elapsed since Mr. Sargeant laboured in this little island, life remains there much as in his day. Descendants of the old Dutch and French families, who were the first supporters of our work, still export the salt (the staple produce), breed horses and cattle, and own the stores. And although they complain as in the other islands of "hard times," and of the enforced emigration of many of the islanders, yet they still keep up their comfortable domestic establishments, and are famous for their intelligence and warm-hearted hospitality. They form a little world to themselves, and this chiefly of geographical necessity, for a steamer but rarely calls at the island, and the journey to St. Kitts, the

nearest port for the Royal Mail steamers, and therefore the nearest point of contact with the greater world beyond, has to be made by sailing boat. And as this voyage of forty miles is a matter of several hours, or even days, according to wind and weather, it has taught St. Martin a self-reliance unknown in more dependent colonies.

CHAPTER VI

Jamaica—Early History of Jamaican Methodism—Emancipation.

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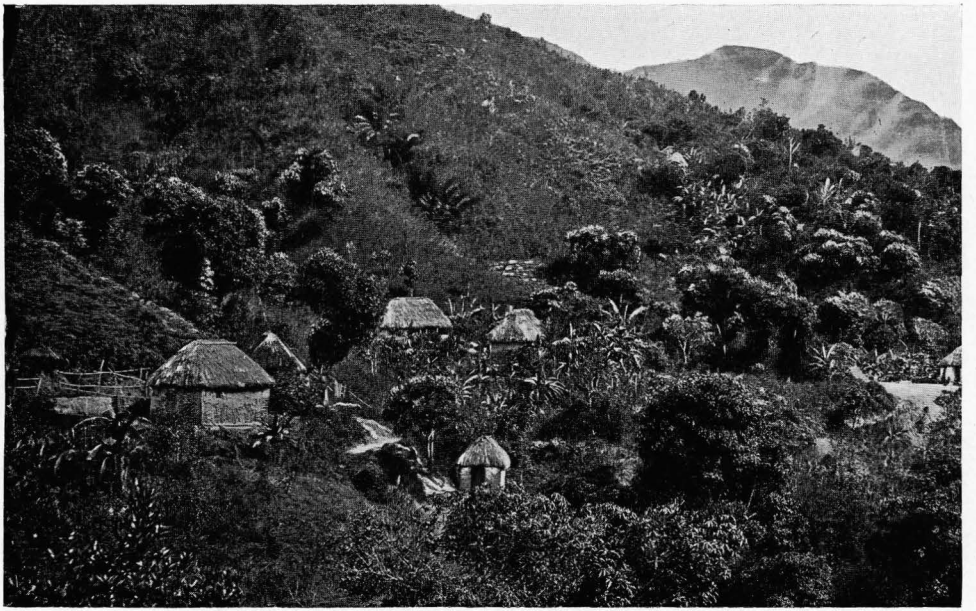
Jamaica—Early History of Jamaican Methodism—Emancipation.

THE scene of our narrative now shifts to the large and important island of Jamaica, whither Mr. Sargeant came in the year 1856. The reason of his transfer from the Antigua district is not clear, but probably it was done by the Missionary Committee by way of making a balance of ministerial help between the islands of the East and West. The rate of mortality in those times seems to have been higher in Jamaica than elsewhere, and the ranks of the missionaries were frequently reduced through yellow fever and other tropical evils.

To describe Jamaica would require a volume to itself, and we can but briefly refer to its great natural beauties, its interesting history, and to the progress of Methodist missions in the colony.

Jamaica is the largest of the British West Indies, and is about one hundred and fifty miles long by twenty-one in its narrowest, and eighty-one in its widest part. It lies about eighty miles to the southward of the eastern extremity of the island

of Cuba, the "Queen of the Antilles," which on a clear day may be distinctly seen from its northern shores. The island was discovered by Columbus in 1494, and taken possession of in the name of the King of Spain. Its name, bestowed upon it by the gentle tribes of Indians who inhabited it, signifies "the land of springs." For a century and a half the Spaniards held possession, during a portion of which time the government of the island was administered from its first capital, the city of Sevilla D'Oro, on the northern shore hard by the site of the present town of St. Ann's Bay, noted for its spicy groves. Afterwards the Spaniards moved across the island and built the city of St. Jago de la Vega, more popularly known as Spanish Town, which for nearly two hundred years after the English occupation continued to be the capital of the island, until it became a Crown colony, and the honour was transferred to Kingston, the present capital. In 1596, when England was at war with Spain, Sir A. Shirley, a British admiral, invaded Jamaica, but made no attempt at occupation. In the time of Cromwell, however, a determined attempt to take the island was made, and a British force led by Admirals Penn and Venables took possession in 1655. Gradually the Spaniards were driven from the island, and in 1661 a regular civil government was established, and a governor-general with an elective council appointed. But the history of the country was very chequered,



TYPICAL WEST INDIAN SCENE.

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and for a long period the buccaneers roved the seas round about, making the island their resort, and Port Royal—the chief place of commerce—"at once one of the wealthiest and one of the wickedest places on the face of the whole earth." In 1670 peace was made with Spain, and England's title to the island was recognised by the Treaty of Madrid. Then began the history of Jamaica's prosperity, and the cultivation of its sugar and spices proceeded apace, and then began also the shameful traffic in African slaves. The aborigines, unaccustomed to the yoke of bondage and the lash of the oppressor, gradually diminished in numbers, and to find labourers to work the estates recourse was had to the importation of black people from Africa, who were brought over in shiploads and treated like cattle. The history of slavery in Jamaica, like that of any other colony, is a black record of wrong, and abounds in details of a cruel and revolting description. It is no wonder that without any religious restraint upon them the unhappy slaves frequently broke out in rebellion, burning the estates and slaying their cruel owners. Little wonder, too, that the fearful earthquakes, hurricanes, and epidemics which occasionally visited the island were looked upon by the superstitious as expressions of the anger of God.

When Dr. Coke visited Jamaica in 1789 he found little or nothing being done for the moral benefit of the black people, and even among the

whites religion was at a low ebb. The parish churches throughout the island were some of them only opened for marriages or funerals, and the Sabbath was given up to business and pleasure. All classes of society were deeply sunk in moral degradation. The good doctor, however, was kindly received. "In no place," he says, "did I ever receive greater civilities; four or five respectable families having opened to me their houses and evidently their hearts also, and assured me that any missionaries we may send shall be welcome to everything their houses afford." It is recorded that he preached several times in Kingston during his first brief sojourn in the island, meeting with some opposition and disturbance on the part of some white "gentlemen," but being greatly encouraged by the way in which the black people listened to the Word of Life, and responded to the invitations of the gospel.

As a result of Dr. Coke's visit, the Rev. W. Hammett was sent out from England as the first Wesleyan missionary to Jamaica. On the apostolic principle of "beginning at Jerusalem," he began his work at Kingston, an old house being adapted as a place of worship. In 1791 another missionary was sent to assist Mr. Hammett, and shortly afterwards Dr. Coke arrived on a second visit to the island, bringing with him yet one more. Consequently Methodism took a firm root in the island, and when Dr. Coke paid a third and final visit in

1792–93, he was greatly encouraged by what he saw of the work of God among the black and enslaved peoples.

But as the work prospered opposition increased, and in no island did our missionaries and people suffer more for the truth's sake than in Jamaica. The planters and officials resented the open rebuke of sin from the mouths of these Methodist preachers, and regarded their efforts to Christianise the blacks as a direct propaganda against slavery. This occasioned a systematic and cruel opposition to all forms of Christian missions, which often resulted in chapels and schoolhouses being destroyed and in the missionaries being shamefully treated. Local laws were passed prohibiting preaching without a licence, and for alleged breaches of the law these godly men were cast into loathsome prisons. And at all times they were liable to be assailed by rough, insulting mobs of so-called respectable people. In 1816 it was found necessary for some Methodist missionaries to memorialise the House of Assembly on behalf of themselves and their fellow-labourers, stating their connection with the Methodist body in Great Britain, and that their avowed and real object was to render their hearers, in temper and conduct, upright and humble Christians; that they were wholly unconnected with politics, and that they were conscious of most unimpeachable integrity and disinterestedness; but that they had suffered much opposition in their endeavours to

exercise their calling. The memorialists assure the Honourable House that they are clearly and fully persuaded their doctrines and discipline, with their manner of enforcing them, have a direct and powerful tendency to promote general concord, as seen in the effects of their labours in the reformed lives and humble and peaceable deportment of hundreds of their people. They offer cheerfully to lay before the House their form of government, appointments and duties of all their officers, etc. Of the memorial one of the missionaries writes: "It was graciously received," and also states, "in consequence of this I have been examined on oath before a committee of the House. I believe the examination gave them satisfaction respecting our intentions, doctrines, and discipline."

Brighter days came with the abolition of slavery. When in 1833 the Bill of Emancipation passed both Houses of Parliament, the Wesleyan Missionary Committee, along with other kindred societies, felt it was incumbent upon them to do what lay in their power to provide for the spiritual necessities of the freed people under the new conditions of life in which they suddenly found themselves. Accordingly, between 1834 and 1838, the period of "Apprenticeship," twenty missionaries, most of whom voluntarily offered themselves for the work, were sent to Jamaica by the committee. By the vote of its own House of Assembly the island relinquished two years of the "Apprenticeship"

arranged for by the Bill of Emancipation, and so the year 1838 witnessed the granting of entire freedom to the black people. The Governor of Jamaica at that time judiciously adopted measures to control the excited feelings of the people on gaining their liberty, and among other things issued a Proclamation forwarded to magistrates and ministers of religion recommending that all churches and chapels should be open for religious worship on the 1st of August. The idea was generally carried out, and in many places a watch-night service was held during the last hours prior to the dawn of the day of freedom. Mr. Sargeant well describes the occasion in his own eloquent fashion: "Oh! it was a sight never to be forgotten, when at midnight the voice of praise was heard in hundreds of sanctuaries all over these islands. There were the aged into whose souls the iron of slavery had entered, fathers and mothers who to this hour had never been able to call their children their own; young men and maidens whose bounding spirits had chafed under the yoke of bondage;—all united in the uttering of the sentiment, 'Jehovah hath triumphed; His people are free.' This was the way in which they received the boon of freedom. It was the reverse of that which had been predicted by their owners. They went forth from bondage 'with joy, and were led forth with peace, and the mountains and the hills broke forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clapped their hands.'

The Christian spirit of England crushed and forever abolished the institution of colonial slavery, and with all the results before us we can still sing—

> England! empire's home and head,
> The first in every art and power,
> Mighty the billow's crest to tread,
> Mighty to rule the battle hour,
> But mightier to redeem and save,
> Rejoice that thou hast freed the slave."

CHAPTER VII

LOVE FOR JAMAICA—REBECCA WAITE—EDWARD FRASER—FIRST FURLOUGH—ENGLISH CIRCUITS.

CHAPTER VII

Love for Jamaica—Rebecca Waite—Edward Fraser—
First Furlough—English Circuits.

MR. SARGEANT spent four years in Jamaica before returning to England for his first furlough, labouring at Yallahs, Falmouth, and Montego Bay. We have not the details to make a connected history of his life during that period, but they were years of strenuous labour, the fruit of which remaineth to this day. It may be truly said he lost his heart to Jamaica. He revelled in its glorious scenery, which he was never tired of describing in after years. The scenery of the other islands was additionally charming to him if it resembled Jamaica. And he loved its people with an especial affection. Friends he had in all the islands, but it was with certain Jamaicans he seems to have had the closest association. This is largely accounted for by the fact that the best years of his life, the years of his maturer ministry, were spent in that island. And as Chairman of the District he travelled throughout the length and breadth of the country, and became intimately acquainted with all the stations and the brethren, clerical and

lay, who laboured there. Towards his colleagues, who shared his toils, and the saintly men and women, both black and coloured, who were as pillars in the various churches, he cherished an undying affection. Those who heard his speeches will remember how fond he was of referring to one or two in particular. One was Rebecca Waite, of Montego Bay, his third Jamaican station. Her memory is enshrined in one of his own speeches, from which I quote :—

"It was in the last years of her life, when she was about eighty, I was introduced to Rebecca Waite. She was born a slave, but was liberated in early life. She commenced business in the town, and by the time she was forty years of age had amassed a fair competence. She was then converted to God, and gave herself up body and soul to His service. Her house became the home of orphan children that by her were clothed and fed. She purchased a horse, and for many years, as long as she could sit upon horseback, she missioned the estates for fifteen miles round the town, visiting the sick, holding prayer-meetings and class-meetings, and doing very largely the work of a Christian minister. With all this she met two large classes in the town. Wishful to preserve the minister's health, and enable him to do more work, at a time when the Missionary Committee could only allow a horse and a saddle, she purchased for him a gig and harness and kept

them in repair. Besides what she did to maintain the gospel in her own locality, she was at once the best missionary collector and the noblest missionary giver. The missionary in those days had to content himself with a comparatively mean, and often unhealthy dwelling. Rebecca Waite determined upon a remedy; and when one of the best houses in a healthy suburb of the town was for sale, she would not allow the special opportunity to pass of securing it for the permanent benefit of the missionary and his family; and she invested a thousand pounds of her own hard earnings in that house, and made it over to the Missionary Society, with the understanding that the Church repay as best it could. Such was her thoughtful consideration for the abiding interests of the Church of Christ. Her humble birth and social status carried no influence in such a town; but of her piety the greatest sinners would stand in awe, and the scoffer be mute in her presence. When in the last fierce struggles of the confederacy of slave-holders, they sought to uphold and maintain the system by burning or pulling down the mission chapels, they burnt a Baptist one in the town where this godly woman lived, and having done this cowardly deed, they hastened to the Methodist Chapel to demolish that, but they found this heroine in the gateway, and looking the leaders of the mob squarely in the face, she told them that she knew their purpose, and informed them that if they carried it out, they

would have to do it over her dead body. Cowed by the mysterious power of her piety and dauntless courage, the rascally mob, abashed and confounded, were driven from their intended deed. Her interest in the cause of Christ remained unabated to the end of life, and when she could no longer walk to the house of God, she requested to be carried there. I saw her in her last sickness, when with undiminished faith and glorious hope she cried out, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy name,' and soon after rested sweetly and gently from her labours."

It was by the saintly Edward Fraser, one of the outstanding figures of West Indian missionary history, that Mr. Sargeant was introduced to Rebecca Waite, and of that honoured servant of God we have another of his beautiful pen-portraits: "Born a slave, and living in bondage, the chattel of another, until he attained the years of manhood, this prince among men was brought into 'the liberty of the sons of God.' Whatever might be his value to others, the Church saw in him a jewel of the rarest worth, and paid down his ransom, and sent him forth to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Twice during his long ministerial career he visited England as a representative man; and not only did popular assemblies in the largest towns and cities of the country listen spellbound to the chaste Christian philosophy of his sermons and speeches, but men of the highest culture paid

homage to his royal intellect. It was, however, the Methodist churches of the West Indies that he so long and faithfully served that knew how to estimate his worth; and among them, none would more delight to do him honour than his ministerial brethren. In every season of perplexity he was their trusted counsellor in Church matters. Every question of delicate diplomacy with local government, or with the Missionary Committee, was readily committed to his hands. With a quiet bravery that blenched not in the presence of any danger, he had the modesty of a child. Ever considerate of the needs of others, seldom taking thought about his own, there was no post of duty from which he would shrink; and no self-seeking tarnished his spotless honour to the last. After half a century of ministerial labour, with a faith unwavering, and a hope blooming with immortality, he finished his course and entered into his rest. How remarkable the providence that raised up at this particular time, from the ranks of the native population, a minister of such rare gifts and graces! It would seem as if God would give to us in the life and character of one man a sample of the grand possibilities of the race; and possibilities which, in spite of a shallow philosophy, should ever be kept before the vision of the Churches. When men reason as they do sometimes, as if the West Indian churches could never raise a native ministry equal to their needs, let them stand corrected and reproved by the life

of that grand man Edward Fraser. Being dead, he yet speaketh, and by the memory of his saintly life will continue to speak to the generations to come."

In 1860, after completing thirteen years of foreign service, Mr. Sargeant returned to England, and there laboured with increasing acceptability and success in the Ipswich, Southampton, and Sunderland Circuits, spending in each the full itinerary term according to the laws of British Methodism. It was a great joy to him to return to his native land, for which he never lost his natural affection. He was very fond of quoting Scott's lines—

> Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
> Who never to himself hath said,
> This is my own, my native land!
> Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
> As home his footsteps he hath turned,
> From wandering on a foreign strand!

Thirteen years is a long time, and he found many changes. He missed the touch of vanished hands and voices that were stilled in death. But he entered on his English work with zest, and with a constitution unimpaired by his life and toil in the tropics. Blessed with sound and vigorous health, and being strictly temperate in his habits, he enjoyed a wonderful immunity from those ills which attack sooner or later so many Europeans in the West Indies. He had quite a code of health of his own, and frequently quoted from it for the benefit of his

younger brethren, two of its unalterable articles being the filtration of water and the boiling of milk before consumption. His invariable questions to young missionaries on inquiring as to their well-being were, "Do you use a filter?" "Are you careful to have your milk boiled before using?"—questions which in the light of modern science were not so wide of the mark as might have appeared.

Mr. Sargeant was very happy in his association with his brethren in English Circuits. As regards these colleagues, some few remain on active service, some are supernumeraries, but others "are fallen asleep." Among the latter is Peter Mackenzie, who was his colleague in Sunderland, and about whom he could tell some droll stories. One was about a gift of a Yorkshire ham apiece, which Peter made to his colleagues, accompanying each with a bit of original rhyme. I very much regret I have not been able to recall the lines sent to Mr. Sargeant, although he has several times quoted them in my hearing, but the last two were something like this—

> O! may your faces shine like real West Indian nigger,
> And as the hams they grow the less may you still grow the bigger.

Another Sunderland colleague was the late Rev. George Blanchflower, who had also been his colleague in the West Indies. Mr. Sargeant used to relate how, when he and Mr. Blanchflower were

in St. Kitts together, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* first appeared, and how he and this brother missionary sat up the good part of one night to read it, alternately laughing and crying over its fascinating pages.

It is almost superfluous to say that during his sojourn in the old country Mr. Sargeant never forgot that he was a missionary, and never let the interests of his old field of labour slip from his view. Indeed, as a missionary advocate, he was always on duty. In his speeches, in his sermons, and in conversation, he ever reverted to the favourite theme. He soon became known as an able and eloquent speaker on the foreign missionary platform, and his services were greatly in request. Some of his speeches have already been quoted in earlier chapters, and they are, it must be admitted, models of well-reasoned, tersely expressed, fervent appeal. They were speeches such as were needed at the time when the benefits of emancipation were actually doubted by seriously-minded people in England, and the intelligence and capabilities of the black man grossly impugned.

CHAPTER VIII

RETURN TO JAMAICA — HOME FOR A YEAR — APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF JAMAICA DISTRICT—YORK CASTLE INSTITUTION—AN AUTHORITY ON EDUCATION—TRAVELLING EXPERIENCES—DIARY OF A MISSIONARY TOUR.

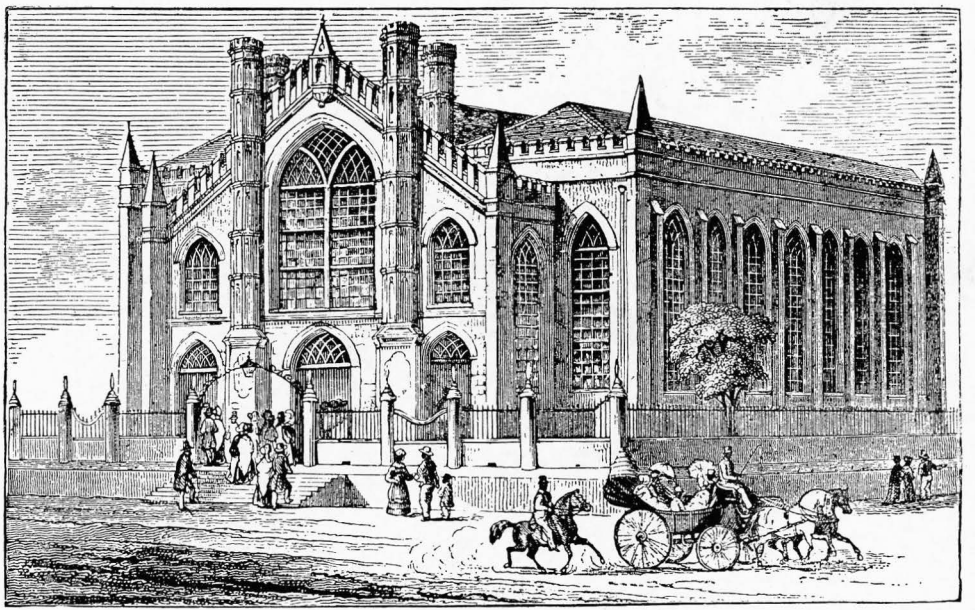
CHAPTER VIII

Return to Jamaica—Home for a Year—Appointed Chairman of Jamaica District — York Castle Institution — An Authority on Education—Travelling Experiences—Diary of a Missionary Tour.

IT is little wonder that in 1869, when a time of crisis occurred in the West Indies, and a strong man was needed at the helm of affairs, the Missionary Committee should have fixed on George Sargeant as the right man, and, gaining his ready acquiescence, should have appointed him to Kingston, Jamaica, as Chairman of that important District. That responsible office he filled for three years, and concerning his administration of affairs during that time, a brother minister, a native of Jamaica, writes: "During the period of his Chairmanship Mr. Sargeant not only solved one of the most difficult problems connected with the administration of the Wesleyan Church in the West Indies to the satisfaction of the Missionary Committee, but proved himself a liberal and sympathising brother of the native ministers connected with that Church. To him they and the Church to which they belong owe a debt of gratitude for services rendered, which can never be compensated, and

which only the West Indian ministers of that day can fully appreciate." This is valuable testimony coming from a native minister, for it shows that in his relations with his brethren Mr. Sargeant displayed neither partiality nor prejudice, but, good Methodist preacher as he was, sought according to Wesley's precept to be "the friend of all; the enemy of none."

Returning to England in 1872, Mr. Sargeant was appointed Superintendent of the Hinde Street Circuit, London; but after spending a very successful year there, and being invited for a second, he was again requested by the Missionary Committee to undertake special duty in Jamaica. Accordingly he again set sail, and for a further period of eight years filled the office of Chairman of District with conspicuous ability. They were years of steady growth to our churches in Jamaica; and one of the chief signs of progress was the purchase of an estate near Kingston, and the establishment of York Castle as a theological institution for the training of the ministry and for native teachers, and as a high school for boys, followed some years later by the founding of the Barbican High School for girls. Mr. Sargeant was a great educationalist, and his advice and counsels were often sought and greatly valued by the officials of the country. When in 1874 the Government thought of establishing a large college at Spanish Town, to be called Queen's College, to be inter-denomina-



COKE CHAPEL, JAMAICA. [*To face p. 77.*

tional in character, Mr. Sargeant was asked his opinion as to the scheme; and when the college was founded and proved a failure, owing to the fact that nearly every religious denomination in the island had its own institution, and preferred to train its young men according to its own tenets, the Governor of the Island, Sir William Grey, wrote to Mr. Sargeant for his views on the matter. Among his papers I found the Governor's letters, and the drafts of Mr. Sargeant's courteously expressed replies to the same. Says the Rev. David J. Reynolds, Chairman of the British Guiana District, and himself a *protégé* of Mr. Sargeant's, and one of his warmest admirers: "The educational success of those institutions (York Castle and Barbican) justified their foundation, and but for the terrible financial depression which has fallen of late years upon the West Indies they would now be continuing the splendid work they achieved in the early years of their history. Alas! they have succumbed to the inexorable pressure of the times passing over us. Mr. Sargeant, as an enlightened and far-seeing missionary, saw the need of providing such institutions for the improving intellectual conditions of our people, and not only in Jamaica, but in this Conference (the Eastern), by the foundation of Coke College, Antigua, and the inception of Trinity and Kingston High Schools in this colony, he evidenced his desire to meet the growing needs of our people,

and to secure to Methodism in the West Indies her legitimate share of the developing intelligence of the young people brought under religious influence. Our first President is not to be blamed for his higher education policy in the West Indies. Had the economic conditions of ten years ago continued, his ecclesiastical statesmanship in this and in other respects would have been amply vindicated. But God's will be done!"

During his long Chairmanship of the Jamaica District Mr. Sargeant had many and strange experiences. Travelling was difficult in that land of mountain and flood. To-day a railway traverses a good part of the country, but in those days journeys had to be accomplished by horseback, waggon, or buggy, and often after rain the mountain torrents would make the roads impassable. What amusing stories he would tell of his adventures! But everywhere he could rely on the kindly services and hospitality of the people, black or white, and no serious harm ever befell him. One fragment of a story I find preserved among his papers. "Once," he says, "I found myself on the banks of a river in the company of a young minister whom I had driven eighty miles to marry. He thought that he would utilise my visit by taking me to one of his new churches to lecture. The church lay some ten miles beyond a formidable river, dangerous in the fording at all times. We had no sooner done our lecture, than down came

the sweeping rains from the mountains, and we got back to the 'Rio Grande' to find that it defied our passage. There the boiling, roaring, dashing river lay before us. In our extremity there came a ray of hope. The river that had so soon overflowed its banks might soon fall again, so we consulted a wise-looking, venerable black man about it. 'When shall we be able to cross?' He looked at the clouds, to the distant mountains, and then with calm confidence comforted us by telling us that we could pass on Saturday. It was now Tuesday, and my friend sitting by my side in the buggy had arranged to be married the next day, and his bride was more than twenty miles the other side of that river! I turned to my friend and advised him the next time he got married not to put an impassable river between himself and his intended wife! 'Fortune favours the brave,' said he. 'At yonder house on the hill the other side of the river the gentleman keeps a large flat-bottomed boat. If we could get that we might cross.' 'Yes, but *how* to get it—that's the question. Who among you black men will undertake to swim these horses across the river and take a note to the gentleman?'

"'I will,' says one, and off goes the harness and off go the few clothes of the rider, and making them into a bundle round his neck, he mounts one of the horses and dashes into the surging waters, and with no more clothing than he came with into the

world he seems not unlikely to go out of it, and we watch with interest and some fear the issue. On the current bears him on its seaward course. Will he emerge? There! he has crossed the middle of the stream, and in a few minutes he and the horses bound on the opposite shore. The gentleman readily gave his consent to the use of his boat, and with his personal assistance and that of his servants we safely crossed the Styx, and were able to pursue our journey, and unite the following day the happy lover to his bride."

Another story he told with great effect on missionary platforms in England, to illustrate the generosity and devotion of the black people, was the story of a wonderful collection:—

"In the mountains of the island of Jamaica, we have a population of black and coloured people. They live for the most part on their own little patches of land, and in decent little cottages that they have built since emancipation was given to them or their fathers. They grow coffee and maize, sweet potatoes and yams. They carry their produce ten or sometimes twenty miles to market on their heads, or on donkeys when they can manage to buy one. Many of them, though black, are very religious, love their Bibles, keep holy the Sabbath, and, in hundreds of cases, they walk several miles to attend a place of worship. Sometimes the place is very humble, only a roof of thatch upon mud walls. Yet they love the place,

as David did, when he said, 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.' They have as much reason to love such places as Christians have in England. There they first felt the converting power of God; there they have felt the comforting power of His word and grace in many a season of trial. I knew in one district a church of these poor people, who worshipped in one of these humble structures that was little better than a cow-house, but they resolved to get a better one. They secured a site where four roads met. It was a fine spot. There they determined to erect a place of worship to seat about seven hundred people, the building to be of stone, and the cost of it to be from £1100 to £1200. It was a great undertaking for a church of poor, black, labouring people, with not a rich man among them. Their minister, however, had confidence in them, and that they would carry out their purpose he was certain.

"The day was fixed for the laying of the corner-stones, and I went with the minister to take a part in the ceremony. When, however, we got up into that mountain district, the clouds gathered in dark, black masses, and the rain came down all day in torrents. We, the ministers, were shut up all day in the old place of worship, waiting for the weather to clear up that we might proceed with service of stone-laying; and the poor people, in their holiday costume, were shut up in their houses waiting to

take their part in the business of the day. At length it was clear that the business of the day must be for the time given up; the shades of evening were gathering just as the rain ceased, and we had to go over ten miles of dangerous roads. So we ordered our horses into our waggons, and came on the road where the stones should have been laid; the people saw us, and came running out of their houses, and cried out, 'Minister going to lay de stones, sah?' To which the minister replied, 'Not to-day, too wet, too late; we will come another day.' They, the people, cried out, 'Minister, make the collection.' It was a droll idea to make a collection while the people stood in the country road, in the shades of evening, and with the roads and ditches full of water. The minister at first hesitated. But I saw the people would not take back to their homes the money they had intended to give, so I urged the minister to make the collection in the road. He consented, and while we sat in the waggons, the people, men and women, too, took off their hats, went into the cottages and fetched plates, and a collection was made in a few minutes which amounted to £70 of the current coin of the realm. Some weeks after this the stones were laid, and the people again contributed an amount about equal to that they had collected in the road. The chapel is now built, and is an ornament to the locality, and is pretty well crowded with black and coloured worshippers every Sunday."

An account of one of his missionary tours in Jamaica, probably written for the authorities at home, will give a good idea of the character of Mr. Sargeant's work and the vast amount he was, thanks to his good health and spirits, able to accomplish at one stretch :—

"On the 10th of April [year not given] I preached in the city, and as soon on the following day as I could set matters in order and prepare for a long journey, I started for the north side, resolving to make about thirty miles before dark. Just about sundown, oppressed by the intense heat and weary of the dust and glare of the white roads, I drove up to the door of our mission house at Linstead, and was met by the cheerful smile and hearty welcome of our young native minister, who only a few weeks before had entered upon the work of this his first circuit. I spent a pleasant evening with him, and found him happy and hopeful in his work.

"The next morning (12th) I started at 4.30 for St. Ann's Bay, and found myself nearly at the top of Mount Diavola before the sun rose over the distant Blue Mountains. By a little after nine I had crossed the summit and descended the steep sides of the Devil's Mount; passed over the glorious park-like scenery of St. Ann's, and was sitting at breakfast with our missionary and his family at Beechamville. While my horses refreshed themselves in the cool pastures of the mountains for

a few hours I had time to examine the day school, and was delighted with its order and progress.

"From Beechamville I journeyed to St. Ann's Bay, and found our missionary and his wife there in tolerably good health, abundant in labours and rejoicing in success.

"On the 13th I had promised to preach at Duncan's, and after a good night's rest and an early breakfast at St. Ann's I was again skirting the coast on the white roads to the north of the island. Before the shades of evening came on I had reached the station, and preached at night to a good congregation.

"Early next morning I left for Falmouth, arriving there in time for breakfast, which I partook of at the house of a Frenchman who had found the grace of God in one of our chapels in the Windward Islands.

"Intending to spend a Sabbath at Falmouth on my return, and having a special appointment forty miles beyond, early the next day my horses were put in the buggy, and after nearly five hours travelling through clouds of dust and heat of about ninety degrees, it was with a sense of relief that none but a weary traveller in the tropics can fully appreciate, I entered a cool and hospitable resting-place in my former residence at Montego Bay. I found that preparations had been made by the missionary for the laying of the foundation-stone

of a new chapel the next morning at Bethel, a country station about ten miles away.

"Before daybreak the next morning the whole household were astir, and very soon eight of the number were on the way to Bethel. Never in the colonies have I seen such interest in any religious service as in the laying of the foundation-stone of this village chapel. From town and village, mountain settlement and sugar plantation, on foot and horseback, for many miles around the people thronged the roads. It was a goodly sight to see several thousands of the poor peasantry of Jamaica, well and comfortably dressed in every variety of costume, evincing such a deep and intelligent interest in the proceedings of the day.

"At the close of this ceremony I went on twenty miles to Mount Ward. On Sunday (17th) I preached twice to large congregations.

"Monday (18th).—Lectured at Mount Reece on behalf of chapel improvements.

"Tuesday (19th).—Returned to Mount Ward. Examined day school and lectured to a large and deeply attentive audience.

"Wednesday (20th).—Went on fifteen miles farther to Savannah-la-Mar, and lectured in the Court House.

"Thursday (21st).—To Mearnsville, and lectured.

"Friday (22nd). — Needed rest, and, after a journey of fifteen miles, found it in the cool mountain home of an old friend.

"Saturday (23rd).—Left for Lucea, a distance of twenty-five miles, where, the next day (Sunday), I preached morning and evening, and addressed a large gathering of Sunday-school scholars in the afternoon.

"Monday (25th).—Lectured in the same place.

"Tuesday (26th).—Drove twenty-five miles to Montego Bay, where I lectured on Wednesday, and preached on Friday.

"Saturday (30th).—Left for Falmouth, where I preached twice on Sunday, and lectured on Monday in the Court House.

"Tuesday (May 3rd).—I went on to Duncan's, and the next morning started with our missionary there to do some real pioneer work in the mountains, some twenty miles from his station. We drove to an out-station called Sawyers, as far as we could drive with safety, and after examining the day schools there, we took to the saddle, climbed up the sides of the mountains into the region called the Alps, and on higher still, until we came to one of the most religiously destitute parts of the island, a region in which are a number of small settlers. For several years past the minister of the Duncan's Circuit has occasionally visited this locality. A small society has been formed in which are several Germans, who many years ago settled here, and in temporal matters appear to be doing well. A day school also has been commenced, which I had the opportunity of inspecting. Two sites for a chapel

being offered to us, one by a German, the other by a Creole, we made what we hope will prove a wise selection; and then, according to a previous announcement, I lectured for the building fund in the curing house of an old sugar estate. After the lecture we addressed the people as to ways and means for the intended new chapel. Promises were made with cheerful liberality. One would give two thousand cedar boards, another six thousand cedar shingles, a third a month's work as a mason, a fourth a week's work as a carpenter, and so on. Various sums of money were also promised, and we were fully convinced the work might proceed at once.

"Thursday (May 4th).—We returned to Duncan's, and I had time to examine one day school.

"Friday and Saturday (5th and 6th) I needed for rest and correspondence, and the Sunday following I preached twice on behalf of the new mountain chapel.

"Monday (8th).—Started between four and five a.m. for St. Ann's Bay, where I examined the school and lectured at night to a large audience.

"From St. Ann's I returned home by way of Ocho Rios, where I had the opportunity of seeing the school and inspecting the new mission house."

Truly a wonderful record of toil and travel, the physical strain of which could only have been borne by a man of exceptional robustness and energy; but Mr. Sargeant was a born missionary, and the joy he felt in his work made the labour light.

CHAPTER IX

CHAIRMAN OF BEDFORD AND NORTHAMPTON DISTRICT—APPOINTED FIRST PRESIDENT OF W.I. CONFERENCE—ELECTION TO LEGAL HUNDRED — MARRIAGE — ON DEPUTATION FOR BIBLE SOCIETY—BARBADOS—RECEPTION BY W.I. BRETHREN.

CHAPTER IX

Chairman of Bedford and Northampton District—Appointed First President of W.I. Conference—Election to Legal Hundred—Marriage—On Deputation for Bible Society—Barbados—Reception by W.I. Brethren.

IN 1881 Mr. Sargeant returned once again to his native country, and was appointed by the Conference to the Superintendency of St. Paul's Circuit, Bedford, his brethren electing him at the same time to the Chairmanship of the Bedford and Northampton District. That position he filled with conspicuous ability, the experience he had gained as a missionary standing him in good stead in the administration of home affairs. But his missionary work was not yet finished. Just as he was closing his full term of service at Bedford it had been decided that the West Indies should cease to be regarded as missionary stations under the direct control of the Missionary Committee, and should be formed into a separate Conference. It was an important crisis, and a strong man was needed to guide the churches into their new conditions of life. Who so suited for the position as the man who loved the West Indies, who had given twenty-five of the best years of his life to work in that

field, who was intimately acquainted with all its conditions of life and service, and whose gifts and powers of statesmanship were at their zenith? Yielding to the wishes of those in authority, Mr. Sargeant consented to occupy the position of the first President of the West Indian Conference. The same Conference (1884) which entrusted him with that sacred charge further showed its confidence and appreciation of his services by electing him a member of the Legal Hundred, an honour which he richly deserved, and of which he was justly proud. In 1883 he had married the widow of the Rev. George Blanchflower, and accompanied by his wife he again sailed for the sunny isles of the West. At the same time the British and Foreign Bible Society, by way of commemorating the Jubilee of Emancipation, desired to send a deputation to the West Indies to carry from island to island a message of congratulation and encouragement. By arrangement with the Missionary Committee Mr. Sargeant was selected for the honour, along with a clergyman of the Church of England, the Rev. David Brodie, the Society's Metropolitan District Secretary. They began their tour in Barbados in October 1884, and spent four months in visiting nearly all the British Colonies from Demerara to Jamaica. In the Committee's Report for 1885 this visitation is thus referred to: "The Committee have abundant reason to be thankful for the results of this tour. Zeal for Bible work has been re-awakened where it

STREET IN BARBADOS.

[*To face page* 93.

had become cold, earnest workers have been cheered amid their isolation and hard toil, by words of sympathy and praise, and everywhere it has been felt that the bonds of union between the Parent Society and the West Indian Auxiliaries have been tightened." In the Report for the following year further services rendered by Mr. Sargeant to the Society are acknowledged, and in recognition thereof it announced that the Committee had been pleased to place his name among the Honorary Life Governors who have rendered essential service to the Society.

Mr. Sargeant decided to make Barbados his head-quarters, that island affording the best facilities for visiting the others of the Eastern group, and being in direct communication by the Royal Mail Atlantic steamers with Jamaica. He therefore became Superintendent of the James Street Circuit in Bridgetown, the capital, with a junior colleague who should act for him in his frequent and necessary absence from the island in discharging the duties of the Presidency.

Barbados is an interesting and delightful island. "Little England," the inhabitants love to call it, and there is much in it that reminds English people of their own country. In the distance its richly cultivated plantations look like waving fields of corn, and here and there a grey church tower or steeple, rising from amid the verdure, serves to complete the illusion. The island has excellent roads,

so that you may drive to any part of the country. Only about the size of the Isle of Wight, it is one of the most thickly populated parts of the globe, containing one hundred and eighty thousand people, mostly black and coloured. Barbados has the distinction of being among the British West Indies the only island which has belonged to England from the first, being taken possession of and colonised by Englishmen in the reign of James the First.

Methodism in Barbados dates from even an earlier period than Dr. Coke, for when that worthy man visited the island in 1788 he found some godly Methodist soldiers carrying on gospel work among the inhabitants in a warehouse in the city. As in the other islands, our missionaries in Barbados had a hard fight for their liberties in the days before slavery was abolished, and early in the nineteenth century the Rev. John W. Shrewsbury and his family had to flee for their lives, the chapel, the predecessor of the present handsome and commodious structure in James Street, being razed to the ground by the genteel mob! But the work could not be exterminated, and pending the arrival of another missionary, the services were continued in the house of a brave coloured woman named Ann Gill, to whose memory a chapel was erected a few years ago in a growing suburb of the city. Representations were made to the Government at home, and the result was the Governor of Barbados

received instructions that the members of the Methodist mission, with their missionary, should be protected and the work allowed to proceed. This effectually checked the opposition, and with the Act of Emancipation came the end of all our troubles; and from that day to this Methodism has had a firm and beneficial hold upon the people of that island. To-day there are five circuits in the island with seven ministers and some five thousand members of Society.

Mr. Sargeant was commended to his brethren in the West Indies by the Missionary Committee in a circular referring to the new constitution, in the following terms:—

"We are glad to find that the appointment of the Rev. George Sargeant as the first President of the West Indian Conference is so warmly welcomed. Mr. Sargeant has spent many years in the West Indies, and is intimately acquainted with every department of our work in the islands. He has also had experience of Methodist administration in England, and enjoys the confidence of his brethren at home, as shown by his election into the Legal Hundred at the last meeting of the yearly Conference. Until the meeting of the West Indian Conferences he is the Delegate of the Yearly Conference, and is invested with legal powers to act in that capacity. Henceforth all official communications must be made to the Missionary Committee through the West Indian Conferences, and

until they shall meet, through Mr. Sargeant. We hope, however, that our brethren will continue to supply us with information concerning the progress of the work of God on their several stations suitable for publication in the monthly *Notices*. Our people at home will continue to be interested in that work, and their interest and sympathy will be best sustained and fed by frequent communications from the brethren, relating to their toils and trials, their encouragements and successes."

At a meeting held in the James Street Chapel, Mr. Sargeant received a kindly welcome from the ministers and people, and in reply to an address presented to him, said :—

"My dear brethren, allow me to assure you that your very kind welcome to me I fully and heartily appreciate. The generous expression of your confidence will strengthen my hands, and hearten me in the work to which I have been appointed by the English Conference.

"Hitherto, as you know, the various districts of our mission, in the West Indies, though a part of the great Methodist Connexion, have, practically, in working, had no more relation to each other, than if they had been as wide as the Poles asunder. Now, however, churches that have so much in common, in their origin, their growth, their trials, their duties, and in all their surroundings, will, under the new Conference, be drawn together by the

bonds of a new legislative and administrative régime. In the endeavour to carry out our plan and purpose in this new departure, we may have our difficulties, we calculate upon them; but they will turn out to be difficulties that will vanish before the united prayer and faith of our ministers and churches. We remember that the men who toiled in this part of the vineyard before us had their difficulties, and they bravely met and conquered them. They trusted in God and were never confounded. They have entered into their rest, and we have entered into their labours. They have as the fruit of their hallowed toil left us a goodly heritage, that, by the good hand of the Lord our God upon us, we will defend and extend.

"Whatever here and there a timid soul may feel or say, as to the possible result of the self-government of our West Indian churches, you in Barbados, and our ministers and people, generally, will have no fear as to the ability of Methodism in these islands to hold her own, and make headway against all opposing power.

"I may have other opportunities of expressing my views on many of the questions involved in a West Indian Conference, and shall at present content myself with this brief reference. Only adding, in conclusion, that while my home is with you in Barbados, it will be a pleasure to serve, as opportunity may offer, the various interests of your

churches; and if in my relation to the West Indian Conference I fail to reach the standard of your kind estimate of my fitness for the office I hold, it shall not be for the want of diligent effort."

CHAPTER X

BEGINNING OF COMMERCIAL DEPRESSION—STORY OF PROGRESS—PRESIDENTIAL TOILS AND TRAVELS—AT HOME IN BARBADOS — RE-APPOINTED PRESIDENT — "FROUDACITY."

CHAPTER X

Beginning of Commercial Depression—Story of Progress—Presidential Toils and Travels—At Home in Barbados—Re-appointed President—"Froudacity."

IT was a most unfortunate coincidence that with the formation of the West Indies into a separate Conference should begin the great wave of commercial depression, which, intensifying year by year, has brought such poverty and ruin to those beautiful and historic colonies. But in spite of that the work of Methodism was never more healthful and progressive, and although feeling the pinch as regards the finances of the Church, yet the faith and earnestness of the people were never so manifest as during the first years of the Conference. Let Mr. Sargeant's own words, spoken in the "open session" of the English Conference of 1891, describe that period of history. Mr. Sargeant said he represented the "oldest Mission and the youngest Conference. It had pleased the British Conference some seven years ago to unite together the greater part of the Wesleyan churches in the West Indies from Demerara to Jamaica, and thus to make them self-supporting. Many in the West Indies had serious

misgivings about this step, and thought the time had not come. Others thought the time would never come. He was there to tell them what had been the result. Everything at that time seemed to indicate that the Conference would be a failure. Many sugar estates were thrown out of cultivation. Thousands of their people went away to Panama. Others emigrated to other parts of the world. There were also two years of smallpox in the most important island of the group, and then they had had swept away in one of their most important centres Government help to the extent of a thousand pounds annually. In spite of all these adverse influences they had made progress all along the line. At the present time they had four thousand three hundred and eighty more members than they had at the beginning. They had also two thousand five hundred on trial for membership. They had increases also of over five thousand junior members, of over six thousand Sabbath scholars, and over seven thousand day scholars. They had raised over six thousand pounds for trust purposes. They had built more chapels in the last six years than had been built in the previous thirty. They had built twenty-two chapels, mostly of stone. Neither had they neglected the work of primary education. Some fourteen years ago they established, with British help, their High School in Jamaica. The Government at that time thought it a most audacious thing to attempt. The Government had also established a High School, with every

modern appliance, and with two gentlemen from Oxford and Cambridge as professors. The result was they could only get three boys. Although they had undertaken to charge more than the Government in the shape of fees, before the school had been opened a month they had thirty scholars from all parts of the country. Their numbers had since grown from thirty to one hundred in that school. They had seven masters, mostly from England. The Government established ten years ago a scholarship worth £200 a year for three years at one of the universities, and they had taken more than half these scholarships in their school in Jamaica. They had, notwithstanding the hard times, established a mission in the island of St. Lucia, around which they had been working for a hundred years; and had also established a mission in the Danish island of St. Thomas. They had a missionary working in Panama, and he was persuaded that whatever became of the great 'ditch,' Methodism had planted its flag on that part of the continent of South America, and would never turn its back upon the country."

The years of Mr. Sargeant's presidency found him in labours most abundant, in the midst of trials connected with the initial difficulties of the new organisation, pressed with different calls for service in the different islands and British Guiana. Unwearyingly and sympathetically he

responded to those calls, displaying in connection with such service that unselfishness and true brotherliness which was so marked a trait in his character. Wherever he went he was a welcome visitor, and friends vied with each other in showing him honour and hospitality. In some places his visits to lecture, or preach, or lay foundation-stones, were made the occasion of a general festival; and he often brought home trophies in the form of handsome presents received from his admirers, some of them from the very poor people, and therefore prized the most. On board the Royal Mail steamers and intercolonial boats, he was a familiar figure, and many of the captains and officers claimed him as a friend. The place of honour was always given him at the captain's table; and if a Sunday were passed at sea, Mr. Sargeant was nearly always asked to conduct the service, and this when dignitaries of the Church of England were on board. On one occasion, when a bishop on board ventured to interfere with the captain's arrangements for divine service, he was politely reminded that he (the captain) was bishop on board that ship. On one occasion he was a fellow-passenger with the late Dr. Thorold, Bishop of Winchester, and the two entered into very friendly relationship. The bishop was interested in hearing from Mr. Sargeant an account of his missionary work and experiences, and when they parted expressed the pleasure he felt in having

made his acquaintance. "You are a bishop, Mr. Sargeant."

"According to the teaching of the New Testament, I believe I am," was the reply.

"Yes, you are a bishop."

In a series of articles on the West Indies, written for one of the religious magazines, Bishop Thorold referred to this interview.

Mr. Sargeant used to tell of a terrible storm at sea when voyaging from England to the West Indies in the *Don*, when the passengers quite expected to be wrecked. But the skill of the captain ("Old Woolard") saved them. Out of gratitude, a purse of thirty pounds was presented to him, and Mr. Sargeant was asked to draw up the address, and make the presentation. This he did, and among his papers is the rough pencilled draft of the address, upon which is inscribed, "Written in bed, while the sea was still heaving with the storm."

In their beautiful home in Belleville Square, Mr. and Mrs. Sargeant dispensed true hospitality. Barbados being the first port of call for the outcoming and the last for the home-going steamers, nearly every mail brought some friends who had to be met and entertained during their brief sojourn. To new-comers—and especially to young missionaries—it was a delightful introduction to West Indian life, and to those going home it was a last glimpse that even in spite of sickness or disappointment could not but leave a pleasant

memory. Mr. Sargeant was all kindness and sympathy, and if the passing stranger were fortunate enough to find both the "gude-man" and his wife at home, he saw a picture of perfect domestic happiness. Those times when he was at home were very precious to those who formed the family circle, for his chat, as we gathered at the meal table, or sat in the verandah in the cool of the evening, was most entertaining and instructive, and his bright, cheery presence made a great difference to the house. To the friends at James Street and the other chapels it was a great delight to see him in the pulpit, for the services he conducted were always seasons of refreshing. Much as he needed rest on his return from his long tours, he generally preached on the Sunday; and indeed his vast correspondence, and having the care of a large circuit, in addition to the "care of all the churches," made prolonged rest an impossibility.

At the end of the triennial term, Mr. Sargeant was re-appointed President of the Conference, and the following three years were rich in splendid service. Just about the beginning of this second term, James Anthony Froude published his *English in the West Indies*, the fruit of a somewhat hasty visit to the islands, and like Anthony Trollope, and many others before him, had come to far too hasty judgments concerning the colonies and their people. The book raised a storm of indignation

among the intelligent people of the islands, and in no breast was there greater ire than in that of Mr. Sargeant. Before he had finished the book, he realised it as his duty to publicly refute the errors which crowded its pages. And this he did in the form of a lecture, which was delivered to large audiences in Jamaica, Trinidad, and elsewhere. Men of high position took the chair, and people of all denominations came to hear Mr. Sargeant, as, in his own trenchant style, he took the book point by point, and showed how utterly false and misleading its statements were. He was asked over and over again to publish his lecture, but this he never did, and even the manuscript appears to be lost. A *resumé*, however, taken from newspaper reports, may be sufficient at this distance of time:—

"The Rev. George Sargeant, in commencing his lecture, said that he was there to answer the false statements concerning the West Indies, and the West Indian people, which Mr. Froude had made in his book, *The English in the West Indies*. That book conveyed an entirely false impression of the tendencies of West Indian life, and it would be his duty to correct, as far as possible, these false impressions. Gentlemen of that class seemed to think that it was right for them to inscribe upon their banners the watchword of the old southern planters in America, who said, 'the black man had no rights that a white man was bound to

respect.' They seemed to go to work writing their books in that spirit. Let them look to Mr. Froude's book and see if they found any references to authority. He got on board the steamer, sat down by the side of other gentlemen whom he had never met before, they talked to him about the natives of the West Indies, and he went to work upon that authority, never testing the things he heard, and said, 'Now, I understand for the first time the peculiar people of the West Indies,' and began to write, and told all about them. Speaking of them generally, he said they were naked and not ashamed. They did not know the very first principles of Christianity; they sinned, but only sinned as animals. They had no law, and therefore could not be charged with the violation of any law. Mr. Froude seemed ready to swallow anything. A French priest told him that the black man changed his religion when he got back to his own country just as he changed his clothes, —and he put it down in his book as gospel! And to crown all he declared it was high time they should send missionaries to the West Indies. Fancy writing this when in Jamaica he would find not less than probably two hundred ministers, a vast number of schoolmasters, and an improvement of the social condition of the people such as they would not find in many regions of the mother country. Mr. Froude sneered at the

philanthropy as foolish which emancipated the black man. He did not hesitate at the expense of men who fought the battle of freedom to sneer and make cynical remarks; but the names of Wilberforce and Buxton, Clarkson, Macaulay, and others, would live in English history when Froude's name was forgotten." As an illustration of one of the minor inaccuracies in the book, Mr. Froude describes, in one of his most poetical paragraphs, the fireflies sparkling about the bushes in Barbados, whereas those beautiful insects are never seen in that island. I remember Mr. Sargeant naïvely suggesting that Mr. Froude probably put the fireflies in his book before coming to Barbados, and forgot to take them out again after he had been there!

One newspaper report adds that, although taking exception to its theories and statements, Mr. Sargeant did ample justice to the literary merit and beautiful word-painting of Mr. Froude's book.

"Mr. Punch" perhaps summed up Mr. Froude's literary style best of all—

> About Froude there is no mystery,
> He writes without restriction,
> His fiction's full of history,
> His history's full of fiction.

CHAPTER XI

RETURNS TO ENGLAND FOR GOOD—"FAREWELL"—SETTLED IN CHELMSFORD—BECOMES A SUPERNUMERARY.

W. I. GENERAL CONFERENCE, BARBADOS, 1891.

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CHAPTER XI

Returns to England for Good—"Farewell"—Settled in Chelmsford—Becomes a Supernumerary.

TOWARDS the end of his second term as President, Mr. Sargeant talked of returning to England for good. Much consternation and regret were called forth by this intimation, and he was earnestly entreated to reconsider his decision, and after a change to the old country to come back and fulfil the next three years' presidency to which he had been appointed. He eventually said he would leave himself in the hands of the Yearly Conference. After presiding over the General Conference, which was held in Barbados in March 1891, Mr. and Mrs. Sargeant began to prepare for their journey home. Both felt the need of rest and change. The President's arduous duties in connection with the Annual and General Conferences were enough to overtax the strength and skill and temper of the strongest man. Still there were no signs of abated strength, and the pangs of parting were softened by the confident hope that it would not be for long, and that in the autumn he and Mrs. Sargeant would return.

The address to the Yearly Conference from the West Indian General Conference contained the following paragraph :—

"We recognise the good hand of our God that has been on our beloved President, the Rev. George Sargeant, during these six years of our Conference life, in the preservation of his health and his mental vigour. We rejoice in his many excellent gifts, and we are grateful for the ready and efficient ways he has used them in the service of the Conference. We take the occasion to express very earnestly the hope that the strong desire of the Conference may be realised in his continued presidency for the term for which he stands elected and appointed. We are persuaded that there will be general advantage to our West Indian Connexion from his remaining in that position."

The friends in connection with the James Street circuit presented Mr Sargeant with an address, bearing tribute to the affection in which he had been held by them as their superintendent and to the spiritual development of the circuit whilst under his care, and commending him and Mrs. Sargeant, "your beloved wife, who, with yourself, has won our genuine esteem and affection as a Church and people," to the care of the Great Father in Heaven.

The *West Indian Wesleyan Watchman*, the official organ of the Eastern Annual Conference,

then edited by the present writer, makes the following references to the departing President:—

"To-day, the President and Mrs. Sargeant leave by the R.M.S. *Atrato* for England. All our readers will join with us in wishing them a most prosperous voyage. They will be followed by the prayers and blessings of thousands, who will listen with interest for news of their safe arrival. This is a good time of the year for the voyage, and England will be reached in the midst of the sunshine and flowers of May. A warm welcome awaits Mr. and Mrs. Sargeant on the other side of the water, for not only have they a large circle of relatives and friends, but the President is highly esteemed by his brethren in the Yearly Conference, and his services are sure to be greatly in request. Indeed he had, some time before leaving, received invitations to speak at provincial missionary meetings. As our chief representative, too, he will attend the Conference at Nottingham in July, and our churches will have the benefit of his powerful advocacy, and the Missionary Committee of his sage counsel and advice. It would have been a good thing if all our missionaries, who have returned to England to tell the story of our missions, were as capable of giving an exact account of things as Mr. Sargeant. Of course, few have stayed so long in the work as he, but even a ten years' sojourn in these islands has not prevented some of our missionaries from committing the sin of 'Froudacity.' It is a sad

reflection that much of the misconception regarding the West Indies and West Indian Methodism which exists in England to-day, is owing to the incorrect and ill-judged speech-making of men whose livers—to put the most charitable construction upon the matter—have become affected through long residence in the tropics. Mr. Sargeant is no pessimist under any circumstances, and he will have an encouraging story to tell to our English friends. He has carefully watched, and taken part in, the progress of Methodism in these islands for more than forty years, and he rejoices in the fact that never was our Church doing a greater work than at the present day, and never had she a more glorious prospect of success. The President is an enthusiast on these matters, but it is an enthusiasm born, not of a superficial acquaintance with things as they appear, but of a thorough knowledge of things as they are. One important commission has been entrusted to Mr. Sargeant, and that is to look out, in conjunction with Rev. H. Adams, for suitable young men to enter the ministry here for life-service. It is found that we cannot at present depend upon our Theological Institutions for an adequate ministerial supply, and whilst there are young men who have passed successfully the District Meeting, but who fail to pass the July Committee because of the large number of candidates, and the consequent 'survival of the fittest,' it is wise to secure them

for our work. The experiment has already been tried with satisfactory results.

"In October, Mr. Sargeant will be present at the Ecumenical Conference in America, to which, along with the Rev. T. M. Geddes, the Vice-President of the Western Annual Conference, he has been appointed our delegate. We trust that the President, in all his travels and engagements, will not overtax his strength, and that he may soon become so thoroughly recruited as to long to get back to us and the work he loves so well."

Mr. and Mrs. Sargeant had a safe and pleasant journey home,—the sixteenth voyage Mr. Sargeant had made across the Atlantic,—and their letters indicated they were travelling about a great deal and finding much joy in meeting old friends. Mr. Sargeant attended the Conference at Nottingham, and spoke with great effect in the "Open Session" on West Indian affairs. In the autumn he attended the Second Methodist Ecumenical Conference in America as Delegate from the West Indies, and renewed many acquaintances he had made on previous visits to that country. Everywhere he went he carried a brief on behalf of his much-loved mission field, and although separated by thousands of miles of water he served its interests in many ways. The brethren on the field still corresponded with him about their difficulties, and were sure of receiving courteous and sympathetic replies to their letters. In the matter of securing suitable rein-

forcements for the West Indian ministry he was unceasing in his efforts, and great was his joy when he could go down to Southampton to see brethren whom he had selected for the work, off by the Royal Mail steamers. On such occasions he always expressed the wish that he were going with them, and the longing would be intensified when the captain, seizing him by the hand, would ask whether he was to have the pleasure of his company on the voyage. In their cosy home in the old county town of Chelmsford, where they decided to settle, amid a large circle of relatives and friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sargeant kept open house for any stray West Indian missionary who might find himself in that direction, and it was an intense joy to them both to see old friends and to talk about West Indian affairs.

It was increasingly apparent that Mr. Sargeant would not return to the West Indies, and in 1892 he requested the Yearly Conference to become a supernumerary. In granting this request the Conference passed the following resolution:—

"In granting the request of the Rev. George Sargeant to become a supernumerary, the Conference takes the opportunity of placing on record its appreciation of his personal character, and of the faithful and varied service which he has rendered to the Church of Christ both at home and abroad. During the first ten years of his ministry Mr. Sargeant laboured with marked

success in the West Indies. Then, after a brief service at home, he returned to the same mission field. Subsequently he spent twelve years in the home work, where he loyally served Methodism both as superintendent of important circuits and as Chairman of the Bedford and Northampton district. The Conference especially recognises the readiness with which Mr. Sargeant has repeatedly placed himself at its disposal for foreign service, and remembers how, after he had completed thirty-seven years in the ministry, he undertook a responsible charge in relation to the newly constituted West Indian Conferences. He was appointed the first President, and the duty thus devolved was faithfully and efficiently done in the presence of peculiar difficulties. During two triennial terms he rendered valuable service in this important capacity. His brethren recognise not only his fidelity to the doctrine and discipline of Methodism but his lifelong service to the Church. The Conference assures him of its affectionate regard and earnest hope that for many years he may be able to serve the cause of Christ."

The *West Indian Watchman*, speaking of the event, says:—

"We cannot allow the retirement of Mr. Sargeant, first President of the West Indian Conference, the news of which came with the intelligence of the Yearly Conference contained in our last, to pass without a few words of comment.

The announcement, although scarcely unexpected, had for us a touch of pathos. When a Methodist preacher, after a long ministry, 'sits down' (to use the common phrase), it generally means that his natural force has begun to abate, and that he is no longer equal to the wear and tear involved in the regular work of the ministry. He joins, in fact, the company of 'worn out preachers.' Now, the fact of a preacher having spent his strength and become worn out in the work of the Church, and retiring from the noise of the battlefield to the quietude and seclusion of supernumeraryship, has in it a tinge of sadness. It is that twilight hour of life which indicates that the day will soon be done. With the name of Mr. Sargeant, however, we cannot link the usual associations of retirement from the active work of the ministry. When he left these shores in May 1891, on a short visit (as we hoped) to England, he was quite hale and hearty; and his friends expected that at least he would fulfil the duties of his position until 1894, to which time he had been re-elected. It was hoped that after a few months' rest and change he would return and continue his work of superintending our churches in the West Indies. Those who knew him best saw no falling-off in his powers. Although well advanced in years, he retained his freshness and vigour to the last; and the pleasure he took in his work, and the enthusiasm he threw into it, were a marvel to all. He was as truly

the 'Grand old man' of West Indian Methodism as Mr. Gladstone is of the Liberal party. He was well known and respected throughout the length and breadth of these islands, and not by the members of his own Church alone, but by all sorts and conditions of men. His genial disposition, his wide culture, and powers of conversation—to say nothing of his high platform and pulpit gifts—won for him the admiration and respect of all. A better type of the Christian *gentleman* it would be hard to find, and an unkind word or a mean action never marred the purity and grace of his daily conversation. All these things would have made his return, even for a year or two, very welcome, and they also remind us how great is our loss. But Mr. Sargeant has thought fit to retire. He has not done this without due consideration, and he has been guided by circumstances. The Yearly Conference has resolved to insert a special resolution on his retirement in the 'Minutes.' This is fitting. Mr. Sargeant has rendered illustrious service to West Indian Methodism. He began his career in the Antigua district in 1847, and with the exception of intervals (amounting in all to about twelve years) spent in English circuits, his ministerial life has been one long spell of arduous missionary toil. When the West Indian Conference was formed in 1885, his great services and eminent gifts were recognised in his being made the first President, and that office he has continued

to adorn to the time of his resignation. We have no need to give particulars of the wise administrative acts of Mr. Sargeant's presidency, and they are almost too numerous for recapitulation. He has left the stamp of his genius upon the churches of these islands, over which he was a true bishop. He will never be forgotten, and in very many homes his name will linger as a household word. We are glad to know that Mr. Sargeant means to continue to exercise his ministry, and that this present year he will find a congenial field of labour in his old circuit of Hinde Street, London, where he will assist the Rev. W. L. Watkinson. We pray that the evening of his life, and that also of his estimable wife, may be crowned by much peace and joy, and that surrounded by their friends, and blessed with every temporal and spiritual comfort, the day of life may close as the glorious sunset of a summer's day."

CHAPTER XII

Days of Retirement — Failing Strength — Notes of Last Address — "Asleep in Jesus" — Funeral Service — Last Tributes.

CHAPTER XII

Days of Retirement—Failing Strength—Notes of Last Address —"Asleep in Jesus"—Funeral Service—Last Tributes.

THOSE days of retirement at Chelmsford, although serene and peaceful, were far from being a period of inaction. Mr. Sargeant's services as a preacher and speaker were greatly in request not only by the churches round about but all over the country. Nearly every Sunday found him preaching somewhere, and in the town itself he grew greatly beloved by people of all denominations. The progressive spirit which marked the whole of his ministry manifested itself in the stimulus he gave to the Wesleyans of Chelmsford to build a new and commodious church in a leading thoroughfare of the town, to replace the old and inconvenient one up a side street, which had done duty for so many years. He was greatly interested in the selection of a site and in the design and progress of the building, and rejoiced greatly when the beautiful church was opened for worship. "A *marvelious* man that, sir," said one of the workmen to the writer, nodding in the direction of Mr. Sargeant, as he was showing him round the half-

finished building. A sentiment that was heartily endorsed!

It was not until early in the year 1899 that his strength really began to show signs of failure, but after that there was a gradual decline. His last public service was to deliver an address at a United Covenant service held at Chelmsford early in the new year, and his friends say they never heard him speak with greater power or acceptance. The notes of that address are preserved, and a few extracts may not be out of place:—

"It is a joy to me, and I have no doubt it is to you, to have another opportunity of expressing the substantial oneness, with all their diversity, of the free Churches of this country. There is a loud call in our day for Christian unity, and I trust we all feel its importance. But we have reason to fear that many who call for it, mistake its essential nature. Our blessed Lord prayed that His people might be one, and that the oneness of His true followers might be a power to convince the world of the Divinity of His person and the great purpose of His Incarnation.

"But what is the oneness for which the Saviour prayed? Is it subscribing to some particular form of words called a creed? or obedience to some particular form of church government? A uniformity of Shibboleth, or religious externalism of words or deeds or dress? You look in vain for any such oneness in the teaching of the New Testament.

You have no defined creed, no form of church polity there. But we have great principles that were to govern all the followers of Christ individually and collectively in all ages, in the maintenance and extension of His kingdom. The oneness of His followers is a oneness of simple trust in Him as our Prophet, Priest, and King. The teaching of His lips and the teaching of His life: that is our creed.

"Now this kind of unity or oneness of His people Christ knew would be a power to overcome the scepticism of the ages. The faith that embodies Christ in the life, that shows Him supreme in the spirit and temper and action of the life, would stop the mouth of every foe and set the seal of divinity to the religions of Christ. It is our joy to know that amid the abounding infidelity of the age on the ground of history and science we have thousands of men who can meet the enemy in the gate and triumph over him. But let us bear in mind that we have a greater power than this to silence the gainsayer. What is that power? It is the united, loving, Christlike life in His people. Men have been found to resist all argument the most logical as to the divine origin of Christianity, who have been captivated, charmed, overpowered by the logic of a Christian life, and standing in its presence they have been compelled to say, 'Herein is the finger of God.'

"What is the object of our holy communion?

We remember what the Saviour said, 'Do this in remembrance of Me.' We are met to refresh and strengthen ourselves with the memory of His boundless love. To remember Him in Bethlehem's stable, to remember Him as the great Teacher who spake as never man spake, to remember that His whole life was one vast expression of love, a love that many waters could not quench, and that floods of ungodliness could not drown. To remember Gethsemane's garden and Calvary's summit, the triumphant Resurrection and glorious Ascension. To remember the Saviour until our faith in Him becomes enthusiastic in action on the moral battlefield of the world, and victory, victory through the blood of the Lamb resounds over every nation of a redeemed world.

"Brethren, I may not detain you, but there is the battlefield before you, there is the Captain of our Salvation ready to lead you, there are the weapons of your warfare, the Sword of the Spirit, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness. And there to hearten you amid the noise of conflict, the victor's crown."

We do not wonder that those who listened to this beautiful address felt their hearts burn within them. It was Mr. Sargeant's last message to the Church on earth. Like the holy Apostle John's, the burthen of it was "Love one another," and the address breathes the whole spirit of his life.

On the evening of the 10th of April he con-

ducted family worship in his own beautiful and reverent manner, and retired to rest in his wonted cheerfulness. Early the following morning he became unconscious, and in the afternoon, without a struggle, he calmly fell asleep in Jesus.

His death made a profound impression in the town where he had become so generally known and beloved, and from all parts of the country, too, came messages of condolence to his sorrowing widow. The funeral took place on Saturday, 15th April, and was attended by a large gathering of relatives and friends, and ministers of different denominations. The first part of the service was held in the new Wesleyan Church, Chelmsford, in the erection of which he had taken such a practical interest. The Wesleyan Missionary Society, whose honoured servant he had been, was represented by the Rev. Joel Peters, who delivered the following address:—

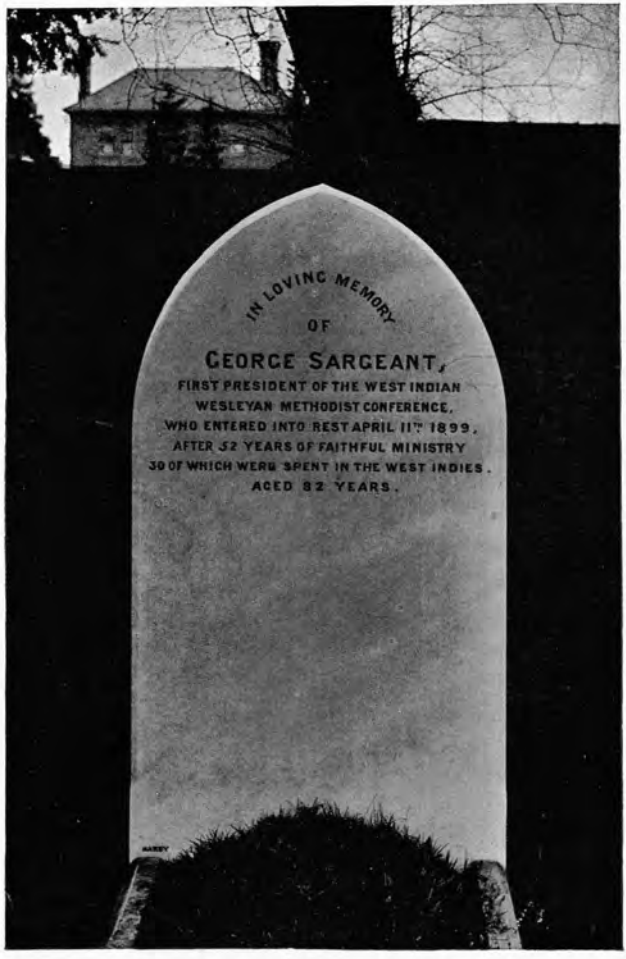
"I am here to-day at the request of the secretaries of our Missionary Society to represent them on this occasion in paying a tribute of affection to him whose loss we all mourn. I have no particular qualification for this office beyond the fact that I knew Mr. Sargeant, and for many years was associated with him in the work he loved so well. I feel it an honour to be asked—to be permitted—to come and pay at least a tribute of affection from my heart to the memory of him whom we knew and loved. I could not help thinking as I

sat in this church that if the tens of thousands of our members in the West Indian churches knew what was going on here now, and that I was speaking of their beloved and honoured President, they would, I am sure, wish me to pay a strong tribute of affection to him whom they loved most sincerely and tenderly. I am sure they would like me to express in some deep way the sense of their loss in his removal. My own acquaintanceship with Mr. Sargeant began when I was a young man going out to foreign fields, and he was stationed in Southampton. We used to call him a little more familiarly than 'Mr. Sargeant.' You know how it is with those men who are loved, honoured, and great—we don't give them titles, and so he was known as George Sargeant throughout the length and breadth of the mission fields. He came on board the steamer I was on to say 'Good-bye and God speed.' I laboured for some years in a district where he laboured—Antigua—and found that George Sargeant was spoken of as a man of great work for the Master. At Jamaica he gave me a greeting, and when I left the West Indies a year or two before he did, he came off from Barbados to say 'Good-bye, God bless you, make haste and come back again.' I can hardly imagine that he has gone from us, and yet, of course, he was a man full of years. But at the last Conference in Hull I saw him sitting side by side with his successor in the presidency of the

West Indies (the Rev. George Sykes) looking so hale and well. We honoured him, we loved him, and we mourn and weep with those who weep at his removal. As a man you have got to know him here, and knowing him you must have loved him. He was always kindly and genial, and made himself at home with you and you with him at once. He had a most remarkable memory. People whom he once met he never forgot, and whenever he met those who knew him there was a kindly inquiry and an affectionate greeting. Although he held the highest position we could give him, there was never anything of officialism about him, there was never any of that dignity which would make younger men stand away from him; he was always a brother and a friend ready to give a helping hand. He never censured anyone; if he had to do anything of that nature he always did it kindly and not harshly. He was one of the most able and eloquent preachers we have ever had in our mission fields in the West Indies. There was always sure to be a big congregation—a big crowd following him—to listen to his eloquence—persuasive eloquence which held us bound when he spoke. I have seen him on occasions which would try the patience and the temper of most people, but I never saw anything from him that did not become a Christian or anything that was at all subversive of a true minister of Christ. There was an evenness, a beautiful

Christian simplicity and loveliness about him which never seemed to be disturbed." Mr. Peters then referred to Mr. Sargeant's election for three consecutive terms as President of the West Indian conference, on the last of which a strong resolution was passed expressing high appreciation of his qualities. Mr. Sargeant was the one link which seemed to bind the whole of the West Indian churches together, and now he was gone there was not another man in regard to that particular office who could take his place. Mr. Peters concluded: "He served thirteen years in home work honourably and well. For three of those thirteen years he was Chairman of the District in which I now reside. I am sure the West Indies was engraven upon his heart. Whenever we had a conference of West Indian brethren we never thought it complete unless Mr. Sargeant was there. We looked upon him as a father, as a friend, and as one to be highly honoured and loved. We shall see and feel a mighty spiritual influence as a result of his labours for years and years in the mission field; we shall see and feel that though his outward frame has gone his work has lived. He himself has not gone; he is in reality, in truth, in the beautiful world with Christ. There lies our comfort and our hope, and he will abide with Him until we, too, shall join hands again when we have crossed like him to the other side."

On the Sunday evening following the funeral



GRAVE IN CHELMSFORD CEMETERY.

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the superintendent minister of the Chelmsford circuit (the Rev. Samuel Lock) preached a memorial sermon before a large congregation from the appropriate text: "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."

There in the little cemetery on the London Road, Chelmsford, awaiting the resurrection of the just, lies the honoured body of this servant of God. Thither the children who loved him so well come with their tribute of flowers, and there his many friends—some from the sunny isles of the far West, where he laboured so zealously for the Master—come from time to time as to a sacred shrine. Visiting it a short time ago the ancient and beautiful words of the Liturgy involuntarily came to my lips:

"AND WE ALSO BLESS THY HOLY NAME FOR ALL THY SERVANTS DEPARTED THIS LIFE IN THY FAITH AND FEAR; BESEECHING THEE TO GIVE US GRACE SO TO FOLLOW THEIR GOOD EXAMPLES, THAT WITH THEM WE MAY BE PARTAKERS OF THY HEAVENLY KINGDOM: GRANT THIS, O FATHER, FOR JESUS CHRIST'S SAKE, OUR ONLY MEDIATOR AND ADVOCATE. AMEN."

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL

"Christ is all, and in all."—Col. iii. 11.

THE great object of the Christian ministry is to hold up to the gaze of nations the God-Man Christ Jesus. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up," that looking the nations may live. How strikingly, my brethren, is this important truth illustrated by the examples that the apostles present us in their ministry. They preached not themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord. They no sooner arrested attention by a miracle or any fact or certain statements than they fix that attention upon the Saviour. If the miraculous gift of tongues is theirs, it is used, not to glorify themselves, but to set before the astonished auditory the claims of Christ. If a lame man is healed at the Beautiful gate of the temple, and the people filled with amazement, run together to the porch called Solomon's, "greatly wondering," the opportunity is seized at once to fix the mind of the

astonished multitudes upon Him "Whom God had raised from the dead, and glorified, and sent to bless them by turning every one of them from their iniquities." If scribes and elders and high priest stand for the accusers of Stephen, it is not so much his own innocence that he is bent upon vindicating as the true Messiahship of "Jesus of Nazareth." If Philip makes the acquaintance of an Ethiopian noble, not a word or thought seems devoted to any lower purpose than preaching to him Jesus. And whether Paul stands in the presence of Felix, Festus, or Agrippa; in Jerusalem amid the embodied bigotry of the Jews; in Athens amid the sages of Greece, or in Rome amid her haughty statesmen and warriors, one purpose clearly fills his mind, absorbs his every thought and calls forth all his energy, it is to know nothing, to teach nothing among men save "Christ and Him crucified." Whether he stands up to preach a sermon, or sits down to write an epistle; whether he sorrowfully tells of persecution, or exultingly sings of victory; whether he commends for fidelity, or blames for faithlessness; whether he warns the sinner, or comforts the saint, "Christ is all, and in all." He sees Him, in one word, as the fulness of Him that filleth all things; as the Sun that at once illuminates and quickens all, as the grand centre of attraction and the bond of union to all His people. That our views may be more in keeping with those of the apostle, let us seriously meditate upon the significance of this language.

I. Christ is all in all with respect to the volume

of revealed truth. From the giving of the first promise in the garden of Paradise, where our Lord is spoken of as the seed of the woman that should "bruise the serpent's head," down to the last mention of Him as the final Judge, there is not a page of Holy Writ that is not in some way or other connected with Christ. If you take Christ from this Book, the whole New Testament, at one fell swoop, would be taken; and marching back through the lesser and the greater prophets, what tattered fragments of their writings would you not have left! What havoc would you not make of the preaching, the proverbs, and the songs of Solomon, of the glorious prophetic psalmody of David, and the inspired utterances of Job! And when you have managed to cut Christ out of the inspired history of God's dealings with His people from Genesis to Esther, the whole would have no meaning; to our fallen race it would impart no instruction, and administer no comfort, and might be thrown aside as without value.

The sacrifice of Abel pointed to Him. He was the Shiloh of old Jacob. He was typified by the smitten rock in the wilderness; and all the services of the tabernacle and temple of the Jews foreshadowed His mighty work. The priest, with his vestments and sacrificial victims, and smoking altars and sprinkled blood, directed the sinners of his time to the coming Saviour.

The Holy of Holies, the ark of the Covenant, the bending cherubim, and the beaming glory, all stood in mystic relation to the anointed Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus. Abraham "desired to see His

day"; he saw it, with its superior glory and blessing, and was glad. Moses ascended the mount of vision, and far away in the coming ages he saw Christ Jesus advancing as the Teacher of our awakened race, and he exclaimed, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, Him shall ye hear." Job saw Him, and in rapture could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." David fixed the eye of his faith upon Him, and in wonder and admiration his poetic soul sang of His suffering and His salvation, of His cross and of His crown, of His conflict and His triumph. Solomon sees Him rejoicing in the moral glory of His Church, and hears the Church uttering her joy in possession of Him as the fairest among ten thousand. We open the pages of Isaiah, and behold, they are full of Christ! He lights up those pages with an awful and glorious sublimity. He is the Child born, the Son given, His name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. His person, His character, His office, and the blessings of His reign and government are set before us in language the most glowing. In Jeremiah, He is "The Lord, our righteousness." In Daniel, He is the Ancient of Days, whose garment was white as snow, and whose throne was the "fiery flame."

In Micah, He is the Ruler of Israel coming forth out of Bethlehem Ephratah, "whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting." In Haggai, He is the desire of all nations that was to fill the house of God with His glory." In Zechariah, "the man whose name is the Branch, who was to build the

house of God, and bear the glory and sit and rule upon His throne." And in Malachi, He is the Sun of Righteousness "who should arise with healing in His wings." These hasty references, my brethren, will help us to bear in mind the significance of the text as applied to the Old Testament Scriptures. But how much more readily shall we be struck with the force of the language as applied to the New.

The four Gospels are the life of Christ. The Acts of the Apostles—what is that book but the history of the establishment of His Church, the triumph of His truth, the victory of His soldiers, and the onward march of His kingdom?

The Epistles—what are they, but the reiteration of His doctrines, the enforcements of His precepts, and the statement of the blessings that He sheds upon the heart of His true disciples?

And the last mysterious pages of the inspired record, what are they but the prophecy of the Church's sufferings and persecutions and the final conquests of Christ on her behalf? Thus, my brethren, is Christ "all and in all" with regard to this volume of revealed truth. From Genesis to Revelation it is filled with His presence, it is pervaded by His power, it is radiant with His glory. The religious ceremonies, the types, the histories and prophecies and songs all point to Christ. He is linked for ever with them all, becomes the grand exponent of them all. He sustained the faith of every patriarch, was gazed at by every priest, pointed at by every sacrifice, and fired the imagination of every prophet, and is the grand exemplification of

virtue to every New Testament saint. "Christ is all, and in all." There is not a ray of truth, from the first that flashed across the darkened heavens of a blighted paradise, to the last that broke the gloom of the exile of Patmos, but found in Him its centre and its source.

II. Christ is all and in all in the great work of human redemption. When man had sinned against God it was not within the limits of possibility that he could make an atonement for his transgressions, or save himself from the curse of the violated law. The holiness of God, we are taught, demands perfect and constant obedience at man's hands; and man having failed in that obedience, became incapacitated, when left to himself, alike for future rectitude and atonement for past transgressions. Angels in heaven, an innumerable host, that excel in glory and in strength, might, we may suppose, from the pure benevolence of their nature, offer to man their aid, to help him to throw off the crushing load of his guilt; but men and angels together could not lift it. Such was man's awful exigency, when the Son of God, out of the boundless compassion and pity of His heart, stepped forth to his rescue. Between the wrath of a sin-avenging God and the guilty spirits of our race, He stood and cried, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. To glorify Thy name, and to save man I will assume man's nature. I will go from Edom with dyed garments, from Bozrah I will travel in the greatness of My strength, and prove Myself mighty to save: I will tread the wine press of Thy wrath alone, and with the people there shall be none with Me to

help. I will gird Myself for the mighty enterprise, and for the joy that is set before Me of showing in sweetest harmony Thy justice and Thy grace, and bringing many souls unto glory, I will endure the cross and despise the shame."

In the fulness of time the work undertaken was accomplished; and Bethlehem's stable and Judea's wilderness, and Gethsemane's garden and Calvary's summit were the scenes of humiliation and suffering that the world had never seen before, and shall never behold again.

The God-Man in His own mysterious person was seen "suffering the just for the unjust," that He might bring us to God. Men and angels might stand and gaze at the stupendous process of redemption, but they could take no part in it.

The bitter cup in the garden He drank alone; one drop of that bitter cup would have poisoned the universe. The mighty load of our transgressions He bore in His own body on the tree; one iota of that load falling upon men or angels would have crushed them into outer darkness; and men fled, and angels retired, and sun and moon and stars withdrew themselves, and the eternal Father hid His face from His beloved Son. Then was the hour and the power of darkness. The hour, when solitary in His sufferings, but undaunted in His high surprise, he received the outpourings of infinite justice until the last vial of wrath was emptied, and there burst from His lips the grand utterance of His triumph, "It is finished, it is finished!" And Heaven attested that it was finished, and Earth saw that it was

finished, and Hell abashed and confounded felt that it was finished. And in three days after death the Victim of the cross gave in His own resurrection the eternal attestation that the redeeming work was done; and standing forth the Conqueror of the grave, He could say, "I am He that was dead, and am alive again, and have the keys of hell and of death." God forbid, my brethren, that we should ever forget that He is the propitiation, and the *only propitiation*, "for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." That in the great redeeming work He is the first and the last, the "all and in all."

III. Christ is all and in all, as the only source of blessing to His people.

Look at that once stout-hearted sinner yonder, what is the matter with him? That tearful eye, that heaving bosom, that distressed face — what mean they? He has deserted his old companions, he has abandoned his old haunts, and given up his old practices; what strange thing has happened to him? In the daytime he has no peace, and in the night when deep sleep falleth upon other men, he is restless, and waters his couch with his tears. What wonder-working power has touched him? Ah! my brethren, that man has felt the power of the Spirit that Christ promised to send to convince the world of sin. That Spirit has taken of the things of Christ and shown them unto him. He has taken him to the foot of the cross and shown him the true nature and dreadful consequences of sin in the suffering Victim that hung upon the cross to die for it. And

what none besides could give him, Christ has given him. He has given him "godly sorrow," "repentance unto life." He has smitten the marble of his heart, and brought him in penitence to the footstool of mercy.

2. But look you a moment at another sight. There are thousands of men that have got rid of guilt; their sorrow is turned into joy, their mourning into praise. Their faces beam with rapture, as if the sunlight of the better country had fallen upon them. Listen to their songs, their strains are as sweet as those that angels sing; and what, my brethren, is the burden of their song? Listen, and you will know. They are taking up, in blessed harmony, the song as Paul left it. "Being justified by faith," etc. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "Alive in Christ, their living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine, bold they approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown through Christ their own."

3. But in every pardoned sinner there is wrought a real change. This, in the Scripture, is spoken of as a "new birth," a regeneration of the soul, a renewal of the soul in righteousness and true holiness. A change that causes old things to pass away, and all things to become new. Ask the soul that has undergone this blessed transformation to what power it stands indebted for the mighty work that has thus been wrought; and mark the answer! "Not by works of righteousness that I have done, but according to His mercy He hath saved me." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Thus, my brethren, with regard to that mighty work, that mental, moral, and spiritual change that begins in repentance and goes on to the renewal of the soul in the image of God, "Christ is all, and in all." He lays the foundation, He rears the superstructure, He brings on the "top stone." The whole is the "Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

4. And if from the moment of his justification and regeneration, to the termination of his earthly course, you mark the Christian, and inquire the cause of his everyday triumphs and hopes and blessings, you will find that "Christ is all, and in all."

See him, there, in fierce conflict with the powers of darkness, triumphing over them, with more than a giant's strength breaking the neck of every temptation as it presents itself; by what strange talisman has the moral being of that man been touched? by what strange power has he been nerved for the conflict? Ask him, and he will tell you that he does all "*through Christ*, who strengthens him." Marvel you at that christian's power? It is not his, but Christ's. The Captain of his salvation is with him, and teaches his hands to war, and his fingers to fight; bruises his enemies under his feet, and leads him on to conquest and a crown.

Look, again, at those blessed hopes that distend the bosoms of God's people, and those glorious visions of immortality that gladden their hearts amid the darkest scenes of earth. Whence came they? With one voice the rejoicing host of God's

people answer you, and they tell you that they are begotten again to these by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Because He lives they know they shall live also; He has lighted up the dark valley of death, and they are confident that He will conduct them in safety and triumph through it to the mansions that He has prepared in His Father's house. "Christ is all, and in all," with respect to the moral and spiritual life, the blessings of the Christian in time.

5. And as on earth, so in heaven. Christ is the recognised source of every blessing, and the grand centre of attraction even then.

"Lift your eyes by faith, and see" the millions that from every habitable part of the globe encircle the throne of the Deity. "Who are these, and whence came they?" is the interrogation of the angel to John, and the answer of the apostle is, "Sir, thou knowest." Yes, he did know! and for John's information, and ours, he said, "These are they that came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them, to fountains of living water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Christ is all and in all to them. Paradise has not a beauty that He did not create, not a flower that He did not paint, not a charm that He did not imprint, nor a fragrance that He did not

shed. Every mansion in our Father's house He prepared, every throne of the Redeemed He raised, every crown of righteousness He jewelled and bestowed; and the gathered host of His triumphant people in heaven will for ever ascribe glory, and honour, and blessing, and salvation unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

In conclusion, my brethren, if Christ is all and in all in the sense to which we have alluded, let it be our constant business to honour Him as such. Let us exercise an unwavering confidence in the merits of His death, let us enthrone Him in our affections, let us bow to His precepts, follow with unfaltering step His bright example, and set Him forth as the hope of the world.

Let the thoughtless worldling content himself by tracing his blessings to secondary causes. He has food and raiment, and he is content to look to no higher source than the genial sunshine, the seasonable rain, and the fruitful earth. He has social blessings, and he is content to trace them to the wise and mild form of government under which he lives. He has knowledge and a certain restraint upon his passions, and he traces them simply back to a mother's counsels and a father's care. But be it yours and mine to gather all our blessings together from the smallest daily bestowment that bestrews the path of life, up to the highest aspirations and hopes that link our souls to the throne of God, and lay them at the foot of His cross, who bought them with His blood, and upon us bestowed them as a free gift.

If Christ is all in all to us, let us remember He is so to the world. He is the only object worthy the world's faith, the only firm foundation of the world's hope. The only rest and secure refuge for a growing and disquieted race. Amid the numerous claimants for the world's suffrage and homage, let it be ours to set before the world the claims of Him who alone is "mighty to save."

Let the rabble divinities of heathendom retire. All experience tells us that their "sorrows are multiplied" that hasten after them. Let the ministers of the "false prophet" begone, with their flinty hearts, and gory hands, and fatalistic creed; they are not the world's desideratum but its destruction. Let the mitred high priests of a spurious Christianity fly before the light of truth, and abandon their vocation; they are not the world's comfort, but its curse. Let the infidel and pantheistic philosophers, with their cold and cheerless creed, ashamed and confounded depart; the world wants them not, and their ignis fatuus light has led many to their ruin, but none to comfort and safety. And come Thou Prophet of Nazareth, Thou Great Teacher of Israel, Thou Sun of Righteousness, and shine upon every heart. Come Thou Great Physician of souls, and pour Thy healing balm into every wounded spirit! Come Thou promised Pacificator, and hush the rude tempest of this troubled world. Sinner, one word in conclusion to thee. This same Jesus is ready to prove His all-sufficiency to thee. Accept, we urge and entreat thee, His prof-

fered help, and then with His rejoicing ones shalt thou sing—

Jesus, *my* all in all Thou art,
My rest in toil, my ease in pain,
The medium of my broken heart,
In war my peace, in loss my gain,
My smile beneath the tyrant's frown,
In shame my glory and my crown.

THE SAINTS OF CÆSAR'S HOUSEHOLD

"All the saints salute," etc.—PHIL. iv. 22.

IN the 16th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we have an account of the special circumstances under which the gospel was first preached in Philippi. Paul, while waiting at Troas, saw a man of Macedonia, saying to him, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Convinced that this was God's call to go into a quarter of the world as yet unvisited by the light of God's truth, Paul, we read, set sail from Troas, and came with a straight course to Samothracia, thence to Neapolis, and from this port they pushed on without delay to Philippi, and there Paul preached the first gospel sermon ever preached in Europe. The result of his labours and sufferings there was the establishment of a Christian Church, which for its loving fidelity to Christ and His truth, drew from the apostle the most unqualified commendations. These words are the closing ones of a tender and loving epistle written to them when he was a prisoner in Rome. They remind us—

I. Of the marvellous triumphs of Divine Grace.

II. Of the far-reaching character of Christian sympathy.

We gather from the Acts of the Apostles as

well as from other incidental references in the New Testament that the gospel had found its way into Rome long before Paul's visit. Hence we find that when the apostle was on his way to that city, kind Christian brethren came to meet him as far as "Appii Forum and the Three Taverns." And when he dwelt in "his own hired house" they came to him, and he "preached the kingdom of God." "And the number of true believers multiplied."

Some think that when the Church was scattered after the persecution which broke out at the martyrdom of Stephen, that they that were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the gospel might have gone to Rome and planted the first Church there. Others think that as on the Day of Pentecost strangers of Rome are said to have been of the mixed multitude upon whom the Spirit was poured out, *they* might have carried the gospel first to that great city, which at that time stood as the wonder of the world.

2. But by whomsoever planted, that Christian Church in Rome stood as one of the greatest marvels of saving grace, and one of the early outstanding pledges of the final triumph of Christ's kingdom. Think for a moment what this means. The wickedness of which Paul speaks in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, is but a faint picture of that embodied in the everyday life of these Romans. There was the centre of the world's power and wisdom and wickedness. There every vicious principle found a home, and every base passion an indulgence. And as we reflect upon the circumstances of the case, that amid the

heathenism and moral pollution of this great city numbers of men should be found to embrace and embody the truth as it is in Jesus, and stand forth the calm unflinching abettors of the religion of the Crucified Nazarene, is one of those facts of history that speak to us of the finger of God.

3. But that there should be "saints in Cæsar's household"—that is the wonder of wonders. We learn that the Cæsar of that time was the Emperor Nero. Of all the mean, contemptible, vile, cruel, murderous men that were ever allowed to sway a sceptre, he seems to have been the worst. After the lapse of nearly two thousand years, we almost instinctively shudder at the mention of his name. He murdered his own mother, and his own tutor, and his most faithful adviser. He set fire to Rome, and fiddled while it burned, and then attributed the deed to the Christians. And then with every species of cruelty which devilish ingenuity could invent he put them to death.

Now, that saints should be found in the "household" of such a man, whether you regard them as his relatives, his servants, or the officers of his court, is certainly one of the most glorious and triumphant instances of gospel power and grace on record.

If there ever was a hell upon earth, the court of Nero was that place. Oh, the moral courage and grace required to resist the ever-pressing pestiferous influences of that place!

The Christian life is a warfare everywhere, even in the best of places, but what must it be to avow Christian doctrine, to utter Christian

sentiment, and to live a Christian life in that place!

Saints in Cæsar's household, to what shall we liken them? An oasis in the desert. Saints in Cæsar's household! Think you see the rose, blooming and shedding its fragrance on the blasted wilderness. How doubly strange and beautiful amid the surrounding desolation. Saints in Cæsar's household! Think you see the brightest star of heaven set in the darkest cloud; think you see the brightest emblems of life and immortality amid the horrors of the charnel house.

But no comparison of ours can fully bring out the significance of this historic fact.

What a lesson does it read to the men who are afraid to seek after divine grace, lest in this bad world they should lose it. Let such remember that there were saints in "Cæsar's household," and that if you get God's grace, as they did, there is a glorious possibility of keeping it in spite of all the darkness and sin which may surround you. How sternly does this fact rebuke the men who teach that the grace of God is a plant that can only live in the hothouse culture and seclusion of a cloister! Let them bear in mind that it flourished amid the blasting breath of Nero's palace.

1. I would now press on your attention the fact of which the text reminds us, viz. the far-reaching character of Christian sympathy.

How strangely has sin severed the human family, and set man against man, family against family, and nation against nation! But God's gracious intention by the gospel is to throw a bond of

brotherhood around the vast human family. How strikingly has this been made known to us as the direct tendency of vital Christianity in all ages of the world. And how beautifully it is exemplified in the case before us. How touching and tender the expression of it in this epistle. Paul knew the deep interest they felt in his welfare, and with the loving affection of a father or brother he tells them of his circumstances, and how he rejoices in their grace and consolation.

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you," etc. etc. About ten years before he had met them as entire strangers. He preached to them the first gospel sermon to which they had ever listened. They received the truth in the love of it, and between them and the apostle, from that moment, there were ties of affection that neither time nor space nor death itself could sever.

2. But allow me to remind you that this loving affection as between Paul and these Philippians was the natural product of the gospel among all people. Mark the significant language of the text and context.

"All the Saints," etc., "the brethren that are with me," etc.

Why this interest in men they had never seen?

The apostle had no doubt talked with the brethren in Rome about the Church in Philippi, and at once a loving sympathy was created. They had never seen each other; they were in very different circumstances, surrounded by very different scenes, vastly different in social status. But one faith

animated them; to one Lord and Master they had pledged a common fealty; to one law they yielded a loving obedience; to one common pursuit they were actuated by one o'er-mastering passion of love to the ever-present Saviour; and they looked forward to one grand gathering in the home of God's great family.

Hence the sympathy of the brethren in Rome toward those in Philippi. There was no blood relationship, no natural family tie, no bond of old acquaintance. But they were united in Christ, and with all their diversities they were brethren.

3. And have we not the same outcome of gospel truth now? Thank God we have! We have men and women in thousands in all parts of the world whose piety, like that of the "saints in Cæsar's household," stands gloriously out amid the abounding wickedness of the world. How often have we seen two or three godly young men amid scores and sometimes hundreds in a workshop the only witnesses for Christ; laughed at for their faith, but holding it fast and living it, a constant protest against the ungodliness of those around them. Look at those two or three converted soldiers in the barrack or ship, bright and blessed in their character amid the blighting moral atmosphere, enough, one would suppose, to poison a continent.

What a testimony it was to the worth of Christian character in the army when one general in India who wanted a regiment for an emergency said, "Call out Havelock's saints; they are always ready!"

4. And now let us learn that we have, in the product of gospel truth in the form of sympathy

between those Romans and Philippians, the pledge of a power that can and that will terminate the strife of the nations. Increasing knowledge cannot do it. Civilisation cannot effect it. Commerce, though it is daily teaching nations more and more their mutual dependency, cannot do it. But the gospel can. It can unite men of every diverse nationality and character in bonds of tenderest sympathy, harmonise forever the jarring interests of our social life, calm the passions of the nations, and hush them into universal and abiding peace.

Let us live and labour and pray for the coming of that time, and grasp with firmer hand the promises of God's Word.

> In vain, and long enduring wrong,
> The weak may strive against the strong;
> But the day shall yet appear
> When the might with the right,
> And the truth shall be;
> And come what there may to stand in the way,
> That day the world shall see.

ORDINATION CHARGE DELIVERED IN BARBADOS

14TH MARCH 1891

BY the ceremony just closed you have been solemnly and publicly received into the ranks of the ministry; and I am expected, in accordance with our usage, to address to you a few words suitable to the occasion, and that may help you to see the work that lies before you and the spirit in which it should be done. In the discharge of this duty I would press upon your attention the very significant words of St. Paul to the Galatians in the 6th chap. and 10th verse: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men." While these words were addressed to the whole Church, and were intended to have a bearing upon all Christians in after ages, they have a special application to the Christian minister. As those words of inspiration stand before us, on such an occasion as this, they remind us that you have not entered upon professional dignity to dream and sentimentalise, but to *work*. Never did the vast field of ministerial labour open more clearly before the vision of the Church of Christ than at the present time, and never was the cry for earnest work louder. It is by no means an uncommon thing to find professing

Christians, and even Christian ministers, reasoning about benevolence, and kindling into rapture while describing it, and breathing all the sentimental pity that you can desire, but who rarely show the practical benevolence of the text. Now, Paul reminds us that it is not enough to reason correctly about Christian work, we are to "*do*" it. If the houseless wanderer is to find a shelter, if the hungry are to be fed, if the naked are to be clothed, the sick to be comforted, the dark to be illuminated, and the ignorant to be educated, somebody must not only think about it, and talk about it, and write about it, but *do it.* Hence the apostolic injunction would push our sentiment into prompt and vigorous action. "As ye have therefore opportunity, do good." "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Permit me to urge upon you the truth which, in the service we have just concluded, we have especially emphasised, namely, that the mightiest instrumentality for doing good that the minister of Christ can wield is the gospel—the gospel in its simplicity and purity as Paul preached it. In these days when pretenders to philanthropy are trying to meet the wants of men and lift the burden from the crushed heart of the world by the gospel of science, or the gospel of æsthetics, or the gospel of pantomimics, be it yours to dispense the Word of Life; that Word that God has sent for the healing of the nations. You profess to believe that word yourself, and that it has been the means of your salvation. Go forth, then, with all the fervour of settled conviction, to speak that word

to others. "We also believe," said the apostle, "and therefore speak." Wherever you go, don't make apologies for uttering God's truth. Don't beg your ground; take it boldly as Christ's ambassador. In clear and fearless tones let men hear from your lips not only the promises and invitations, but the warnings that God has charged you to deliver. Permit me, without attempting to enlarge on the manner of preaching suited to the times in which we live, to urge upon you to cultivate simplicity and directness in your style. The use of words and phrases that none but the learned can understand; criticisms that none but the learned can appreciate, and that they, in preaching, had rather be without, may make the ignorant stare, but they will never accomplish the object of your mission; and the opportunity of doing good to your audience is lost. The hardened sinner is there, but he is not affected; the hungry are there, but they are not fed; the weary are there, but their burdens are not lightened; the sorrowful are there, but they are not comforted. After a service respectably conducted your audience may depart as they came, rather worse, it may be, than better, with the sad feeling that as far as they are concerned you have been beating the wind. I knew a Methodist minister in England who had preached so often against infidelity and atheism as to provoke this gentle reproof from one of his plain and blunt hearers. Meeting the minister as he came out of the chapel, he said to him, "I shall be so glad when all the infidels are converted that we may hear the gospel preached once more." The Lord

help you to see to it that Christ be not shut out of your ministry by controversy, to whatever the controversy may relate.

I would press, with all possible earnestness, the thought that your special opportunity for doing good is in your public ministry. Therefore prepare for it. By diligent reading, by careful study, bring your best and freshest thought to it. Select, as your Master did, the simplest and clearest illustrations. Then, as in the case of the Great Preacher, the common people will hear you gladly; and rest assured that the truly learned will never despise simplicity, but prize it. Further, in your public ministry be dominated by one great purpose—that, and nothing less than that, of saving them that hear you. It must not be enough that your hearers become wiser; that they receive from your ministrations a higher moral polish; that in increasing numbers they attach themselves to your communion; that they be ready to utter your Shibboleth: they must be brought in penitence to the foot of the Cross. *Repentance*, *Faith*, and *Holiness*, these must be the fruits of your ministration. Pointing to them with joy and rejoicing, while men in some quarters may question your orders or your authority, you may in holy triumph say, "The *seals* of my ministry are ye in the Lord."

And here let me remind you, that success in your public ministry, of the kind I have indicated, will be doing good on the widest and the most diversified scale to all that come within the sphere of your influence. You may sometimes meet men who will tell you that your religion is too ethereal,

too spiritual, too heavenly for this matter-of-fact world; that under the pretence, or plea, that you want to fit them for another world, you forget that they have to live in this, and that you unfit them for the present life. Thank God, you have a ready answer, or may have, to the bold challenge of the secularist of the age. Settle it in your mind that if by the grace of God you convert a sinner from the error of his ways, you not only save a soul from death, but you increase all the blessings of the present life. Convert the sinner, and you expand his mind, you purify his heart, you brighten his life, you multiply the comforts of home; society feels the touch and the uplifting power of his changed moral tone; and the narrow and shallow philosophy of your modern secularism vanishes in the presence of the indubitable facts of the outcome of the gospel in a sinner's life. Keep, then, before yourself the truth, and let the world know it, that your religion is for this world as well as for the next; that it touches men's bodies as well as their souls; and that "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is," as well as of "that which is to come."

The words of the text should remind you of the wide sphere of a Christian minister's labour: "as ye have opportunity do good," not only in the pulpit but *out* of it; and *out* of it, that you may do more good when you are *in* it. Nothing will contribute more to your pulpit power than your Christlike benevolence as you move in and out among your people, and as you are seen in the common, every-day walks of human life. You may bring all the

learning of the age into your public ministrations, and all the graces of the orator into the style of your delivery; but if it is known that your life does not back your teaching, if it be known that, though it is free from any dark blemish, it is marked by no self-denial, no sympathy with suffering humanity, men will pay small heed to your oratory. But let them see, from the daily habit of your life, that you have a heart that sympathises with human woe, that your hand is ever ready to relieve it, that nothing is foreign to you that concerns humanity, and then your lightest word from the pulpit will be a power; there may be nothing overmastering in your argument, nothing captivating in your style, but men will receive with loving reverence the message of your lips, enforced upon them by the lessons of your life.

"As ye have opportunity do good," are words that open up to us other spheres of your ministerial and pastoral life, and remind us that your benevolence must, while it is practical, be diversified and incessant. Duly impressed with a sense of responsibility, the opportunities for usefulness will present themselves in every lane of life. The family cares of your people present themselves, and you can lessen them by your cheerful presence, and your wise and kindly advice. They have their temptations, and if you give yourself the trouble to understand them, you may break their spell; and the enthralled one may bless your liberating power. There are the manifold forms of sickness, and your presence and prayer may bring heavenly sunshine into the abode where the shadow of death seems to have fallen.

But while your people generally are your care, do not forget that your special opportunities for doing good are to be found among the young. Your fathers in this ministry toiled hard, and often fought bravely, to establish common day and Sunday schools for the thousands of the rising generation, and nobly have they succeeded. You may be tempted to think that the work of teaching and training the young may be safely left to others now, and that the minister may be relieved of that burden. But it will be a fatal mistake to do it. Governments may be satisfied with the minimum of education that is expressed in "reading, writing, and arithmetic," but this is not our view of education. As far as you are concerned, see to it that the children of your charge are grounded in the great truths of the Bible. Fight steadily against the unwise attempts of Governments to leave the children with nothing better than a secular education. In more than one of these islands the School Code aims at this; and when I have spoken to day-school teachers about the neglect of Bible teaching, the reply has been, "It does not pay." The meaning of this was that secular subjects crowded it out. I found, too, that in those very schools in which such answers were given, the utter ignorance of the Bible was most lamentable.

And while you never lose sight of your day schools, ever be found in touch with your Sunday schools. The Government Codes cannot shut the Bible out of that realm. The efficiency of your Sunday-school teachers and the success of their work may be vastly increased by your personal

interest. There is no work as a pastor that will pay you better in the form of spiritual success than that which you heartily perform in the Sunday school. And that this part of your church work may prosper, strive earnestly to get circulated among your people a healthy religious literature. If this is not done by the minister in this country it is not likely to be done. If this duty is neglected what a precious opportunity for doing good is lost! The press of the age offers to supplement our pulpit labours a hundredfold, and if we disregard the offer because it may cost us a little effort, or, possibly, a little money, we incur a fearful responsibility. As far as our neglect is concerned, we silence a voice that might be speaking for God and truth in hundreds of homes when our own cannot be heard. When John Wesley wanted to speak more widely to the English nation, with all his other labour, he gave all the time and money he could command to sow broadcast over the country a wholesome religious literature that helped to establish and strengthen the piety of the Methodist people. The Methodist Conference knew the benefit that John Wesley had thus bestowed upon the Church, and followed in his footsteps; and our great publishing house in London is the loud expression of our fathers in England of the immense value of the Christian press. Let not their example be lost upon us; and let it not be said that while our home churches need and demand the blessings of the press, and have them, that we deny them, or, what is equally bad, make no effort to give them, to the people of these islands.

I would further remark that if you are to do good as you have opportunity you must practically realise your responsibility as a Christian citizen. The Church of Christ is more than ever waking up to the fact, that doing good as we have opportunity means that we are not quietly to leave the government of the country in which we live to the devil and his agents. Don't imagine that I would have you merge your higher calling in that of the politician. That is one thing, but it is another to oppose unrighteous legislation and to keep power out of the hands of wicked men. It is another thing to use your power to purge the statute of your country from every foul enactment. It is highly worthy of your office to try to lift or lighten the burdens that unduly press upon the physical and mental energies of your fellow-men. Do this, but do it with a dignity and discretion becoming your office, and then do it with your might.

Finally, do not forget that the sphere of Christian sympathy and practical benevolence is to be as wide, as all-embracing, as catholic as that of Paul. Do good unto all men; not to some men only. Your charity is not to be confined within the limits of family, or clanship, or friendship, or neighbourhood; it is to go forth to the world. It must not fix upon the deserving simply, but it must, like the love of your Lord and Master, go forth to the undeserving. It must not radiate within the geographical limits of Christendom simply, but must embrace a world. That, said Wesley, "is my parish." Your bodily presence may never be found in heathen mission fields abroad, but if you live in

the spirit of Paul's injunction your heart will be there, and one thing will be certain, that the waste places of your own circuit will not be neglected. In these days of social progress, of culture, and refinement, we stand in danger of being spellbound, fascinated by the charms of the polite society of town life to the neglect of the claims of the country. The villages upon your circuit plan may be small, your chapels plain, your congregations poor and illiterate, and you will stand in danger of yielding to the temptation to disregard their claims. Within the last quarter of a century, amid all the attractions of the great centres of national activity, our brethren have been tempted to neglect village preaching, and they are just waking up now to the terrible results at home; and by a tremendous effort they are shaking off their supineness, and are addressing themselves with redoubled energy to the work. When tempted to neglect your country work, remember that it was from Bethlehem Ephratah, though little among the thousands of Judah, that He came forth who is the Light of the World. It was from some of these insignificant places of the United Kingdom that our Church got some of her bravest soldiers and her brightest lights. It was the little, insignificant village of Maybeg in the county of Londonderry in Ireland that gave the Methodist Church the good and learned Dr. Adam Clarke. It was from another village in Ireland, and from a congregation that would not fill a labourer's cottage, that William Arthur came, one of the most brilliant and able authors of the day, and one of the most powerful Methodist preachers.

It was from a little village in Lincolnshire that John Hunt came, that noble Apostle of Fiji, who, before he laid down his life in that land of cannibals, translated the Scriptures into their language and left them that as his best legacy. It was from the little village of Elstow in Bedfordshire that John Bunyan came, that grand old dreamer in whose works all the Churches of Christ have a common heritage.

Despise not, then, your opportunities as they lie before you in the obscure nooks and corners, and amid the quiet, rural scenes of village life. How significant the language of Gray in the presence of these facts, and as you think of the possibilities of your country toil—

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

In the strength of God's grace go forth to the hallowed work to which the Spirit of God has called you—to vigorous, earnest, prayerful, incessant labour in the vineyard of the Lord. "As ye have opportunity, do good unto all men," and "be not weary in well-doing"; you have the Master's promise that if you sow the seed of His truth in humble dependence upon Him, "in due season you shall reap if you faint not."

> Ye cannot toil in vain;
> Cold, heat, and moist and dry,
> Shall foster and mature the grain,
> For garners in the sky.

THE LATE REV. GEORGE SARGEANT

An Appreciation by James H. Darrell

IT was early in 1879, twenty-two years ago, that I made my first acquaintance with Mr. Sargeant. The occasion was his visit to Antigua with the late Rev. Marmaduke C. Osborn, who came out as a deputation from the Missionary Committee to inquire into the affairs of our West Indian churches, with the view to their being formed into separate Conferences. But though we had never met before, it seemed as if I had known Mr. Sargeant for a long time previously. I had travelled in several of his early circuits—notably, Antigua and St. Martin—where the memories of his pastorate still survive and are among the inspiring traditions of the Methodism of those islands. In those far-off times the condition of our West Indian circuits was widely different from that of to-day. In the two places I have specially named, as well as in St. Kitts, we numbered among us many wealthy and influential families, the majority of whom have long since passed away, leaving none to succeed them. My association with these places dated sufficiently far back to enable me to learn from the best possible sources something of Mr. Sargeant's early missionary

career; and I found that he was greatly and universally beloved wherever he had laboured.

When Mr. Sargeant first arrived in the West Indies in 1847—only nine years after the Emancipation of the Slaves—these islands were in a transition stage. The political, social, and religious condition of the colonies at that time demanded the utmost wisdom, prudence, and fearlessness on the part of those who had to deal with the people in that formative period of their history. Happily for our churches, the men then on the field were of the right sort; and of them no one was better fitted for the special work of those times than George Sargeant. My acquaintance with many of the grand old men and women who lived in that period enabled me to discover the character and work of our missionaries then stationed in the West Indies; and from the best sources of information at my disposal thirty-five years ago, when there lingered among us such men as the Honourable Richard Challenger of St. Kitts, J. B. Thibou, and David Barnes of Antigua, the Du Cloux' and Van Romondts of St. Martin, I gathered that, both as a preacher and pastor, Mr. Sargeant was beloved and respected by all classes of society, and that as the people came to know him more fully their respect rose into reverence. I distinctly remember Mr. Challenger's description of Mr. Sargeant, which he gave me in 1868 when I first met him in St. Kitts, and which I noted at the time: "Mr. Sargeant was one of the strongest and purest spirits in all that goes to make up a complete manhood. His very countenance was a benediction and an index of his character. His serenity of

mind, reposefulness of manner, were marked traits of his temper and work. To a high order of native talent he joined the attractiveness and persuasiveness of a gentle, urbane culture that made him a welcome guest in any worthy presence and a helpful associate in any good cause." Such was the opinion of one of the greatest, wisest, and most statesmanlike Methodist laymen that God ever gave to our West Indian churches. So, when I met Mr. Sargeant for the first time, twenty-one years after, I found his friend Challenger's estimate of his worth was strictly correct. There was that in Mr. Sargeant's make-up which held his friends fast to him, and caused their admiration to increase with the advance of years. To those who had the advantage of personal acquaintance with him he gave the added charm of a genial fellowship which made him at once a brother and a companion. The late Sir Anthony Musgrave and his brother, Burnthorn Musgrave, speaking of Mr. Sargeant, said: "To know him intimately was a liberal education to any young man aiming to acquire his greatest acquisition—his type and ideal." It was the universal testimony of the old Antiguans, whom I knew thirty odd years ago, that no man did more for the Methodism of those days, and more favourably impressed the people of all classes, than Mr. Sargeant. His many-sidedness secured for him many agreeable associations beyond his own ecclesiastical circle. He kept up with the times, and always commanded attention. While he was pronounced in his devotion to Methodism, his catholicity was not repressed or hampered. He loved Methodism, not merely as a machine or an organisation,

but as a system of teaching and work for propagating the gospel in its purity. He imbibed its spirit, grasped its scope, comprehended its structure, and reverently delighted in the loftiness of its aim. He saw in Methodism the embodiment of scriptural Christianity, the incarnation of Divine beneficence, the highest type of practical godliness. His ideals for his Church were always exalted and their realisation a matter of earnest solicitude. He always stood for liberty, justice, fraternity, and for equal rights before the law for all classes. He was too broad to be sectional, too patriotic to be indifferent to great issues, too scriptural to be tolerant of heresy, and too loyal to the ideals of righteousness to show favour to any form of civic unrighteousness.

It was in Barbados that I became intimately associated with Mr. Sargeant, from 1885 to 1892. Speaking of my own experience of him, he had what seemed to me the richest boon of Heaven—the gift of personal charm. A native graciousness of manner made him easy of access. Some of it, no doubt, was due to his many-sidedness; the variety and catholicity of his tastes and knowledge enabling him to secure many points of contact with many kinds and classes of people. Added to this personal charm was an element of power. Men not only loved him; they also trusted him. He was as gentle as a lamb, but as fearless as a lion. I never knew him to write or utter a word that might give pain to a human heart, although he could not be persuaded to be silent when he felt that duty required him to speak. His keen insight enabled him to discern the right situation of troublesome issues, and his courage

prompted him to express it. His mind was judicial and tenacious. He readily grasped situations, judged men accurately and generously, exercised patience, treated all considerately, even when compelled by a sense of justice and expediency to differ from them and do what they did not wish him to do. His suavity of manner was not a mark of weakness. His courage and strength of character appeared whenever duty was to be discharged in the presence of difficulties.

He was so even and so true that you could almost leave your own judgment one side and follow him entirely. And yet it was just this he never asked of anyone. He constantly called out the best in one, and always appealed to the highest motives. I have seen him in the arena of strong, hot debate, but no clamour disturbed him; neither did partiality influence him. Still he was not cold nor impassive. He saw deep into men's hearts, but he was always looking for the good; and he made you feel that he was really interested in your welfare, though in this he was as artless as one's own father. I never knew a man of less pretence, and I have met few men of stronger personal force and influence. Sweetness and strength combined in him in an eminent degree; and the closer one came to him the more one felt not only the grace but the strength of his character.

I have frequently seen Mr. Sargeant, and have closely scrutinised him, when under extreme provocation; but I never saw him ruffled in spirit nor heard him speak an ill-tempered word. In fact, I never heard him speak an unkind or derogatory

word of anyone. He was a sweet-spirited, brotherly, considerate, devoted friend and Christian.

As a Christian, Mr. Sargeant was absolutely without pretence or dogmatism. He rarely preached on holiness specifically, because he preached it as he walked in and out among men; his lips were guileless, his life was pure, because his heart was ever true as the compass is true to its polar star.

Mr. Sargeant was a preacher of a high order. His range of study was wide, giving variety and freshness to his topics, as well as richness and instructiveness to his ministrations. He was also a born orator, and had the gift of golden speech. His command of language was remarkable. He never hesitated for a word, and exactly the right word came without the least sign of effort, putting every listener at ease, and showing himself master of what he discussed. His voice was agreeable, his utterance distinct and natural, his thoughts clear and flowing, his theme elevated and enriched with spiritual unction; and while his manner was dignified rather than impassioned, he often lifted and roused his audience as nothing short of genuine eloquence could do. His sermons, perhaps, were not always cast in the most modern mould, but they went straight to the respect, conscience, and abiding spiritual profit of those who listened. He knew how to play upon the heart-strings and fit his words to every condition, whether of joy or sorrow.

The mid-week services under his conduct were never lifeless. Those who attended them were as men waiting on and waiting for God. If they were not mounts of transfiguration, they were hillocks

illumined by rays that did not reach the valleys of moil and toil in which so much life is spent.

As a platform speaker he was unexcelled. He was always equal to the demands made upon him, and never disappointed the expectations of his audience. A clear discrimination, a chaste and lucid style, a burning conviction and intense enthusiasm, and a marked originality gave his utterances great attractiveness and force.

As a President, for nine years he met the highest expectations of all reasonable men, and at once drew to himself the respect of all classes, the love and esteem of the people, and the confidence of his brethren, as few, if any, could have done at the starting of our Conference scheme. Whether the enforcement of that scheme upon our unprepared churches was a wise measure or otherwise, I have nothing to say here. Sufficient is it for me to add that no better man than Mr. Sargeant could have been selected to inaugurate that change in the government and administration of West Indian Methodism. In administering his presidential functions he was wise and safe, firm but affable, faithful but tender. His radiant gentleness, his buoyancy and warmth of feeling, his interest in his brother ministers, his beautiful sympathy with our people, his wide, intelligent, and perfect grasp of our discipline, his catholicity of soul, his poise and attitude, which more than the mere knowing of this or that makes the true gentleman, the able superintendent, and the trusty friend, marked him all through the nine years of his presidency of our Conference. He was faithful and conscientious in

the discharge of his duties to the last degree. His emotional nature, which was exceedingly sensitive and delicate, never usurped the place of judgment nor dominated his decisions. He carefully considered his duty, thoughtfully and broadly, and reached his conclusions slowly; but when he reached them he was exceedingly firm and almost invincible. No hasty act or ill-advised utterance ever gave him occasion to explain or apologise. His mind was well poised, his temper always even and serene; but there was never any indication of weakness, uncertainty, or vacillation in his actions or plans. He had a remarkably calm, steadfast nature, and his gentleness and sympathy for the youngest and the poorest of his brethren won for him the confidence of those over whom he so ably presided. I once heard Alexander Macaulay say to him, "Sargeant, if I had your poise and equanimity of temper, I should live to be a centenarian."

We greatly missed Mr. Sargeant's wise and firm rule when he decided to retire from our work. We all respected his opinions and loved his sunny disposition. He was so true and noble in all his instincts, so generous and unbiassed in his judgments of men, so patient towards the impetuous and erring, so tender with all in embarrassment and affliction, while at the same time so abhorrent of everything that was mean or degrading, that his withdrawal from the presidency was felt to be a calamity.

I have not spoken of him as a conversationalist. He excelled in that character, and was always the

magnetic centre in any social gathering. A ready memory, replete with information, incidents, and humorous facts, made his table-talk a cheery experience to all who heard it. His fund of reminiscence and anecdote was almost exhaustless. His knowledge of current events and collateral history was also so accurate and remarkable, and so willing was he to talk about what he knew, that to meet him was to go away with new information and deeper and higher convictions.

Mr. Sargeant was an optimist, not of that cheap order which, misinterpreting a poet's mood, declares that because "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world"; but of that rare and noble order which declares that because "God's in His heaven" it is worth while trying to make things right in the world.

To sum up the character and work of my dear departed friend: The type of his character and ministry, both in preaching and in pastoral care was Johannean—a mingling of affectionate tenderness, the strength of deep conviction, and an easy mounting to the heights of spiritual attainment. The results of his work in these islands have been seen and felt in the thousands to whom he preached the Word in its simplicity and power, and in the thousands whose lives he touched and stirred, moulded and inspired. Unmeasured and unmeasurable was the magnitude of his influence. The aroma of his noble and saintly but humble spirit still permeates the churches which he so dearly loved, and for whose welfare he spent so much of his precious life. Far across the years I

can see the effect of his apostolic toil, and though he has gone away from us I still feel the upward pressure of my long and happy intercourse with him. Yes, George Sargeant was a princely character —a valiant and knightly soul. In the pulpit a benediction, in goodness superb, in friendship unsurpassed, in conduct irreproachable, in character consummate; beautiful on every side, a courtly gentleman, a ripe saint, his was an unsullied name, a white soul, a fragrant life.

ST. VINCENT, W.I.,
October 1901.

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