

## Thomas Robinson of Cleethorpes

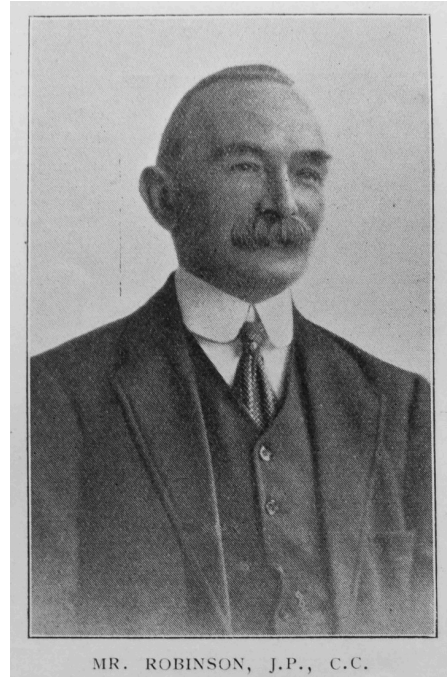
### Transcription of article in the series "Some of our Stalwarts" by "Nimrod"

THE subject of this chronicle does not love the limelight. It is penned, printed, and published without his consent, and contrary to his wish. A long and close acquaintance has put the writer in possession of much information which he is glad to hand on to the readers of the "Aldersgate." The ultimate responsibility for its appearance devolves upon our Editor, who has said: "Do this," and it must be done.

Our Church at Cleethorpes has had a remarkably successful career. The present beautiful chapel is the third in which this thriving society and congregation have been housed. The two former ones became, in turn, too small, and the present capacious edifice is none too large. Aggressive evangelism has been a conspicuous feature in the life of this people. They believe in conversion, and have seen the reward of their faith and zeal in a growing Church. Social and material advance among its members has been most marked during the last twenty-five years. Their temporal prosperity has been consecrated to religious ends. Under Divine direction they have undertaken large and bold schemes of extension, and have succeeded so well that they are neither crippled nor crushed by debt. Not less has this Zion been fruitful in outstanding and strong personalities. For originality, perennial freshness, and diversity of gift and method it would be difficult to equal, and almost impossible to surpass. Names, characters, sayings, and deeds crowd in upon the mind and clamour for a place in this record. Of these qualities Mr. Robinson possesses a goodly share, and, withal, a sturdy self-reliance. He named one of his fishing smacks "Reliance," and that name is also his telegraphic address. What spiritual conquests have been won on this battlefield! And how striking the speech and action of many of the soldiers! But a few weeks ago we heard and saw the old-time life and enthusiastic interest in a Sunday night prayer meeting. It was indeed good to be there. Into this church Mr. Robinson came as a boy, and in its fellowship and service he has remained to this day.

When Mr. and Mrs. Robinson began life, Cleethorpes, of which they are natives, was little more than a fishing village. Their fathers were fishermen, and were both attached to the Primitive Methodist cause. Mr. Wheeler (Mrs. Robinson's father) was a superintendent of the school up to the time of his decease. His widow still abides on this side of the river; she has reached a great age, and has lived a most consistent life. Their family consisted of five daughters—all happily surviving. Four of them reside in Cleethorpes, and one in Sleaford, and they all find in our Church their religious home. Mr. Robinson's parents, his two brothers, and his only sister have entered within the veil.

The Humberstone Grammar School supplied this boy with as much education as diligent application could assimilate. At



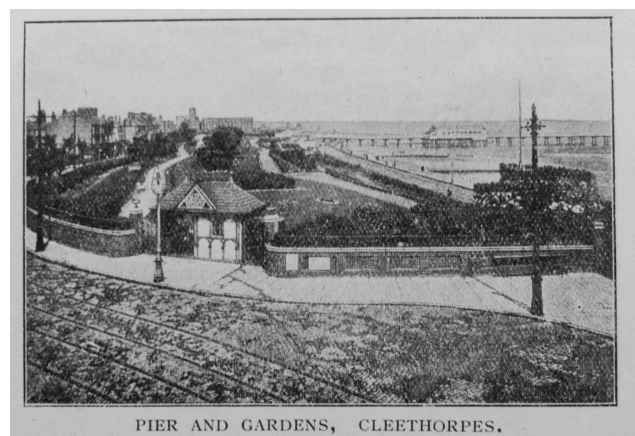
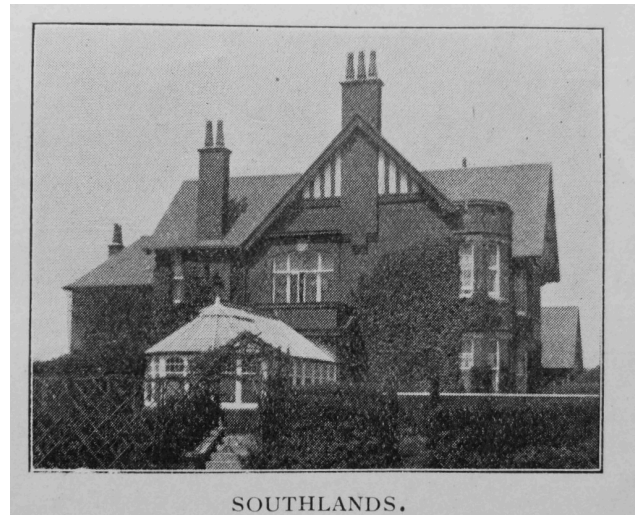
the age of fourteen years the smell of the sea got into his nostrils, and he voluntarily took to the life of a North Sea fisherman, and pursued that vocation until he was twenty-eight. He worked his way through all stages until he became both captain and owner. He bears permanent marks of sea-faring life in a crushed and dislocated elbow.

Thirty-one years ago the smack "Cornelia," in which Mrs. Robinson's father sailed, went down with all hands. To this tragic event was due his ultimate decision to remain ashore. It meant not only the loss of his father-in-law, and of a fine young fellow, who was about to marry Mrs. Robinson's sister, but it involved a monetary loss of £500. To turn his energies into an entirely new direction demanded no small measure of faith and courage. "He went out, not knowing — whither he went." Hard working and thrifty as he had been, he had not got far from the bottom of the ladder of success. From being a fisherman he became a fish merchant and salesman, his interest in fishing smacks being entrusted to other captains. Heavenly direction was sought and found. The way opened, and after considerable striving, success was attained.

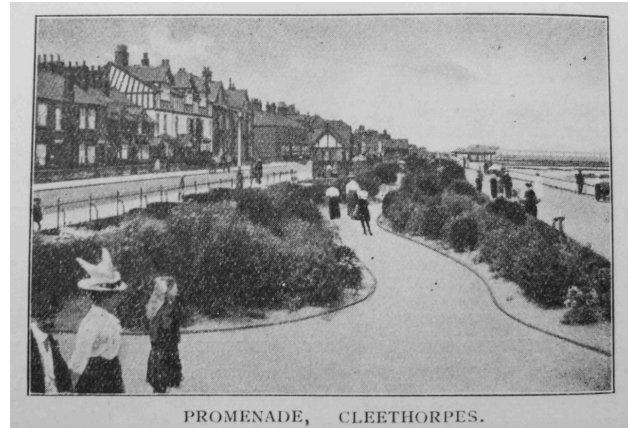
When steam-trawling came along Mr. Robinson was among those who early discerned its utility, and he had the first steamship built in 1893. Since then many others have been constructed, and he now controls a very considerable fleet of them. Among the outward and visible signs of material success, methods of locomotion have a place and significance. "Shanks' pony," the bicycle, horse and trap, and the motor car—in these four modes we have often joined our friend. If he should take to aviation we must part company!

In his own line of business Mr. Robinson is an expert. In connection with the Canadian steam fisheries ships have been constructed in England under his supervision. He is, moreover, under an engagement to pay three visits to Canada to give the authorities there the benefit of his wide experience. One voyage was made last year, another will have been made ere these lines appear in print, and the third is to take place next year. His position may be defined as consulting director. In addition to this he is a director of two other prosperous Canadian companies. His first voyage across the Atlantic took place twelve years ago, when he and Mrs. Robinson accompanied their eldest daughter to New Denver to marry and settle there. He was a delegate to the Ecumenical Conference in Toronto in October, 1911. Mrs. Robinson shares the joys and perils of these long excursions. May the gracious Providence, which has been with them in five voyages, guard them in the sixth, and seventh, and evermore.

In politics Mr. Robinson is a convinced and earnest Liberal, and he renders very considerable assistance to every progressive



movement. Seven years ago he was appointed to the county magistracy. In March of last year he was elected unopposed to the Lindsey County Council, to represent one of the wards of his native town. As a member of the Education Committee he has already made his influence felt. Our educational system is far from ideal, but we can only get the best out of it by the application of the convictions, and the realisation of the visions, of alert and

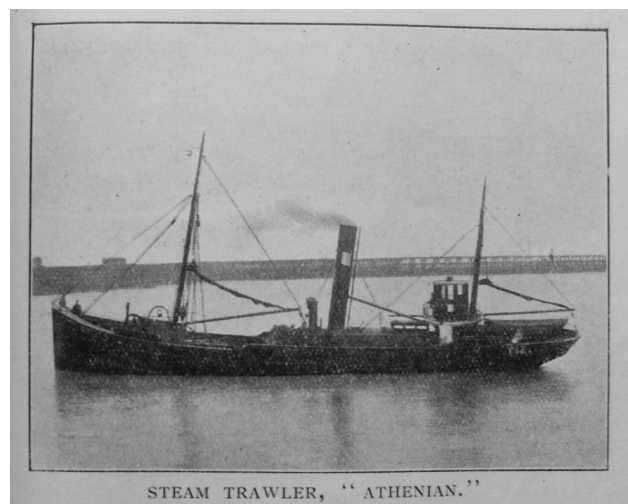


PROMENADE, CLEETHORPES.

strong minds. Systematic and proportionate giving is a principle Mr. Robinson adopted thirty-one years ago. He keeps a strict account of God's share in his material successes, and this is the secret of his ability to give to religious and philanthropic objects as he does. For the work of his own Church his generous aid can always be relied upon. To the new church opened in June last in his own circuit he and Mrs. Robinson have given three donations of £100 each, in connection with the Coronation of the late King, and also of the present King, two blocks of almshouses were erected in Cleethorpes, and in each case one house was built at his cost. Nor are the sympathies of our friend narrow and parochial. To our London missions, foreign missions and the work of our Church generally, he has rendered, and still renders, liberal assistance. It was the writer's joy to extract from his family missionary box sums ranging from £21 to £31 10s, in three successive years. He is not only a liberal supporter of the Port of Hull Society, but also a member of the Management Committee. As the treasurer of our own Orphan Homes since 1907 he has given such service and satisfaction that the Conference of this year suspended recent legislation, and unanimously re-elected him for a further term of five years, and at the same time gratefully accepted his offer to erect a recreation hall for the Harrogate Homes at a cost of £600. Distress and poverty have always appealed to him very strongly. Many of his timely gifts have been conveyed to the recipients by the hand that writes these lines. Subscription lists are obnoxious to him. He argues, and rightly, that the poor widow's half-crown and the labourer's florin often embody more real sacrifice than the larger gifts of the well-to-do.

To the work of preaching Mr. Robinson has never aspired. He has done good service in the Sunday school for thirty years, has long filled the post of class leader, and has willingly borne the responsibility of trusteeship. As chairman of almost every variety of meeting, our Church knows he has rendered efficient and helpful service. He has been a member of many District Synods, and of several of our Conferences.

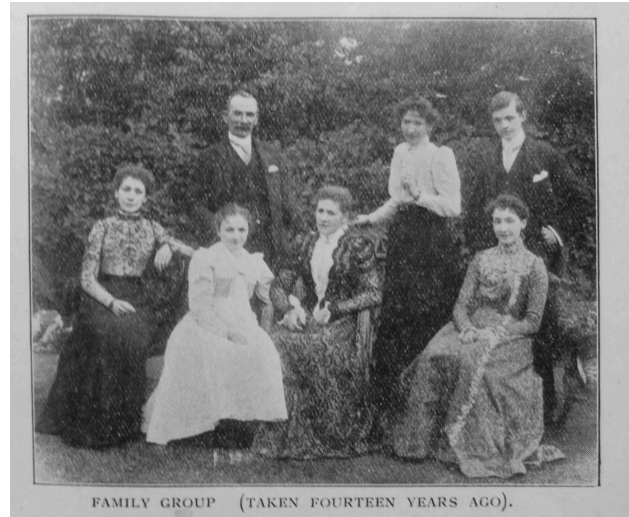
Mr. and Mrs. Robinson have spent thirty-eight years of happy married life and have been blessed with four daughters and one son. Mrs. Welton, their second daughter, after over twelve years of ideal wedded life, passed away in March of last year, leaving a devoted husband, a darling boy, together with her parents and sisters and brother, greatly impoverished by her decease. She was a choice spirit, full of goodness, gentleness, and



STEAM TRAWLER, "ATHENIAN."

grace. The other members of the family are happily settled. The son and two sons-in-law associated with Mr. Robinson in his business, and they are identified with our Cleethorpes Church. Mrs. Robinson is a vice-president of the Ladies' Missionary Auxiliary, while Mrs. Hazlegrove has been one of its secretaries from its commencement, and Mrs. Hartington Adams is also an active worker in connection with it.

The home of our friends has for many years been open to the ministers and officials of our Church, many of whom have very fragrant memories of rest, refreshing, and joy received there. Their present residence was built eight years ago. It is "beautiful for situation," capacious, and comfortable. Mr. Robinson is still on the young side of sixty, and in the prime of physical and mental vigour. His Church membership and that of Mrs. Robinson date from their teens, and their zeal for Zion's enlargement grows with the years.



The joys of our friends have been more than "touched with pain." Besides the tragic loss of Mrs. Robinson's father, there came the long struggle of their deceased daughter with wasting sickness. Then near the end of 1911 the steam trawler "Persian" mysteriously disappeared with all hands. It is supposed—of proof there is none—that the ship was struck in the darkness or fog by another ship, and the colliding vessel made off, and failed to report the incident. What such a calamity means in the wreckage of happy homes, in widowed wives, and orphaned children cannot be imagined. To a heart as tender as that of the owner of the lost ship the stroke was heavy indeed. All that could be done to alleviate the sorrow and supply the needs of the bereaved families has been done with a generous hand. Well, indeed, has it been for Mr. and Mrs. Robinson that in their darkest hours they have known the way to the sure Refuge, and that the same God to whom they gladly attribute their success has not failed them in the time of storm and stress. Of the joy of Christian service and communion they have had a large share, and to the consolations and hopes of the Gospel they are not strangers.

Theological reading and study have not been possible in any large degree to Mr. Robinson, and he has not a very elaborate religious creed. But there are two or three tenets to which he tenaciously clings. He firmly believes in the utility of prayer—prayer concerning business affairs and domestic interests, as well as things spiritual. To him prayer has its place in week-day as well as in Sabbath concerns. All the reasoning in the world would not shake his faith in the potency of prayer. He has asked and received, both in relation to things material and things of the soul. He *knows* that answers come. He believes in the stewardship of material possessions. He is not the owner, but the trustee of his business capacity and successes. He also believes with the Apostle James that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." This may be only a vest-pocket creed, but it works, and therein is its worth. It has been tested on sea and land, in sunshine and storm, both in circumstances that were narrow and lowly, and in the ampler spaces of success. May his "bow abide in strength" for many years to come, and his power for service increase all the time.

## References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1914/632