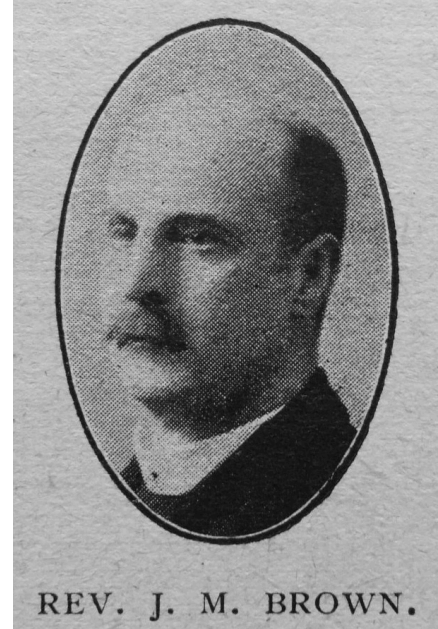


Rehoboth Central Mission, Leeds

Transcription of article published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by "Observer"

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, the Leeds Primitive Methodist Council negotiated with Leeds III. Circuit to set apart this mother-church of West Leeds as a Central Mission. In the light of gathered experience, the wisdom of such a step may be open to question. Certain it is, that such a project, to-day, would be launched with much better material advantages than were thought necessary a quarter of a century ago. An attractive workshop is a *sine qua non*, in these days, when the call for effectiveness is everywhere heard.

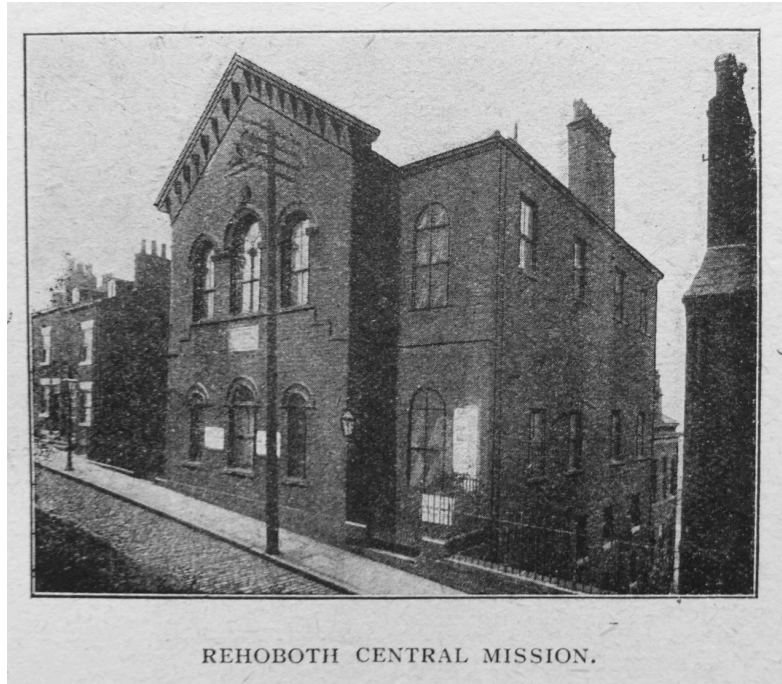
Attractive looking buildings Rehoboth does not possess, but, all the same, her record during these twenty-five years, is worthy of a place in her honourable history. Much that is beautiful in the lives of men and women had its birth and nurture here. Sons and daughters of Rehoboth are to be found doing creditable service in all parts of the world; while other societies in this city have received from her — sometimes much more than she could well spare — officials and members who have abundantly enriched the life of the other churches, and the community.



In its early years as a mission Rehoboth suffered sore disappointments. Its first superintendent, the Rev. H.O.H. Richardson—whose name and worth are still cherished here—was, for a long period, laid aside by illness and unable to preach. His "Supply," sent by Conference, also broke down in health, soon after his appointment, and was unable to take any work for some months. Then, the Sister of the People, who, in an extremely difficult situation, toiled like a heroine, found her strength so impaired by the strain that she was compelled to retire from the service. And these were the most trying years, financially; promises that had been made by friends, and Connexional Courts were not realised, and the position became a serious problem. Faced with a chapel debt of over £1,200, and a large overdraft in the current account, it seemed as if no other thing was possible but to retire from the field—a course that was more than once suggested by outsiders. But Rehoboth has raised heroic children, who refused to be beaten; these, led by a succession of faithful, toiling ministers, have bravely faced the difficulties of the situation, and, without any Connexional grant to aid them, have *won through*.

The men and women of Rehoboth have exercised a ministry which, in fidelity and industry, is equal to that of any church in the city. Indeed, this mission has a splendid record, and its roll of membership includes the names of many who were the builders of Leeds Primitive Methodism. The winsomeness of the late John W. Hives, the first secretary of our Bible and Prayer Union and an enthusiastic Sunday school superintendent; the statesmanship of the late Thomas Howdill, and the financial genius of J.W. Pawson—whose recent removal is a distinct loss — have done more than tongue can tell to establish this mission in the hearts of many who are glad to call Rehoboth "*home*."

In more recent years the social ministries of the mission have not been so extensive as formerly—imperative financial needs have demanded far too much time for material ends—yet, in spite of this, much quiet, kindly service has been rendered, especially amongst the young, for Rehoboth has always been a young people's church. Nor have the sick and aged been forgotten. The church has established itself in the home, and the infirm have shared the ministry of comfort and helpfulness. The work of these years, quiet and unobtrusive as it mostly is, has brought little financial or even material gain, but it *has* created great wealth of love and tenderness; and many a grateful heart is heard to say, "Thank God for Rehoboth, and its service of hope and help."



During the seven years' term of the Rev. George Ayre—who went from Rehoboth, to Aliwal North—the mission saw much success; the War, and heavy losses by removals and death have since greatly taxed the strength and resources of those who still "hold the fort." But better days are dawning, and, surely, "the best is yet to be." As an important step towards future usefulness, the present Superintendent — the Rev. J. Marcus Brown—and the officials have set themselves the immediate task of extinguishing the remains of the old chapel debt, which is £750.

This they hope to accomplish by October, 1919, when the semi-jubilee of the mission will be celebrated. After which, it is intended to renovate the buildings, and again employ a Sister of the People, for it is the people about whom we are mostly concerned; "not thrones, and crowns, but men." And there is abundant material here, in the swarming populations of these dull, grey streets; the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are all too few. To expect one man— be he ever so able—to do all the work required of a superintendent; in organisation, preaching, visiting, etc.; is, under present circumstances, to ask the impossible. When the financial strain is easier, and more effort can be given to developing the real life of the church, then the glorious times of old will be repeated and even surpassed.

One very encouraging feature about the present situation is that the present workers are, almost all, of life-long association with the mission. Mr. William Kay has been here for forty-nine years; he is the esteemed circuit steward, and a devoted Sunday school worker. His son, Mr. Harold Kay—one of the most promising professional men of the city, and the secretary of the mission—has just passed to his eternal reward. His death, in early manhood, and on the threshold of a fine career, is a loss of the heaviest kind, and his place will not be easily filled. Mr. C.B. Howdill, A.I.B.A., was born here, and has been the honorary organist for nearly thirty years. He is the accomplished teacher of the senior

Bible-class. Of Mr. C.H. Crowther, the choirmaster, and Rehoboth Prize Choir of nearly thirty voices, not enough can be said. They have wrought magnificently in the service of praise, and are known for their fidelity to the morning service, as well as to that in the evening.

The Sunday school superintendent is Mr. R.H. Davis, who has an active association with the school for more than forty years. He has an enthusiastic colleague in Mr. Henry Clay, who, in addition to the duties of the assistant superintendent, is the whole-hearted organiser of the Young People's Missionary Society, which does so well for our Foreign Missions. Of class leaders, Messrs. T. Richmond and T. Hawes are the veterans, while Mr. W. H. Paley represents the younger men, and the Misses Walton, Pogson, and Perkins are sisters, faithful and true to the C.E. Society.

Amongst the workers, whose service is often rendered in quiet ways, are Messrs. W. Smith and J. Scholes. In the choir and the Band of Hope they have proved themselves staunch friends of the mission.

And what would Rehoboth do without its ladies' sewing party, whose valuable work makes possible the annual bazaar, in the absence of which it would be almost impossible to carry on?

To be the superintendent of this mission is no sinecure, "there's no time for idle dreaming." He must be in everything, for his leadership is essential to the success of any enterprise. But he finds a fruitful field in the Sunday school and the Boys' Life Brigade, as well as in the various services for adults. And the work of the present superintendent is valued, not only at Rehoboth, but in other circles of the city. Mr. Brown is chairman of the Leeds Sunday School Union Committee—one of the most flourishing of its kind in the kingdom—and he is in constant demand as a special speaker at workshop services, and in connection with the temperance organisations of the district. He finds time, also, to work with the After-care Committee of the Leeds Educational Board, in visiting those who have just left school, and have begun the harder tasks of life, and many discharged soldiers know him as a friend whose visits are always welcome.

In these, and other ways he is making the influence of our Church to be felt in the life of the city. Only a man with excellent good health and a tough constitution could do all that this varied life demands, and it is cause for profound thankfulness that, so far, the present minister has never had to abandon any public engagement on account of sickness.

There is urgent need for the extension of the work of this mission, especially on social-religious lines, and it is a matter of sincere regret that, at present, the Missionary Committee is unable to place an additional worker here; such an investment of missionary money would yield a splendid return in days to come.

Certainly there is a great future before Rehoboth, if it is thoroughly worked on up-to-date mission lines, and it is hoped that, in the days soon to be, this larger work will be undertaken, and strongly supported by a well-equipped staff. It is wonderful what has been done with the limited support of the past, and now that the fifty or more men whose names are on the roll of honour, are returning from active service, it is expected that more will be accomplished. For these men, on coming home, are met by a kindly welcome and are the invited guests of the C.E. Society and the Sunday school to a social evening, and thus an early opportunity to renew old acquaintances is afforded.

With this band of young men and their partners sharing the work and responsibility, it is not too much to expect that the future will justify our hopes.

Given adequate recognition and support, a work can be done at Rehoboth equal to the best traditions of our Church. It is absolutely necessary that missions of this kind should be continued. We look to the time when the State and the Municipality will deal with the social problems that are urgent.

We are eager to believe in the coming of the New Britain, when slums, sweating, drunkenness and poverty will cease. Because we believe in the coming of Christ's Kingdom, we believe in the final abolition of all these un-Christian things and conditions. Meanwhile, it is the mission of the Church, not as an end in itself, but as a means to the highest end, to be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. The Christian religion means the enfranchisement and the ennoblement of life in every sphere. Rehoboth stands for this.

References

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