

## Transcription of Petty's account of John Stamp

Advancing still further southward, in the beautiful and fertile county of Kent, we find Sheerness and Canterbury mission under the care of Hull circuit, The progress of the Kentish mission had not been great, though considerable sums had been expended thereon. Yet after Hull circuit took the mission a second time under its care the work was carried on with increased vigour, and hopes were entertained of greater success than had before been realised.

The mission had improved materially when the late Mr. John Stamp was appointed to labour thereon, in the year 1838. He was in some respects an extraordinary man, being as remarkable for the weakness of his judgment as for the greatness of his declamatory powers. His enterprising spirit and his influence over popular assemblies caused considerable excitement among the Kentish people, and for a time the mission appeared to be prospering rapidly. Before the conference of 1840 Sheerness was made into a separate circuit, with Mr. Stamp for its superintendent, for the office of which he was utterly incompetent. His lack of discretion, and his rash and headstrong proceedings soon involved the circuit in serious difficulties, and nearly completed its ruin. A series of charges was preferred against him by several of the office-bearers of the circuit, and a deputation from the General Committee examined matters on the spot, taking in writing the evidence against him, and his reply to the whole.

When this official document came before the conference of 1841 it was the opinion of that assembly that Mr. Stamp was altogether unfit for the office of a travelling preacher, and he was therefore discontinued. Sheerness circuit could no longer bear up under the difficulties which his improper proceedings had occasioned, and was taken again under the maternal care of Hull circuit; but the kindness of Hull friends in this respect brought upon them severe trials from Mr. Stamp, who repaired to that town, and began a course of slander which few men in their senses could have pursued. Public meetings were convened in his behalf; and a local periodical, long since extinct, espoused his cause, and admitted into its columns all manner of calumny against the connexion, and much violent abuse of its leading men at Hull.

The brethren concerned lived down the cruel aspersions cast upon them, and the inhabitants justly venerate the memory of those of them who have departed hence. But for a time Mr. Stamp and his advocates made an unfavourable impression upon a portion of the public; and twenty persons or more withdrew from the society. Among these were some whom it proved a great benefit to lose; but others were sincere and pious, and, being misled by the false representations of Mr. Stamp, were more to be pitied than blamed.

A church was formed under the pastoral care of Mr. Stamp, and a good chapel was erected for him within a short distance of West-street. But Mr. Stamp's pastorate was not of long continuance; confusion and financial embarrassment soon broke up his church, and occasioned the sale of the chapel. Days of humiliation speedily overtook him, and serious disappointments chequered his short and eccentric career. He died several years ago, a wiser and a better man, charity would hope, than he was in the height of his popularity, when vanity and show were affectingly visible to pious and discerning minds. But the injuries inflicted on the stations in which he laboured were not easily or soon repaired. In Louth circuit, where he began his public career, the embarrassment and distress caused by his rashness and self-will in erecting chapels without title-deeds or trustees, or any reasonable prospect of them being supported, were relieved by the generous conduct of Mr. W. Byron, who purchased many of the erections, and in various ways sought to assist the suffering cause.

But in Kent the wound inflicted upon the young and feeble societies was deep and painful. Years of toil and persevering labour have not sufficed to repair the injuries in some places. Hull circuit, however, continued to prosecute the mission in Kent with zeal and vigour, and when transferred to the care of the General Missionary Committee, in 1843, there were four stations occupied, namely, Sheerness, Ramsgate and Margate, Maidstone, and Canterbury.

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### References

J Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, 1880, p419ff