

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MAKING OF SUNDERLAND DISTRICT (*continued*).

III.—THE NORTHERN MISSION.



THE story of the Northern Mission has now to be told. The success of this mission was in every way remarkable—so remarkable indeed as evidently to have been beyond expectation, and even somewhat embarrassing. How the new territory thus gained and added on to the Connexion was to be apportioned and administered, raised some problems which had at once to be dealt with. Pre-existing arrangements were modified. A new District unthought of at the Conference of 1823 was extemporised. Five new northern circuits, which had been made during the year, had to be represented at some District Meeting. The district to which they geographically belonged was Brompton, which, in 1823, included North Shields; but, as we see from the Minutes of 1823, no district was supposed to comprise more than six circuits, whereas, if Hexham, Carlisle, North and South Shields, Newcastle, and Sunderland sent their representatives to Brompton District Meeting, that District would have eleven circuits instead of six. So the six northern circuits were provisionally formed into an entirely new District, which had its first meeting at South Shields on Easter Monday, 1824. The Conference Minutes make no mention of this fresh grouping of the northern stations; but that it took place, and that there was for one year a South Shields District, is clear from an interesting entry in *N. West's Journal*, which is worth giving, as bringing before us in a vivid way the progress the Connexion had made in the north-eastern counties in two short years.

Monday, April 19th.—Went with brothers Anderson and Peckett (delegates from Sunderland) to South Shields District [Meeting], where we met the delegates from North Shields, South Shields, Newcastle, Hexham, and Carlisle. The District Meeting lasted till Friday the 23rd. Much peace prevailed. The state of each circuit was prosperous, the whole number in the District amounted to twenty travelling preachers, sixty-one local preachers (not including exhorters), and 3,632 members. We have great reason to thank the Lord.”

Our method hitherto has been to relate the particular history of a circuit to the general history; to try to show how that circuit was but a link in a chain, one of a series of stepping-stones, a brick in a building, supported and lending support to others. Agreeably to this method, the missioning of the populous towns on the Tyne and Wear must be regarded as being, in its beginning, the continuation and natural development of Hull's Hutton Rudby and East Yorkshire Missions. In 1821, Hutton Rudby sent Messrs. J. Branfoot and J. Farrar to establish a cause in Guisborough, which for a time proved very successful. After this, Mr. Branfoot found his way to

Newcastle, where, in all these northern parts, the human grain stood thickest and ripest. We say he "found his way" advisedly; for, whether he had a roving commission to go where he thought he could do most good, and so, in the spirit of a true Christian knight-errant, bent his steps to the capital of the North; or whether the Hutton Rudby Circuit gave him a definite commission, the phrase "found his way" will, in either case, suit the fact. Though as yet there was no Primitive Methodist Society in Newcastle, there were those resident in the town who had been Primitive Methodists, and who were still such in sympathy, though for the time being they were attached to a sister community. Among these were Mr. William Morris, whose name stands on the first printed plan of the Tunstall Circuit, and Mr. John Bagshaw, also a local preacher of a later date, and who was shortly to become a travelling preacher in the Newcastle Circuit. These two early adherents had removed from Staffordshire to the North for the sake of employment, but still kept in touch with their old friends. It may even have been that when Mr. Branfoot entered Newcastle, Mr. Clowes had by him an invitation from these two old comrades to visit them, and was only waiting the opportunity to accept it. The visit was duly paid in the autumn of this same year, and the probability is that it was paid when Mr. Clowes was in the Hutton Rudby neighbourhood. It was during this visit that Clowes preached on "the Ascension of Christ" with telling effect. He was better advised than Mr. Branfoot in fixing upon the Ballast Hills rather than the end of Sandgate as the locality for his service; for it was in the Pandon or older eastern district of Newcastle that Primitive Methodism was destined to strike its earliest roots. It chanced, too, that on this first of August, when Mr. Branfoot attempted to preach near Sandgate, there had been a boat-race on the Tyne; and what that means every Tynesider will know. Mary Porteus was there, and she has told us that, as she saw Mr. Branfoot standing on a stool, with the rabble crowd surging round him—some swearing, and others setting dogs on to fight—she thought gospel-preaching was needed there and then just as much as when John Wesley preached on the same spot eighty years before. But as she witnessed the good man struggling to preach, and at last obliged to content himself with words of warning and exhortation, she thought again: "Surely the preacher must think that the people in these northern parts are little better than heathens." The service broke up in confusion,



JOHN LIGHTFOOT.

though not before Mr. Branfoot had announced his intention to preach in Gateshead on the following evening. This he did, standing beneath some trees on the very spot where Wesley had once stood to declare the word of life. This time the service was orderly, and the preacher spoke with power from, "I am the resurrection and the life."

It should be noted that during his visit to Newcastle, Mr. Branfoot was the guest of Mr. John Lightfoot, who is said to have been converted at Durham through the agency of William Bramwell, and through his good offices placed in a business-house in Newcastle. Mr. Lightfoot was the leader of two classes, and an active worker in the Wesleyan Church. Mr. Branfoot's visit, though a brief and apparently abortive one, would have its influence. Later in the day of this same first of August, Mary Porteus

was surprised to receive a visit from Mr. Lightfoot and his guest. She counted it an honour to have the good missionary under her roof, and to take part in the prayers which, as a matter of course, marked the visit. Newcastle made ample return to Cleveland for sending her its first missionary; for Mary Porteus began her ministry in the Guisborough and Whitby Union Circuit in January, 1826, and laboured there two and a half years, while in 1827 John Lightfoot also in the same circuit began his useful ministry of thirty-seven years. Thus was fulfilled Christ's saying: "Give, and it shall be given you; good measure."

When next we get an authentic glimpse of John Branfoot he is holding a service in the spacious market-place of South Shields, which has long been a favourite pitch for those who have something to sell or tell. He himself has given us the date of this



SOUTH SHIELDS MARKET-PLACE.

first service: "It was on the 17th of December, 1821," he says, "when we first opened the place." The Market Square, as Mr. Branfoot saw it in the dubious light of that winter's evening, would present much the same appearance it does to-day, except that the fronts of the shops that line three of its sides have been modernised. In the middle stood the Town House, and the fourth side of the square was flanked by the old church and its graveyard. This service was in every way a contrast to that which Mr. Branfoot had attempted to hold in Newcastle. The goodly number that gathered round—pilots, fishermen, miners, coal-heavers, glass-workers—were used to criers and vendors of all sorts, but this one was different from the rest, and must be listened to. So tradition tells, that as they stood there nothing broke the silence save the preacher's voice, and when he had done, men and women still lingered as though loath to leave the spot.

For a time services were of necessity held in the open-air; then two houses in Waterloo Lane, now Oyston Street, were thrown into one, and the room thus formed served as a shelter and home for the small society. This room was a workshop also, as well as a shelter, and in it work went on which made less work for the police-court and public-houses, and ensured better work being done in the mine and glass-works. Some who had led vicious lives were reformed, and their reformation was manifest in the town. Those who had known their former manner of life recognised the change, and had the candour to acknowledge that "good work was being done in the Ranters' room." So the society soon outgrew its first habitation, and a remove was made to a sail-loft in Wapping Street, hard by the river. The third and topmost story of this building was the preaching-room. It was reached by a flight of stairs, dark and steep; the room was open to the ridge of the roof, and dimly lighted by small windows eked out by a few slabs of glass inserted here and there among the tiles. This room was opened for worship by W. Clowes on October 20th, 1822. "The room," he says, "is nearly thirty yards long, but more came than could get in. At night the congregation seemed to be all on a move. There was a cry out for mercy, and two got liberty. This meeting, I conceive, will never be forgotten." There was no persecution met with at South Shields worth speaking of. A few youths might now and again put out the lights on the stair-way of the sail-loft, or let sparrows loose in the room itself; but this was only their way of finding amusement, and these youths were the very material out of which promising converts were made. Indeed, persecution found no favourable soil for itself in these northern towns. There was no territorial influence or popular sympathy to foster it, and employers of labour were disposed to favour rather than to discourage a movement which, in its first evangelistic phase, was so plainly working to their advantage. So the sail-loft was crowded and converts multiplied, until, by the spring of 1823, we find the society deep in chapel-building. A piece of glebe land, near the old graveyard, was obtained on a long lease, and on April 21st, 1823, the foundation-stone of the Glebe Chapel was laid, and a collection of £3 14s. 3d. taken! The amount suggests that the society was financially but poorly equipped for the formidable task to which it was committed; for, with the exception of two or three tradesmen, such as Messrs. Edward Nettleship, Joshua Hairs, and John Robinson, the members were worth no more than their weekly wage. The building of the chapel was not contracted for; it was done by the day, and paid for as the work proceeded. The first service was held in August, when it was a mere shell of a building, and even when it was formally opened in November, it was still unfinished, and remained so for some years. It would seem that the Glebe might have been lost to the Connexion in this time of searching and trial, had it not been for Mr. John Robinson, who was better off than the rest. By diligent trading he had got together means which his careful and inexpensive habits of life made it easy for him to keep together and increase. He came to the rescue of the trustees just at the time of their direst need, when they could do little more than pray for deliverance. He advanced £460, and some smaller amounts were advanced by others, which gave a measure of relief. In the end, Mr. Robinson took upon him the whole financial responsibility and much of the practical management of the trust estate, and bore the burthen until the society was in a position to shoulder

the responsibility. No wonder our fathers were firm believers in a Providence, and had a special "Providence Department" in their *Magazine*. It was by such experiences as these the conviction was inwrought that God had interposed on their behalf. That conviction was recorded on the front of the sanctuary which, in no conventional sense, was regarded as their "Ebenezzer"—their "God's Providence House." "What building



MR. JOHN BRACK.



MR. ALEXANDER THOMPSON.

is this?" asked a man of his companion as they passed the Glebe. Before the other could make reply, a boy, who was playing among the rubbish, broke in: "It's the 'Ranters' Chapel." "Why, how in the world have these folk got such a building as this?" was the exclamation of this "man of the street," expressing a surprise natural in



MR. GEORGE BIRD.



MRS. ROBINSON.



MR. J. ROBINSON.



MR. WILLIAM OWEN.

one not aware of God's partnership in the venture. "If you will go round to the other side you will see," said the boy. They went and read: "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." Joseph Spoor used to tell this little anecdote with zest. But, indeed, it is more than an anecdote; it is also a parable, with an obvious moral, setting forth the history of many of our early chapels—notably of the Glebe. Despite all the changes of

the years, that chapel has had a continuous history. There is still the Glebe Chapel as there is still St. Sepulchre Street. Eighty years have but served to impart a richer suggestiveness to the old name, and to make the pious legend, "*Hitherto* the Lord hath helped us," still more pertinent.

Meanwhile, during this prolonged crisis, the spiritual side of the Church's work was diligently attended to by the few faithful men who stood to their posts. The whole of Werewickshire—the district lying between the Tyne and Wear—was missioned as far west as Chester-le-Street, Ouston, Pelton, and the collieries by the Wear beyond Washington. The places thus opened were made into a circuit in September, 1823, Joshua Hairs being the first Circuit Steward. "A short time before the circuit was formed, a few members from the sail-loft missioned the colliery at the west end of the town and established services there. A class was soon formed, the leader of which was a publican. This society [Templetown] met in cottages and other places, till circumstances favoured the erection of a small place of worship."* At the first Circuit Quarterly Meeting, held December 9th, 1823, there were twenty-three places with 552 members; three months later the membership was 760, the quarter having witnessed an increase of 208.

Our space will permit us to do little more than allude to one or two out of the many officials who have contributed to the extension and upbuilding of the South Shields Circuit. Unfortunately no portrait is procurable of Mr. John Robinson, whose praiseworthy efforts to preserve the Glebe to the Connexion have been referred to; but we give the likenesses of his son—Mr. John Robinson, shipowner, and late Circuit Steward, and of his excellent wife, whose life was full of good works. Other faithful men and active officials were Messrs. George Bird, Richard Bulmer, Alexander Thompson, son-in-law of Rev. John Day, and father of Rev. J. Day Thompson, J. Brack, a most estimable man, and William Owen, a once very familiar figure to the riverine inhabitants of both the Shields, who could preach a sermon, and steer his ponderous ferry-boat across the Tyne, with equal skill.

NORTH SHIELDS.

On Tuesday, February 5th, 1822, W. Clowes crossed over from North to South Shields, and heard J. Branfoot of Hutton Rudby Circuit preach. Referring to South Shields, he writes: "If he had not taken it, we [the Hull Circuit] should now have taken it. So we are shoulder to shoulder. I think we are now likely to spread through the North." Only three days before, Clowes had arrived from the Darlington branch in order to begin a mission at North Shields. He had come at the invitation of Joseph Peart who, four years before, had left his native Alston Moor and was now a schoolmaster at Chirton. Why a Wesleyan local preacher in good standing, as Joseph Peart was at the time, should have taken such a step as this, he himself has told us. The explanation he gives shows that, at North Shields as elsewhere, there existed, side by side, two variant and competing types of Methodism which found it difficult to live and work together without friction. The experience—so common as

* Notes by the late Rev. John Atkinson.

to be a characteristic of the time—goes far to explain and justify the rise and spread of Primitive Methodism.

“One day I was alone in my room, studying how I could best glorify God in supporting His blessed work; for there had frequently been antagonists to great outpourings of the Holy Spirit even amongst the professed members of the Church. They could not endure the natural results of such visitations, but looked upon it as wildfire, disorder, confusion, enthusiasm, etc. I had a very strong debate with a professor of the dead languages who, as well as myself, belonged to the society of the Old Methodists. While contending with him in vindication of the rationality and great utility of such a work as had been effected in North Shields, about five years previous to that time, by an extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Ghost, he, by way of derision, said, ‘You should have been a “Ranter.”’ It powerfully wrought on my mind, as I sat in the room, that it was my indispensable duty to send for the ‘Ranters’ (so called). The circumstance was very singular; for I had never heard and never seen any of them. ‘I was not disobedient to the heavenly’ call, but wrote for William Clowes, who shortly arrived at our house, and stopped till the cause got established.”

Mr. Clowes had preached at North Shields in the autumn of 1821, when he visited his Newcastle friends. He had always his “seed-basket” with him; and he had preached during this flying visit, on the principle of “sowing beside all waters,” even when he was not likely to enjoy the fruits. Now, however, he was here for the double purpose of sowing *and* reaping. February 3rd, 1822, is reckoned by him as the date when North Shields as a new outfield was first opened. On that Sunday evening he preached at the lower part of the town, in a schoolroom belonging to Mr. Webster, who had granted them the use of it for a month, rent free. The town-crier was sent round to let the public know what was afoot, and the room was thronged. Next night, after a preaching service in the same room, the first class was formed consisting of three members, two of whom became travelling preachers before the year was out. One of these, and the first to have his name enrolled as member and leader, was Joseph Peart, who began his fourteen years’ ministry in Hull’s north-eastern branches. The other was William Summersides, the missionary of Carlisle and Whitehaven, one of Hull’s first missionaries to the United States, and, on his temporary return in 1838, the advocate and promoter of Protracted Meetings. When, at the end of three weeks, W. Clowes returned to Darlington, he had formed a second class at the upper part of North Shields; had preached at Howden Pans “to a thousand of a congregation, in general well behaved”; and visited Blyth, “where there appeared to be an opening for the work of the Lord.”

With an improvement in its “temporal concerns,” and influenced by the representations of W. Clowes, the March Quarterly Meeting of the Hull Circuit decided to take over the Northern Mission from Hutton Rudby. After his three weeks’ experience, W. Clowes was more confident than when, at the end of three days, he had written: “*I think* we are now likely to spread through the North.” Now he was persuaded that the work only needed to be pushed forward and followed up vigorously in order to be a signal success, and it is evident he brought his brethren to see as he did and to share his confidence. So, in a communication to the *Magazine* sent by Mr. R. Jackson

on the morrow of the Quarterly Meeting, we are told: "Brother Clowes left Hull on the 18th inst. for Newcastle-on-Tyne, Sunderland, Shields, etc. We are going to send three preachers into Northumberland this quarter." Then follows an allusion to the favourable opening presented by Blyth, on which, no doubt, Mr. Clowes had dilated: "There appears to be a good opening in one town, near the sea-side, which is about 140 miles from Hull."

The Hull authorities had faith in the future of the Northern Mission, and gave bond for their faith by appointing to it John and Thomas Nelson as the fellow-labourers of W. Clowes. The brothers, who sprang from a village in the neighbourhood of Whitby, rendered unforgettable service to the Connexion in its early days. In the North their names are deservedly held in high esteem. Contemporary journals, biographies, and tradition, bear concurrent testimony to the quantity and quality of the work they did in pioneering Primitive Methodism in the eastern parts of Northumberland and Durham. Of the two brothers, Thomas Nelson was slightly the elder, and by a few months was first in the field. He had a good share of natural ability, and a more than common zeal in winning souls. He preached almost exclusively in the open-air when in the North,

and often to immense congregations. Whether in this as in other cases which have come under our notice, "the fiery soul o'er-informed the house of clay," and subjected it to a strain that could not long be endured, we know not; but this is certain—Thomas Nelson travelled only seven or eight years. His last circuit was Birmingham. Here, in 1828, his health failed, and he settled down at Rothwell, near Leeds, where he died February, 1848, aged 51 years. The model minister, John Wesley tells us, should have "gifts, grace, and fruit." Thomas Nelson shaped himself after this pattern.



JOHN NELSON.

John Nelson entered the itinerant ranks in December, 1820. He had the advantage of his brother as to physique, being tall of stature and strongly built, his countenance pleasing, and his presence commanding. In him were united zeal and industry, considerable intellectual power and fluent utterance—a combination of qualities which naturally rendered his ministry popular and attractive. John Nelson entered, too, the ranks of authorship; but he took his place there as the precursor of J. A. Bastow, John Petty, James Garner, and Thomas Greenfield, not as a Biblical scholar or systematic theologian, but as a preacher still. The volume of "Sermons and Lectures" he published—the bulkiest and highest-priced book as yet given to the press by a Primitive Methodist preacher—was a souvenir of his ministry in Hull in 1828—9. It consisted of a series of discourses—doctrinal, practical, and experimental—delivered on Sunday evenings when, in his turn, he occupied the town pulpit. Unfortunately for our Church and unfortunately for himself, too, we believe, John Nelson afterwards withdrew from the Connexion. But this withdrawal did not take place until some years after the time of which we are writing, and does not concern us here.

Close upon a year after their appointment to the North Mission, the three yoke-

fellows met at North Shields, for the purpose of attending the preparatory Quarterly Meeting. They slept under Dr. Oxley's roof, which for once failed to afford a safe shelter. A tragedy like that which, in the night of February 27th, 1903, was fatal to the estimable W. R. de Winton, was all but rehearsed. Seldom are men brought so near death and escape scathless. Well might W. Clowes prefix to his account of their common deliverance the words of the Psalmist, "He shall give His angels charge over thee;" for death brushed them with his wings as he passed, and yet n^o harm befell them. It was the early morning of Monday, March 3rd, 1823. W. Clowes was roused from sleep by the noise of the wind, which had risen to a perfect hurricane. Scarcely had he dressed when a stack of chimneys crashed through the roof and broke in the floors. When he and his alarmed companions made for the stairs they found them blocked by the fallen roof. How under these circumstances they contrived to escape is not very clear; but escape they did. The local chronicler notes the preservation of Dr. Oxley and his family, but he does not know—as how should he?—what the preservation of Dr. Oxley's guests meant for Primitive Methodism. The loss of Messrs. Branfoot and Hewson by misadventure on the Hetton waggon-way on February 26th, 1831, was a heavy blow; the loss of W. Clowes and the Nelson brothers in the great storm of 1823 would have been a disaster.*

The preparatory Quarterly Meeting held, as we have said, on the day of this hair-breadth escape, proposed that North Shields should be made a circuit. Considerable progress must have been made during the year to warrant the taking of such a step. So late as June, 1822, the membership of the Northern Mission was but seventy. Since then the Mission had been divided into the North and South Shields branches, with an aggregate membership of 681, almost equally divided between the two branches. In addition to these, Stockton Mission, which since June had increased its membership from 79 to 114, was soon to be incorporated. What was more, a footing had been gained in the important towns of Sunderland and Newcastle, under circumstances shortly to be narrated. The outlook had appeared so promising that the Hull December Quarterly Meeting determined to send reinforcements, and eight missionaries were now at work—three North of the Tyne, three at South Shields, and two on the Stockton Mission, of whom N. West was one. The *Journals* of the missionaries show that these results had not been accomplished without hard work, often performed under trying conditions. A six weeks' storm in the first two months of 1823 had blocked the roads with snow-drifts, so as to make travelling hard and risky. For a whole week no Western or Northern mails had entered Newcastle, and the inhabitants saw with astonishment the South mails carried on the backs of thirteen saddle-horses. Travellers found themselves storm-bound in country inns and running short of provisions, as though they were in a beleaguered fortress. Clowes speaks of having witnessed distressing shipwrecks on South Shields sands, and having, at Sunderland,

* Sykes' "Local Records" refers to this incident of the great storm. Clowes' words are: "We therefore contrived to escape by the top of the roof, which lay then on the stair-case, holding ourselves by the wall." Some years later than this a Dr. Oxley befriended our cause in London. Whether we have here a mere coincidence of name we are unable to determine. The good doctor might have removed in the interim.

offered public thanksgiving on behalf of several sailors who had escaped with their lives. And yet, "fair or foul, snow or shine," the missionaries went on with their work. We get glimpses of Clowes preaching at North Shields, in New Milburn Place and on the New Quay. We see him, in conjunction with John Nelson, visiting Newbiggen and Morpeth. Newbiggen was so little accustomed to the Gospel that it hardly knew what to make of the evangelists: "Some few gathered round, but others stood at a distance as if frightened." At Morpeth they sent the town-crier round, and then preached at the Town Cross. "Several did not behave well;" one man in particular raised a clamour, and, from his movements, seemed to be intending an onset on the preacher, but Clowes "endeavoured to fix him with his eye, and waited upon God." Already we see there were good societies at Percy Main and Benton

Square. Still, the great ingathering was yet to come. Clowes and John Nelson both moved off after the Conference of 1823, and Jeremiah Gilbert, of prison fame, was for two years the leading missionary of North Shields Circuit. He speaks of "our noble chapel," in which he began his ministrations. Union Street Chapel was centrally situated and well attended, but an adjective more appropriate than "noble" might have been found to hit off its appearance and character. In the end it came to be a burden and an embarrassment. So much was this the case that, when Mary Porteus was stationed to the circuit in 1836, leave was obtained for her "to take an extensive tour to collect funds through Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and elsewhere where Providence might direct." Union Street was happily superseded by Saville Street Chapel, opened March, 1861, when the Rev. Thomas Smith was superintendent.



SAVILLE STREET CHURCH, NORTH SHIELDS.

Shortly after J. Gilbert's arrival—July 20th, 1823—a notable circuit camp meeting was held on Scaffold Hill, at which more than twenty persons were converted.* Thomas Nelson and George Wallace were two of the six travelling preachers who took part. Wallace was a native of the district, who ran his short course from July, 1823, to March, 1824, and probably died a martyr to excessive toil. Only a month before his death he walked from Wingate to Kirkwhelpington, a distance of seventeen miles, in snow and rain, and preached at night. "It put me forcibly in mind," says he,

* The "Extracts from the Journals of Jeremiah Gilbert" was printed in 1824, at North Shields, by J. K. Pollock, Camden Street.

“of some of the first Methodist preachers and the missionaries. There were great mountains, and crags, and burns to go over, which sometimes nearly exhausted my strength.” When, in December, 1823, Newcastle became an independent circuit and Morpeth a branch of North Shields, there were seven preachers on the ground instead of three, and near 800 members where, in March, there had been 335. The anthracite had fairly caught fire. From this time Newcastle and North Shields went each its own way, and the missionary efforts of the parent circuit had necessarily to be confined to the north—to the country lying between the Blyth and the Tweed. In this part of Northumberland the Connexion has now six stations, all of which can trace their descent from North Shields Circuit, viz., Seaton Delaval, Blyth, Ashington, Amble, North Sunderland, Lowick, and Berwick. Had success been at all proportionate to the amount of toil expended, Morpeth and Alnwick would have been found in this list; for both were early branches of North Shields, though they never grew to be circuits, and after a time ceased to be even branches. Morpeth has had a chequered history. Beginning as a branch of North Shields, it was afterwards served by Hexham. In 1836, with its twenty members, it reverted to North Shields. Much later it was remissioned by Blyth, and is now included in Ashington, one of the new progressive circuits that owe their rise to the sinking of collieries further north. As for Alnwick, the capital of the county, we have nothing to show for some years of labour. We may visit the Duke of Northumberland’s famous castle, said to be one of the most magnificent baronial structures in all England; but we shall look in vain for a Primitive Methodist chapel or preaching-room. And yet, W. Lister, Mary Porteus, and other missionaries lived here in the ’Twenties and ’Thirties, and made Alnwick the centre of earnest evangelistic efforts.

Mr. Lister was on the Alnwick branch from January to April, 1829, and again for two months in 1830. We give an item from his *Journal*, which shows that the future President and Book Steward could cheerfully endure privations:—

“During the months of July and August (1830), I missioned about a dozen of the villages. I often had long journeys, much hard fare, made my breakfast and dinner at times by the side of a spring of water, with a pennyworth of bread bought at some village shop. Yet these were trifles to what my Master had to go through in preaching among the villages. The prosperity of the work sweetened all.”

The same *Journal* speaks of a crowded Missionary Meeting held in the Town Hall of Alnwick, at which Brothers Herod, Clough, W. Garner, J. Parrott, and W. Lister were the speakers. “Next day” (March 2nd, 1830), says Mr. Lister, “I walked, in company with the other four brethren, twenty-five miles to Bedlington, where we held a Missionary Meeting. Next day walked home [to North Shields] twelve miles.”*

Still the efforts put forth on the somewhat niggard soil in and around Alnwick were not altogether in vain, as the biographies and journals of some of the workers show. If the societies were numerically feeble, and mostly made up of the poor of this world, there were amongst them some men and women of high principle who did no discredit

* MS. *Journals* of the Rev. W. Lister.

to the Connexion. Such, assuredly, was the aged woman, a member of the Alnwick society, who, too poor to pay her weekly class-pence, still recognised her Christian obligations and, in the spirit of Northumbrian independence, explained to the minister who led the class, "*I clean the chapel for my privileges.*"

The most notable achievement of North Shields Circuit in the early days, was undoubtedly, next after the planting of our Church in Newcastle, the missioning of Berwick-on-Tweed. The first on the ground was William Clough. He began his mission on January 4th, 1829, by preaching on Wallace Green, and also in a large room he had taken on rent. During the three months he spent on the mission, Mr. Clough established preaching-stations on both sides of the border, instituted a Sunday afternoon service at the Town Hall steps, preached to the prisoners in the jail, and laid the foundation of the Berwick society. Mr. Lister, who followed him, is rightly regarded as having been the maker of Berwick Circuit. He it was who,



OLD BRIDGE, BERWICK-ON-TWEED.

building along the lines already laid down, prepared the mission for circuit independence, which was granted in 1831. Himself a fruit of the Northern Mission and called into the ministry by North Shields, his home-circuit (1827), Mr. Lister seems to have understood the Northumbrian and Scottish type of character, with which, indeed, his own had many points of affinity. This sympathetic insight of one who was in the full vigour of early manhood and prodigal of his strength, made his double term of service in Berwick, and his year in Edinburgh (then a branch of Berwick), remarkably successful. During his first term of fifteen months in Berwick, he preached every Sunday afternoon, from April to September, at the Town Hall steps, often to as many as two thousand people. Places as far distant as Kelso, in Scotland, were visited, rooms hired, and services held, with the view, if possible, of establishing new causes. A friendly arrangement was entered into by which Wooler and two other societies

were taken over from the Bible Christians.* A chapel capable of holding six hundred people, also a schoolroom and a manse were built (February, 1830); and, although the debt left on the property afterwards proved burdensome, the acquisition of these buildings so soon after the beginning of the mission, was something of a feat. Converts



WILLIAM FULTON.

were made like W. Fulton and Adam Dodds, both of whom afterwards spent two terms of ministerial service in Berwick, to the great advantage of the circuit. Another convert was Dr. W. Landells, the once well-known minister of Regent's Park Chapel, who for some time was a local preacher in the Berwick Circuit. In 1833, Mr. Lister began his second term of three years in the circuit under disheartening conditions. The interests of the station had recently suffered from ministerial bickerings, of which the public were but too fully aware. The circuit had gone backward instead of forward. Retrogression was writ large on its poor manuscript plan showing only six places. The one chapel of the circuit was in difficulties, the mortgagee threatening

to foreclose. But the new preacher was known, and received a cordial welcome that was of good omen. The same methods which had proved so successful four years before were again adopted, with the result that a new era of progress set in. Eyemouth, which had been missioned in 1830 and afterwards abandoned, now asked for the resumption of services, and in October, 1835, a new chapel was opened for its twenty members. In June, 1834, Edinburgh Mission was transferred to Glasgow, and at the following Quarter Day Alnwick branch was re-attached to North Shields. When Mr. Lister was leaving Berwick in 1836, he could write: "Through the blessing of heaven, we leave 120 more members than we found, one new chapel, nineteen places missioned, Berwick chapel relieved of its financial difficulties, and all old circuit outstanding bills paid off."

There are one or two peculiarities connected with the planting and subsequent history of our Church in north-east Northumberland that may briefly be pointed out. One thing we cannot find—persecution. More than this: in no other part of England did our missionaries receive such civil treatment from all classes, and in none were they taken more seriously and listened to more attentively. There were many places in England where the missionary no sooner began his service than the bells were set a-ringing to drown his voice; there were still more places where the bells were rung only at the prescribed times—missionary or no missionary; but, as far as we are aware, Berwick was the only place where the bells were stopped ringing, even at the authorised times, so that the open-air service might not be interrupted. Like the Bereans of old, the people of Berwick were "ready to listen, willing to inquire." Probably the attitude of the people to our early missionaries may be explained by the extent to which the seriousness and thoughtfulness native to the Northumbrian character, have, through the long-prevalent influence of Presbyterianism, taken the bent towards a non-priestly religion—a religion which regards the Bible and pulpit with instinctive reverence.

* It was a pious female named Mary Ann Weary, from Cornwall, who was the founder of these societies. She alleged the mission was begun in obedience to a divine impression.

Certainly here, if anywhere, the preacher starts with the great initial advantage that there is a recognised presumption in his favour, and it will be his own fault if he fails to justify that presumption, and does not succeed in turning the sentiment of deference into a reasonable and well-grounded respect.

But our history shows that Presbyterianism can take as well as give, and that she has enjoyed a large reversionary interest in the evangelistic movements our Church has carried on in her midst. From the beginning, Berwick Circuit has given many to other communities. Every revival—and there have been many of them—has enriched the Churches. Such was notably the case after the Eyemouth revival of 1859, in which the Rev. J. Snaith took a leading part at the beginning of his ministry. No doubt the loss was greater in the early days, when chapels were few and accommodation scant; but some fruit was lost even after store-rooms were provided. Of course statistics are not available. If they were, we venture to say the disclosure would be startling as to the number of members and officials of other Churches who received their definite call to the Christian life through the agency of Primitive Methodism. The late Rev. W. Fulton, writing in 1868, says: "There are no Churches in Berwick, the Romanists excepted, which have not benefited by our ministry." What W. Clowes said in 1820 applies with special force to Berwick: "It is true we have received assistance from our friends by a few class leaders, local preachers, and others coming to us . . . but for every old sheep received, we have given in lieu at least two fat lambs."

It would be interesting to know how many ministerial probationers have travelled the Berwick Circuit and its offshoots, and how many ministers Berwick has pledged during the course of its history. In the eighteen years, from 1855 to 1873, the pledges of no less than ten ministers were accepted, amongst them those of John Waite, John Gill, Hugh Gilmore, and R. G. Graham. A large proportion of the ministers of the old Sunderland District had their turn of service in this border region soon after they had put on the harness, so that Berwick has been a veritable training-ground for the ministry. At first sight there would seem to be little connection between these facts and the situation and physical characteristics of the district these young men helped to evangelise. But the connection is not difficult to trace; they are the first and last links in a chain of causation. It is the country, such as we find it, that has limited the expansion of industrialism and checked the natural growth of population. The intermediate links of the chain are obvious enough. Even churches cannot escape the working of the laws of political economy. All that can be done is to recognise their working and to seek to minimise their disadvantages; and this has been the course pursued in relation to Berwick. The industrial revolution which, in other parts of the country, has multiplied mines and manufactories, and doubled or trebled the population, has done little for Berwick except to draw off and provide work and food for its surplus hands and mouths. When we find that Berwick, the chief town of this district, had but 679 more inhabitants in 1891 than it had fifty years before, and that in 1891 the population was actually less by 617 than it was in 1881, we can see what must have been going on all through these years, and form some idea of the difficulties the Churches have had to contend with. We see the youth at the close of his

apprenticeship moving off to the busy towns on the Tyne or Wear. We see parents, anxious to put the means of an assured livelihood within the reach of their rising family, migrating to the centres of trade and commerce. It is disheartening to those striving to build up strong societies, to find themselves thus seemingly thwarted by the laws which control the labour-market. Still it is gratifying to know that in this border district the Connexion has held its ground—and something more. In 1842 Berwick had three ministers and 274 members; now Berwick, and its offshoots, Lowick and North Sunderland, together have six ministers and 771 members.

Besides William Fulton and Adam Dodds, the Berwick Circuit has sent out into the ministry others who have long and ably served the Connexion. Among these may be named Michael Clarke, and George Lewins who, after forty-one years of labour in various parts, still holds his place in the ranks. Michael Clarke was born at Ford Moss, and it is interesting to note that John Clarke, one of the Baptist missionaries banished from Fernando Po in 1858, was his uncle. Mr. Clarke was called out by the Berwick Circuit, and in 1853 went out to Melbourne to take the place of John Ride. After an absence of more than a quarter of a century he revisited England, and the



MICHAEL CLARKE.



MR. JOHN BROWN.



MR. GEO. JOBSON.

Conference of 1879, recognising the distinguished service he had rendered Australian Primitive Methodism, elected him as its Vice-President. He was superannuated in 1885 and died 1892.

Of the Berwick laymen who have "obtained a good report," we can but refer to one or two. James Young with a considerable dash of eccentricity, and Michael Clarke of Belfort, were both notable men. John Brown of Ancroft was a fine specimen of a border tenant-farmer—broad-shouldered and broad-minded, to whom the eyes of men turned as one in every way fitted to represent the people at Westminster, though Sir Edward Grey eventually became the accepted candidate. Mr. Brown was, for many years, a conspicuous and devoted worker for our cause. The Allerdean church stands as his memorial. Of Mr. George Jobson, who for forty years was a local preacher and leading official of the Berwick Circuit, the Rev. H. Yooll (2) (who knew him well) says: "He was one of the best fruits of our work in Berwick at a comparatively early day, when loyalty to the cause was often tested severely. His outstanding characteristics were zeal and generosity. The Berwick Circuit covered then what is now the area of three circuits, and Mr. Jobson was one of its tireless

workers. In its somewhat varying fortunes he was ever the same devoted son and servant of our Church. His two sons are local preachers with us."

We return to the "old North Shields Circuit" as, in order to distinguish it from the truncated circuit of to-day, it is often familiarly called. The constituent societies of the old circuit were diversified in character. They were not all of the same cast or complexion. The circuit-town—a considerable seaport—and the river-side societies had their distinctive features. Cullercoats, two miles away, was a typical fishing village; while an ever-enlarging proportion of the societies was found in the mining villages to the north of the Tyne.



JAMES HALL.

Amongst the officials of an early date resident in North Shields were Messrs. Stephen Knott, John Foster, and James Hall. Two men who at a later time came to the front and took a prominent part in the management of affairs, were Messrs. John Spence and Thomas Smith. Mr. Spence began life as a working miner at Percy Main, but set up in business for himself and, by dint of push and ability, raised himself to a good social position; in the end becoming an alderman and chief magistrate of the borough. Mr. Spence was full of vitality; without being intellectual or making any pretensions to culture, he had an alert intelligence. He was genial, jocose, ready to show hospitality, and both had it in his power and inclination to be helpful to the society and circuit. As circuit steward and chapel treasurer his capabilities for business found full scope, while he also filled the offices of leader and Sunday School superintendent. Mr. Thomas Smith was a man of a very different type, both in appearance and still more in mental constitution and temperament. With no imagination to speak of, he had an original and vigorous mind that in its workings occasionally threw off sparks of grim humour. Had he but had the advantage of thorough mental discipline in his youth, there is no telling what he might have become or achieved. Even as it was he could not help being a philosopher in his way, a solid preacher, and a man of weight in the counsels of the Church. Moreover, he and his excellent wife having leisure at command, were indefatigable in the more private walks of usefulness. Unfortunately, Mr. Smith had an unyielding and somewhat passional nature. As a retired blacksmith, he might not unfittingly have adopted as his own the family motto: "You may break but cannot bend me." As Mr. Spence, too, had also the defect of his qualities, in a certain over-sensitiveness, it is not to be wondered at that these two estimable men were sometimes in opposition and that the result was friction, from which, now and again during the years, North Shields has unhappily suffered.



J. SPENCE.

The loss of Thomas Nightingale is too recent, and the man himself too widely known, to require much to be said of him here. As one who was frequently elected to attend the Conference assemblies, and who invariably drew large audiences on the Conference Camp-ground; as one too, who ran for the Vice-presidency of the

Conference, and was selected as a morning speaker at the Metropolitan Missionary meeting, he had deservedly achieved a considerable Connexional reputation. In the years to come he will be ranked with the original and popular preachers of his day, and his sayings and doings will enrich the traditions of our Northern churches.

Another valuable official was Mr. Joseph Salkeld, a Cumbrian by birth, who, after some years' residence in Newcastle, settled at Howden-on-Tyne, where he and his worthy wife—strict though kind—dispensed hospitality, and were a stay and help to the church. Mr. Salkeld was a healthy-minded, sunshiny Christian, the influence of whose life “did good like a medicine,” purging the mind of black vapours, and causing others to look out on life as smilingly as he looked on it himself. He was a frequent platform speaker as well as preacher and, being full of humour and having a rich repertory of anecdotes, his speeches were lively and entertaining. How often his, “This reminds me of an anecdote,” was the introduction to some reminiscence of the past that had its lesson, though no disparagement, for the present.

Many years ago, John Barnard and J. H. Jopling as youths bowed at the penitential form at Percy Main, along with some ten others. The former was called into the



THOS. NIGHTINGALE.



MR. J. SALKELD.



MRS. E. SALKELD.



RICHARD RAINE.

ministry (1857) by Berwick Circuit. After travelling a few years he settled down in his native circuit, and as a local preacher rendered extensive and valuable service for a long series of years. Benjamin Hall, his early guide and mentor, still survives as the doyen of the North Shields Circuit local preachers. So, happily, does J. H. Jopling who, full of good works, holds a secure and lasting place in the affections of preachers and people. There are many others who in the quieter walks of usefulness have served the interests of these river-side churches—families like the Dodds, the Jewels, the Grants, the Nicholsons, the Rutherfords; and men like J. Spoor, H. B. Thompson, R. Holden, and Richard Raine. Of the last-named two, a further word must be written. Mr. R. Holden decided for Christ at a famous camp-meeting at Dye House, in the Hexham Circuit. In early life he was associated in his employment with Dr. Joseph Parker. He afterwards removed to Chirton, and then to North Shields, where, for thirty years, he pursued the even tenor of his way, filling at one time or another important Church and civic offices, and living a blameless and most useful life. Richard Raine—“the famous Primitive singer and *beau ideal* choir-master”—spent the declining years of his life in North Shields. When in the hey-day of his

powers, he was known far and wide as *the* man to head the van of a procession, and he had led the singing at many a historic camp-meeting. To the end, although "the daughters of music were brought" somewhat "low," he retained his enthusiasm for sacred song. Assuredly, with a soul so full of music, he is now right amongst the "harpers harping with their harps."

The society at Cullercoats offered a pleasing variety to the church-life of the circuit. When first missioned, and for some years after, Cullercoats was, as we have said a typical fishing-village. Its fishermen were hardy, adventurous, and industrious; and their women-folk, clad in the characteristic garb of their class, were as picturesque figures as the Scots' fishwives, whom in many respects they resembled. Like their norther



CULLERCOATS BAY. (Present Day.)

sisters, they toiled hard, taking quite their full share of work as bread-winners for the family. Not only did they look after their households, but they mended the nets, gathered bait, and, above all, they vended the fish. Often might they be seen in North Shields, and even in Newcastle, bending under the weight of three or four stones of fish, carried on their backs in wicker-baskets or "creels," and their cry of "caller herring" was as striking as their appearance. The fishing-people of Cullercoats were clannish, and intermarried so closely that the surnames were few and, for the purpose of identification, nicknames had to be used. In the early 'Sixties, it was said there were six John Taylors in the village, who had severally to be distinguished by a sobriquet. Some of the primitive simplicity and old-world customs which once

prevailed may have vanished before the sure oncoming of modern fashions. Cullercoats itself has undergone great changes so as scarcely to know itself. Railway facilities and its nearness to Newcastle have transformed it into a residential neighbourhood, and into a popular sea-side resort. The extent of the change effected may be partly measured by the material advance our Church has made in the village; for Primitive Methodism has done much for the fishermen. From the beginning—probably in the early 'Forties—it got a good hold of them. Its ministrations suited them and helped them, and the experience of Filey was repeated in the moral transformation of the fishermen and their families. At first, services were held in a chapel, jointly used—strange to say—by the Presbyterians and Congregationalists—each of the three



CULLERCOATS NEW CHAPEL.

denominations conducting one Sunday service therein. In the end, the Primitives were left sole occupants of the chapel. The cause prospered. Visitors were attracted to "the Fishermen's Chapel," so much so that the chapel became quite an institution in the village, and it got to be considered quite the correct thing to join in its worship. Visitors admired the heartiness of the services; they liked the look of the fisher-people, who came in numbers, all clad in their Sunday best, and they liked the way in which they threw themselves into the service. It was a new and piquant experience to listen to such preachers as Thomas Wandless and Thomas Nightingale; so that when the visitors went back to the big town, the word was passed round: "When you go to Cullercoats, you must be sure to attend 'the Fishermen's Chapel.'" This is

no fancy-sketch, for we write from a four years' experience—1867-71. It was decided the time had come for enlargement; whereupon, ladies of various denominations co-operated with the society in raising £400 by a bazaar, and in 1868 the chapel was rebuilt. That chapel, which may be seen in our picture, is still used as a school and lecture-hall; and, hard by it, there stands a new chapel capable of accommodating five hundred people, which was opened in 1899.

In the march of improvement quite a new village or town has sprung up at the adjoining Whitley Bay, with scarcely any religious provision for the residents. Here, under the superintendency of Rev. G. F. Johnson, a handsome and commodious church was erected in 1904, at a total cost, including land, of £3,200. We leave Cullercoats and its record of progress, just noting the fact that George Dodds, of Newcastle—the trusty comrade of George Charlton in the temperance crusade—in the evening of his life, came to reside amongst the Cullercoats fishermen, and worked for and with them; and here, too, Rev. James Young has chosen to locate, after forty-four years' faithful and fruitful ministerial service; here, too, Alexander Petticrow, who has been called the "Billy Bray of Cullercoats," ended his days. In a recess of these sea-cliffs he found sanctification, and in these streets he witnessed for God.*



REV. J. YOUNG.

Turning now to the colliery societies of the old North Shields Circuit, we find they have all along been a growingly important factor in its life; so much so, that the administrative changes which have taken place in the circuit—its divisions and subdivisions—have been largely the result of the working of this factor. This is seen in the next important organic change which took place in the circuit after Berwick was parted with. This was the formation of Blyth, first into a branch, and afterwards, under the guidance of Rev. James Jackson—"an able administrator and an excellent preacher" †—into an independent station. Blyth had been remissioned early in the 'Thirties, but had encountered reverses largely due, we are told, to Church dissensions; the chapel became involved, and was ultimately lost to the Connexion. But Blyth was destined to become the head of a vigorous circuit, and, what is more, to become the parent of circuits. The opening of new collieries greatly increased the population of the neighbourhood. Blyth became the centre of a new colliery district, and, more and more, a port of shipment for coals. It is significant that the year when Blyth was made into a station was also the year when Thomas Burt, then a working miner at Choppington, was appointed the Secretary of the Northumberland Miners' Union; nor less significant is it that, largely by the votes of the miners, he was, in 1874, returned to Parliament for the Morpeth Division. These facts point to the growing influence of the miners in the district; and the reference to Thomas Burt is not out of place; for besides his early association with C. C. McKechnie, and others of our ministers in the old North Shields Circuit, he was, during his residence in Blyth, the close friend of

* See Rev. S. Horton's article on him in *Aldersgate*, 1901, p. 219.

† Rev. C. C. McKechnie's MS. Autobiography. For a reference to the troubles in Blyth, see "The Earnest Preacher," p. 125. Joseph Spoor resided at Blyth in 1845.

Hugh Gilmore, and, in association with him and men of kindred spirit, such as Robert Lawther and William Bell, took part in many a local fight for truth and righteousness. In this part of the country, at least, our Church has developed with the development of the coal-trade, and has attended upon its movements. The sinking of a pit has always meant the establishment of a society; for, amongst the sinkers and miners drawn to the spot, were sure to be some Primitive Methodists, who might be counted upon to abide true to their Church, and who, if there were no society already, would see to it that one was founded. So the expansion of the coal-trade, as also its northward drift, go far to explain the history of our Church in South-East Northumberland. Seaton Delaval, which had no existence when Clowes missioned North Shields or Benton Square, becomes,



BENTON SQUARE OLD CHAPEL.

in 1875, the Seaton Delaval Circuit. Ashington, too, made a circuit in 1896 with 405 members, was the creation of the coal trade, and received many colonists from North Shields—men like the Gregorys, the Crawfords, the Mains, and many besides. Amble Circuit, formed in 1897, is the last outcome of this process. Here extension is taking place. A new iron church has been put up at Radcliffe, and Greyton, a new colliery district of 2000 inhabitants, has been missioned with every prospect of success.

There is nothing particularly prepossessing about the pit villages of Northumberland, or any other county. They have features in common familiar to most of us. We can see the rectangular rows of cottages, each one outwardly like its neighbour, the inevitable

pit-shaft and engine-house and waggon-way. But nowhere more than amid such depressing surroundings may a man find more use for the second of the two sights God has given him. Here, if anywhere, "among the angular marks of men's handiwork," Sir Arthur Helps' reflection seems very much to the purpose: "The painter hurries by the place; the poet, too, unless he is a very philosophic one, passes shuddering by. But, in reality, what forms of beauty, in conduct, in suffering, in endeavour; what tragedies, what romances; what foot-prints, as it were, angelic and demoniac—now belong to that spot."* Whatever the painter and the poet may do, a Primitive Methodist need not hurry through this district; for human traits, and mementos honourable to his Church, are afforded by every pit-village of old standing hereabout.



OLD CHAPEL, CRAMLINGTON.

Here, for example, is Old Cramlington Colliery. What memories are recalled by the view of its singular old chapel given in the text! It was at an exciting missionary meeting, held here in 1843, the idea of a New Zealand Mission was first broached—the mission to be sustained by the Sunday Schools of the Connexion. The memorial sent from that meeting had its influence. The idea caught on, and, as we shall see, the New Zealand Mission was begun in 1844.

We pass on to Seaton Delaval. Here, in 1859, exasperated by their grievances, the miners struck work without due notice having first been given. In consequence, eight

* "Companions of My Solitude," p. 241.

men were sentenced at North Shields to 'two months' imprisonment. These were amongst the most intelligent men on the colliery; they were all teetotallers, and they had all been opposed to the strike. Of the eight victims, four at least were Primitive Methodists, viz., Anthony Bolam, Alexander Watson, Henry Bell, and Robert Burt. Henry Bell was a man in many ways remarkable—for his intellectuality, his character, and the physical suffering he was called to endure. Robert Burt, the uncle of Thomas Burt, M.P., was arrested when kneeling by the bedside of his wife, who was sick unto death. When the manager was expostulated with for putting in prison the very men who had opposed the strike, and were the most respectable and law-abiding men they had at the colliery, he replied: "I know that; and that is what I have put them in for. It is of no use putting those in who cannot feel."

As you go eastward from Seaton Delaval, you soon come to New Hartley, a name recalling one of the most appalling colliery disasters of modern times. The sight of the broken beam of the pumping-engine is indeed a grim memento; for, by the breaking of that ponderous shaft, in January, 1862, four hundred and two men and boys lost their lives. We refer to one incident—and to one only—in that long-drawn-out tragedy, because it shows how grace, in the persons of some of our co-religionists, could assert itself as a conquering and sustaining power in a situation dire and desperate. On the body of the back-overman there was afterwards found this memorandum, roughly pencilled on a piece torn from a newspaper:—

"Friday afternoon, at half-past two.

"Edward Armstrong, Thomas Gledston, John Hardy, Thomas Bell, and others, took extremely ill. We also had a prayer-meeting at a quarter to two, when Tibbs, Henry Sharp, J. Campbell, Henry Gibson, and William G. Palmer [exhorted]. Tibbs exhorted us again, and Sharp also."

Four of these who preached "as dying men to dying men" were our brethren; William Tibbs being a class-leader at New Hartley, and Henry Sharp, Chapel Steward at Old Hartley.

The old North Shields Circuit has had its vicissitudes. By the disastrous "long strike" of 1844, which lasted eighteen weeks, the societies were almost wrecked. The miners were ejected from their homes, and had to camp in the lanes, or where they could. But if the societies have at times been "minished and brought low," they have also had their seasons of revival and replenishment, as the following extract from Rev. C. C. McKechnie's MS. autobiography, referring to the great revival of 1867, will show:—

"Contemporaneous with this great and good work in the town [of North Shields], a similar work was going on all over the circuit. I am not aware that a single place in the circuit failed to share in the marvellous visitation. Such places as Seaton Delaval, Cramlington, Dudley, Howden, Cullercoats, where we had a good staff of workers, and a considerable population, reaped the largest harvest. The revival scenes at these places were often glorious. They cannot, indeed, be described without using language that would appear extravagant. Often when I have seen crowds, yea, crowds of men and women flocking to the penitents' form, and with strong crying and tears pleading with God for mercy, I have felt utterly

broken down. The whole countryside was moved. It almost seemed as if the Millennium was rushing upon us, and as if the entire population were being enclosed in the gospel-net."

This witness is true, as the present writer can avouch. The numerical returns for the North Shields Circuit for 1868-9 show an increase of six hundred members for the two years.

To give pen-and-ink sketches of the worthies of this part of the old North Shields Circuit is impossible, and we shall not attempt it. The portraits of two or three, out of scores equally worthy, will be found in the text. Fain would we have given one of Thomas Wandless, the eccentric and popular local preacher; but here are Thomas Gleghorn, of whom Rev. S. Horton has written an appreciative sketch;* good John Bell, of Dudley, and his saintly wife, whom the Vice-President of the Conference of 1903 is proud to claim as his parents; and Matthew Lowther, of West Cramlington, afterwards of Chertsey, father of Alderman Lowther, J.P., of Brighton.



THOMAS GLEGHORN.



MR. JOHN BELL, DUDLEY.



MRS. BELL, DUDLEY.



MATTHEW LOWTHER.

PRIMITIVE METHODISM AND THE MINERS OF THE NORTH.

The claim is here made that our Church has materially assisted the miners of Northumberland and Durham in working out their temporal as well as spiritual salvation, and that among them as a class may be found some of the choicest samples of the fruit of our labours. This is the claim made, and it is a large one. But, large though it be, the claim is conceded by those best qualified to pronounce judgment according to the facts with which they are fully conversant. One such expert witness is Principal Fairbairn, who recently wrote:—

"The Primitive Methodist Church has without aid from taxes or rates, achieved for the godly manhood of the miners in Northumberland and Durham more than could be achieved had all the schools been non-provided, all the teachers been appointed by the Church, and all the atmosphere carefully regulated by the local clergy."†

Another witness tells the story of the long, unequal struggle carried on by the miners

* *Aldersgate Magazine*, 1896, p. 616.

† Letter in "The Pilot," January 16th, 1904.

of both counties to free themselves from galling and impoverishing disabilities—from the yearly bond, the truck system, the employment of boys in the pits for as many as seventeen or eighteen hours at a stretch, and other grievances too numerous to be particularised. The struggle, he shows, was often attended with reverses, and the leaders in that struggle not infrequently became marked men and had to suffer the loss of employment, or in other ways were “made an example of.” The first attempt to form a union for self-protection, made in 1830 by Thomas Hepburn, a local preacher,* ultimately failed. But still the struggle went on until political emancipation was won, one grievance after another redressed, the Miners’ Permanent Relief Fund established, the Mines Regulation Act (1872) passed, and strong unions formed both in Northumberland and Durham, with Thomas Burt and William Crawford—both of Primitive Methodist extraction and training—as their secretaries and paid Parliamentary representatives. As we follow the moving story, it is significant that we are continually meeting with names already familiar to us in our Church-records, showing that those who were prominent workers in the various societies had come to be, by virtue of their character and ability as speakers, the recognised leaders in the struggle for the rights of labour. And they were moderators as well as leaders in the struggle; for there were amongst their followers exasperated men smarting under their wrongs, and there were also no inconsiderable number of young hot-bloods, as well as a sprinkling of men of little principle, to whom Revolution delusively promised quick and large returns, while the methods of Reform seemed tame in comparison and slow in yielding but meagre results. For all this, the leaders, being for the most part Christian men, and shrewd and patient withal, set themselves resolutely to withstand the temptation to resort to violent and illegal methods; and the cause they championed was, in the end, the gainer by their self-restraint and wise leadership, though in many cases the reward came too late to be of any use to them who had earned it. It is a posthumous honour we pay them. All this Mr. Fynes tells us in his book,† and then, in closing his retrospect of the long struggle, he pays a tribute to the work of our Church, only part of which we can quote here:—

“Unsatisfactory though the moral and intellectual condition of the miner to-day is [1873], yet, compared with his condition at the period treated in the opening chapters of this book, there is a miraculous change. Side by side with the Union the earnest men who have been stigmatised ‘Ranters’—the Primitive Methodists of the two counties—have been working out the social, intellectual, and moral amelioration of the miners, and in this great reform they have been very materially assisted by the temperance advocates who have from time to time

* “When a mass meeting on Shadin’s Hill was threatened by the Marquis of Londonderry and a regiment of soldiers, the miners had already raised their muskets, and in a moment or two a massacre would have begun, but for Thomas Hepburn, a local preacher, who cried out: ‘Make way for His Majesty’s troops.’”—Hon. E. Richardson, of Australia, in the “Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review.” We mistrust the reference to the miners’ muskets and the threatened massacre. There is, however, no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the story.

† “The Miners of Northumberland and Durham. A History of their Social and Political Struggles. By Richard Fynes.” Blyth, 1873.

laboured amongst the miners. . . . Probably no body of men have ever been subjected to so many jibes and jeers from superficial people as those referred to; but without doubt none ever achieved such glorious results as they have done. To many it may be a matter of supreme indifference what is the exact creed professed by Primitive Methodists; but whether they have a creed or none at all, it is impossible for any observing man not to see and admire the bold and ardent manner in which they carry on their labour amongst the miners."—(Pp. 282—3).

It is much to be wished that Mr. John Wilson, M.P., or other competent person, would so set forth the facts known or accessible to them, as once for all to make good Mr. Wilson's own statement: "There has been no more potent factor in the moral uplifting of the population of our pit-villages than Primitive Methodism."* For ourselves, we have said all that space permits us to say on the general question, and cannot, except incidentally, recur to it. Possibly, enough has been written to show that, while our Church has done much for the evangelisation of the mining villages of the North, it has also at the same time been largely helping forward the advance—economic, political, intellectual—of the miners and their families. Even yet much ameliorative work remains to be done, and the fervent evangelic impulse that helped our fathers is still the all-essential qualification for enabling us to repeat the triumphs of the past. That is still primary; the rest is secondary, and will follow. Such is the lesson taught us even by the secular press. When, in 1875, the jubilee of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway was being celebrated, an able writer—probably Mr. W. T. Stead—passed in review the changes effected during the fifty years. In assigning the causes of these gratifying changes he singles out for special mention the labours of the early Primitive Methodist preachers.

"One cause," says he, "of this great change had nothing to do with the railway. To the advent of the Primitive Methodists in the North Country is due much of the transformation undoubtedly effected in the latter part of the first quarter of the century. The 'Ranters,' as they were then universally called, had to bear a good deal of ridicule and opprobrium, but that has long since been forgotten in the good which they effected. The accounts published at the time concerning the results produced by their ministrations among the semi-savage colliers of the North remind us of the glowing narratives of the most successful missionaries, and make us sigh for the dawn of another great religious awakening which would empty the public-houses of Bishop Auckland, and convert the rowdies of Spennymoor into local preachers."

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

Newcastle is a very different town to-day from what it was in 1821, when John Branfoot preached near Sandgate. How different we shall find it hard to conceive. It is only by an effort that we can picture it as a town only one fourth its present size, with no Stephenson's High Level spanning the gorge of the Tyne, and wanting those stately and ornate buildings with which the skill and enterprise of one man enriched it. What Haussmann did for Paris, that Richard Grainger (1798—1861), a man of lowly origin, did for Newcastle. It was old Newcastle he

* *Aldersgate Magazine*, 1896 (p. 690).

found in 1834; he left it modern Newcastle. We have nothing to do with the story of Newcastle's progress from comparative mediævalism to modernism, except in so far as that progress is reflected in the history of our own church-life. It may be a mere coincidence but, nevertheless, it affords a convenient date-mark to note that by taking possession of Nelson Street Chapel in 1838, the first period of old Primitive Methodism in Newcastle came to its end. More than that: Nelson Street was built by Richard Grainger, as was also the chapel we took possession of. It dovetailed into his scheme of architectural reconstruction. Our occupancy of Nelson Street Chapel for some sixty years, was co-eval with a second long and somewhat uneventful period of church-life; but by the acquisition of the Central Church in 1897, a great step



VIEW OF NEWCASTLE AS IT WAS IN 1823.
From an old Engraving.

forward was taken, in which we may, if we choose, fancy a correspondence to the elevation of Newcastle to the rank of a city and bishop's see. True; we have no dioceses, and do not believe in bishops, but these things may afford a shadowy analogue of the fact that the one original Newcastle Circuit has at last become a group of circuits, and that the central city-church stands there in the midst—*primus inter pares*. Unmistakeably, the three periods are there, and these are what we have briefly to consider.

It was only on July 29th, 1822, that Clowes formed the first society of ten members at Ballast Hills. Shortly after, others are "added to the Church," and he records that "some of the worst characters are turning to God here." On October 20th, 1822, the Butcher's Hall, in the Friars, was opened as a preaching-room, and in December, 1823, through the labours, especially of the men already mentioned, this side of the North

Shields Circuit became the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Circuit, with three preachers to work it. On April 4th, 1824, the old Sallyport chapel, previously occupied by the Scotch Church, was opened by J. Gilbert from North Shields, J. Branfoot from South Shields, and N. West from Sunderland. The last-named says: "It was a high day: five souls professed to find the Lord, besides many more who were in distress." Still the cause moved on, surely if steadily. There was not the rush and roar of a great conflagration like that which, in 1854, half devastated Gateshead and Newcastle; yet the anthracite glowed. What J. Spencer wrote in June, 1824, expressed no mere passing phase of the religious life of the circuit but one of its characteristic traits: "There is," says he, "no particular revival, but the work is going pleasingly on." Progress was marked by the securing of a chapel in Silver Street, vacated by the Congregationalists. The street was silvern only in name, as many Silver Streets are; and the chapel itself needed considerable repairs which, it is said, the Rev. S. Tillotson, the superintendent, took off his coat to assist in effecting. Still, the chapel was fairly commodious, and for twelve years—1826-38—Silver Street was the chief centre of our church-life in Newcastle. How much is implied in this bald statement which cannot be drawn out



MR. W. B. LEIGHTON.



MR. PETER KIDMAN.



MRS. R. COOK.

in detail! Some idea of what was accomplished during these formative years may, however, be gained from the plan of the Newcastle Circuit for April to July, 1837, which now lies before us. The ten members of 1822 have now become 1028, of which number 371 are included in the Gateshead Circuit, in this year detached from Newcastle. The plan shows twenty-eight preaching-places, of which Silver Street, Ballast Hills, and three open-air preaching-stands are in the town proper, while three or four others on the outskirts of the town are also supplied with preaching. The Circuit includes Westmoor and Wallsend, and extends to places as far away as Medomsley and Wallbottle, Wylam and Shotley Bridge. The plan shows four travelling-preachers, of whom one is down for the "Scotch Mission," *i.e.*, Dundee—and sixty-two local preachers and exhorters. Besides these, we recall the fact that other labourers have been raised up, and they amongst the most capable and useful, whose names we do not find here because they have gone forth to wider service. Among these we recall John Lightfoot and Mary Porteus; Joseph Spoor and his sister, Jane Spoor, who will afterwards become the wife of Mr. Ralph Cook (himself

for many years a prominent layman of the Newcastle Circuit), and the mother-in-law of Dr. Watson; Thomas Jobling, too, was converted in 1828, and has entered the ministry, and will ultimately become General Missionary Secretary; John Matfin, who was converted at Sallyport Chapel in 1824, is now in the ministerial ranks, and also G. S. Butterwick, one of the firstfruits of the Newcastle Mission. Thomas Butterwick will soon follow him, and become one of the best and ablest of our early preachers. These are some of the results of the years which the plan fails to register.

As we glance over the long list of preachers, we notice the names of some who, in 1837, had already "purchased to themselves a good degree"; and we also recognise the names of others who, during the next period, will come to the front and play their part. Here, for example, are the names of W. B. Leighton and Peter Kidman, who had already begun their long and honourable connection with the Newcastle Circuit. Both joined the Ballast Hills Society at or soon after its formation, and did not cease to serve the Church until the year 1884. As they were companions in service, so in their deaths they were not divided.* Every organised form of local Christian philanthropy had Mr. Leighton's countenance and co-operation, so that his life was one of manifold activity. He was not eloquent by nature or a skilful debater, but just a constant, cheerful worker on behalf of deserving causes. The good work, however, for which he merits special remembrance in this connection was the starting, in 1829, of a Sunday School at Ballast Hills. Of this he was the superintendent for the long space of fifty-nine years. After its formation the school grew until it had five hundred scholars and sixty teachers. It had its branches, to one of which the present St. Anthony's Society can trace its origin. Neglected children and youths were gathered in; a library got together, a Mutual Improvement Society established, and Temperance and habits of thrift encouraged. Amid such influences as these many a young man had his intellect quickened and disciplined for service. The Revs. John Davison, the biographer of Clowes, and Thomas Greenfield, were two of many who had a new direction given to their lives by this Sunday School. About the year 1830 Mr. Leighton, then only a young man himself, invited a youth who was playing at pitch-and-toss to go with him to the school hard by. The youth yielded to persuasion kindly given, and from that simple incident Thomas Greenfield was accustomed to date his conversion. Then began, on his part, that course of mental cultivation which in the end qualified him to become a College tutor and Principal, and made him an expository preacher of rare excellence. Thirty years after Mr. Leighton won this youth for his Master, the like process was repeated, and with the same happy results. This time it was William Pears—whose name stands No. 35 on the plan of 1837—who induced his young lodger to accompany him to Ballast Hills Chapel. That youth was Hugh Gilmore, than whom our Church can show no more interesting figure. But at that time the youth, though a lad of parts, was poor, untaught, and undeveloped as a lion's cub. He went, and went again, to Ballast Hills, and soon "experienced a complete awakening."

* Their memoirs, written by Rev. H. Yooll, will be found side by side in the "Supplementary Connexional Biography," issued December, 1885.

Hugh Gilmore never forgot Ballast Hills or its Bible class, of which Rev. T. Greenfield was now the President. Nor did he forget William Pears; for in the last sermon he preached, June 7th, 1891, he thus refers to him: "I lived with a plain, poor man, whose name was perhaps unknown beyond the people in the little row of cottages where we dwelt. I felt that there was something about that man—not from any natural cause—that made him separate from the men with whom I was mixing."



REV. HUGH GILMORE.

God's promise is "seed for the sower" as well as "bread for the eater"; so it is instructive to note how in Newcastle, as elsewhere, provision was made for our Church's perpetuity and enlargement, as well as for the daily needs of those composing its fellowship.

With the acquisition in 1838 of Nelson Street Chapel, Newcastle Primitive Methodism entered upon the second period of its history, destined to last for forty years. Mr. Clowes had founded the first society in the town, and it was but fitting that he should, on November 21st, 1837, lay the foundation-stone of this

historic building. "The chapel was consecrated before it was built"; so spoke the feeling of some who had come under the influence of his address and dedicatory prayer. The chapel was duly opened on the 7th and 12th of October, 1838, by Revs. W. Sanderson, J. Bywater, and H. Hebborn. Its cost was £2,950, and even after the opening services, there remained a debt of £2,000 on the building. It was a bold venture to make. To come out of Silver Street and plant themselves down within the area of the town improvements, as though they were smitten with the architectural fever then raging; and for this to be done, with all the responsibility involved, by men none of whom could give more than a donation of five pounds without a monetary strain—all this was quite enough to give rise to unfavourable comments and head-shakings. So it was; for one whose memory goes back to that time tells us: "The erection of Nelson Street Chapel produced great excitement. . . . Some, of course, thought it very wrong to build such a costly edifice and leave Silver Street Chapel, which was greatly needed in that wicked part of the town."* But the men on the Trust, if not moneyed men, were men of faith and courage, and not wanting either in good-sense and practical discernment. They believed the time had come for a forward movement, and so they acted in accordance with the old "dour" saying inscribed on the walls of Marischal College, Aberdeen: "They say. What say they? Let them say," and they stopped short with no half measures.

When, in 1897, Nelson Street Chapel had been sold and possession was taken of the Central Church, Northumberland Road, not one of the trustees of Nelson Street remained; all had passed away. For once, it will be well to give the names of these

* Dr. Edw. Barrass: "Reminiscences of Primitive Methodism Forty Years Ago," *Aldersgate Magazine*, 1894, p. 527.

fifteen, because among them are the names of many who carried on the work of the church during the years that followed. Speaking generally, their character was marked by stability, which largely contributed to give stability and a certain recognised type and tradition to the church to which they belonged. When death came—as come it did sooner or later—it found most of these men still at their posts. It is not often this can be said of so large a proportion of the signatories of an early trust-deed. The fact, thus lightly glanced at, is an important one for the understanding of the history of Nelson Street in its mid-period. The names of the Trustees were :—John Scott, George Charlton, Joseph Salkeld [afterwards of Howden], David Keell, Robert Barron, Ralph Cooke, John Taylor, Andrew Mc Cree, Thomas Mc Cree, William Armstrong, W. B. Leighton, Edward Holmes, George Dodds, James Thompson, George Moore, Robert Foster, J. Lockety, Joseph Pattinson, R. Robson, James Stewart, and James Gibson. John Scott and John Taylor are names found in this list. The influence their



E. HOLMES.

high character and fair social position gave them was profitable for the Church. William Armstrong was a man of meek and gentle spirit, kindly disposed, and a sweet preacher. Edward Holmes was a familiar figure for many years. The writer, who as Newcastle Circuit's "young man," spent three years under his roof, gladly bears witness to his piety and solid qualities. Robert Foster, sen., was quiet, unassuming, intelligent, and an acceptable pulpit man. He and his wife were amongst the first victims of the cholera scourge in 1853; for, just as London had its year of the great plague followed by the great fire of 1666, so, on a smaller scale, had Newcastle in 1853 and 1854; and, in this dread visitation, the angel of death did not pass by our Church. Mr. and Mrs. Scott were also amongst the fifteen hundred who were stricken down in that fatal September. For many years Andrew Mc Cree, as Circuit Steward and Sunday School superintendent, was a leading figure at Nelson Street. Though built on hard lines and wanting in flexibility, a stickler for rule and a martinet in discipline, he was an able man and a diligent and conscientious official, and it was wonderful to see how, as the end was approached, his character mellowed and softened.

Undoubtedly, George Charlton's is the best-known name in the list of men of the middle period. C. C. McKechnie, who spent three terms of service in Newcastle, says truly of him :—

"He had altogether a striking presence. Though not a deep thinker, nor given to abstract or speculative inquiries, he had a mind of great activity and force. His mind was eminently practical. He took a deep interest in the social, political, and religious movements of the day. Among temperance advocates he stood in the foremost rank. He was a most effective temperance speaker. Dealing with facts which could not be gainsaid, and putting his arguments and appeals in the plainest and strongest light, and speaking with the fervour of deep conviction, he usually made a powerful impression, and carried his audience with him. He



ANDREW MCCREE.

seemed specially fitted and intended for temperance work. Let it also be said, however, that he rendered signal service to the cause of religion. As leader, local preacher, Conference delegate, he made himself felt as a power for good. He was one of the best men I ever met with for open-air services. He never appeared more in his element than when taking part in leading a procession, or in preaching at a camp meeting. He was a leal-hearted, loyal Primitive, proud of his Church, never ashamed to show his colours, and always ready to forward the interests of the Connexion. He might have, as some thought, rather narrow and perhaps unreasonable ideas as to the salaries and accommodation of travelling-preachers; but allowance must be made for the spirit of the times, for the training he had received, and for his extreme democratic views.* With sundry drawbacks, which were greatly modified with advancing years and experience, George Charlton was a splendid character; one of the noblest men raised among the Primitives in the North.”—(MS. “Notes of My Life.”)

William Stewart and Robert Foster, jun., are names not found in the list of Nelson Street trustees, though their fathers' names are there. Yet the history of



JAMES STEWART.



WILLIAM STEWART.



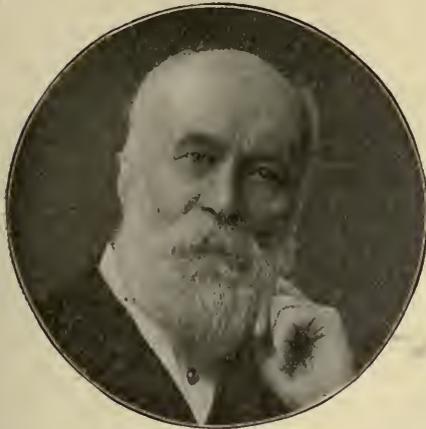
THOMAS PATTISON.

Nelson Street cannot be written without a reference to them, and both claim their place in the larger history of the Connexion. James Stewart was an early class-leader as well as trustee. He had a kindly, genial disposition and a vein of humour that sometimes ran into fun and banter. In these respects William Stewart showed himself his father's son. But the son was also a keen business man—a man of affairs and, despite a constitution not over robust, he rose to be one of Newcastle's leading tradesmen and Sheriff of the “town and county.” Prosperity did not spoil him or wean him from the Connexion. There was no stand-offishness about him or pride of purse, but he was ever affable and accessible. In their well-appointed home, he and his good wife—the daughter of Mr. Thomas Pattison—dispensed a gracious hospitality which, socially, had its value for the Church. He took an interest in the affairs of the circuit (of which he was the efficient Steward), as well as in the wider affairs of the Connexion—in district administration and extension, in Missions, in Elmfield College and Sunderland

* It may not be generally known that the future Mayor of Gateshead was a speaker at two of the immense Chartist gatherings on the Town Moor in 1838-9, at one of which the military appeared; and that George Charlton also identified himself with the miners, and took part in their mass-meetings.

Institute. Meanwhile he had the generous hand, and his family-pew was seldom empty.

Robert Foster, jun., was a young man of promise at the time of his father's death. The pious but heavy duty that now devolved upon him precluded his entering the ministry, in which assuredly he would have taken a high place. But it did not prevent his ultimately attaining to the highest honour the Connexion has to bestow on its laymen. This honour was his when the Conference of 1901 elected him as its Vice-President. Except during the years he resided in London, Mr. Foster has been closely attached to the society that worshipped in Nelson Street, and, under the leadership of Rev. A. T. Guttery, along with Messrs. Hewitson, Stokoe, Morton and others, actively assisted in the transference of the society to what Mr. Foster has himself called "the city church." With no special advantages arising from wealth or position, he has steadily pursued the path of usefulness and the cultivation of mind



ROBERT FOSTER.

and spirit. As he took the right road early in life, he has had no need to change his direction. The ideals of youth are not outworn. Hence his life has been a progress, and the influence of that life cumulative. In him we see the harmony of "mind and soul according well." Mental cultivation, though steadily pursued, has not weakened his sense of conduct, of the demand made upon us, amid all the social groupings and combinations of which we form a part, for what is righteous and fitting. Nor is moralism the last word. No fear of "blanched morality" while the life-blood ceases not to course through every duct and vein, suffusing all with the hue of spiritual health, and keeping the heart young and fresh.

Besides those already mentioned, there were others (speaking only of the dead) whose association with Nelson Street was close and long. Such were George Dodds, second only to his friend George Charlton as a temperance advocate, and as a master of incisive Saxon speech; John Ingledew, kind, gentle, unassuming, a man of blameless and attractive character; of quite another stamp was James Bruce, a godly keelman, whose responses and quaint sayings will not readily be forgotten; from the Yorkshire Dales came John Wilson, and from Alston Moor Robert Varty, both of whom were generous supporters of the cause and thoroughly loyal Primitive Methodists. Nor must we forget that



REV. A. T. GUTTERY.

Rev. William Dent, with his alert intelligence and his solicitude for Zion's weal, was for some twenty-three years, as a superannuate, identified with the Nelson Street Society.

As were the men so was the church, in the long middle period of its history. That period we have spoken of as an uneventful one. Such it was in a good sense, and also in a sense not so good. As a rule things moved steadily on. The old hands stood to their posts year in and year out. Now and again, indeed, there might be a breeze stiffening to a gale like that of which the Hymn Book of 1854 was the storm-centre, or like that which in 1855 blew from the high latitudes of Conference.* But by skilful pilotage the storms were weathered, without mutiny of the crew or damage to the ship. Such experiences, however, were exceptional. Novocastrian Primitives were proud of Nelson Street. They regarded it, and rightly, as "by far the most superior place of worship owned by the Primitives in the North." They were proud too of their anniversaries and of their congregational singing, as they had good reason to be; for in the pre-organ days, John Kidd, an enthusiastic musician, led the singing and presided over an instrumental choir. He loved the old hymns, and nowhere were they sung with such verve as at Nelson Street. He set tunes to many of the old hymns: that known as "Happy day," composed for No. 50 in the Small Hymn Book—"I'm glad I ever saw the day," still holding its ground.

But there is a *per contra* side. Notwithstanding its intelligence, its stability, and other good qualities, it must be admitted Nelson Street lacked aggressiveness. The town grew amain, but the church did not keep pace with its growth. Open-air work indeed was not neglected, and once a year a rousing procession would startle the inhabitants of the lower quarters of the town, and George Charlton and others would deal out straight talk to the people who leaned out of their windows or stood at their doors, and then in the afternoon a capital camp meeting would be held on the Town Moor, and—things moved on in the old regular way. That this was characteristic of that period is admitted by Mr. R. Foster, who says: "As a Christian organisation Primitive Methodism has not been as enterprising and aggressive as it ought; and judged by the census returns it is remarkably behind. But recently a more militant and forward spirit has taken possession of our churches."

The following notes respecting the later development of Newcastle Circuit may be found useful. They will serve to show how comparatively recent that development has been, and thus confirm the truth of Mr. Foster's words just cited. Dealing first

* With the concurrence of an influential minority, the Conference had appointed as an *additional* preacher to Newcastle one for whom, notwithstanding his acknowledged ability, it could find no place. The circuit stoutly and successfully resisted the impost; and the preacher had a year's rest. See Rev. J. Atkinson's "Life of C. C. McKechnie," pp. 121—6.



JOHN INGLEDEW.



JOHN KIDD.

with Newcastle: A mission at the west side of the town (Scotswood Road) resulted at length in the building of Brunel Street Chapel. This was in 1870 superseded by Maple Street, which in 1874 became the head of Newcastle II., with the Rev. James Young as its superintendent. Another westward mission, Arthur's Hill, founded in 1842 by Mr. William Armstrong, gave place in 1864 to West Street. This in turn was vacated in 1897 for Kingsley Terrace, now attached to Newcastle II. Eastward, Heaton Road Chapel was built in 1877, and in 1892 was constituted the head of Newcastle III. Another city chapel not shown on our full-page illustration is Derby Street which in 1883 took the place of an upper room where we had long worshipped. Strickland Street is the successor of a joiner's shop in Elswick. Other schemes of local extension are projected. Finally, Newcastle II. was in 1894 again divided by Blydon and Lemington becoming the heads of circuits. The number of members for the five circuits reported to the Conference of 1904 was 1886, as against 747 when the division of 1874 took place.

Turning now to Gateshead: Its early history was one of toil and disappointment, while its later history has been one of remarkable success. Made a circuit in 1837, it was in 1841 again joined to Newcastle. Its first chapel was lost to the Connexion



JOHN THOMPSON.



E. GOWLAND.



G. E. ALMOND.

through the defalcations of its treasurer. In 1854, Nelson Street Chapel was opened by Rev. Ralph Fenwick. The lineal successor of that chapel, sold in 1886, may be said to be the fine block of buildings in Durham Road, consisting of school and lecture hall erected in 1887, and chapel and manse in 1892-3. Meanwhile, Gateshead was again created a circuit in 1862.

Gateshead II. was formed in 1891. At its head stands Prince Consort Road Chapel, the outcome of a mission begun in 1869. The Teams mission, begun by Messrs. Carr and Scope in 1874, has similarly resulted in Victoria Road Chapel; and the Somerset Street mission, started in 1875, developed nine years later into Sunderland Road Chapel, which has connected with it a Christian Endeavour Hall, said to be the first of its kind in the Connexion. Still another mission resulted in the building of Bank Street School-chapel in 1891. Further extensions are projected.

One cannot but be impressed with the amount of work that has been crowded into a period no longer than is often the term of one man's ministry. How much of this success may have been prepared for by the sorrowful sowing of the previous period—who shall tell? Referring to the progress made by Gateshead since it was made a circuit

NEWCASTLE



STRICKLAND ST. PM CHURCH



CONFERENCE CHAPEL, NORTHUMBERLAND RD.



KINGSLEY TERRACE CHAPEL



HEATON R. CHAPEL



MAPLE ST. CHAPEL



BALLAST HILLS CHAPEL



GOSFORTH NEWCASTLE

CHAPELS

in 1862, the Rev. G. Armstrong, to whom we are indebted for many of the facts given, says: "From that time its advance has been rapid and continuous, until to-day its membership slightly exceeds that of Newcastle. Its more prominent leaders included W. Peel, John Thompson, Edward Gowland, John Scope, John Cherry, and G. E. Almond, who is still with us, and is yet a tower of strength. The great feature of Gateshead Primitive Methodism has been its persistent missioning, and its dogged determination to succeed."

Men are of much more value than many chapels, and however beautiful to look at they may be, one would gladly turn to the men who got them built, or, yet more—because they are in greater danger of being forgotten—one would fain recall the men who worshipped in the humbler buildings of the early days. Some of these we have endeavoured to revive the memory of; but, though Nelson Street was the head and centre of the old circuit, there were good men and true connected with its other societies no less worthy of being remembered. From Bessie Newton, of Wickham, the popular preacheress, and Ralph Waller, the Blaydon coke-burner, down to the men of the present, there have never been wanting those who have stood by the cause and furthered its local interests—men like David Wright of Ballast Hills, Thomas Scott of Walker, the Pickerings of Winlaton, and many others who might be named, did space permit. Besides these who have lived and died in the circuit, others have gone forth from it who have done yeoman-service in other parts of the Connexion. In proof of this the names of Benjamin and Ferdinand Spoor, and Thomas Robson may be cited. It was at Walker the brothers Spoor began their course of Christian usefulness which, with concurrent worldly prosperity, was hereafter to make them so influential in the Bishop Auckland Circuit, and far beyond. The father of Thomas Robson was one of the earliest local preachers of the Newcastle Circuit, and it was in the same circuit his son began to exercise those gifts which, after his retirement from the ministry, made him one of the most acceptable local preachers in the Darlington and Stockton District.



BENJAMIN SPOOR.

SUNDERLAND.

John Branfoot was probably our Connexional pioneer in Sunderland. Tradition says he visited the town in 1821 and preached on the pier. Further, that some considerable time after, John Nelson walked over from South Shields to hold a service. A good-hearted woman lent him a chair for pulpit which he placed at the end of the Friends' School—the very building which soon after was obligingly placed at the service of the few who had rallied round the missionary, amongst whom are particularly named—George Peckett, John Tiplady, Benjamin Dodds, and Christopher Fenwick. So far tradition, which agrees with the earliest evidence afforded by printed documents. In the *Journals* of W. Clowes as found in the *Magazine*, he notes being at Sunderland on July 16th, 1822, and adds: "there is likely to be a good work here."



FERDINAND SPOOR.

GATESHEAD



PRINCE CONSORT R.P. CHAPEL



CARRS HILL CHAPEL



DURHAM R.P. CHAPEL



SUNDERLAND R.P. CHAPEL



BANK ST. P.M. CHAPEL



FELLING GATESHEAD



SPOOR MEMORIAL CHAPEL



VICTORIA R.P. M. SCHOOL & CHURCH

CHAPELS

On September 1st, he meets the class of six members who then constituted the Society. Under date of October 8th, "I preached," he says, "in a large school-room kindly lent us by the committee of the school. We received it as a very great kindness." This would probably be the service attended by a young man who became a New Connexion minister, and who afterwards recalled his impressions. His ear had been so abused by tales of these new-comers that he went to the room full of prejudice. Mr. Clowes preached from—"We are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence, steadfast unto the end." As he listened his prejudices gradually gave way, and he pushed further into the room. By the time the preacher had finished his sermon, Mr. Lynn's "heart was bound to him in love as a precious man of God. After the singing of the hymn beginning:—

‘Come and taste along with me,
Consolation flowing free,’



VICTORIA HALL, FROM THE PARK, SUNDERLAND.

Scene of the Disaster of June 16th, 1883, in which 182 children lost their lives.

he engaged in prayer, and Divine influence came streaming down in such a way as completely overcame me. I was so affected that I could not stand and sank on my knees. Oh, the unutterable bliss that filled my soul! For many days after, I feasted on the rich supply of grace then given; and ever after I revered the name of William Clowes.”*

Very soon after this Mr. Clowes went on his Carlisle mission as already described. Not quite a year later the Sunderland and Stockton branches became the Sunderland

* "Methodist Records; or, Selections from the Journal of the Rev. Andrew Lynn, 1858." 251

and Stockton Union Circuit. The Circuit thus formed was of wide area. It embraced the whole of the south-eastern part of the county of Durham, a part which included the towns of Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees, Houghton-le-Spring, the ancient city of Durham, and numerous collieries which were springing up and rapidly transforming the character and increasing the population of the district. Such was the old Sunderland Circuit; and as such it remained until 1837 when Stockton Circuit was formed. Two years later the western side was detached to form the Durham Circuit; while Hetton,

in the heart of the collieries, continued its connection with Sunderland until 1864. We shall not now interrupt the narrative in order to follow the process of circuit subdivision further, although it has resulted in giving us some twenty circuits instead of the one circuit of 1823.

The growth of the Circuit was rapid. Primitive Methodism quickly rooted itself both in Sunderland and the mining villages. This will appear from two extracts we give from the *Journals* of the time. The writer of the first is Thomas Nelson, whose zeal and unremitting labour had no doubt largely contributed to the success realised.

Monday, August 25th, 1823.—Last year at this time in Sunderland we had six in Society and one leader; but now we

have 275 members, eleven leaders, and a very large chapel building. The increase for this quarter is 459. What hath God wrought! Shall I say that this has been one of the best and most wonderful quarters I ever saw before? I have preached nearly every sermon in the open-air, and have seen the good effects of it. I am afraid if our people do not watch, as they get chapels, and places of worship, they will cease to preach in the open-air, and, then the glory will depart from us as a people."

Our second extract is from the *Journal* of N. West, and is dated October 15th, 1823. As usual, what he writes is helpful. It gives us a graphic presentation of what was going on amongst the colliers. We see them gladly receiving that form of truth



DURHAM CATHEDRAL.

which was to do so much for the moral elevation of their class. Alluding to its being less than a year since our cause was introduced into the northern part of the Circuit, he proceeds:—

“A very blessed and glorious work has gone on for some time in Sunderland and the neighbouring collieries. In Sunderland and Monkwearmouth (which is a village on the opposite side the river from Sunderland) we have nearly four hundred members. In Lord Steward’s and Squire Lambton’s collieries we have near four hundred more. Some of the most abandoned characters have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Indeed, the Lord and the poor colliers are doing wondrously. Our congregations are immensely large, and well-behaved. It would do any of the lovers of Jesus good to see the dear colliers sometimes under the word. On some occasions (for want of time to wash themselves), they are constrained to come black to the preaching or else miss the sermon. And when the Lord warms their hearts with His dying love, and they feel Him precious in His word, the large and silent tears rolling down their black cheeks, and leaving the white streaks behind, conspicuously portray what their hearts feel. Their hearty and zealous exertions in the cause of God would make almost any one love them. We have five preachers employed in this Circuit, and a blessed prospect.”

Thomas Nelson, it will have been noticed, alludes to the building of Flag Lane Chapel as already going on in the autumn of 1823. The date is significant, as is also the fact that the chapel was not opened until September 3rd, 1824. For a society not yet a year old to buy land without money, and to begin to build a chapel to seat a thousand people, was a bold undertaking. Judged by modern methods and requirements it was impolitic and rash to a degree. But it should be remembered that the Society was, thus early, joined by some men of intelligence and character, and that this saved the enterprise from being as Quixotic as at first sight it might appear to be. But even so, Flag Lane was long regarded as a standing monument of the good Providence of God over His people. It was under the influence of this feeling that N. West, after its opening, told the story to the Connexion. To him God’s hand was in the building of Flag Lane as surely as it was seen in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah’s days. Difficulties more than enough to daunt any but the most determined were met and overcome. A wall stood on the ground promised them, which wall was claimed by one who refused to sell except at an exorbitant price. Faced with this difficulty, the Society betook itself to prayer. From the prayer-meeting Brothers Peckett and Sharkitt waited upon the owner of the wall who, after some conference, gave permission for its removal. When the work was begun their available capital was but £23, the first shilling of which was given by a coal-porter. This is but a sample of their difficulties and deliverances. More than once or twice the work was brought to a stand for lack of money; but prayer went up continually, and sacrifices were cheerfully made, and all conspired to beg as well as to give and pray. But what is worthy of remark:—we see John Gordon Black and Henry Hesman moving about, interviewing this man and the other, and we are brought back to the conclusion that the character of the men associated with this seemingly rash undertaking was a valuable asset, and this the Church in Sunderland found to its own great advantage in this and

subsequent years. It was strong in the moral strength of its earliest and most prominent officials. Of these John Gordon Black was as long as he lived the first and foremost. With his tall, slender, somewhat stooping form, his dark visage, deep-set eyes, Melancthon-like forehead crowned with steel-grey hair, and his sickly cast of countenance, Mr. Black was a striking if not a prepossessing figure. He gave the impression of strength of character, of knowing his own mind, of the power to lead and command; and fuller knowledge but served to confirm the correctness of such impressions. He had a clear penetrative intellect, and could hold his own in argument even with men who might be more fully informed than himself. By the exercise of qualities such as these Mr. Black prospered in business, and in the end amassed considerable wealth. He was a convinced and loyal Primitive Methodist, whose services in its behalf merited the distinction of his name being included—the only one of the Sunderland District—amongst the original signatories of the Deed Poll. He loved to gather round him ministers of his own and other denominations, so that his home became a rallying-point for evangelical Nonconformity in the borough. The influence



W. HOPPER.



W. B. EARL.



R. HUISON.

of these re-unions, and of Mr. Black's reputation for integrity and public-spirit, were of advantage to the Church to which he belonged. Sunderland Primitive Methodism has always been strong on the social side, and has stood well in public estimation. This is in no inconsiderable measure due to the early example and influence of John Gordon Black. His funeral, in September, 1851, was attended by forty ministers of his own denomination, as well as by many ministers of other Churches.

Next to J. Gordon Black should certainly come a reference to his contemporary, Henry Hesman. As we recall the reminiscences of his physical defects, which after all were but the foil to unusual endowments, we are reminded of Joseph Polwarth, the prophet-dwarf of George Macdonald's story.* As Mr. McKechnie has finely written in his unpublished autobiography: "That dwarfed and deformed figure enshrined a richly dowered soul, clear, piercing, far-reaching in its perception, and with capacities for high and subtle thought." As in addition to all his other qualities, Mr. Hesman had a silvery musical voice, oratorical gestures, and a singular excellence in his style of address, it was but natural that, like the very popular Newrick Featonby, he should be well received as a local preacher by the Societies.

* "Thomas Wingfold, Curate."

Other men, the contemporaries or immediate successors of those just mentioned, were prominent figures in the Sunderland Circuit for many years. Such were Messrs. Whittaker, W. Hopper, W. B. Earl, R. Huison, Thomas Gibson and others we need not name. The fact that Mr. Thomas Gibson finally withdrew from the Connexion does not annul the service he rendered the Sunderland Circuit, and the Connexion generally. In regard to the latter, the practical interest he took in the higher training of the ministry demands special acknowledgment. Men quickly pass, and memory is short. They who can recall Mr. Thomas Gibson as, unimpassionedly, he addressed the Conference, are becoming fewer in number every year. The few, however, who remain will not fail to remember his skill in debate. How clearly he could state a case, marshal his arguments, controvert a position!

The men we have referred to were men of good social position. They were the men who figured on platforms, and had a large determining influence in the councils of the Circuit. They took part in the full-dress debates of the Quarterly Meetings and in the sessions of the District Preachers' Association—large and notable gatherings both. Yet the prominence and usefulness of these men must not be allowed to obscure the fact that the strength of the Circuit, and the secret of its success, were with those more sequestered souls in the various societies who quietly did their duty and gave stability to the cause. This was seen when the troubles arose, ostensibly through the building of Tatham Street Chapel (1875), and the subsequent division of the Sunderland Circuit (1877). We have used the word "ostensibly"; for though these events were the occasion of the divergence, their real cause was something very different from the cause alleged. However the issue may



THOMAS GIBSON.

have been confused, the vital question at issue was between the will of the few and the will of the many; whether government by the people for the people was not after all the right kind of government for Primitive Methodism. In the process of getting back on the right democratic lines mistakes may have been committed, but not to have got back would have been the greatest mistake of all.

SUNDERLAND CIRCUIT'S MISSIONS.

Sunderland Circuit soon began to carry on missionary operations beyond its own borders. For a number of years it was a Missionary Society in itself, and as such published its own Report. In that for 1835 we read: "Sunderland Circuit's local situation has prevented it from enlarging its own borders much at home, but distant places such as Edinburgh, and other towns in Scotland, have enjoyed the benefit of its surplus moneys; missionaries were sent to these places, and for some time were supported at considerable expense by this circuit; societies were formed through their

instrumentality, and they have since either been annexed to northern circuits or formed into new circuits."

Sunderland Circuit led the way in seeking to establish missions in Scotland, and Carlisle Circuit soon followed its lead. Edinburgh was Sunderland's objective, while Carlisle fastened on Glasgow, Scotland's commercial capital. It was in April, 1826, the two chosen missionaries—Thomas Oliver and Jonathan Clewer—set out for the northern metropolis. To save the coach-fare they walked the whole of the distance, billeting and preaching, as they went, at Morpeth, Alnwick, and Belford. Arrived at their destination, they looked round. They first surveyed the city; not as sight-seers, but as prospectors, anxious to find the most suitable spot for the delivery of their message. They were only doing in the Modern Athens what Paul did in the ancient one when, first of all, he "passed through the city," and his "heart was stirred within him." So, as they passed through the Grass Market, the impression they sought was received. Here, where so many of the martyrs had surrendered their lives for the faith, they would open their commission. Accordingly, on April 13th, they took their stand in the middle of the Grass Market, and after singing the hymn "Arise, O Zion," Mr. Oliver preached from, "Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?"

(2 Kings ix. 11). On the Sunday evening following, a second service was held at the same place, when Mr. Clewer preached. A room, formerly used as a weaving factory, was rented, and a small society formed. At first their efforts were not confined to the city; towns and villages lying within an eight miles' radius were visited. But not meeting with much success in these efforts they resolved to concentrate upon Edinburgh. Much time was devoted to house-to-house visitation in the Grass Market, Canongate, and Westport. In three months 715 families were visited, and the tabulated results of the visitation were published. By this means public attention was drawn to the sad spiritual destitution of the dwellers in these populous Edinburgh slums, and the most effective



REV. THOS. OLIVER.

method of remedially dealing with this destitution was suggested. This method of systematic house-to-house visitation was afterwards adopted by Drs. Chalmers and Guthrie in the parochial and territorial system they introduced.*

Unfortunately, the bright prospects of the Edinburgh mission soon suffered disastrous eclipse. Sunderland Circuit had appointed N. West to superintend the mission, and from one with so good a record much was expected. He had already acquired considerable Connexional influence, and was active in originating legislation. His last effort in this direction was to prove his own undoing. At the Conference of 1827 he brought forward a proposal, which became a law, to the effect that any preacher who should refuse to go to his appointed station should, by such refusal, forfeit his position as a minister. What followed furnished a striking instance of the "engineer hoist with his own petard"; for N. West, being now appointed to South Shields, declined the appointment, with the result that the year 1828 saw both the disappearance of

* Nor was the method adopted without acknowledgment. Rev. J. Wenn affirms that, in a private conversation with him, Dr. Guthrie made such acknowledgment.

N. West's name from the list of preachers, and also the first appearance on the statute book of that enactment which led to his passing. But N. West did not leave the Connexion unattended. He took possession of the preaching-room, and drew away the greater portion of the society. Then John Bowes was sent to patch up the rent, but made it worse by going over to the malcontents. Jabez Burns, too, who had given Mr. Petty his first ticket, joined the secessionists. For a time they worked together and established several societies, but ultimately the leaders disagreed amongst themselves, and then parted to go their several ways. N. West went to the United States, where he became a D.D. and chaplain to the Federal forces. Jabez Burns also became a D.D., a Baptist minister, and a publisher of sermons that had some vogue in their day. As for Mr. John Bowes, we are told he became a teetotal lecturer and the advocate of an unpaid ministry. Meanwhile, the Primitive Methodist society was a mere wreck, and W. Clowes might well ask in writing John Flesher: "What shall we do for Edinburgh?" The person thus appealed to was sent to save the situation. Hull Circuit agreed, with certain stipulations, to relieve Sunderland of the charge of Edinburgh; and Mr. Flesher spent some anxious months of 1830-1 in the northern metropolis, away from his wife and family and, vested with plenary powers, did his best to reorganise and strengthen the society. No good purpose would be served by following the earlier history of Edinburgh further in detail. It was transferred to Berwick—to Glasgow. It became an independent station; it came again under Sunderland Circuit's sheltering wing. Good men laboured upon it—men like David Beattie, J. A. Bastow, Hugh Campbell, Christopher Hallam, John Wenn. It gave James Macpherson to our ministry in 1833, which gift compensated for much. Other Churches reaped large benefit from our labours, right along from the time the first sermon in the Grass Market gave Dr. Lindsay Alexander one of his best deacons. In 1838, Edinburgh missioned Alloa and Dunfermline, and two years afterwards Alloa was taken under the care of Sunderland as a separate mission, and such it remained for some years, though a small and feeble cause.

Our remarks on the earlier history of Edinburgh may fittingly end by a glance forward to the next most important event in its history. This was the erection, in 1861, of the Victoria Terrace Chapel, through the energetic efforts of the Rev. J. Vaughan, the superintendent. At his first service in the city he had but eight hearers, and the outlook was anything but promising. But some three weeks after his arrival, great excitement was caused by the fall of a five-storied building, by which several persons were crushed to death and others maimed. It was then the well-known incident occurred: A voice was heard saying, "Heave away, lads, I'm no dead yet." The voice came from a poor fellow buried beneath the débris, who was forthwith extricated. Mr. Vaughan sought to improve the occasion by preaching near the scene of the catastrophe; and from that time a revival began which greatly assisted the forward movement. It might almost seem as if preacher and people had adopted the motto of the brave young Scotsman who was the hero of the hour. A chapel, school, and dwelling-house were built at a cost of £1600, and of this sum considerably more than £1000 was raised. After all the migrations of the years from one rented room to another a home was at last obtained in the chief city of Scotland, within a stone's throw of the old Grass

Market, where the first missionaries had stood. Tranent, too, and Elphinstone were missioned, and a chapel built at the former place. But long before these events occurred Edinburgh had passed from the care of Sunderland Circuit. Its subsequent history, as well as that of Paisley, and Glasgow with its offshoots—Calder Bank, Motherwell, and Wishaw—must be glanced at when we come to consider the work of the General Missionary Committee and the formation of the North British District.

Some time in 1822 a Christian philanthropist in Scotland wrote W. Clowes, pressing him to begin at once an evangelistic mission in that country. Through some mischance



FIRST CHAPEL, EDINBURGH.

the letter was not read by Clowes until a year after it was written. Afterwards, when reflecting upon this incident, Clowes regretted the mischance, and was disposed to blame a malign power for its occurrence. "I thought it was unfortunate that I had not received his letter immediately after its arrival: as I should most likely have missioned Scotland, being at the time at Shields in the North, where the work was going on prosperously. I believe Satan laboured unusually hard to get me out of the North; and I am persuaded that I left it too early." It is not often Clowes criticises events in this way, and acquaints us with his personal predilections. One cannot but think that Primitive Methodism might have got a better start in Scotland if that letter—but we leave it. Our business is not with the might-have-beens.

We have now to chronicle the establishment of a mission in the Channel Islands by the Sunderland Circuit. This was in [March, 1832, when the circuit, having been relieved of the Edinburgh mission, was now free to turn elsewhere. Moreover, the circuit was in a very prosperous condition. The tragic death of Messrs. Branfoot and Hewson had been over-ruled for good. The event had left a deep and solemn feeling amongst the societies. The places left vacant were immediately filled, March, 1831, by Messrs J. Petty and W. Lister. It is difficult to realise that at this time Mr. Petty was but four and twenty years of age. He came to the circuit just after he had experienced an extraordinary work of grace in his own soul. He was in a state of spiritual exaltation, and there is ample evidence to show that his preaching of holiness,

and the sanctity and sweetness of his own character, had a powerful influence on the societies and especially on his colleagues. "I had not been an hour in his company," says Mr. Lister, "before I was united to him." Almost the first duty of the newcomers was to visit the widows of the deceased ministers. While praying and conversing together, "we had," says Mr. Lister, "a glorious baptism; Mrs. Hewson praised God for a clean heart." Messrs. Lister and Hebborn both became seekers of the blessing of full salvation, and both rejoiced in its realisation. With the preachers thus aglow and the people urged to seek after sanctification of heart and life, a revival broke out, as might have been anticipated. In another way the revival had been prepared for. Towards the close of 1831, Sunderland and the district suffered severely from the ravages of cholera, and the minds of many were seriously turned towards religion, the result being that in 1832 an increase of six hundred members was reported. South Shields Circuit shared in this revival. While it was in progress certain sailors from Guernsey had attended some meetings of extraordinary power, and had expressed a strong desire that a missionary might be sent to their native island. It was therefore resolved that the two circuits, South Shields and Sunderland, should co-operate in sending a missionary. Mr. George Cosens, a native of the West Indies, was the person selected, largely, it would seem, because "his colour would attract in open-air services." Mr. Cosens reached the island in May, 1832, and began his work under promising conditions. Soon another missionary was sent to his support, and then "something happened." At St. Peter's Port, Guernsey, Mr. Cosens, being annoyed at the conduct of some giddy young people who were present at the service, spoke unadvisedly with his lips. The laws of the island are peculiar; Mr. Cosens was summoned and fined, and in April Mr. Petty took his place on the islands, and during his twelve months' stay endeavoured to repair the damage the mission had sustained.

The Norman Isles mission is of some importance historically because it was but part of a much larger scheme which never came into being. The Norman Isles were to be but the stepping-stones to France. Missionaries were to be sent there for a time to acquire the language, and in other ways to prepare themselves for what was to be regarded as their main work—labouring on the soil of France. This purpose is clearly stated in Sunderland's Missionary Report for 1834:—

"We intend, as soon as circumstances will allow, to extend our exertions to the wide continent of France—to a nation proverbial for infidelity and vice—to a people who seldom or never have the opportunity of hearing the Gospel preached in its purity. Our two missionaries, Messrs. Petty and Macpherson, inform us that they have now learned the French language so as to be able to preach in it, and are ready and willing to go to France as soon as the means are provided."

Sunderland's dream of a Primitive Methodist Mission in France has been one of the Connexion's unrealised possibilities. It is a dream which other circuits besides Sunderland have dreamed, even in later years. In 1869, North Shields tried to revive the project of a French mission. A week's Missionary meetings, beginning as was fitting with Old Cramlington, were devoted to the advocacy of such a mission. Much enthusiasm was evoked, and representations were made in the proper quarters; but nothing came of it. As for Sunderland, it is interesting to recall that the town itself has still had

its honourable association with the evangelisation of France, since the founder of the Mc All Mission was for some years one of its ministers.

In March, 1834, Sunderland Circuit reported 1400 members, and had a balance at its quarterly board of £50. At the suggestion of the preachers themselves it was resolved to devote this surplus to the establishment of a mission in Dorsetshire. Weymouth, a watering-place beloved of George III., was selected as the headquarters of the mission, and Messrs. John Nelson and Cosens volunteered their services as missionaries. At Weymouth they met with a favourable reception. Their open-air services attracted crowds, and some remarkable conversions took place. The Assembly Room, which had for many years been the scene of dancing and revelry, was turned into a Primitive Methodist chapel, and that too was rightly regarded as a remarkable conversion. Dorchester, the county-town was also visited. A Congregational minister who had known our people in Lincolnshire, welcomed the missionaries. He promised them the use of his chapel when the weather should become too inclement for open-air services. He informed them that though Dorchester had a population of six thousand, no more than about five hundred persons were frequenters of public worship on the Lord's Day; and that, within a radius of ten miles of the town, there were at least fifty villages in most of which there were few Dissenters or persons making a profession of religion. Here, it might have been thought, were so many cogent reasons why the advent of the missionaries to these parts should have been gladly hailed, did not experience show that where the evangel is most needed it is often the least desired. So it was in this case. At Dorchester and in the surrounding villages the missionaries met with a rougher reception than at Weymouth. At first, they experienced considerable annoyance in carrying on their open-air work; guns were let off, bugles were blown, artificial thunder created by a machine brought from the adjoining theatre, and missiles thrown; finally, Mr. Cosens had a bucket of water poured over him while preaching. In the villages persecution took a more subtle but relentless form. Some, whose incognito is preserved by the use of dashes in the Report, resorted to intimidation. To give shelter to the missionary or even to lend him a chair to stand upon, might mean loss of employment or ejection from house and home. One day, John Nelson walked eight miles to a village during fair-time and, after preaching in the open-air amid interruption from drunken men, he could find no place at which to sleep. Even at the inn where he had previously stayed he was refused a bed. At last a kindly miller took pity on him and allowed him to sleep in the mill, though he intimated that by granting such permission he might jeopardise his tenancy of the mill. Still, despite the boycott, fourteen villages around Weymouth and Dorchester were visited with some degree of success.

On the whole, it must be acknowledged that Sunderland Circuit was unfortunate in its missions. It was so in Edinburgh and in the Norman Isles, and so it was also in Dorsetshire. Here, persecution was not so inimical to the mission as was internal dissension. Paul and Barnabas were not the last yoke-fellows who had so sharp a contention between them that "they departed asunder the one from the other." Mr. Nelson and his dusky-skinned colleague could not agree. The societies took sides with one or the other, and were rent and divided. Mr. Cosens withdrew from the

Connexion and became a Baptist minister. Mr. Nelson, smarting under the judgment which Hugh Bourne and others had taken of this painful episode, also withdrew soon after and entered the ministry of the New Connexion, in which he was spared to labour many years.

“Weymouth Mission,” says Mr. Petty, “did not soon recover the shock which the unhappy difference we have just named occasioned, and, perhaps, never presented such a flattering prospect as it did when Messrs. Nelson and Cosens began their missionary labours there. In a subsequent year it was indeed greatly enlarged through the enterprising labours of Mr. Thomas Russell, and in the year 1839 we find no fewer than four travelling-preachers stationed to it, then under the care of Manchester Circuit; but the societies never acquired, unless till recently, the prosperity and strength which most societies in other parts in Dorsetshire have done.”—(P. 324).

