

CHAPTER XXI.

THE EXTENSION OF TUNSTALL DISTRICT IN SHROPSHIRE AND ADJOINING COUNTIES.

THE appearance on the stations of Oakengates in 1823, of Shrewsbury and Hopton Bank (afterward Ludlow) in 1824, and of Prees Green in 1826, registered the geographical advance the Tunstall District by this time had made, chiefly in Shropshire, but with extensions into other counties. By this enlargement the foundations were laid of the whole of the modern Shrewsbury, and of a goodly portion of the West Midland District. Moreover, some of these new circuits, almost from the time of their formation, threw out missions into more distant counties, the fruit of which was seen after many days. Indeed it would be a fairly accurate generalisation to say that we owe the beginnings of our present Brinkworth District to Shrewsbury; of South Wales District to Oakengates; of Bristol District to Tunstall and Scotter's "Western Mission"; and of Devon and Cornwall District to Hull and the General Missionary Committee. Besides being fairly accurate, the generalisation also furnishes a useful clue to guide us through the maze-like complexities of our Connexional development in the South-Western counties. Following, then, the actual sequence of events, we now proceed to glance at the making of the four Shropshire Circuits already named, beginning with the earliest—Oakengates.

OAKENGATES.

Hugh Bourne had frequently visited Shropshire on his missionary excursions; but if any fruit remained of these early labours it had been gathered by other communities. To the missionaries sent out by Tunstall in the autumn of 1821 Shropshire was new ground. They felt their way by Newport and other places, meeting on the whole with no great success, until they came into the neighbourhood of Oakengates and Wellington, lying almost under the shadow of the Wrekin. Here, in the populous coal and iron district of the county, James Bonsor, as leading missionary, and his colleagues at once met with much success. Hugh Bourne came to assist at the first camp meeting ever held in this part of the country, on May 19th, 1822—the great camp meeting day. Even at this date "the Shropshire Mission" had so far prospered that it had already become "the Oakengates branch" of Tunstall Circuit; and in December, 1822, it became the Oakengates Circuit, and in 1827 had seven preachers put down to it. In 1828 the name of the station was changed from Oakengates to Wrockwardine Wood, probably because a chapel was built at the latter place at an early date, while, for a long time, all efforts to secure a suitable place of worship at Oakengates proved unavailing. Subsequently, however, a site was obtained near the Bull Ring, where the first

missionaries had taken their stand, and when this building was sold to the Birmingham and Shrewsbury Railway Company, the considerable sum realised by the sale enabled the trustees to erect a much larger one in a prominent situation, and place it in easy circumstances. In 1834 Richard Davies, himself a fruit of the Shropshire Mission, was, through the influence of James Bourne, appointed to Wrockwardine Wood. The circuit had declined, and there were special difficulties, both legal and financial, pressing upon the trust of Wrockwardine Wood Chapel. Thus early the remarkable business abilities of Mr. Davies, from which the Connexion was afterwards to reap such advantage, were recognised by the discerning. During his four years' term of service the station experienced renewed prosperity. Wrockwardine Wood Chapel was freed from its difficulties, and additional land bought on which a preacher's house was built. Chapels were also opened in the summer of 1835 at Wellington and Edgmond. There is a story relating to Edgmond Chapel worth telling, since it shows how formidable were the difficulties that had to be overcome by many a village society before it could secure its own little freehold and all that it insured—independence of outside interference and a reasonable guarantee for the future.

At the time the story opens, Edgmond, now on the Newport station, was a village in which there was no religious competition. The State-Church had it all its own way and, whether coincidence or consequence, the village was in a bad way. The clergyman was one of the old type, now almost obsolete. He kept his pack of hounds, and was not more eager to chase the fox than to drive Dissenters from his parish. True to the adage, "Like priest, like people," many of his parishioners were not only benighted themselves, but stoutly resisted the introduction of the light. Several attempts had been made by zealous members of other Churches to preach the Gospel in the village—notably by a Methodist and a Congregational minister, but they had been driven away, bemired with the filth of the kennel through which they had been dragged. Now Mrs. Jones, a Primitive Methodist local preacher and leader of Newport, who brought the letters to Edgmond every morning, was deeply concerned at the moral condition of the place. At her request preachers were sent from Wrockwardine Wood to mission the village, and preaching was established at its outskirts. But the distance of the preaching-house from the village and the bad state of the roads, coupled with the persecution to which both preachers and congregation were subjected, militated against success, so that at the September Quarterly Meeting of 1834 the question of the abandonment of the place was seriously discussed. However, it was finally decided to try what effect would follow from holding a camp meeting before relinquishing it altogether. The meeting was duly held in a field lent by a farmer, who had opportunely quarrelled with the rector, and it was in every way a great success. In response to an appeal Mr. Minshall offered his house, which stood near the Church, for the holding of services, and a small society was formed, of which Mrs. Jones, the letter-carrier, became the leader; while Mr. Vigars, as the result of the camp meeting, became a staunch adherent of the society. The ire of the clergyman was great. Unmoved alike by the clergyman's persuasions and threats, Mr. Minshall was summoned to appear before the Petty Sessions at Newport for permitting an unlicensed conventicle to be held in his house, the clergyman publicly boasting that the fine about to be

inflicted should be distributed among the poor of the village. Mr. Davies took care to appear at the Justices' Meeting, and as the clergyman sitting with the magistrates was allowed to pour forth a tirade of abuse against the Church of which Mr. Davies



DARK LANE CHAPEL.

was the recognised minister, Mr. Davies also claimed and secured the right to speak in vindication alike of the Church and of the accused. What followed shall be given in Mr. Davies' own words:—

“Here one of the magistrates looked at the clergyman, and asked: ‘Who is the owner of the house in which the meetings are held?’ I knew what that meant, and said: ‘Please, your worship, it is now of little moment who his landlord is, because *land*

is purchased on which to erect a chapel in the centre of the village. The deeds are executed and the works are let to undertakers, and long before a legal notice to quit can expire, the man's house will not be needed for our services.’ ‘I never heard a word of that,’ said the parson, looking at the magistrates. ‘They must have been quick in accomplishing the thing, and very sly about it.’ ‘Yes,’ said I, ‘both rapidity and secrecy were needed, when we considered the gentleman we had to deal with.’ The magistrates then retired for consultation, and on their return into court the chairman said to the poor man: ‘Your house

is properly licensed, and you have a perfect right to worship God in your own way. The case is dismissed.’ We bowed, and were about to leave the court when the parson asked the magistrate in a loud voice: ‘Who is to pay the expenses?’ The chairman looked at him, and sternly said: ‘Pay them yourself.’ On leaving the court a gentleman desired me and the poor man to dine with him, declaring, although a Churchman, that he was highly pleased with the result of the trial. The chapel was completed in a few months, and the two ministers [Messrs.



THOMAS TART.



WM. WITHINGTON.

T. Palmer and J. Whittenbury] who had been so cruelly treated in the village by the persecutors some time previously, were honoured by an invitation to preach the opening sermons, which was cheerfully accepted . . . Henceforth the little chapel at Edgmond had rest, and the hand of the Lord was upon it for good.”*

* Rev. R. Davies' signed contribution to “A Book of Marvels or Incidents of Primitive Methodism,” by Rev. W. Antliff, assisted by numerous contributors. An account of the opening of Edgmond Chapel is given in the *Magazine* for 1836. The names of the actors in this episode have been kindly supplied from local sources by Rev. W. Forth.

Another chapel in this same coal and iron district which also has its history may be briefly referred to. Dark Lane is the somewhat significant name given to a mass of dwelling-houses in the postal district of Shifnal, in the present Oakengates and Wellington Circuit. The chapel, which has been erected on one side of this populous neighbourhood perpetuates, by means of marble tablets, the memory of two men who were devoted workers of the society for upwards of fifty years, and through whose prayers and labours the erection of this building was largely due. Thomas Tart (died 1892) and William Withington (1902) were, it is said, accustomed to kneel on a certain piece of land to pray that the way might be opened for the erection of a much-needed chapel in the place. In 1863 permission was given to stake out a site,



THE MARDOL, SHREWSBURY.

but before building operations could begin there was a change in the ownership of the land, with the result that the chapel had to be built on the very spot on which they had offered so many prayers. The land is spacious, and the saintly William Withington, during his latter years, took an interest in neatly keeping its flower-beds.

Some of the changes the years have brought to what we may call the home-part of the old Wrockwardine Wood Circuit may be briefly noted. Dawley Green and other places in the neighbourhood were successfully missioned in 1839-40, with the result that Dawley became an independent station in 1854. Madeley, that will ever be sacred as the place where the sainted Fletcher laboured and which holds his ashes, formed a part of Dawley Circuit until 1881, when it also came on the list of stations.

Here, too, the venerable Joseph Preston died in 1896 in the 94th year of his age and the 73rd of his ministry. Stafford also was for some time a branch of Wrockwardine Wood, and Oakengates and Wellington, and Newport Circuits were made from it in 1865 and 1893 respectively.

SHREWSBURY.

The first missionary to Shrewsbury whose name is given was Sarah Spittle. On Sunday, June 30th, she preached thrice in the streets of the picturesque old city, led the class, and "joined" nine new members. She remarks that there are now forty-four in society, and "a good prospect." From this it is clear that Sarah Spittle must have been preceded to Shrewsbury by some other missionary. James Bonsor followed on August 4th, by which time the society numbered sixty. It was harvest-time; and it was then, and long continued the custom at that season, for the Mardol, one of the principal streets of the city, to be thronged by men waiting to be hired for the harvest. James Bonsor was moved by this strange profanation of the Lord's Day, to try to engage some of these for his Master's service. He took his stand in the crowded street and began to preach; but before he had got through the service he was marched off by the constable to the Court House; and then, as he would not promise "never to preach there more," he was led off to prison, singing all the way, and followed by an immense crowd. Prayer was made for the missionary at the different chapels, and as a practical proof of good-will on the part of some of the citizens, they provided him with no less than eight breakfasts! His detention was but short; at noon, he was taken before another magistrate who set him at liberty, and at night he was preaching again with "not quite all the people of Shrewsbury" to hear him.

James Bonsor's arrest and what followed was the talk of the city. It resulted in calling attention to the missionaries and securing for them a large measure of public sympathy. Shrewsbury did not forget, and is not likely to forget, the hero of the Mardol hirings and the eight breakfasts. When, in 1828, he died at Preston-on-the-Weald Moors, prematurely broken and worn-out with his excessive labours, the Circuit

Committee decided "that the Shrewsbury Chapel be in mourning for James Bonsor for six weeks," and, as a token of respect to his memory, his funeral sermon was preached. But while James Bonsor is remembered, Sarah Spittle must not be forgotten. Both before, and for some weeks immediately after the Sunday of the imprisonment, she laboured in and around the city—sometimes preaching at a camp meeting, at other times in the street, or at the Cross—so that she is entitled to rank as one of the planters of our Church in Shrewsbury. One of the earliest converts in the city was a girl—Elizabeth Johnson. She soon began to exhort, and when but sixteen years of age went out, in 1824, as a travelling preacher, labouring first in South Wales, and afterwards in Wrockwardine Wood, Preston, Ramsor, Darlaston, and Burton-on-Trent Circuits. Elizabeth Johnson is better known as Mrs. Brownhill; for, in 1828, she was married to Mr. W. Brownhill of Birchills, Walsall. Almost until her death,



MRS. ELIZ. BROWNHILL,
née JOHNSON.

in 1860, she preached in the pulpits of what are now circuits in the West Midland District. Three of the sons of this girl-preacher of the early days have been Primitive Methodist Mayors of the borough of Walsall and, in the language of one of them, Mr. W. Brownhill, J.P. : "The greatest honour in the family is the life of the mother ; and they are following her in trying to make the world better than they found it." Sarah Spittle, the Shrewsbury pioneer, and Elizabeth Johnson, one of its proto-converts, show us once more, how largely in the early days our Church availed itself of female agency, and with what far-reaching and satisfactory results. Shrewsbury, which from 1823 had been a branch of Oakengates, was in 1824 made a circuit. "Castle Court Chapel was purchased at a cost of £850, and was opened in June, 1826. It was an old ecclesiastical building under which, at the time of purchase, were two vaults. Originally it was a portion of the old Town Prison or House of Correction. It stood within the ancient walls of the town, and overlooked the beautiful vale of the Severn."*



MR. W. BROWNHILL, J.P.

In this old-time chapel the brethren met to discuss the affairs of their wide circuit, with its branches and distant North Wales and Belfast missions ; for Shrewsbury has been a prolific mother-circuit from which, during the course of the years, the following circuits have been formed, viz. : Brinkworth, 1826 ; Bishops Castle, 1832 ; Newtown (Montgomery), 1836 ; Hadnall, 1838 ; Minsterley, 1856 ; Church Stretton, 1872, and Clun, 1884, from Bishops Castle ; Welshpool, 1877, from Minsterley.

Though it is impossible to follow in detail the history of each of these derivative circuits, reference must be made to the missioning of Bishops Castle in August, 1828, by Richard Ward and Thomas Evans, a local preacher. The full and interesting *Journals* of Richard Ward, who came from Farndale near Kirby Moorside, reveal a cheery and intrepid spirit which, with Divine assistance, was his best qualification for what seemed a forlorn hope ; for Bishops Castle had a bad name that found expression in more than one reproachful proverbial saying. It was called "the Devil's Mansion," and other uncomplimentary names. Dissent was represented by one small Independent chapel with an almost extinct church. Other denominations had tried to gain a footing—and tried in vain ; the Primitives being amongst the baffled ones. Only the previous year, W. Parkinson, one of the Shrewsbury preachers who had been a missionary in Jamaica, made the attempt. He ought to have succeeded ; for he had as his ally the clergyman of a neighbouring parish, who sometimes preached for the Primitives and let them preach in his kitchen. But the two were stoned out of the place. When, on the 10th August, Mr. Ward and his companion saw Bishops Castle in the distance and "heard the bells giving notice for steeple-worship," they found it needful to encourage each other in the Lord, and succeeded, Mr. Ward's faith mounting clear above all discouragements, so that he had even a foresight of the day when Bishops Castle should be a circuit. Their reception was rough, and it would have been rougher still, had not a noted fighter who stood wishful to hear, sworn to defend the missionaries against

* Communicated by Rev. A. A. Birchenough.

the violence which threatened. The pugilist was one of the first to enroll himself a member of the society afterwards formed. A woman, "with tears in her eyes," offered her cottage for the evening service, but as the mob threatened to burn it down or unroof it in case the offer was accepted, they preferred to take their stand again in front of the Castle green. Here they managed to deliver their message, though under strange conditions; for, while some wept under the influence of the truth, others mocked and swore and threw stones. No sooner was the service ended than the preacher and his friends were chased by the stone-throwers, and had to take to the pastures in order to escape the hail of missiles. Mr. Ward, however, seems to have thought that on the whole his mission had opened promisingly, and the next two Sundays found him again at Bishops Castle. Tact and courage won the day. When Sunday, August 24th, closed rowdy opposition had died down. A society was established and friends raised up—notably Mr. Pugh, a respectable tradesman of the town, who became a local preacher, as did also his two sons. The Pugh family were of great service to the new cause, and in one of their houses services were held. In 1832, Richard



REV. JAMES HUFF.

Ward's prophecy had its fulfilment, for in that year Bishops Castle began its influential career as a circuit. The circuit early gave some useful men to the ministry of our Church, such as Thomas Morgan, John Pugh (son of Mr. Pugh already named), Richard Owen; also Robert Bowen, of Asterton, who, in 1851, began to travel in his native circuit, and died at Bishops Castle in 1896. A sister of his (who afterwards became the wife of Rev. Philip Pugh) was instrumental in the conversion of the revered James Huff, whose long ministry of forty-six years was one of remarkable spiritual power and fruitfulness. In the official memoir of Mr. Huff, written by the late Dr. Ferguson, we are told: "In 1887, at the time of his superannuation, it was said that out of sixty ministers given to our ministry out of the county of Shropshire, forty had been led to Christ by our sainted friend." If this statement be even approximately true, James Huff has indeed carved his name deep in the history of Shropshire Primitive Methodism. He was appointed a permanent member of Conference in 1886, and in 1903 died at Bishops Castle where, in 1842, he had begun his ministry.

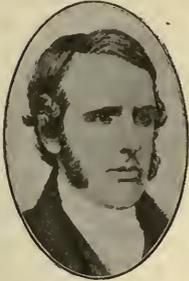
It was at a camp-meeting lovefeast, conducted by James Huff, that a youth named Richard Jones made the great decision. The youth developed a character marked by a fine combination of strength and tenderness. As leader, local preacher, circuit steward, district official, Mr. Richard Jones, of Clun, was widely known, trusted, and respected. At Clun especially he was the stay and guide of the society; and it was chiefly through his liberality and guidance that the present church, school, and manse were erected, forming, as they do, a block of property which is an ornament to the



RICHARD JONES.

town, a credit to the Connexion, and a tangible memorial of the faith, tact, and sacrifice of Mr. Jones, who died January 20th, 1900.*

To the list of ministers raised up by the original Shrewsbury Circuit must be added the eminent names of Philip Pugh and Richard Davies. The former entered the ministry in 1836, and died in 1871. As early as 1839 T. Bateman notes in his *Journal*: "We have got a new staff of preachers. Pugh is a young man from Shrewsbury. *I think there is something in him*—studious, obliging, and a tolerable preacher." The judgment shows the discernment of the writer, but even he when he wrote it, could not have divined what possibilities of solid, continuous growth were latent in this studious youth from Shrewsbury, whom he lived to see worthily filling the office of Editor and President of Conference (1867). Richard Davies was one of a number of youths who, in 1823, invited the



RICHARD DAVIES.

Primitives to Minsterley, promising to find the preacher a room for the services and to provide him with board and lodging. Entering the ministry in 1825, he was sent to the Wiltshire Mission, but returned to Shrewsbury the next year. For six months he was wholly engaged in missioning neglected villages, in five or six of which he succeeded in forming societies that were incorporated with the Shrewsbury Circuit. This young miner of Minsterley was to become General Book Steward and the first Secretary of the Primitive Methodist Insurance Company.

Probably stimulated by the success of its Wiltshire Mission, Shrewsbury Circuit in 1832 led the way in establishing a mission in the North of Ireland. Here are one or two items from the old minute-books which, doubtless, got written down only after much discussion of "pros and cons": "March 18th, 1832: That Brother Haslam go into Ireland as soon as he can after next Monday." "September 5th, 1832: That Brother Haslam beg at every house in Shrewsbury for Ireland." Unfortunately, T. Haslam soon withdrew from the Connexion, and his place on the Mission was taken, December, 1834, by W. Bickerdike. On entering upon his duties Mr. Bickerdike had his modest presentation, as the following entry shows: "December, 1836.—That Brother Bickerdike have one volume of our *Large Magazine* given him as a token of respect." The good opinion evidently already formed of W. Bickerdike was abundantly justified by his after career. He applied himself vigorously to repair the mischief caused by the withdrawal of his predecessor, and succeeded (1836) in building a chapel in Belfast to take the place of the room in Reas Court. In 1839 the powerful Dudley Circuit relieved Shrewsbury of the charge of the Belfast Mission. When, in 1843-4, the three Irish missions were taken over by the General Missionary Committee, it cannot be said that they had hitherto proved particularly successful, or answered the expectations of their promoters.

HOPTON BANK, OR LUDLOW.

Hopton Bank, afterwards called Ludlow, represents the south-western extension of the young and vigorous Darlaston Circuit. Hopton Bank must not be thought of as

* Rev. W. Jones Davies, a spiritual son of Mr. Jones, has published an "Appreciation" of Mr. Jones, in which are to be found interesting notices of Bishops Castle and Clun Circuits.

a comparatively compact circuit of the modern type, but rather as a tract of country extending from Kidderminster to Presteign. About midway between these two extreme points is Hopton Bank which, probably for that very reason, was made the titular head of the circuit; but as the ancient town of Ludlow was the more convenient town for the preachers' residence, the name was changed. We are not able, any more than was Mr. Petty, to furnish interesting particulars as to the first missioning of this wide district. From the memoir of Mrs. Grace Newell, who is stated to have provided a home for the first missionaries that reached Presteign, that town and other places in Radnorshire, were visited as early as the autumn of 1821. Again, in the memoir of Samuel Morris, who was born at Fordham near Clee Hills in 1815, we are told that the Darlaston Circuit missioned Fordham and the district around while he was but a small boy, and that the Morris family opened their house for preaching, and were among the chief supporters of the Hopton Bank Circuit. Samuel Morris began his ministry in his native circuit in 1836 and, what was very unusual at that time, spent the whole of his probation upon it. Once more: we find that Thomas Norman was one of the preachers of Darlaston Circuit in 1823 and stationed in Ludlow when seized with mortal sickness in the spring of that year. These small pieces of evidence justify the conclusion that, from 1821 onwards to 1824, when Hopton Bank was made a circuit, extensive evangelisation in this wide district was being carried on under the direction of Darlaston.

We get an interesting side-light on the missionary activity of the Ludlow Circuit (as we will call it) from the life-story of Elizabeth Smith, afterwards Mrs. Russell. We see the geographical direction that missionary activity took, how far it reached, and, above all, how simply and trustfully it was undertaken and carried on. Elizabeth Smith is one of the most picturesque figures in our early history. She deservedly takes a high place among the many female-workers of the early decades, and the reference to her here is the more in place as we shall soon meet with her hard at work in Wiltshire. She was converted at the Christmas of 1825, while on a visit to Ludlow, her native place. She soon began to exercise in prayer and to exhort, and when, in the September of 1826, a request came out of Radnorshire that a missionary might be sent to a part of the county as yet unvisited, Elizabeth Smith was urged to undertake the mission, and, despite the opposition of her friends, gladly consented. Her going forth was apostolically simple. The superintendent put a map of the road into her hand, and supplemented it with verbal directions. Said he: "You will have to raise your own salary—two guineas a quarter." "Oh, I did not know I was to have anything," was the answer. She travelled the whole of the first day, and night found her on a lonely common—or rather "moss," for it was partly covered with water, and there were deep treacherous peat-holes, like miniature tarns, all around. Fully alive to the danger, she mounted a ridge and began to sing, "Jesu, Lover of my soul." While still singing she saw a light gradually coming towards her. Her singing had been heard by the residents of a cottage that stood on the edge of the common, and one of them bearing a lantern had come out to learn what was the meaning of this unusual nocturnal hymn. Guided by her voice, he made his way to where she was standing. She found shelter in the cottage which, indeed, proved to be the very house

to which she had been directed. "Of course," says the narrative, "they all believed the hand of the Lord was in it."

Elizabeth Smith met with another similar experience while pioneering in "wild Wales." When crossing the Llandeilo rocks overlooking the valley of the upper Wye, the mist came on, and she got off the track. In a few moments she would have fallen over the precipice, had she not given heed to a premonition so real to her that it sounded like a voice crying: "Stop! come back!"

We are not surprised to learn that Elizabeth Smith "practised great frugality so as not to be burdensome to the friends, that she won the affections of the people, and that the Welsh mission as carried on by her cost nothing to the Ludlow Circuit."

Richard Jukes, the poet-preacher, has been more than once referred to in these pages. In him we have another link connecting Ludlow with the general history of our Church; for he was a native of Ludlow Circuit, joined the society in 1825—the same year as Elizabeth Smith—and in 1827 began his ministry of thirty-two years by being appointed one of the six preachers of Ludlow Circuit. When, in January, 1900, Mr. James Tristram died at the patriarchal age of 91, there passed away one who had been connected with Ludlow Primitive Methodism ever since the day when the missionaries from Darlaston held their first service in Old Street. He was seventy-three years a local preacher, and when a young man was engaged by his circuit to mission Much Wenlock, Madeley, Iron Bridge, and other places. From 1886 to 1896 James Tristram was a permanent member of Conference, and his descendants of two generations are in the ranks of the ministry. With but a reasonable degree of prosperity premised, it was inevitable that Ludlow Circuit should be divided, comprising, as it did, portions of four counties—Shropshire, Worcestershire, Hereford, and Radnorshire. It was natural, too, that when the division was made it should take effect at the extremities. This is indeed what happened, and the statement of the fact summarizes the external history of the circuit for a period extending beyond 1843. First, Presteign was detached in 1828, and Kidderminster followed in 1832. Even then the process of division was only begun, for Presteign still included Knighton, which has since been made a circuit; and for some years after 1851 Ludlow had no less than five branches, viz., Leominster, Leintwardine, Weobley, Bromyard, and Worcester—all of which are now circuits of the West Midland District.

"THE SHROPSHIRE STATION," AND PREES GREEN CIRCUIT WITH ITS OFFSHOOTS.

Things which happened together must needs be told one after the other; so, at the very time Oakengates, Shrewsbury, and Ludlow were at work in the central and Southern parts of Shropshire, Burland was at work in the Northern part of the county. Thanks to the carefully-kept *Journal* of Thomas Bateman, we can follow the progress of the mission from October, 1820, when "the work was opening out in Wirral and Shropshire," to 1826, when the Prees Green Circuit was made. Here also, just as had been the case at Oakengates and Shrewsbury, a camp meeting and an imprisonment were outstanding events having important consequences.

At the Whitsuntide of 1822, news reached Burland that some new converts were arranging to hold a camp meeting at Waterloo, between Wem and Whitchurch. Dubious as to the young people's ability for the work in hand, and having a wholesome dread of possible irregularities, the Circuit Committee deputed G. Taylor, J. Smith, and T. Bateman to take charge of the camp meeting. They rose early, for they had a long walk before them. An unexpected rain-storm, for which they were unprepared, led them to turn into the preaching-house at Welsh End, to dry their clothes by the peat-fire. But the drying process was slow, and time pressed, and they resumed their journey. When they reached Waterloo the camp meeting was already in progress.



BAILEY HEAD, OSWESTRY.

They found a Mr. Humpage in charge, who gladly resigned its management into their hands.* All went well until about the middle of the afternoon service, when a number of young sparks rode up and formed in line on the outskirts of the crowd, and seemed disposed to mock; while others, who had behaved decorously enough up to that time, gave signs of following their lead. The conduct of the disturbers was felt to demand a public reproof, and Thomas Bateman was chosen to administer it. Taking as his text the words: "Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken mock on," he gave a pointed exhortation, every word of which seemed to find its mark. It was

* We conjecture this Mr. Humpage to be the person already mentioned in Vol. i. p. 520, in connection with Darlaston.

noticed that the heads of the youths soon drooped; they listened to the end, and then rode quietly away.

This originally unauthorised camp meeting had on it the seal of the divine approval; for its results, immediate and remote, were remarkable. Thirty years after, Thomas Bateman was riding through Whitchurch on his way to open a chapel in the neighbourhood of Wem, when he met with another horseman who also was going to the chapel-opening. From him he learned that the faithful words spoken so long ago had borne almost immediate fruit in contrition and amendment of life; that the young men (of whom the horseman was one), as they rode away from the camp-ground, had made vows—vows that time, and the efforts some of them had afterwards made to help on the evangelisation of the country-side, had proved the sincerity of.

Waterloo, like the battle of that name, was one of the "decisive" camp meetings of our early history. It wonderfully opened up the way into this part of Cheshire and the borders of Wales. Many requests for the establishment of services at places around Ellesmere, Wem, and even Oswestry were urged, and, from this 26th May, 1822, increasing headway was made in the district. In June there had been but four local preachers in this part of the Burland Circuit, whereas in September there were thirteen, besides some prayer-leaders. It was now determined that this side of the circuit should be constituted a branch, under the name of "the Shropshire Station." This somewhat unusual designation was chosen for reasons similar to those which often decide the election of a pope. Strong rival claimants, who will not give way for each other, will sometimes combine to elect some cardinal whom no one had thought of as a possible competitor. Market Drayton was the more important place, and it had memories. But Market Drayton was at the extremity of the branch. Prees Green was central, but—in short, they shrank from calling it as yet "Prees Green Branch," and fell back upon the neutral "Shropshire Mission." Three preachers were put



WILLIAM DOUGHTY.

down to the mission, and one of them—W. Doughty—was appointed to break up new ground.

W. Doughty found his way to Oswestry, and on his third visit, there occurred his arrest and imprisonment which, next to the camp meeting already referred to, turned out to the furtherance of the cause. On June 8th, he took his stand at the Bailey Head, opposite the Red Lion, and because he saw neither law nor reason why he should desist from preaching when Brynner, the constable, and his assistant told him to do so, they carried him off, and eventually put him in a grated cell under the council chamber. A good woman named Douglas brought him food, and though the place in which he was confined was, to use his own words, "too dark to write clear," he did indite "a letter from prison" to his benefactor which after being revised by Mr. Whitridge, the kindly Independent minister, was printed, and may still be read. The Independents, both minister and people, showed W. Doughty much kindness. Acting on the advice of one of them—Mr. Minshall, a solicitor—he refused to walk to Shrewsbury to serve his sentence of a month's imprisonment, so a tax-cart

was provided to carry him there. He told the crowd, gathered in Salop Road to see him off, that in a month's time they would see him coming down this road, and, said he, "I shall sing this hymn"—giving out a line of it; and he kept his word. From this time Primitive Methodism gained a footing in Oswestry. Even the magistrate who had committed him to prison granted him his licence, and granted it with kindly words. W. Doughty is said to have sought the protection of a licence, warned by the recent experience of Mr. Whittaker of Knolton Bryn, who had been fined by the magistrates of Overton twenty pounds for preaching in an unlicensed house.* In those days licences, whether for places or persons were useful, even indispensable documents. But, though Mr. Doughty might now enjoy immunity from persecution in Oswestry, he occasionally met with it elsewhere. For example, it is stated that when he and J. Mullock were at Tetchill, two men on horseback charged them, and that Mr. Doughty was ridden over, and his head so cut that the blood ran



TABLET IN OSWESTRY CHAPEL BURIAL GROUND.
Removed from old Chapel.

through his hat. One is glad to learn that a gentleman of public spirit—Mr. Hughes of Ellesmere—took up the case, and brought the miscreants to justice.†

For a time the services in Oswestry were held in the house of Mrs. Elliot, who also extended hospitality to the preachers. She stood by W. Doughty at the Bailey Head on the 8th June, as also did her daughter, who had a sweet, well-trained voice and greatly helped in the singing. Elizabeth Elliot deserves to be remembered alike for her graces and her fate. She should be placed side by side with Thomas Watson, and John Heaps of

* "Early Recollections of Mr. William Doughty, and of Primitive Methodism in Oswestry." By Mr. Thomas Minshall. 1873.

† "Career of William Doughty: his Preaching, Punishment, and Prison Thoughts." Reprinted with additions from the "Oswestry Advertiser," April 8th, 1863.

life had an early and tragic close. On Saturday, April 23rd, 1825, she started for her Sunday appointments at Llandreino, in Montgomeryshire. As she stepped into the ferry-boat at Pant (Llanymynech) she said, in parting with a friend whose hospitality she had shared: "Pray for me." Now, the river Virniew, swollen by the rains from the Welsh mountains, was in angry flood. There was a chain across the river to keep the cattle from straying. Instead of crossing below the chain, the boatman fatuously attempted to cross above stream, and the boat, being violently thrown against the chain, capsized, and Elizabeth Elliot and the boatman's wife were drowned.

At the June Quarterly Meeting of 1825 the Shropshire Station got itself made into the Prees Green Circuit. We say "got itself made," because the making was done



PREES CHURCH.

against the wishes of the parent circuit, and "rather prematurely," Hugh Bourne thought. Thus a mere hamlet came to give its name to a historic circuit which embraced more than north Shropshire, and is now represented by at least seven circuits. Hard by is the village of Prees, with its "weather-beaten church on the hill." Of this church Archdeacon Allen, the friend of Edward Fitzgerald and Thackeray, was vicar from 1846 to 1883. The vicar was on good terms with his Primitive Methodist parishioners. He took the chair at the lectures Robert Key delivered on his periodical visits to the village. He co-operated with them in Temperance work. When some one asked him to preach in the Primitive Methodist chapel he, in 1874, wrote to Dean Stanley inviting his views on the general question whether there is any law to prohibit a clergyman of the Established Church from officiating in any meeting-house

in his parish; Archdeacon Allen evidently believing there was no such prohibitive law. In this letter to the Dean he says: "The Primitive Methodists have done a great work at Prees in encouraging sobriety and thrift. Thirty years ago there were ten houses in Prees where intoxicating liquor was sold; now there are only two, and in only one of these can drink be consumed on the premises. This happy change is not due solely to the Primitive Methodists, but they have been special labourers on the side of sobriety." Who were these "special labourers" who commanded the Archdeacon's respect and willing co-operation? Materials for an answer are supplied by Rev. S. Horton, himself a native of Prees:—

"Two brothers of the name of Powell got converted at a camp meeting. From being the ringleaders in wickedness they became the ringleaders in righteousness. They were men of marked ability and force of character. William Powell prospered greatly, and became the head of a large firm, employing some hundreds of men. He could neither read nor write when he was converted and, when he commenced work as a local preacher, used to recite his hymns and passages of Scripture from memory. But he was a force in the neighbourhood that made for righteousness, and everybody respected his sterling integrity and uprightness of character. Another village-reformer of a different type was Samuel Adams, a well-read, thoughtful man, with deep spiritual insight, and a lover of everything beautiful and true—the leading temperance reformer of the place. Then there was also Joseph Ikin, one that feared God and eschewed evil, whose descendants are among the prominent supporters of Methodism in the neighbourhood to-day. These and others, less prominent but like-minded, were the leaders of the Primitive Methodist Church, and were by training and conviction Nonconformists of the old sturdy type, that resisted church-rates, and would to-day undoubtedly, if alive, have led a campaign for 'passive resistance' against the Education Bill.*"

To these names must be added that of Thomas Rogers, whose long and honourable connection with our Church was recognised by his election as a permanent member of Conference. He was house-carpenter at Hawkstone Park—the seat of the family to which belonged Lord Hill, Wellington's second in command, and the eccentric Rowland Hill, of old Surrey Chapel. Lord Hill of Hawkstone both gave and sold several sites for the building of chapels in this neighbourhood, and it was through Thomas Rogers' influence, it is said, that the first of such sales was brought about.

Much was said in a preceding part of this History of the "vision-work" which marked the formative period of the Connexion. Hugh Bourne came across it again when on a visit to Prees Green Circuit in October, 1828. Two young women went into trance while he was there; and, though he was struck with "the dignity with which the two young persons conducted their cause," and thought their singing when in the trance was "beyond anything he remembered to have heard," yet the counsel he gave the society indicates a more critical attitude towards these doubtful phenomena than he had taken twenty years before. "I gave them," says he, "the general advices usually given in our Connexion, and which are: (1) None to go in vision if they can avoid it. (2) Not to lay too much stress upon it. (3) That faith, plain faith,

* Article on "Archdeacon Allen" in *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review*, July, 1903.

which worketh by love, is greater than these things ; but that if any one's faith was strengthened by them, so far it was well."

When in 1833 Oswestry was formed into a circuit, a huge cantle of territory lying to the west was cut off from Prees Green. Still, Market Drayton remained to it as a branch and, more singular still, Longton in the Potteries was also a branch until 1836, when it appeared on the stations for a time as a separate circuit, with Thomas Russell as superintendent. Market Drayton continued connected with Prees Green until 1869, and Wem until 1878.

OSWESTRY AND ITS OFFSHOOTS.

Oswestry Circuit had a good start. It had a membership of 697, and a good staff of workers and capable officials. Its "lot"—no narrow one to begin with, was capable of indefinite enlargement in certain directions ; for its way lay open into the Welsh counties of Flint, Denbigh, and Montgomery. Its history shows that it can fairly claim to have been a missionary circuit. It *did* cross the English border. Three other circuits have been formed from it and, in addition, it undertook for some years the responsibility of the Lisburn Mission. Moreover, it was long known for the liberal support it gave to the general missionary fund.

In Oswestry itself, a building called the Cold Bath had been transformed into a chapel, which was opened by Thomas Bateman on December 12th, 1824. Soon after this, W. Doughty retired from the ministry and began business in one of the houses attached to the chapel ; but he still continued a most active official, as the plans and documents of the times clearly show. In, or about, 1840, a new chapel was built in Oswestry, and by this time chapels in other parts of the wide circuit had been acquired. Trouble, however, arose in Oswestry, which led to a serious secession and to chapel embarrassments. The primary cause of the trouble seems to have been disagreement on a point of doctrine. Some young men adopted and publicly advanced views on infant purity which we take to have been practically identical with the published views of Rev. Nathan Rouse, which brought him under the discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. It was maintained as a direct corollary of John Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection that, in the case of children born to parents who are themselves entirely sanctified, the entail of original sin is broken. Senior officials, if they did not understand or share the views of their juniors, were dissatisfied with the treatment meted out to these by the local and District courts, and W. Fitzgerald and R. Thomas, who had been zealous co-workers with W. Doughty from the beginning seceded, and many others with them.* W. Doughty himself followed in 1846 (though his family did not), and the secessionists built a chapel for themselves as an "Independent Methodist" society. We shall not seek to follow the secession through its subsequent vicissitudes. Our only reason for referring to it at all is, that the crisis it created served to bring out the high qualities of Mr. Edward Parry and other of the Oswestry Circuit officials ; and, secondly, because the secession itself is one of the very few in our history which are distinctly traceable to doctrinal differences.

* J. Whittaker, W. Fitzgerald, and R. Thomas are the first three names on the plan of 1843 after the travelling preachers.

Our fathers were too busy pressing home vital doctrines to have time or disposition to dispute about minor ones.

In writing of Mr. Edward Parry and the special service he rendered at this critical time, we will borrow the words of Mr. T. Ward Green, the present owner of "The Wood" estate, Maesbrook, and a leading official of the Llanymynech Circuit:—



MR. EDWARD PARRY.



MRS. PARRY.

"The Oswestry Circuit of that time was an immense affair, more resembling in its area and agencies an ecclesiastical diocese than a Methodist station. Of this important and influential circuit Mr. Parry was for thirty-seven years the steward, and on his retirement from office, his co-officials presented him with an illuminated

address. It is not too much to say that Primitive Methodism in North-west Shropshire owes much of its present position, and possibly its very existence, to Mr. Parry's continued devotion and sagacity. A few years after he joined the community a disruption of a most threatening character took place in the Oswestry society; nearly all the original members left us, and the heavily burdened chapel was being offered for sale. At this supreme crisis in our local history, Mr. Parry came forward, consulted solicitors, undertook responsibilities, obtained new trustees, raised fresh loans; in short, saved the property to the Connexion, and the young cause from ruin. As far back as 1832 he missioned Maesbrook; Morton and West Felton were also opened by him, and at each of these places we have still progressive societies. He six times represented the Tunstall District in Conference, and was delegate from the Oswestry Circuit to District meeting the same number of times."*



ORIGINAL MEETING-HOUSE AT MAESBROOK, LLANMYNECH.

Mr. Parry died in 1894 in the eighty-seventh year of his age, and was interred in the graveyard attached to the Knockin Heath Chapel, which represents the oldest interest in the present Llanymynech Circuit. His eldest son is an official of long standing and the present Steward of Ellesmere Circuit.

Reference is made in the above quotation to the missioning of Maesbrook in 1832. Services were at first held in an old farmhouse in the hamlet of Llwynygo, *i.e.*, the Cuckoo's

Grove, which forms part of the Maesbrook Wood estate. One of the earliest converts

* Memoir in the *Aldersgate*, 1895.

was Mrs. Ward, the widow of the late owner of the estate, who was married to Mr. Edward Parry. Her only son, Samuel, attended the services in the farmhouse and in 1841, when only eighteen years of age, became an exhorter. He celebrated the attainment of his majority by giving a site for the building of a Primitive Methodist chapel fronting the avenue to his own house. Mr. Ward was a well-read man and became a popular local preacher, and also took an active interest in connexional movements. His patrimonial home, known as "The Wood"—comfortable, old-fashioned, picturesque—came to be as well known to the Primitive Methodists in the West, as Bavington Hall had been known to Primitive Methodists of the North. Leading ministers and laymen constantly found their way to this hospitable homestead. In the days of the undivided Oswestry Circuit, it was the custom for one Quarterly Meeting of the year to be held at Maesbrook, in an upper room of one of the farm-buildings; and when we are told that the 'squire and his lady cheerfully dispensed hospitality to some two hundred circuit officials at these times, we get a striking illustration of that period in our

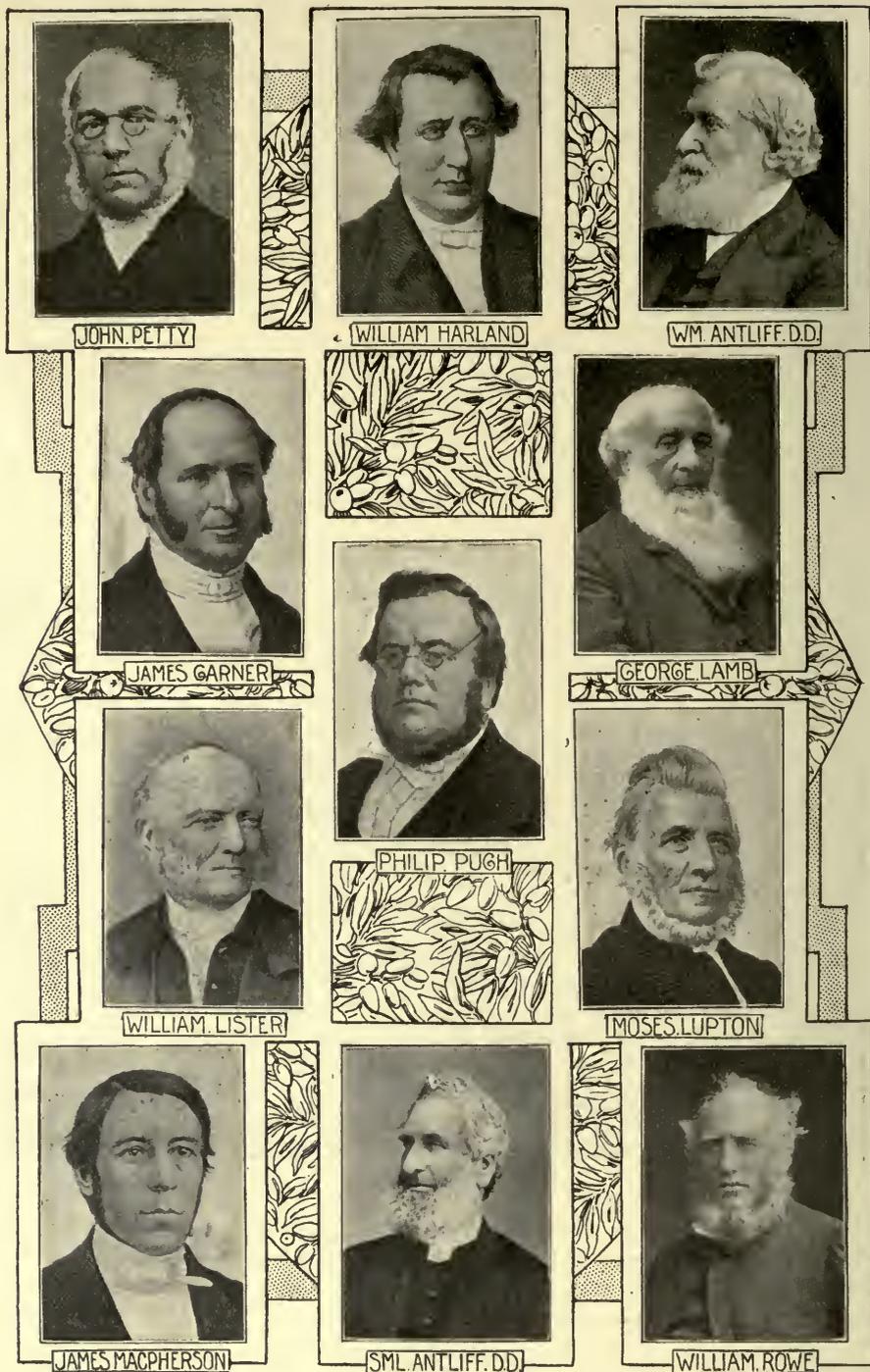


MR. S. WARD.



THE WOOD HOUSE, MAESBROOK.

history which we have called the period of circuit predominance and enterprise. The Oswestry Circuit Quarterly Meeting was a more important gathering, so far as numbers went, than the Conferences of the same period. The fact, true of that day but true no longer, sharply contrasts the past with the present. Mr. Ward's useful life came to



PRESIDENTS OF CONFERENCE FROM 1860 TO 1874.

a close in 1896, and he, too, lies in Knockin Heath Chapel graveyard. It is pleasing to know that the interest Primitive Methodists feel in regard to The Wood does not all belong to the past as in the case of Bavington Hall, but that its present owner,

Mr. T. Ward Green, is carrying forward the old traditions, and is his uncle's successor in the stewardship of the Llanymynech Circuit.*



STEPHEN BATHO.

Besides Mr. E. Parry and S. Ward, J. Grindley of Knockin Heath, and Stephen Batho and R. Mansell were faithful adherents of the cause in the time of crisis in the Oswestry Circuit already referred to. Stephen Batho, who died in 1879, was a local preacher forty-five years. Richard Mansell was converted at Haughton in the Ellesmere Circuit



RICHARD MANSELL.

in 1834, was a most acceptable local preacher for sixty years, and for a considerable time the Steward of the Oswestry Circuit.

It is noticeable that women were as actively associated with the beginnings of our Church in North-west Shropshire as they were elsewhere. Thus it was in the 'Twenties at Knockin Heath, where the three daughters of a large farmer in the neighbourhood of Ellesmere, named Bickley, greatly stimulated the cause. So also at Rhosymedre and the district around. Mary Owens—said to have belonged to the family of Admiral Rodney—was for many years an active worker and altogether a remarkable woman. Married to Richard Williams, himself a local preacher, she and her husband were associated in usefulness. In 1827 they took a house and introduced Primitive Methodism into Rhosymedre, and subsequently assisted to do the same at Black Park. R. Williams was also leader of a class at Ruabon for sixteen years. During the forty years Mary Williams was a local preacher she missioned much in Shropshire and the bordering counties, and even found her way to London in 1847 to assist John Ride in his evangelistic work.

In the *Magazine* we have an account of the opening of the first chapel at Rhosymedre in 1833; a larger one was built in 1842. When the latter, through depression of trade and removals, was brought into financial straits, Mary Williams got leave to beg through the then extensive circuit in order to raise the sum required for arrears of interest and save the chapel—and she succeeded in her object. The late John Evans did much to consolidate the cause at Rhosymedre, and Henry Lloyd that of Black Park.



MARY WILLIAMS.

In its Jubilee year—1873, Oswestry Circuit was still undivided, having 900 members and 121 local preachers. Soon after, its partition began by the making of Rhosymedre, 1877; Llanymynech, 1878; and Ellesmere Circuit, 1895.

* For Mr. S. Ward, see an interesting article in the *Aldersgate Magazine* for 1897—"A Shropshire Village Yeoman," by Rev. A. A. Birchenough.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FORMATION OF THE BRINKWORTH DISTRICT.

88. BRINKWORTH, 1825. S. West W. Strongman, J. Baker S. Turner † A. Sly J. Blackmore W. Wigley	93. HAVERFORDWEST, 1828. J. Gregory	98. STROUD, 1830. J. Horsman M. Bugden
89. BLAENAVON, 1826. J. Hibbs H. Higginson	94. MOTCOMB, 1828. R. Davies W. Langley W. Yapp	99. SALISBURY, 1831. J. Preston A. Woodward
90. WITNEY, 1826. G. Appleby E. Lowe	95. REDRUTH, 1828. W. Driffield J. Richards S. Wilshaw	100. SHEFFORD, 1832. J. Ride H. Hayes G. Wallis E. Bishop G. Price J. Coxhead W. Wiltshire J. Rumming T. Jackson E. Wheeldon M. Moor A. Goodwin S. Wheeler
91. FROME, 1827. J. Prince W. Turner J. Guy S. Price	96. ST. AUSTELL, 1829. T. Ford R. Tuffin B. Tripp J. Clark J. Noot One to be obtained	101. MORETON, 1833. J. Morish
92. PILLAWELL, 1827. J. Morton F. R. Broom	97. BATH, 1829. E. Foizey	102. ST. IVES, 1833. H. Pope T. Meredith

BRINKWORTH DISTRICT AS IT FIRST APPEARED ON THE STATIONS OF 1833,
WITH THE YEAR OF EACH CIRCUIT'S FORMATION.



It will conduce to clearness if, in this chapter, we confine ourselves to giving in outline a sketch of those evangelistic efforts of certain circuits, the combined result of which is seen in the Brinkworth District formed in 1833. That result is set forth above in the transcript of the stations of the Brinkworth District as they first appeared in the Conference Minutes; the only alteration made being the insertion of the year when each circuit was formed, in place of the letters L.D. or T.P.D. of the original draft—letters which have now lost their interest for us. Several distinct lines of agency converged in the making of Brinkworth District. First, in order of time, came Tunstall and Scotter's

joint "Western Mission" which, from Stroud in Gloucestershire, reached Frome and Bath in Somerset, Motcombe in Dorset, and Salisbury in South Wilts. Second, Oakengates' missions to the Forest of Dean and Hereford, and to Blaenavon in South Wales. Third, Shrewsbury's mission to Brinkworth in Wilts, and thence to Shefford or Newbury in Berks. Fourth, Hull's mission in Cornwall represented by St. Austell and St. Ives. Lastly, we have Haverfordwest in the Welsh Peninsula, as the solitary outcome of the agency of the abortive Missionary Committee of 1825. Brinkworth District's fifteen stations of 1833 had, by 1842, become thirty, with fifteen branches and missions. Taking these lines of agency in their order, we have first, then :

I.—THE WESTERN MISSION.

In 1823 Tunstall and Scotter jointly undertook a mission to the West of England. It almost looks as though this enterprise was regarded at the time as one of the weightiest the Connexion had as yet entered upon. Tunstall appointed its own special

committee of management, and hoped that Scotter would do the same : other circuits were also asked to co-operate. If we may regard this as an early attempt to establish a General Missionary Committee, it was destined to be unsuccessful. The circuits did co-operate, but each co-operated in its own way. James Bonsor was chosen to be the leading missionary. When last we saw him he was at Oakengates and Shrewsbury. After his imprisonment at Shrewsbury he fell again into the hands of the police at Bridgnorth, and spent a night in prison. Next morning three proposals



THE CROSS, STROUD.

were made to him from which to choose : to promise that neither he nor his colleagues would preach any more in the streets of Bridgnorth ; to find bail for his appearance at the Sessions ; or to be sent to Shrewsbury jail. "Then," said Bonsor, "I will go to Shrewsbury ; for I was there a few months ago and they used me extremely well. They brought me eight breakfasts to prison one morning, and promised that they would use me well if I came again." Plainly, nothing could be made of such a man, so, after straitly charging him not to preach in the streets again, the bailiffs dismissed him in a friendly way, shaking him by the hand, and promising to protect him against persecution when preaching in licensed houses. And, when, soon after, three of the worst persecutors were brought before them, they made good their promise.

This was in November, 1822, just before Oakengates was made a circuit. In 1823 Bonsor is Tunstall's leading preacher, and on June 7th he set out on his mission, calling at Worcester and Tewkesbury on his way. At the latter place he was once more arrested for preaching in the open air. He was asked to find bail but refused, and as the

Dissenting ministers of Tewkesbury very handsomely spoke up in the court on his behalf, and public opinion was on his side, Bonsor was, after much discussion, liberated. He visited also some of the villages round Gloucester, but no permanent societies were formed either at Tewkesbury or Gloucester at this time. His objective was the cloth-manufacturing district of the county, and here he met with an encouraging degree of success. At Stroud, tradition says, he preached at The Cross, and at the close asked the crowd if he should come again, to which the response was a hearty "Yes." At many villages in the Stroud-water valley and among the pleasant Cotswold Hills societies were established. A chapel was built at Chalford, in the Golden Valley, as early as 1823, and the theatre at Stroud was fitted up as a place of worship—a conversion which led



CHALFORD CHAPEL, BUILT 1823.

the people jubilantly to sing: "Praise the Lord! the case is altered, now this house belongs to the Lord."

In 1824 there were five preachers on the Western Mission; three years later the direction of that Mission had passed from Staffordshire to Somerset. We can see what happened when we turn to the Conference stations for those years. In 1825, Tunstall has eleven preachers; in 1826, seven; in 1827, but two. First, Stroud Branch was detached from Tunstall and joined to the adjoining Brinkworth Circuit, on its formation in 1826. Owing to slackness of trade and the poverty of the people, Stroud still needed financial support and oversight, which Brinkworth was ready to supply. In 1826, James Bonsor's name disappears from the roll of preachers. There is reason to believe

that he had been closely connected with Stroud and district to the last, and hence his retirement from the Connexion would tend to accentuate the temporary difficulties of the Stroud Branch. In 1830, Stroud became an independent but numerically feeble circuit, with 101 members, thirteen local preachers, and one chapel. It was never to be its lot to become a great missionary circuit like its powerful neighbour, Brinkworth. In fact, the Stroud-water valley was an eddy of the particular stream of evangelization which the Western Mission originated. The main volume of the stream rolled on. FROME Circuit, formed in 1827, with J. Ride, T. Haslam, and S. Spittle as its preachers, shows the course taken, and the point reached, up to that time. We find W. Paddison, in 1826, holding camp meetings at Clandown and Nunney, and missioning various places between Frome and Bristol in the vicinity of Wells. Bristol itself was visited, and a small society formed which, however, soon became extinct, so that a more vigorous and sustained attack had to be made on Bristol a few years later. In Bath, the famous city of pleasure, greater success was gained; in 1828, W. Towler was appointed to labour in the city and its immediate neighbourhood. Frome's mission to Glastonbury in 1843, which afterwards extended to Bridgewater, belongs to a much later period. Frome's main missionary efforts lay in another direction at the time of which we write. The line of advance went obliquely forward into Dorset, and on to the sea-coast. Trowbridge, in Wilts, was visited, and Enmore Green and Motcombe, and other places round Shaftesbury, in Dorset, were successfully missioned. MOTCOMBE made a circuit in 1828, played an important rôle in the evangelization of large portions of some of the Southern counties. One of its missionaries seems to have been the first Primitive Methodist to preach in Hampshire—this was under a tree at Breamore in 1830—and also first in the city of Winchester. But the circuit was not strong enough to sustain the required mission, and the duty was afterwards undertaken by Shefford Circuit. Salisbury, and some of the villages around, were visited by Motcombe preachers as early as 1827. Regular preaching services were established in the city, and since 1831, when SALISBURY was made a circuit, it has had a progressive history, which may be said to have culminated in 1893 (when Salisbury shared with Southampton the distinction of giving its name to the Salisbury and Southampton District); and the neighbouring circuits of Wilton and Woodfalls are its offshoots. But Motcombe's most distinctive work has been done in Dorset; in the towns and villages of that Wessex whose physical features and people have been illuminated by the genius of Thomas Hardy. In 1833, Motcombe penetrated deeper into this interesting district—reaching Blandford on the Stour—Thomas Hardy's "Shottsford Forum." How this was done Richard Davies tells us. In 1831 he says—

"From Frome we removed to the Motcombe station, and resided at Enmore Green, Shaftesbury. Two rooms were rented for our accommodation, very scantily furnished, owing to the poverty of the station. Its funds were insufficient for the salaries of a married man and a single one, and to remedy this state of things the Quarterly Meeting resolved to employ a third preacher and to set me at liberty to mission some villages and towns which lay round about us, some near and some a long way off. Several new societies were formed and added to the circuit, and worked afterwards by the three preachers alternately; and

by this means the funds were augmented and the station relieved of debt.”—
(*MS. Autobiography.*)

Blandford Branch, comprising such villages as Durweston, Stickland, etc., was the outcome of this mission. Soon the old seaport town of Poole, situated on its spacious harbour, was reached, and adjoining villages evangelized; and when, in 1838, POOLE became a circuit, it joined hands with the Weymouth and Dorchester Mission, already referred to. As for fashionable, far-stretching Bournemouth, it was not yet thought of. Where it now stands was then but a heath, scored with chines running down to the sea, and covered with odorous pines. Its astonishing development belongs to a later period. We have only to add that, in 1842, Motcombe had the Sherborne Branch and Stoke Mission under its charge, and that Blandford was made a circuit in 1880.

From this sketch of the Western Mission it will be seen that, from start to finish, that Mission gave some six circuits to the Bristol, and seven to the Salisbury and Southampton Districts. There is not one of these circuits which may not feel itself to be historically linked to the powerful but distant Tunstall and Scotter Circuits, inasmuch as it has been directly or indirectly the beneficiary of the Western Mission.

II.—OAKENGATES' MISSIONS.

Blaenavon, Cwm, and Pillawell, which came on the stations severally in 1825, '26, and '27, form a group of circuits that were the direct or indirect outcome of Oakengates Circuit's early missionary labours. The facts as to the origin of these three circuits show that the tracts of country they named, though each had its distinctive physical and industrial features, were so geographically contiguous as to be within the walking powers of the missionary. They were visited in succession by the same pioneer, and came on the stations one after the other, in the same order in which they were visited. Ever since their formation these three circuits have had a continuous history, and that history, important as it is, may be compressed into the statement of the capital fact that from them the whole of the present South Wales District, including also the missions within its area, has sprung. When, in 1888, the South Wales District was formed, it might almost seem as though the principle determining the grouping had been, to include in the new District none but those stations which derived from Oakengates through Blaenavon, Cwm, or Pillawell. Of course, no such idea would influence the minds of those who were responsible for the division made, yet the coincidence of the arrangement with the actual course of development is striking.

BLAENAVON.

The Black Mountains that rise frowningly from the valley of the Usk in Brecknock, and southward sink down slopingly through West Monmouth, Glamorgan, and part of Carmarthen, form the great South Wales coal-field, covering the hill-sides for a distance of 900 square miles—rich, too, in iron and copper. All this mineral wealth has not only made the hill-country a populous hive of industry, but accounts for the remarkable development of the Bristol Channel ports of Newport, Cardiff, and Swansea. Blaenavon is on the north-eastern edge of this district, where the hill-country of Monmouth rises from the valley of the Usk, which river has bent round to pass

through Monmouthshire to find its debouchure in the estuary of the Severn. It was this district which was the scene of the Chartist rising of 1839 when, on a stormy November night, the miners and iron-workers poured down from the hills into Newport and came in conflict with the military. Some twenty persons lost their lives, and Frost, and two other leaders of the abortive rising, were sentenced to be "hanged, drawn, and quartered," though the sentence was afterwards commuted to fourteen years' penal servitude.

When Oakengates sent a missionary to Blaenavon it was like succouring like—one coal and iron district lending a helping hand to another. The missionary selected was James Roles, whom we saw making his entry into Liverpool pelted with mud. He found his way to Blaenavon just about the time James Bonsor was beginning the Western Mission. Writing on August 10th, 1823, he reports that he has already preached at seven distinct places, and gathered seventy in church fellowship, of whom forty were in Blaenavon. Another missionary has been sent to assist him, and applications for their services are constantly being received from various quarters. The first chapel in South Wales is said to have been built at Beaufort about this time.

CWM.

The reader should be advertised that he will not find Cwm in any gazetteer or on any ordinary map. It is not even a hamlet, much less a considerable village or town. It is only the name of a small estate with its farmhouse and flour-mill attached, situate in the parish of Cloddock, in the south-west corner of Herefordshire. The Cwm * lies under the mountains which rise just within the Welsh border and are called the Black Mountains, from the dark heath with which they are covered. To get here from Blaenavon was no difficult matter. No mountainous barrier intervenes between Herefordshire and central Monmouthshire, as a glance at the map will show. But what the particular reasons were which brought James Roles, or other missionary, into this secluded corner are not stated and, however easy, it is useless to conjecture what those reasons were. What is clear is that the missionary from Blaenavon found his way here in the early part of 1824, and met with hospitable entertainment at the Cwm, where Mrs. Phillips resided on her own property with her sons and daughters. Henry, one of the sons, entered the ministry in 1846, and rose to be President of the Conference of 1878. One of the daughters, too, joined the society established at the Cwm in 1824, and in 1830 was married to W. Towler, one of the earliest missionaries in these parts, and who attained to a position of considerable influence in the Connexion. There were other families of good standing in the neighbourhood who identified themselves with the cause, such as Messrs. J. and W. Gilbert. At the adjoining village of Longtown there had been a Methodist cause, but it had become extinct, so that the advent of Primitive Methodism to the neighbourhood was opportune and welcome. In 1825, Thomas Proctor entered upon his all too brief but successful ministry by being appointed to the newly-formed Blaenavon Circuit, and was at once sent to extend that circuit's mission in Herefordshire.

* *Cwm* pronounced *Coom*, is a Welsh word signifying a dingle or small valley in a range of hills. The word occurs frequently in the Saxonised form of *Combe*.

It may be questioned whether in the long roll of the worthies of our Church we have met or shall meet with a name that should more absolutely command our respect and reverence than should the name of Thomas Proctor. He was dominated by one supreme passion—to be entirely consecrated to God in the work of the ministry. As far as we can see that passion was without any taint of fanaticism. We can observe no trace of self-seeking or self-glorification; no eccentricities even in speech or conduct which jar and offend, while we readily excuse. And yet, although there was a “sanity in his faith and a sweetness in his disposition” which told powerfully upon some of the families of the district, like that of the Llanwarnes of The Park, who were brought to God under his ministry, and did much in their turn to support and extend the cause; yet these were exceptions. They were outnumbered by the ignorant, the prejudiced, and the persecuting. Thomas Proctor had often to endure privations—hunger and cold, and the brutal assaults of men who pelted him with rotten eggs and sludge and stones. All this he bore uncomplainingly. “When he could obtain no house for shelter, and no food for money, he frequently retired to the shade of some bush or tree for study and prayer, got what sustenance he could from the hedges, and in the evening went into some neighbouring village to preach in the open-air, often to endure insult and persecution in various forms.” No wonder that Thomas Proctor succeeded; that he laid the foundations of the Cwm Circuit deep and firm, or that success was won at the cost of health and life. For some months in 1826 W. Towler was associated with him in labour, and that year Cwm was made a Circuit. He laboured on until October, 1827, when he went to his home in Yorkshire for a short rest and change; but it was to die. Mr. Petty who laboured in the Cwm Circuit in 1835, and had abundant opportunities to learn the character of his predecessor and the effect of his ministry, has penned a noble tribute to Thomas Proctor, of which we cannot forbear quoting a portion.

“His ministerial course was short, but it was a glorious one. His talents were respectable, his piety profound, his conduct in all things exemplary. For deep humility, quenchless love for the souls of men, and intimate communion with God, he may be fairly classed with Brainerd, Fletcher, and Bramwell. It is affecting to think that a young man of his character, and of his physical strength, should have been brought to the grave in a little more than two years, through the hardships, privations, and excessive toils he endured in Herefordshire. He fell a martyr to his work; but he accomplished a wondrous amount of good in a little time, and left a name fragrant as ointment poured forth. The remembrance of his excellencies will long continue in the families by whom he was entertained, and the report of his exalted piety will descend to their posterity.”

In 1828 a little white chapel was built at the Cwm on a site given by Mrs. Phillips. The modest building might almost be regarded as an annexe of the adjoining farmhouse, where the early preachers found shelter and the comforts of a home.* Chapel

* The farm was also the manse, as the following extract from the MS. journal of Richard Davies shows: “In 1828 I removed to the Cwm Circuit, in which I had no home in one sense, but two good ones in another. I was all welcome to the comforts and care of two families, in particular. The one with Mrs. Phillips of Cwm and her two sons and three daughters, one of the happiest families I ever met with; the other with Mr. Llanwarne of the Park, a very kind and hospitable family. Hence I had much to be thankful for.”

and farm—nothing more, gave the name to, and formed the centre of, one of the most important circuits of Primitive Methodism in the early days. This is the outstanding fact challenging attention in relation to the early history of the Cwm Circuit. In 1835, when John Petty was on the circuit, it had its home-branch, with fifty-four distinct preaching-places; its Bromyard Branch in East Herefordshire, and its Monmouthshire Mission; these together employing eight travelling preachers and having an aggregate membership of 796. Nor does this fully represent the missionary activity of Cwm Circuit at this time; for the Circuit Report of 1836 says: "We have taken up Tewkesbury and its neighbourhood as a mission"; and we learn from Mr. Petty's *Journal* that at the June Quarterly Meeting of 1836, "an order was made out for employing a hired local as an additional missionary on the Monmouthshire mission, and to extend that mission into Brecknockshire, and as far as Brecon, the county town."* Primitive Methodism does not seem, however, to have struck root either in Gloucestershire or Brecknockshire through Cwm's efforts at this time. Bromyard Branch, as we have seen, was afterwards taken charge of by Ludlow; but Cwm's hold on Monmouthshire was more lasting. Joseph Grieves and Thomas Llanwarne carried on a vigorous mission in the hilly and thinly populated district to the east of Abergavenny. When, as the outcome of this mission, the Rose Cottage Branch of Cwm Circuit was formed, we get still another example of a single house becoming the titular head of a station. Rose Cottage is now included in the Abergavenny mission. The Thomas Llanwarne just mentioned was a man remarkably successful as an evangelist. He belonged to a family that has done much for the extension and strengthening of the Cwm Circuit and its offshoot—Kingstone, made a circuit in 1892. Indeed, one cannot but feel that, next to the devoted labours of its pioneer preachers, the healthy development of this rural circuit is largely attributable to the unusual number of families of standing and high character that from the beginning have been identified with its societies. Besides the Gilberts and the Llanwarnes, yet another such family was that of which Mr. John Gwillim was the head. In 1830 he took up his residence at the Wayne, and soon after he and his wife joined the society. Mrs. Gwillim was the daughter of Mr. Rogers, the vicar of Cloddock—a man so liberal and evangelical in sentiment that, when he had concluded the services in the parish-church, he would frequently be found worshipping with the Primitives in their humble sanctuary or in the open-air. John Gwillim, jun., entered our ministry in 1843; in 1856–9 he was superintendent of Cwm Circuit, and he died when stationed at Presteign in 1867. He was, we are told, "noted for hospitality and benevolence." William Gwillim was a well-read, intelligent, public-spirited yeoman. He began to preach in 1832 and to the end of his life, which extended to 1896, he rendered exceptional service to the Primitive Methodism of this part of Herefordshire. Mention should be made, too, of the Hancorns of Ploughfield, and of Mrs. Lea and her daughters of Yew Cottage near Madeley, who joined the Church about 1830. At her own expense Mrs. Lea fitted up the "Cottage Chapel" near her own residence, as also a chapel at Shenmore. Of this lady (who died in 1855) and her family Mr. Petty writes: "This highly respectable and pious family rendered eminent service to the community in various-

* "Life and Labours of Rev. J. Petty," by Rev. James Macpherson, p. 287.

ways, and greatly contributed to the establishment and increase of the societies. They patiently bore the sneers and contempt of many in their own rank, cheerfully encountered persecution in different forms, and zealously endeavoured to spread evangelical truth and Christianity in many of the surrounding villages and hamlets."

PILLAWELL AND ITS OFFSHOOTS.

The Forest of Dean is "an island of the coal measures," lying between the Severn and the Wye. Still mindful of its fellow colliers, Oakengates sent James Roles to this secluded corner of Gloucestershire to seek them out, just as before it had sent him to Blaenavon. We find him at Pillawell in the autumn of 1824, and we may reasonably conjecture that he reached it from Cwm, where he had been doing pioneer work. We are furnished with no particulars of his experiences in opening the mission, but it is evident he met with a fair measure of success before moving off to Pembroke Dock; for in December, 1826, Pillawell was made a circuit. A "circuit" indeed it was, being forty miles in length and extending some miles beyond the city of Hereford, which was visited in August, 1826, if not before.

From the *Journals* of some of the earliest preachers who travelled this circuit some idea may be gained of the moral condition of the people of the Forest at the time, and of the difficulties and privations that attended the work of the missionaries amongst them. For example: Richard Davies, who was here in 1827, tells us that there was then not a single Connexional chapel in the circuit, but that the first was soon afterwards built at Lydbrook. Pillawell got its chapel in 1835, at a cost of £70! He notes the long and toilsome journeys and "the lack of suitable and seasonable refreshments." From what befell Edward Beard of Oakengates, we can see that pioneering under such conditions exacted its penalties. He was one of the first missionaries to this district, and preached at Ross and other places in Herefordshire; but, like Thomas Proctor, he was soon forced to relinquish his work and to return to his native circuit broken in health.

On a certain day in 1829, Joseph Middleton, now the Pillawell preacher, walked fourteen miles with the snow reaching to his knees; and yet, though the weather was so wintry, it was spring by the calendar, being April 3rd. "Plainly a portent!" said "a certain individual near Broad Oak." "God is angry with the Ranters for using His name so frequently in their prayers, and so has sent this unseasonable weather as a punishment!" The diarist's blunt comment is: "What ignorant stuff!" But probably this man, with his warped and ill-furnished mind, thought he was drawing a pious and legitimate inference from the facts of the universe. His sapient conclusion was of a piece with the reasoning of those dwellers under the Black Mountain who counted Thomas Proctor and his followers as the false prophets who were to rise in the latter days, with whom therefore it was a self-denying virtue to have no manner of dealings, not even monetary ones. From boycotting the "false prophets" to stoning them was but a short step.

If this was how the Revival and its agents were conceived of by some in 1829, there were others who, with or without theorising, set their faces against it. It was so at Newnham on Severn—a town which for many years had been as notorious as

Bishops Castle for the bitterness of its opposition to religion as evangelically presented. Nevertheless, Samuel Morgan and Richard Morris, two local preachers, had the temerity to attempt a service in the streets of Newnham on August 2nd, 1829. "They had not unfurled the banner of the Cross more than a quarter of an hour when two constables came up, and without any authority from a magistrate put the hand-cuffs on Mr. Morgan and led him, with Mr. Morris, to the stocks, in which they confined them three hours and a quarter." But though their feet were fast in the stocks, their

tongues were free: "they faithfully warned the people standing round, and like the Apostles they prayed and sang praises unto God."*

On another day, we see William Leaker, the superintendent, spending the whole of the day on his knees in the Forest of Dean, wrestling with God on behalf of the Pillawell society. It was March 21st, 1832, the day appointed by authority as a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer on account of the ravages of the cholera in the land. As Mr. Leaker rose from his knees to go to his evening's appointment he rejoiced in the assurance of victory. The national fast-day was the day-dawn to the Pillawell Circuit which, "from that time, became an important and interesting field for Primitive Methodist enterprise and toil."†



OLD PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL, HEREFORD.

These excerpts from the old *Journals* throw their flash-lights on the early history of what has now come to be the Pillawell, Hereford, Monmouth, Lydbrook, and Lydney Circuits of the South Wales District. Primitive Methodism did not win a place and position in Hereford without a struggle. Indeed, for a number of years, it would be truer to say that it had to fight for its existence, rather than that it flourished. It was eighteen

* Rev. Joseph Middleton's MS. *Journal*.

† "Life and Labours of Rev. Wm. Leaker," p. 33. We have also in this connection quoted from the MS. Autobiographic Memoranda of Rev. R. Davies.

years before Hereford became the head of a circuit. The society, numerically feeble, had to do its best to grow in a niggardly soil and in the cold shade of opposition, such as often rests on Dissent in cathedral cities. During this time there was much adverse sentiment to face, and frequently the roughs took advantage of it to annoy the worshippers at their camp meetings, and even in their own rented room in Union Street. But, at last, persecution was undone by its own act, and better times came. On August 26th, 1833, when Mr. J. Morton, the superintendent, was holding an open-air service at the Friars', in the neighbourhood of Quaker Lane, he was arrested by the direct orders of an irascible magistrate. Mr. E. Pritchard, attorney and Congregationalist, generously undertook to plead Mr. Morgan's cause before the mayor and



PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHURCH, HEREFORD.

magistrates on the following day; while Mr. Morgan, by his firm though respectful attitude made a powerful impression on the crowded court. Messrs. Pritchard and Yapp stood bail, but when the Sessions came no "true bill" was found against the street-preacher; and, after this, street preachings were unmolested, and public sentiment became much more favourable. The Circuit Report of 1836 speaks of the prosperity of Hereford. "The room is now generally crowded; there are now eighty members, whereas in 1829 there had been but twenty-two." Persecution is spoken of in the past tense: "At Hereford our people have been persecuted, and on various occasions life has been in danger. Several attempts have been

made to obtain redress but we could not succeed, because many of the higher powers were utterly opposed to our cause. But now some of the respectable inhabitants are favourable towards us, and use their authority for our benefit, and some of our most violent persecutors are gone the way of all flesh, some are transported, and some converted to God." In June, 1838, a chapel was opened in the city, and in 1840 Hereford became the head of a new circuit with two travelling preachers and 220 members. The present beautiful church in St. Owen's Street was erected in 1880 at a cost of £3561, and yet within twelve months after its opening the building was out of debt. It has seatage for six hundred people, and the schoolroom behind has accommodation for three hundred scholars.

The name of Mr. T. Davies, J.P., will always be associated with the building of St. Owen Street church, as well as with the early struggles of Primitive Methodism to secure a position in the city of Hereford. Converted about 1830 he removed to Hereford, and from that time to his death in 1893 he stood by the cause. In



MR. T. DAVIES, J.P.

his case physical strength was mated with a resolute will. These qualities had their use in the early days of persecution. The sight of his stalwart figure among the little company acted as a wholesome restraint on the roughest of the crowd, some of whom knew the power of his grip. Mr. Davies was a builder, and prospered in business. That, too, was of advantage to the Church. To the building fund of St. Owen's he gave £200 and Mrs. Davies £25. By acting as architect and superintending the erection, and in various other ways, he is said to have saved



MRS. DAVIES.

the trustees quite another £200. The confidence of the Connexion in him was expressed by his being appointed the first Treasurer of the African Missionary Fund. He was a local preacher of considerable ability, and was the first Circuit Steward elected in the Hereford Circuit, and he held that office until his death. He was highly esteemed by his fellow-citizens, and for many years held the position of town councillor and justice of the peace. His good wife was "a help meet for him." Her sympathies were with the poor and suffering. These were her clients, for whose sake she gave gifts and made personal sacrifices.

The present Steward of the Hereford Circuit is Mr. T. A. King, whose career offers another example of the success which so often crowns persistent effort. By success we do not mean that which is measured by mere material wealth: that is common and cheap. By success we mean the fruition—the return into the man's own personality—of his endeavours after self-improvement; the development of special gifts and faculties, or the acquisition of knowledge. In Mr. King's case irrepressible instinct has made



MR. T. A. KING.

him become a craftsman of so superior a kind that his work need not fear comparison with that of the acknowledged artist. This instinct for giving expression to what the eye saw or the mind conceived awoke early, and not amid circumstances that might seem likely to foster it. As a lad of seventeen he worked for some months in the yard of a monumental mason, his employment being to clean and prepare the surface of the gravestones. But he rose step by step. He sought to supply the defects of a somewhat meagre education, and to become more deft of hand in carving, modelling, etc., until he has made for himself a name and a position as a sculptor. Those who have seen the

busts of Revs. C. T. Harris and J. Odell done by his chisel, will hardly have been able to stifle the wish that he may yet live to give us the "counterfeit presentments" in marble of the founders of that Church to which Mr. King by birth and life-long attachment belongs.

Monmouth, another county-town, was missioned in the early part of 1835, under favourable conditions. Mr. Bell, supervisor, who had been a local preacher at Louth, gave a hearty welcome to his co-religionists, and by his zealous labours and liberality greatly assisted in establishing and strengthening the Monmouth society which, by March, 1836, numbered forty members. After the separation of Hereford from Pillawell, Monmouth became the residence of the superintendent. In 1869 we find "Monmouth and Lydbrook Circuit," and in 1891 each of these towns became the head of a station, as in 1880 Lydney already had become.

THE PEMBROKESHIRE MISSION.

Once more, and finally, we follow the stirring James Roles—this time to Pembrokeshire, where he had gone, probably at the beginning of 1825, to establish a mission as the agent of Oakengates Circuit. Becoming somewhat embarrassed, Oakengates offered its mission in the Finisterre of Wales to the General Missionary Committee which had been appointed by the Conference of 1825. The offer was accepted, and in November of the same year, James Roles sent a roseate report of the prospects of the mission to the Committee. Twelve places had been opened, and ten or a dozen other places wished to have preaching established at them, etc. The same sanguine note is clearly perceptible in the Secretary's endorsement of the report: "This letter," writes Hugh Bourne, "contains an account of the first-fruits of the labours of the General Missionary Committee of the Primitive Methodist Connexion. The opening of their missionary labours the Lord has thus crowned with success." At the bottom of the stations of 1826 we still have, "Pembroke Mission: J. Roles"; but, even before the words were printed, the fair prospects had been dashed and the mission become like a wilted flower. It was even in contemplation to withdraw the preachers and relinquish the mission but, ultimately, it was decided to continue one man on the ground and see what could be done. A youth between eighteen and nineteen years of age was selected to go to a station which was "in a manner a complete wreck." When John Petty, for it was he, appeared before the Committee composed of men with whom we are already familiar—Hugh and James Bourne, James and Thomas Steele, James Nixon, John Hancock, C. J. Abraham, John Andrew (sen. and jun.), W. Barker, and Joseph Bourne—his youthful appearance excited grave misgivings. But James Bourne had full confidence in the young man, and he was sent to Haverfordwest, arriving on July 26th, 1826. He found two local preachers, eleven members, and one on trial!

The moving story of John Petty's two years' labours in Pembrokeshire deserves to be placed side by side with that of Thomas Proctor in Herefordshire. He, too, had his full share of long journeys, toils, and privations; and, though he did not suffer so much direct persecution, yet, when we remember his youth and the comparative isolation and loneliness of his lot, from which he would not escape even when the chance was afforded him, we are presented with an example of moral heroism which cannot fail to be inspiring to those, especially, whose situation at all resembles his in that they are striplings called to "endure hardness" that might tax seasoned veterans, and yet who have to endure it alone. It is this aspect of the young missionary's Pembrokeshire labours which is new to us and which we would fasten upon. We have had, and shall have again in plenty, instances of missionaries "roughing it" and, so

to speak, "fighting with beasts at Ephesus"; but the sight of a mere youth in his teens treading his own special winepress alone, and coming out at the end of the ordeal, chastened, strengthened, and victorious, is a picture of our own early times that has its own distinctive quality and value. In Pembrokeshire John Petty had no colleague, few fellow-labourers, and not many congenial friends. The moral ground was sterile, and the progress made for a time almost inappreciably slow; yet, when in January, 1827, the General Missionary Committee declared it had no funds, that the mission must no longer look to it for support, and had better give up its preacher, use the mission's money to pay the rents of the rooms, and hope ere long to be received as a branch by Cwm or Blaenavon Circuit, the youth who was more than three hundred miles from home and friends, instead of welcoming the prospect of gaining a more congenial sphere, pleaded to be allowed to remain on the mission at his own risk until Conference: nay, to be permitted to remain a year beyond that Conference if there were no guarantee that in 1827 a preacher should step into his place. His plea was heard. He was allowed to stay with his own poor people; to sink or swim, as the case might be. And he did stay until 1828, and did not sink, or the mission either. Credit must be given to the impecunious Committee that it let John Petty have his way, and afterwards handsomely acknowledged that "he had fully brought up the work," and "that his being appointed to Haverfordwest had made him expert in the office of superintendent."* The truth is, the time to establish a central or general Missionary Committee had not come, and the attempt made, being premature, was comparatively fruitless. What the "first-fruits" were we have seen; and, though certain circuits might be subsidised, yet the first General Missionary Committee has left no distinctive mark on our history. In 1828 John Petty left for Brinkworth—where we shall soon follow him—and Haverfordwest was declared a circuit.

This narrative will have shown that Haverfordwest (now Pembroke Dock) can claim to be the Connexion's premier mission station. It has passed through many vicissitudes but it is a mission station still. It was a circuit until 1836 when, presumably, it was taken under the wing of Blaenavon or Swansea. Some few years after, it took circuit-rank again, but only to be received in 1851 by the General Missionary Committee. It must be admitted that in the county of Pembroke the Connexion has lost ground; that fewer places are preached at in 1905 than in 1828; that chapels have been lost, and Haverfordwest itself has been abandoned. Our business is to record facts rather than to express opinions; but it does seem that, so far as the Peninsula of Wales is concerned, the Connexion ought either to have attempted less than it has attempted or, what would have been better still, that it should have attempted much more. Either it should have relinquished the Peninsula altogether, or have made a vigorous effort to establish a chain of missions from Swansea to Milford, including Carmarthen, Llanelly, and Tenby.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH WALES DISTRICT.

For some years Blaenavon was the only circuit in the Southern part of the Principality, and it may fairly be regarded as the "procreant cradle" of the South

* The Committee's Letter is given in Vol. i. p. 344.

Wales District. When Cwm was parted with, its work lay chiefly among the hills and valleys of Monmouthshire. With the possible exception of Newport, it had not yet found its way to the sea-coast,—to the growing towns at the mouths of the rivers that were the ports of shipment for the vast mineral wealth of the mountainous hinterland. But in 1834 it turned its attention to Swansea. At the beginning of that year, in response to an application for a missionary, Joseph Hibbs, the superintendent, went down to Swansea to prospect, and found “a great part of the town much neglected for want of open-air preaching and family visiting.” Reporting to his Committee on his return, Henry Higginson was instructed to open a mission at Swansea. He had entered the ministry in 1833, just after having given proof of his fitness for the work by his remarkable labours in Darlaston Circuit during the visitation of cholera, so that Blaenavon was his first station. He walked all the way to Swansea, arriving there on the third day, and was kindly received by Captain Alder, whose wife had been a member of the South Shields society. He began his labours on March 16th, 1834, by preaching on the Pier Head where, as he reports, “the nobility and gentry are often seen promenading.” Some had told him “they thought the back streets would be best. I said, I had been *there* long enough. I would try what the *front* would do.” Henry Higginson was not the man to take a back street or seat if a front one was accessible. He was but two months in Swansea and its neighbourhood, but in that time he seems to have made a considerable impression by dint of hard work and a striking personality. He was tall; of commanding appearance; with a good address. He had received an education above the average, and yet that educational superiority formed no barrier to his mingling freely and unaffectedly with the people. Moreover, there was a dash of originality and even eccentricity about him which in itself was taking; and as this became even more strongly marked as he grew older, it is no wonder that tradition—to which a striking personality dashed with eccentricity always



REV. JOSEPH HIBBS.

appeals—still loves to talk of his doings and sayings. The young missionary seems to have been treated with respect and kindness by all and sundry. He had sometimes a thousand people at his services on the Pier. “All denominations flocked to hear him.” During his two months’ mission he visited the Mumbles, Merton, Llanmaddock, and other places, and left 44 members, thirty of them being at Swansea and ten at the Mumbles. The superintendent, Joseph Hibbs, now took his colleague’s place and carried on the work, spending much labour upon family visitation, which, he observes, was something new in Swansea. He, too, was generally cordially received, though he met with a cold reception at Neath and found it “a hard place.” On July 6th, a room, capable of seating 300 people, was opened by E. Foizey of Bath, and J. Prosser of Presteign. Swansea

soon became a Circuit (1835), and Joseph Hibbs was its first superintendent. In 1836 chapels were erected at Swansea and Llanmaddock, the one at Swansea serving

until 1860, by which time it had evidently come to be considered as behind the times; for in the *Magazine* report of the chapel opening, George Dobson quaintly remarks of the old chapel: "The up-tendencies of the times and the lowering sanitary changes occurring in and around its immediate locality, will not admit the application of the Scripture precedent and commendation—'Beautiful for situation,' etc."



ALD. J. RAMSDALE, J.P.

Progress in this rapidly developing district was marked by the formation in 1841 of the Tredegar Circuit from Blaenavon— or rather from Pontypool Circuit, as it now came to be called. This arrangement was tantamount to a partition of the hilly hinterland already referred to. In 1851 we find Tredegar Circuit still including, amongst other places, Merthyr and Dowlais in Glamorgan, Brynmawr on the borders of Breckon, as well as Rhydney, Ebbw Vale and Blackwood in Monmouth. Some of these places are now themselves the heads of circuits.

It seems singular that Cardiff—whose progress in recent years is said to have been the most remarkable of any town in the kingdom—was not seriously attempted by the Connexion until 1857, when it was missioned by Pontypool Circuit again under the superintendency of Joseph Hibbs. Afterwards Cardiff came under the care of the General Missionary Committee and, in 1879, it was made a circuit. Newport with Caerleon and Risca had already, in 1872, been detached from Pontypool to form a new circuit. During the superintendency of P. Maddocks, Canton and Mount Tabor chapels were erected, now the heads, respectively, of Cardiff First and Second. Alderman Joseph Ramsdale, J.P., the Steward of Cardiff Second has, ever since he came to the town in 1870, rendered eminent service to Primitive Methodism in the town and district. Here also resides Rev. J. P. Bellingham, who entered the ministry in 1852 and retired in 1904. Mr. Bellingham merits record here, not merely because of his long and fruitful ministry, but also because of the interest he has taken in scientific questions in their bearing on Christianity, and because his pen has been freely used in the service of our Connexional literature. In 1904 Mr. Bellingham was appointed a permanent member of Conference.

In 1885 Aberavon and Briton Ferry were taken from Swansea and formed into a mission-station. Abergavenny, too, formerly a branch of Pontypool, has also become a mission station. But there has been loss as well as gain in South Wales. Carmarthen was made a circuit, with Joseph Hibbs as its superintendent, in 1839, and in 1842 we had a chapel there and 143 members. In 1851 we had connexionally ceased to be, and now we have no foothold whatever in the county of Carmarthen, and Pembroke Dock Mission is our solitary outpost in the peninsula of West Wales.

It will have been noticed how frequently the name of Joseph Hibbs has occurred in writing of South Wales. His ministry was largely bound up with South Wales, and the course of that ministry singularly followed the lines of its connexional development. Appropriately enough,



REV. J. P. BELLINGHAM, F.A.M.

he began his labours in Oakengates (Wrockwardine Wood) Circuit. The next four years he spent in Blaenavon; the following four in Swansea; and then three more were spent in Carmarthen. After this he had two other terms of service in Pontypool and one in Tredegar. As we have seen, he had much to do with the missioning of Swansea, of Carmarthen, and Cardiff. With the exception of a term in Truro and another in Bristol, the whole of his forty years' ministry was spent in Blaenavon, or in circuits that grew out of it, largely under his direction. No wonder that Joseph Hibbs was spoken of as "The Bishop of South Wales."



ISAAC PROSSER.

In turning from Blaenavon or Pontypool we give portraits of Isaac Prosser and Alderman Henry Parfitt, J.P. The former joined the society at Blaenavon about 1857, and as Class-leader, Circuit Steward, Trust Treasurer, etc., rendered inestimable service to the society especially in its time of trial and adversity. He was an overman in the mine, and met his death by the fall of a mass of rock, September 27th, 1898. Alderman Henry Parfitt, J.P., was a good friend and adherent of our Church in Pontypool—a staunch Nonconformist, a keen politician, and a devoted worker for the public good. He also died in 1898.

III.—SHREWSBURY'S WILTSHIRE MISSION. BRINKWORTH.

In the autumn of 1824 Samuel Heath, one of the five preachers stationed to Shrewsbury by the preceding Conference, took his way South in order to open a new mission. He had volunteered for this work because the circuit, having relinquished a mission in Wales, had now a preacher to spare. At Cirencester he was stoned and otherwise ill-treated, although several persons are said to have received good under his preaching who afterwards joined other Churches. Some years had to elapse before the Connexion got a permanent footing in Cirencester, and when at last this was done, it was through the agency of the very circuit whose founder was Samuel Heath, the rejected of Cirencester. So the missionary passed over from Gloucestershire into the adjoining county of Wilts. Now, whether S. Heath had received general instructions to seek to establish a mission that would be in alignment with the one already recently established, we cannot be sure; but this, as things turned out, was what really took place, so that Shrewsbury's Mission is quite properly spoken of in the *Magazine* as having been "into the parts bordering on the Tunstall Circuit's Western Mission." Instructions or no instructions, Samuel Heath felt it was plainly the will of heaven he should open his commission here. It did not take long to convince him that he might travel far before he found any piece of English soil that stood more urgently in need of the preaching of the Gospel in all plainness and directness than did the northern part of Wilts in which he now found himself. And yet we are told that,



ALD. H. PARFITT, J.P.

some seventy-five years before, John Cennick, the hymn-writer and former friend of Charles Wesley and Whitefield, had not only preached in a chapel in the parish of Brinkworth, but had extensively evangelised the surrounding district, so as even to acquire the name of the "Apostle of North Wilts." But three quarters of a century afterwards there was very little to show for all this evangelistic effort. "The spiritual results of Cennick's teaching had, to human observation, almost wholly disappeared. No doubt the moral atmosphere retained some of the evangelical sentiment with which it was once so strongly charged, but the power and spirit and activities of his propaganda had passed away." His hold upon Brinkworth may at one time have been influential, but "the nature of his church organisation failed to invest it with permanence."*



OLD PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL AND MINISTER'S HOUSE, SHEFFORD, BERKS.

A little later on we shall have to consider more fully the social and moral condition of the people of the Southern counties, especially in its bearing on the severe and widespread persecution to which the pioneers and makers of the Brinkworth District were exposed. But there is one incident in which Samuel Heath figures we will refer to, because it took place at Wootton Bassett (now in the Brinkworth Circuit) and brings before us the contest called back-swording—once a favourite diversion at the revels held on feast and fair-days in Wilts and Berks. Thomas Hughes shall tell us how the "noble old game of back-swording," as he calls it, is played. Despite the name, no sword is used by the contestants: "The weapon is a good stout ash-stick with a large basket handle, heavier and somewhat shorter than a common single-stick. The players are called 'old gamesters,'—why, I cannot tell you,—and their object is simply

to break one another's heads: for the moment that blood runs an inch anywhere above the eyebrow, the old gamester to whom it belongs is beaten, and has to

* The quotations are from "Pioneer Work in the Old Brinkworth District, being Memorials of Samuel and Ann Turner," a series of valuable articles which ran through the *Aldersgate Magazine* for 1900, from the pen of Mr. Turner of Newbury.

stop.* Though the genial author of "Tom Brown's School Days" laments that "the noble old game is sadly gone out of late," and has done his best to glorify and rehabilitate it—for all that, the sport was quite as brutal in its way as the football match played at Preston on Maudlin Sunday, and quite as significant of the rough manners of the people. S. Heath chose to take his stand and preach in the main street of Wootton Bassett just at the time when the crowd were gathered to witness a back-swording contest. He went up and down the country preaching from one favourite text which spoke of judgment to come; nor did he think it needful, for prudential reasons, to change this text for a more conciliatory one, now that he was going into the midst of Vanity Fair at an hour when the people were excited by witnessing a gladiatorial combat on a small scale. The missionary began his service, but before long he was haled before the local authority (Mr. Petty says it was the mayor) for unwarrantably interfering with the due order and observances of the Fair. After some altercation he was let go, and promptly returned to the same place to finish his sermon. Nor did he preach in vain. Many returned to their homes in the surrounding villages under conviction of sin, and some of the inhabitants of Wootton Bassett never forgot that day's service. Soon afterwards a long room, which had been used as a ball-room in connection with a public-house, was taken on rent, and for some time used as a place of worship. Of course the worshippers for a time suffered from the usual annoyances; but the society continued to prosper, and it is recorded that "the cruel and barbarous practice of back-swording was entirely abolished in the town." At Brinkworth, a village midway between Wootton Bassett and Malmesbury, a strong society was established, and a great moral change wrought in the face of considerable persecution, which the clergyman-magistrate was averse from punishing as it deserved. Malmesbury, however, was easily first in the bitterness, and we might add—the nastiness of its opposition to the new movement. Not only were the windows of the preaching-room continually being broken, but "intestines of beasts and all manner of filth were thrown in upon the people. On one occasion during service, an impious man got the Bible out of the preacher's hand and put it into a pot then boiling on the fire! He was brought up before the civil authorities, and fined *one shilling and fourpence* for his impious deed!" These facts were told Mr. Petty in the neighbourhood not long after they occurred.

Samuel Heath had found a fine field of usefulness, such as the prophet found in the Valley of Vision. He asked for additional labourers, and two Shropshire preachers were sent him in succession, each of whom began his ministry on the Wiltshire Mission. The first to come was Edward Vaughan, a man of whom the Connexion knows but little, since he died as early as 1828. But, in his brief ministry he did good service, not only in Wiltshire but in Blaenavon, the Isle of Man, Tunstall and Boston, in whose churchyard his remains are buried. In his own quaint way Hugh Bourne

* The following is taken from the *Reading Mercury* of May 24th, 1819:—"Peffard Revel will be held on Whit-Monday, May 31, and for the encouragement of young and old gamesters, there will be a good hat to be played for at cudgels; for the first seven couples that play, the man that breaks most heads to win the prize; and one shilling and sixpence will be given to each man that breaks a head, and one shilling to the man that has his head broke."

has summed him up in the words, "Edward Vaughan was of slender abilities in regard to management; but in the converting line the Lord put great honour upon him. His faith in the Lord was great, an extraordinary power attended his word, and many souls were converted to God through his ministry."—(*Magazine*, 1836, p. 437.) Vaughan was followed in March, 1825, by Richard Davies, from whose MS. Autobiographic Memoranda we can gain an authentic and helpful glimpse of Brinkworth Circuit in the making.

"In due course I reached Seagry, then the centre or head-place in the Mission and was kindly received by my senior brethren in the work and others. We all went to work in good earnest and many and striking conversions occurred at many places. Several powerful societies were formed. We were bitterly opposed in our work by parsons, magistrates, and roughs, as vile as the beasts at Ephesus, but we, trusting in God, defied them all, rejoicing in these tribulations. For a long time we preached twice a day on week-days, at noon in towns, and in villages in the evening, walking many miles daily. Our greatest want was suitable places to worship in, and we were often led to be thankful for cart-sheds, barns, workshops, cottages, and good village-greens as our sanctuaries. The first chapel built was at Seagry, and others followed in due time, which led the people to believe that the Primitive Methodists meant to remain and labour amongst them, although some ill-disposed persons had said they would not do so. Amid our heavy persecutions and trials we were blessed with many friends who liberally supported the cause of God according to their ability. There were now five missionaries on the Mission, which extended over many miles of country, and such was the liberality of the societies and congregations, and the profits arising from the amazing sale of Hymn-books, Magazines, Nelson's "Journal," etc., that no demand was made on the funds of the Shrewsbury Circuit. On the contrary, that circuit received considerable pecuniary aid from the Mission."

Brinkworth became a circuit between the Conferences of 1826-7, and at the same time it took over the Stroud Branch of the Western Mission. Mr. R. Davies intimates that his own unexpected recall to the home-branch in May, 1826, was the circumstance that incidentally brought about the severance of the connection between Shrewsbury and its powerful Mission. It was felt that his removal was likely to be detrimental to the interests of the Mission, and that it was time to protect itself against the risks of similar "untimely and uncalled for removals of preachers" in the future by applying to be made into an independent station. The General Committee of the time gave its sanction, and the Shrewsbury Circuit acquiesced, as the following laconic minute in the Circuit books shows:—"That the Wiltshire Mission become from this day a circuit by itself."

Brinkworth began its career as a circuit, having five preachers appointed to it by the Conference of 1827, of whom S. Heath was still the superintendent. Unfortunately, his name must be added to the list of pioneers, who, like J. Benton, J. Nelson, W. Doughty, J. Bonsor and J. Roles, soon dropped out of the ranks. Ideally one could wish it had been otherwise, but historical fidelity demands that the fact be duly noted. After what has been written of Hutton Rudby, Scotter, Ramsor, Prees, and especially of Cwm, the reader will feel little surprise that a village of scarcely more than

a thousand inhabitants should have become not only the head of a powerful and aggressive circuit, but also the head of a District which at one time extended into some ten counties. What *may* awaken surprise is the fact that this village of the Wiltshire Uplands should through all the changing years have maintained its District primacy, and has not yet lost it, though Swindon has been admitted to be its consort, so that the style now runs, "Brinkworth and Swindon District." Our surprise will diminish in proportion as we come to know the history of Brinkworth, especially the history of its achievements as a missionary circuit, and it is these achievements we have now to chronicle. Nowhere is our Connexional history more complex and difficult to follow than in this section. The figures called up before us are so many and always in motion; names of towns and villages occur with bewildering frequency; persecution seems everywhere, so as almost to defy record. For result we feel like an uninstructed civilian who is watching from a church tower the progress of a big battle to which he has not the key. Can this complexity be simplified? Having regard to where the events happened, as well as to the events themselves and the order of their happening, can any guiding lines be traced which will save us from losing the sense of direction and progress in the midst of this mass of detail? We think so—that the task of simplification is not so hopeless as at first sight it looks to be. For example, if we keep an eye on the whereabouts and the movements of John Ride from 1828, when he was appointed to Brinkworth, to 1844, when he went to Cooper's Gardens, we shall see how the battle is going, or, to speak without figure, we shall be able to follow the main lines of advance which first took their direction from Brinkworth.

Brinkworth (1828-31), Shefford (1832-6), Reading (1837-43), London (1844-7)—these were the successive stations of John Ride for a period of nineteen years. As the superintendent of Brinkworth he directed the missionary efforts of that circuit chiefly in Berks, and Shefford Circuit was formed in 1832, of which he became superintendent. Agents were multiplied, and a vigorous evangelisation was carried on in Hants of which Mitcheldever (1835) and Andover (1837) Circuits were the outcome, as also in Berks represented by Faringdon (1837) and Wallingford (1837) Circuits. The magnitude of Shefford Circuit's operations may be judged from the fact, that in 1835 it had no fewer than eighteen preachers labouring under the direction of its Quarterly Meeting. But John Ride kept to Shefford's *main line* of advance which was to Reading (1837). Thence, still under his direction the work branched out in various directions. Aylesbury in Bucks was reached and became a Circuit in 1840, and from Aylesbury, Luton in Bedfordshire was made a Circuit in 1843. In this same year—1843—Wallingford had its two branches of Oxford and Witney, and its two missions—Thame and Camden. Andover had its Romsey Branch and Lymington Mission in the New Forest. Reading had High Wycombe and Windsor Branches, both of which were made Circuits in 1848, the latter taking the name of Maidenhead Circuit. Besides these it had no less than five missions, viz.: St. Albans, Hertford, Henley, Brentford, and Essex. These were during the year transferred to the care of the G.M. Committee. In the meantime, the prolific mother-circuits of Brinkworth and Shefford had not been inactive. After parting with Shefford, Brinkworth successfully missioned both Chippenham and Bristol (made circuits in 1835 and 1837 respectively), and in 1843 it

had its Cirencester, Cheltenham, and Worcester Branches, and its Filkins and Tormorton Missions, and as late as 1854, Malmesbury at last yielded to the vigorous assaults of George Warner, and in 1858 was made a circuit. Finally, Shefford in 1843 had its Marlborough Branch and its Petersfield and Aldermiston Missions. It is



REV. GEO. WARNER.

better to give these dry but necessary details once for all. But to revert to our clue, which is as we have seen, the movements of John Ride; Brinkworth, Shefford, Reading, mark the main lines of Connexional advance on this side, though what we may call the branch extensions are scarcely of less importance. For fifteen years John Ride is the superintendent of these three historic Circuits, which were the successive centres of that semi-circular sweeping movement by which our Church reached the home-counties. After his three years term at Cooper's Gardens, John Ride was in 1848 put down for Hammersmith with the words:— "To evangelise or open a fresh mission." As though his work

in England was finished and he desired more worlds to conquer, he in 1849 went as a missionary to Australia: but excessive labour had debilitated his frame, and he was compelled to superannuate in 1853 and died 15th January, 1862.

Some elementary knowledge of the physical geography of the counties of Wilts, Berks, and Hants makes the outline facts just given still more significant. Some one has called Wiltshire "a mere watershed—a central boss of chalk, forming the great upland mass of Salisbury Plain and dipping down on every side into the richer basins



NEWBURY: THE TOWN BRIDGE OVER THE KENNET.

of the two Avons on the West and South, the Kennet on the East, and the Thames on the North." The elevated table-land of Salisbury Plain which is a continuation of the Hampshire Downs divides Wilts into two parts. It fell to Motcombe and Salisbury as representing the Western Mission to evangelise the Southern part of

Wilts and a large tract of Dorset. To Brinkworth fell the northern division of the county. Here the escarpment of the table-land overlooks to the North the Vale of Pewsey, a tract of country which runs across the county from West to East in which is situated Devizes. The northern side of the Vale of Pewsey is bounded by the upland plain of the Marlborough Downs with their continuations in Berks—White Horse Hill and Ilsley Downs overlooking to the North the Upper Valley of the Thames, called the Vale of the White Horse and the Valley of the Ock in which are Wantage, Alfred's birthplace, and Faringdon. Southward, the hills fall in gentle slopes to the Valley of the Kennet in which are Hungerford, Newbury and, at its junction with the Thames, Reading. Then come the Hampshire Downs, and at their foot the river-valleys of the Test and Itchen wherein lie Winchester and Southampton. Evangelisation went on in the country now under consideration conformably with that country's physical features. First of all, as Nature had divided Wiltshire into two parts, the Western Mission had to do with the one, and the Wiltshire Mission with the other—the northern part of the county. Starting from Brinkworth as a centre, it soon reached Shefford and the Valley of the Kennet, where are the towns of Hungerford and Newbury, now the heirs and representatives of the old Shefford Circuit. It descended into the Vale of the White Horse in the Upper Thames Valley, and thence crossed over into Oxfordshire and the Vale of the Thame. From the Valley of the Kennet it ascended the northern slopes of the Hampshire Downs, and then following the downward course of the rivers reached Winchester, and finally the New Forest and the low-lying country by Southampton Water. Soon also it reached Reading and the Lower Thames Valley, and thence spread out into Buckinghamshire—the Vale of Aylesbury—on the one hand, and into Surrey on the other. Then, while the country watered by the Southern Avon was left to Motcombe and Salisbury, Brinkworth turned its attention to the Vale of Pewsey, and followed the course of the Bristol Avon by Calne and Chippenham and on to Bristol itself; it even extended into Gloucestershire to the North. Chronology and geography are the two eyes with which even the humble history of the making of the Brinkworth District can easily be followed.

But what was the social and moral condition of this particular District in 1830, when Brinkworth Circuit was about to enter upon its missionary labours? This was just what John Ride and the Brinkworth Circuit authorities wanted to know, and so, in their own primitive fashion, they sent a walking commission of inquiry into the north-eastern corner of Wilts, and into the Vale of the White Horse—so dear to Thomas Hughes, in order that they might see and learn for themselves the real state of things, and ascertain whether these villages did or did not need the simple gospel carrying to them. As the Israelites sent forth spies into Canaan before attempting to take possession of the land, so in a sense did Brinkworth Circuit send forth *its* spies, who indeed saw the “nakedness of the land.” The Berkshire Mission was inaugurated at a famous Missionary Meeting held after the Quarterly Meeting on Good Friday, 1829. At this meeting there was much earnest prayer on behalf of the proposed mission, and faith rose so high that many gained the assurance that, for every penny given that day, a soul would be won. John Ride and John Petty (who, in 1828, had come from Pembroke Dock to Brinkworth Circuit) were deputed to go into the parts already mentioned and

survey the land. It was on April 27th, 1829 they set out on their mission, which it would be incorrect to regard as merely a reconnaissance, inasmuch as they preached at cross or on village-green wherever opportunity offered. These two Johns—Ride and the still youthful Petty—he was only twenty—were in order of time the foremost pioneers of the Berkshire Mission. The first Primitive Methodist sermon in Berkshire was preached at Bourton. They found this fair and goodly land, so rich in historic memories going back to the days of good King Alfred, a moral wilderness indeed. Dissent was practically unknown, and there was throughout a sad dearth of evangelical preaching. At Ashbury a sermon had not been preached by a Dissenter for forty years, although here, mercifully, there was a good evangelical clergyman, the same who afterwards hailed the advent of the Primitives' missionary, by exclaiming, "Now my curate has come!" They preached at Ramsbury, where years before Dr. Coke had attempted to preach, but "was attacked by a turbulent mob headed by the vicar of the parish." Stones and sticks were plentifully used. Dr. Coke was violently pushed from his stand, and his gown torn into shreds. Nothing daunted, he continued the service. The vicar then thought of another expedient, and gave the order, "Bring out the fire-engine." The mandate was obeyed, and both preacher and congregation were compelled to retire before the well-directed volleys of this liquid artillery.* Here, strange to say, their service was unmolested, but that cannot be said of the one held on May-day at Aldbourne. Never, surely, was a religious service "begun, continued and ended" under conditions more extraordinary and embarrassing. A troupe of merry-andrews were on the ground in front of the cross, with the double purpose in view of interrupting the preacher and of competing with him for the attention of the vast audience. There was hand-bell ringing, and the concerted shouting of children, to say nothing of a prancing steed bestridden by a man bent on mischief. Yet John Petty—saint and scholar to be—went on steadily and solemnly with his discourse on the Second Coming of Christ, not even turning his head to see what was the danger threatening from behind, although that there *was* danger he could see from the tell-tale faces of those in front. At the very hour this strange May-day service was being held, the friends near Wootton Bassett were praying hard and long for the missionaries.

But lest it should be thought that our picture of the bygone Wiltshire and Berkshire wilderness is overdone, we would like, as we have done in the case of other districts of England, to adduce corroborative evidence drawn from an unbiassed and unimpeachable source. For our present purpose, therefore, we will call as witness Mr. Richard Heath, author of "The English Peasant," admittedly an authority, and who himself states that "so far as he has personal tastes and sympathies they are with the liturgy of the Church of England." In the book just named he refers to the agrarian disturbances which, as we have seen, were rife in various parts of England in 1830-3—in the Southern counties amongst the rest. In December, 1830, three hundred persons were tried at the special assize at Winchester. The Duke of Wellington was sent down to support the judges. "They were brought up in batches of twenty

*"Life of the Rev. Thos. Coke, D.C.L.," p. 62.

at a time, and all had sentence of death recorded against them, Six were actually sentenced to suffer on the gallows; twenty were transported for life, the remainder for periods varying according to judicial discretion. The *Times* newspaper for December 27th, 1830, commenting upon the Winchester trials, did not mince matters.

“We do affirm that the actions of this pitiable class of men [the labourers], as a commentary on the treatment experienced by them at the hands of the upper and middling classes; the gentlemen, clergy (who ought to teach and instruct them), and the farmers who ought to pay and feed them, are disgraceful to the British name. The present population *must* be provided for in body and spirit on more liberal and Christian principles, or the whole mass of labourers will start into legions of a banditti—banditti less criminal than those who have made them so—than those who by a just but fearful retribution will soon become their victims.”

But what has all this to do with Brinkworth's Berkshire Mission? Much every way. It shows that that mission was begun and carried on at an unprecedentedly critical time in the national life. It may also go some little way to explain why the “peasant preachers” of our Church had not only to suffer from mobs—ignorant, brutalised by neglect, and driven by poverty almost to desperation; but also why their betters, including the large farmers, the clergy, and even the magistrates, were too often not merely suspicious but bitterly hostile. We were between two fires. The labourers—poor souls—did not know their true friends; and those of a higher social grade so far misconceived our character and aims as to suspect us of designs intended to be subversive of the existing order.

Referring to the formation of the Labourers' Union in 1872, through the instrumentality of Joseph Arch, Mr. Heath asks: “What had given the labourer courage to claim his rights? I will answer that question by giving the following narrative.” The story of “Old Ben Roper,” the Primitive Methodist local preacher—which we found in the *Magazine* for 1858, is the narrative he proceeds to give in full. This story, touching as it is and well worth reprinting, we omit. What follows this narrative, however, we venture to quote, as it is germane to the matter in hand.

“Many respectable people would have called old Ben a ‘Ranter.’ I should call him a primitive Christian, for though I do not believe the poor in Judæa had fallen so low as the English poor have done, some of the apostles were not in a much more exalted station than old Ben. Poor and ignorant as he was, it was men like him who woke in the dull, sad minds of his fellow-sufferers a new hope, a belief that there was indeed a Kingdom of Heaven worth struggling to obtain. The very ignorance and poverty of the labourers cut them off from knowing anything of the Gospel, even in its narrow English form. They were too ignorant to understand any one who did not speak their language and think their thoughts, too poor to support any kind of ministry.

“In the source from whence the foregoing narrative has been taken [*The P. M. Magazines*] will be found, through a long course of years, the obituaries of Christian apostles, some of whom laboured all the week for a wage of a few shillings, and then on Sunday walked twenty or thirty miles to preach the Gospel. One such, having six children, for weeks ate nothing but bread, although he had five miles to walk daily to

a barn where he was employed as a thresher. 'Yet,' we are told, 'he sometimes so felt the presence of God that he seemed to have strength enough to cut the straw through with his flail.' Believing literally in our Lord's promises, he realised their fulfilment, and in moments of dire necessity received help apparently as miraculous as that given to Elijah. Nobody, of course, will believe this who supposes that there is no other kingdom but that of Nature. However, these things are realised by the poor who have the least faith, 'for *theirs* is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

"These were the kind of men who prophesied in 'the valley of the dry bones'; but, of course, Resurrection is no agreeable task to unhealthy souls. Like the sickly sleeper, who has passed a night full of horrible dreams, and has just fallen into a heavy slumber before dawn, the benighted villagers cursed the heralds of the coming day, and bid them begone. They pelted them with mud, stones, and rotten eggs; sometimes threw ropes over them to drag them to the river; often sought to drown their praying and preaching with fire-shovels and tin-kettles. In these persecutions they were sometimes led on by the authorities; and constables wishing to ingratiate themselves with the upper classes laid information against these poor preachers as disturbers of the peace."*

We do not follow Mr. Heath in his further reference to the gross malversation of justice by which John Ride and Edward Bishop were imprisoned at Winchester in 1834, as that will shortly come before us. The long citation from Mr. Heath's book we have given—creditable alike to his discernment and his heart—amply sustains our contention that, in the early 'thirties our land, and not least in its southern counties, was indeed in a parlous state, and that, under God, its rescue from that state was largely due to the earnest and often ill-requested efforts of Primitive Methodist missionaries. And yet, there are journalists and publicists amongst us who, posing as experts, and professing to give a list of the great historic revivals which have swept healingly over our land, will leap at once from John Wesley and Whitefield to General Booth, as though there had been nothing but stagnancy lying between! So little do they know of the history of their own land, or so much have they forgotten.

The dark shadow which rested on our land in 1830 cast its gloom over the Marlborough Downs, and was felt by Brinkworth's missionaries. They had enough to do to keep it from getting into their souls and, as with mephitic vapour, stifling their faith and paralysing their efforts. John Petty had been replaced on the Berkshire Mission by Richard Jukes, to whom was soon added John Moore. In September, 1829, Thomas Russell took the place of the latter. The work was toilsome and the prospect gloomy. The nights were getting cold, making open-air services a risk to health. At Church Lambourne, over-exertion in order to make himself heard above the din, caused him to rupture one of the smaller blood-vessels. Houses in which to



REV. THOMAS RUSSELL.

hold services were difficult to get; for even though the "common-people" might be favourably disposed, they went in fear of their masters or landlords who threatened

* "The English Peasant. Studies: Historical, Local and Biographic. By R. Heath," 1893, pp. 54-5.

them with loss of work or roof-tree if they harboured the missionaries, or in any way encouraged them. When in pity a house at Lambourne was offered Mr. Russell, he was obliged to walk at once to Salisbury in order to procure a licence. It was a dreary journey of thirty miles, a large portion of which was over Salisbury Plain, which he travelled on foot, with snow on the ground. Still a beginning was made.

The first society on the Mission was formed at Upper Lambourne, and in December, 1829, there were forty-eight members on the Mission. John Ride himself became Mr. Russell's colleague in labour. And now we come to an incident, which, though it may be deemed small in the eyes of the world was yet fruitful of results and has withal a grandeur and pathos all its own. The scene of the incident is Ashdown on the Berkshire Downs, where nearly a thousand years before, King Alfred and his brother gained a victory over the Danes. As for the time it is a dull, cheerless day in the month of February, 1830. We give the incident, we cannot do better, in the words of a writer in the large *Magazine* for November, 1886, who has drawn out the significance of the event under the strikingly appropriate title of "A Parallel and a Contrast"*: "Two men of solemn mien, and dressed in the garb of peasant preachers, are to be seen approaching Ashdown Park Corner, where the treeless, rolling downs are varied by a coppice or small wood. The younger man had already that morning walked ten miles across the downs to meet his companion for prayer and counsel, and they were now returning together. Reaching the wood they had to part, as their destinations lay in different directions. They had already shaken hands. But no; they must not, should not part until it had been fought out on their knees whether their mission was to prosper. 'Let us turn in here and have another round of prayer before we part,' was the remark of one of them, and turning aside into the coppice and screened by the underwood, and being far away from any habitation, no more secluded spot for communion with God could be found. Oblivious of the snow, and of personal considerations, they throw themselves upon their knees, and in an agony they pour out their souls to God. The success of their mission, which is for God's honour, and the salvation of souls, is summed up in the burden of their prayer, 'Lord, give us Berkshire! Lord, give us Berkshire!' The pleading continued for hours. At last the younger one receives the assurance, and rising to his feet, exclaims with an outburst that betokens a new-found possession, 'Yonder country's ours, yonder country's ours! And we will have it,' as he points across the country, the prospect of which is bounded by the Hampshire Hills some thirty miles distant. 'Hold fast! I like thy confidence of faith!' is the reply of the more sober pleader. They now part with the assurance that 'yonder country is ours.'"

Such was the conflict in which were arrayed on one side, the powers of darkness, and on the other the two men sent forth to establish the Primitive Methodist Mission in Berkshire. Up to this point the opposition had been so violent as sorely to try the faith of the missionaries. On leaving the wood, John Ride and Thomas Russell, for these were the men whose names will be imperishable as the pioneers of Primitive Methodism in Berkshire, went to their respective appointments. On the following night Thomas Russell was at Shefford; the word touched the hearts of Mr. and

* The writer is Mr. Turner of Newbury.

Mrs. Wells, who built a house which served as the missionaries' home and the place for worship. This, indeed, has been the roof-tree of Berkshire Primitive Methodism, the original home of its early preachers, as well as its first meeting-house. Few incidents in the religious history of the county are of greater significance than this afternoon prayer in the wood at Ashdown. Had the pleaders lost faith in their cause the religious aspect of the county would have been different. Remarkable revivals of religion followed this time of wrestling prayer, the habits and practices of the people became changed, scores of sanctuaries were erected, until now there are more Primitive Methodist congregations in Berkshire than of any other Nonconformist body, and probably more Primitive Methodist Chapels. It is surely a noteworthy coincidence that almost on the spot where the struggle for Saxon and Christian supremacy in England was decided, there also took place a struggle which decided whether Primitive Methodism was to be a power in the county. It is also illustrative of the way in which God honours prayer, for while Messrs. Ride and Russell pleaded for Berkshire, He gave also territory beyond.*

IV.—HULL'S MISSION IN CORNWALL.

As the present chapter is already sufficiently long, we will glance at the "origins" of the three Cornish Circuits that were included in the newly-formed Brinkworth District of 1833, reserving for a final chapter a glance at some of the lights and shadows of Brinkworth District when it was in the making. We got to Cornwall just as we got to Hull and Leeds—by invitation. The invitation was addressed to William Clowes while labouring on the London Mission, and it came from Mr. W. Turner, of Redruth. He had formerly been for a few months a preacher among the Bible Christians, but had withdrawn, and for two years he and his wife had been working as unattached evangelists in and around Redruth. They had succeeded in gathering some one hundred persons into their societies. These societies Mr. Turner was now anxious to hand over to the Primitive Methodist Connexion in the hope that the flock hitherto his care would be duly shepherded, and the work of evangelisation be vigorously pushed forward. Hull Circuit's Quarterly Meeting acceded to the request, having first received the required assurance that Mr. Turner and his followers would in all things submit to the discipline of the Primitive Methodist Connexion.

Mr. Clowes arrived at Redruth on October 5th, 1825, on what proved to be his last general mission. Though exhausted with his all-night coach journey from Exeter, he yielded to the importunity of the friends to preach to them the same night. "While waiting on the Lord in the meeting I felt," he writes, "a girding on of the Divine power; the *mission baptism* began to flow upon me"—which surely was of good omen for the success of the mission. As the people retired from the service they were overheard saying—"He'll do; he'll do." His next duty was to hear Mr. Turner preach his trial sermon as a candidate for the "full plan." The sermon was indifferently good, but at one point in his discourse the preacher went off into a fit of holy laughter, which many in the congregation seemed to find infectious. Clowes met with this

* It may be as well to state that the account of this incident is taken from the writer's smaller History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion.

laughing, dancing and shouting several times during his Cornish mission, and he did not approve of it, but expostulated with those who indulged in these histrionic manifestations. If they felt happy, let them bless the Lord as the Psalmist did, when he called upon his "soul and all that was within him to bless and praise His holy name." As to Mr. Turner, it may be said parenthetically, he seems to have honoured the terms of his agreement. He remained loyal to the Connexion to the end of his long life. For ten years he was a travelling preacher in the Connexion, and then located at Frome, where he had previously travelled. As a local preacher, class leader, and diligent family visitor he made himself useful and respected. He passed away as recently as 1880.*

Our interest in all that relates to William Clowes must not induce us to follow him in his itinerations from place to place, or to note every incident which occurred. Enough to say that his labours were chiefly confined to Redruth and its vicinity, varied by occasional visits to St. Austell and the Downs, where Mr. Turner's people had chapels—one the walls of which was of mud, and the other of mud and stone. He also found his way once, at least, to St. Day, where on a subsequent visit in 1833 he had one of those experiences of a ghostly kind, such as John Wesley loved to take note of, and such as now find their way into the Transactions of the Psychological Research Society.† The impression one gets from the careful reading of the *Journal* so far as it relates to this time is that, while in Cornwall, Clowes was not equal to his former self; that his excessive labours and, we may add, the sins of his youth, were beginning to tell upon him, and that there were already premonitory signs of that somewhat serious breakdown which occurred in February, 1827, and which led to his ceasing to have charge of a station from December of the same year. His experience was marked by swift and sharply contrasted alternations of mood. Now he was in a state of exaltation, with all the old sense of freedom and power. "He felt the priestly vestments cover his soul as the glory covered the mercy seat." Then he was down in the trough of depression, fighting for his life: he felt as if he were near the gates of hell. These varying subjective states were the spiritual counterpart and reflection of the vicissitudes of his lot and circumstances from day to day. Toil and exhaustion, mental tension and reaction swiftly succeeded one another. Like Paul he knew what it was "both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want." Now he was well and comfortably lodged, with a good table spread before him; the next day might find him at a loss for a meal or a bed. One day, when no hospitable door stood open, he went on the top of Charn Bray Rock. He bethought him there of what Wesley and Nelson had done in the same county and under the like circumstances, and looked round, if haply he might find some blackberries with which to appease his hunger. One blackberry, and that an unripe one was all he could find—and he dined off that. At another time he wandered pensively on the cliffs. He lay down on a rock and watched the waves as they dashed against the reefs. He peopled the solitude with the forms of friends whose love he cherished. Then the thought of the London

* See his memoir in the *Magazine* for 1881, written by Rev. J. H. Best.

† Clowes' *Journal*, p. 338. See also article by Rev. E. Boccock on "William Clowes and the Ghost," *Aldersgate Magazine*, 1900, p. 530.

Mission and the urgency of its affairs pressed in upon him. "Oh, that £100 that was owing to Mrs. Gardiner! What was to be done about that?" He prayed, and tried to believe that God would give them a happy issue out of all these troubles. Soon after, G. Tetley sent the happy news that Mrs. Gardiner had consigned the promissory note to the flames.

Though Mr. Clowes was not privileged to see such remarkable results follow his labours in Cornwall as he had witnessed in the North, yet his labours met with a considerable measure of success. When, just before his removal, the Quarterly Meeting of the Mission was held February 26th, 1826, it was found there were 225 members in



PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL, REDRUTH.

church-fellowship and that the financial affairs of the Mission were in a satisfactory state. Mr. Petty thought it unfortunate that Mr. Clowes was removed just at the turn of the tide; for soon after his removal one of the most remarkable revivals for which even Cornwall has been distinguished broke out; and there can be no question that this revival was largely due to the sound preparatory work done by Mr. Clowes during the four months he was on the Mission. John Garner succeeded Mr. Clowes as superintendent in September, 1826, and he had as his colleagues Messrs. Driffield, Abey, and Hewson, all of whom we have met before. W. Driffield was a Cleethorpes man. He was taken out to travel by Hull Circuit, and while in the town he lived under Mr. Clowes' roof.

He laboured on the Bridlington

and Scarborough branches, was arrested for preaching in the open-air at Beverley, laid the foundation-stone of its first chapel, became responsible for a hundred pounds of its cost, and along with John Verity begged a considerable sum of money on its behalf. Fourteen consecutive years of his ministry were spent at Redruth, St. Austell, and St. Ives, and being a man of some means, as he evidently was, he cheerfully undertook monetary responsibilities in connection with buildings erected or rented by the denomination. At Redruth he is said to have found an unfinished chapel, which he got completed at a loss to himself of nearly £300. It need scarcely be said that the chapel thus referred to was not the one shown in our illustration

which was built in 1884. He paid the first rent of the room at Penzance, Newlyn, Falmouth, and Truro. He introduced Primitive Methodism into various places both in the western part of Cornwall and in some parts of Devonshire. "I missioned," he says, "Devonport, Exeter, Bridgerule, and Barnstaple, and my responsibilities at one time must have amounted to nearly £2000." He subsequently travelled in Brinkworth, Salisbury, Motcombe, and Banbury Circuits, and at his death in 1855, his body was carried to Wootton Bassett for burial. It is due to such a man, who was also "a most powerful and zealous revivalist," that his name and work should be remembered, especially by the circuits he helped to found and establish. With such fellow-labourers as these, we are not surprised to find John Garner reporting that in ten months six hundred persons had united with the Church. In 1828 Redruth became a circuit with twelve preachers.

One of the most notable gains of the great Cornish revival of the 'Twenties was the acquisition of Adolphus Frederick Beckerlegge to the Church and the ministry. Were it not that the memory of men is so short, Mr. Beckerlegge would rank in the general regard of the Connexion as one of the most remarkable men it has produced.



Adolphus Frederick Beckerlegge

And yet he is chiefly remembered on the strength of one or two extraordinary sayings which have stuck like burrs and been carried along by the years, while his more solid qualities and extensive services have been almost forgotten. There is no memoir of him in the *Magazine* of the time, and the regulation record of his death, in the Conference Minutes of 1867, is scarcely longer than an ordinary tombstone inscription. Happily, Dr. Joseph Wood did much to recall to the attention of a later generation of Primitive Methodists one who would have a strong claim to remembrance, were it for no other reason than that, but for

his influence, Dr. Wood might never have entered our ministry: But apart from this, Mr. Beckerlegge was in every sense an uncommon man. From his name to his calligraphy everything about him seemed exceptional. He had a commanding presence, a fine voice, a refined pronunciation, and as a preacher he was far beyond the average. He was born at St. Ives in 1798, and after receiving a Grammar School education, settled in business as a watchmaker and jeweller at Penzance. Any worldly ambition he might reasonably have cherished was set aside when the call of the Church came. He carried out the injunction he himself afterwards laid on young Joseph Wood when he found it difficult to choose his path: "There is not the money in the ministry, but there is the glory; and you must go for the glory." Mr. Beckerlegge was stationed in 1828 as one of the preachers of Redruth, and after subsequently travelling in some of the leading circuits of the Hull and Nottingham Districts he returned to St. Ives, where he was under the superintendency

of that apostolic man—C. T. Harris. Superannuated in 1862, Mr. Beckerlegge died at Flushing in 1868.

Before leaving Redruth to glance at some other places that formed part of the mission, we would refer to two captains of industry who have lately passed away who were rightly regarded as the two pillars of the Redruth Church, and whose names will serve to link together for us its past and its present. Captain John Hosking, who died June 21st, 1901, was for many years probably the best-known and most highly respected layman of the Cornwall and Devon District. His biographer, the Rev. J. H. Best, says: "When comparatively young he qualified himself for and attained the position of mine captain, and after being thus employed for many years he was appointed mineral agent, and had the direction of the mining department of Tehidy estate. He was calm, genial, kind in bearing, wise in counsel, and of a truly catholic spirit." For forty-seven years he was a local preacher, and at the time of his death he had two classes under his care. For many years he was also Circuit Steward and school superintendent. He loved good, sound literature, and even during his last affliction this love showed itself. Books were strewn round his pillow, and when free from the paroxysms of pain he found solace in turning to the words of some master of thought.



CAPT. J. HOSKING.

Captain C. F. Bishop was the manager of two important tin-mines employing more than a thousand men, and he had come to be regarded as one of the leading authorities on mining in the country. Beginning life as a working miner, he had by dint of perseverance worked his way to this honourable position. He efficiently discharged the duties of a local preacher for forty years, and was also a class-leader and active worker in the Sunday school. Together with Captain Hosking he was very helpful in the building of the Redruth chapel. Nor should his systematic liberality to the poor go without mention. Captain Bishop died November, 1902.



CAPT. C. F. BISHOP.

ST. AUSTELL.

The great revival already spoken of was not confined to Redruth, but was mightily felt in the St. Austell part of the station, where John Hewson was stationed. In July, 1827, Joseph Grieves, whom we saw last in Weardale, was sent to assist him. Shortly after his arrival a notable camp meeting was held on the "Wrestling Downs," so called because the annual wrestlings which took place at the parish wakes were held there. These were due to come off on the Sunday after the camp meeting, which was one of great power. One of the umpires was arrested by the Spirit of God, abandoned the sport to which he had been addicted, and united himself with the Church. The wrestlers left the camp-meetings in possession of the field, and retired to a spot on the other side of the town. A chapel was afterwards erected on the "Wrestling

Downs." How powerfully the revival had affected the district will be made evident from Mr. Grieves' statement that in September, 1828, there were 457 members on the mission (St. Austell) and 282 on the home branch (Redruth). In 1829 St. Austell was made a circuit. It afterwards became a station under the care of the General Missionary Committee and so far prospered, especially under the superintendency of Mr. E. Powell, that it was again made an independent circuit.

ST. IVES AND PENZANCE.

Penzance, the last town in the South-west of England, was visited by John Garner while he was at Redruth. He walked there, preached in the Green Market to an attentive congregation, then made his way to Newlyn where he also preached, after which he returned to Redruth, having preached twice and walked thirty-seven miles.



PENZANCE FROM THE HARBOUR.

Shortly after, Mr. Teal was appointed as a missionary to Penzance. He was successful in raising a society of twenty members at Penzance and one of about thirty at Newlyn. But this devoted young man caught cold at a camp meeting, and consumption soon claimed him for its victim. His place on the mission was taken by Joseph Grieves. From an interesting article which appeared in the *Magazine* for 1857, we are told that the first place occupied in the town was a low dilapidated schoolroom in Market Jew Street. Thence a removal was made to a schoolroom in South Parade. Queen Street Chapel and a schoolroom in North Street were successively occupied until 1839, when a new chapel was opened in Mount Street by Messrs. Cummin, Driffield, and Wigley. This building was enlarged in 1848, 1851, 1853, and 1857 under the care severally of Joseph Best, Robert Tuffin, John Sharpe, and Robert Hartley.

St. Ives was "opened" by Joseph Grieves on July 15th, 1829. "When he arrived at the river Hayle to cross from Penzance to St. Ives the tide was up; under these circumstances passengers had to wait the reflux of the waters before they could proceed. He went into an old church, nearly buried in the sand, where he spent about three hours in prayer, beseeching God to go with him. A few apples made the missionary's dinner. The tide having now ebbed he prepared to cross. While taking off his stockings for this purpose, a strong man offered to carry him over on his back, and after a little difficulty Mr. Grieves reached his destination. He went to a "decked boat" on the Quay, and stood upon it, and there alone and a stranger began to sing "Come, oh come, thou vilest sinner," etc. The people were struck with astonishment, and a crowd, chiefly made up of sailors and fishermen with their wives, soon gathered round. With great liberty the preacher offered gospel terms to the worst of sinners. Many wept and earnestly entreated another visit, promising a place to preach in. When he returned the following week he had nearly two thousand persons to preach to. "The hearts of many were smitten; numbers dated their first religious impressions from this night." As the result of this and subsequent visits a remarkable revival of religion broke out which extended to the other Churches of the town, and a striking reformation took place in the manners of the people. We read of no persecution being encountered by the missionaries; on the contrary, they were welcomed and treated with kindness and respect by all classes. In June, 1830, there were 136 members in society. The Penzance mission became first the St. Ives' Branch of Redruth Circuit, and then in 1833 St. Ives became the head of an independent station. A large chapel was built in St. Ives which Mr. Grieves had the gratification of opening. An interesting incident occurred at St. Ives in 1839, while Mr. Driffield was on the station—made such in 1833 with Penzance as its second place. The Rev. Mr. Malkin, clergyman of the Established Church in that town, became converted to God during a powerful revival of religion. "Attracted by a spirit of curiosity, he entered the chapel at a late hour one evening, when the Spirit of God instantly arrested him. In a few days he obtained pardon, left the Church, and preached his first evangelical sermon in our (the Primitive Methodist) Chapel from 'Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul': Psa. lxvi. 16."*

No good purpose would be served by occupying space in showing what was done by the Connexion in the county of Devon during the first period of its history since, unfortunately, the efforts put forth, however successful they might seem to be at the time, were destined to end in failure and withdrawal. The story of the renewal of missionary effort in this charming county—this time happily successful—belongs to a later period of our history. Mr. Petty lived nearer the time when these events happened, and presumably was conversant with all the facts; hence, we shall content ourselves with reprinting and handing on his well-weighed words on this sombre episode in our history.

"It is painful to add that, notwithstanding the labour and toil which several of the first and succeeding missionaries spent on the mission stations in this fine county, and the cheering prospects which for a time presented themselves in

* "Memoir of Rev. W. Driffield," *Magazine*, 1855, p. 259.

some of them, a succession of calamities befell them all ; and through the improper conduct of one of the preachers, the inefficiency of two or three more, the lack of sufficient connexional support, and of courage and perseverance under difficulties, the whole county was abandoned by the Primitive Methodist Connexion ! It is humiliating to record these facts, but truth and fidelity demand their insertion in these pages. It was certainly not honourable to the community, nor in harmony with the spirit of enterprise and perseverance which it has generally displayed, to relinquish all the mission stations which it had in the county, though several disasters had occurred on them. However, the labour, toil, and expense spent thereon were not altogether in vain. A few souls were brought to the Lord under the ministry of the missionaries, who died happy in communion with them ; several acceptable and useful travelling preachers were raised up, who have rendered good service to the Connexion, namely, Messrs. Chubb, Rooke, Grigg, Mules, etc., and the Wesleyan and Bible Christian communities largely shared in the fruits of the missionaries' labours on the before-named stations. It was well that these two denominations were able to collect into church-fellowship the scattered remains of the societies unwisely relinquished by the Primitive Methodists."—*History*, p. 292.

Mr. Petty's closing reference to the Bible Christian Church challenges an observation or two on the early relations of that community with our own. The experiences of the two denominations at the opposite extremities of England were curiously parallel. In Northumberland societies that had belonged to the Bible Christians fell to our lot, and their minister withdrew. In Devon much the same thing happened, only in this case it was we who withdrew and left our sheep to be gathered into the Bible Christian or Wesleyan Methodist fold. But the parallel is not merely an incidental or superficial one : it goes much deeper than this. The two denominations were alike in the time and circumstances of their origin, the class of people they worked amongst, the agents they employed, the spirit that animated them, the methods of evangelisation they employed. Each was so like the other that they might have been called the Methodist twins. Even in later years, when each denomination has developed its specific differences, the curious resemblance between them has struck the attention of observers.* To any one who knows the early history of both communities it will be matter for wonder why they that were so much alike and so near together did not come nearer still, and it will be cause for regret that alliance or union was not something more than one of the might-have-beens of history ; for union was never, perhaps, so near as it was a few years after the origin of both denominations. Even as early as 1820 our fathers were no strangers to the idea of amalgamation with another religious body. In that year, as the old Minute-book of the Hull Circuit shows, overtures were made for union with the Primitive Wesleyans of Ireland. Of course the overtures came to nothing, as they were bound to do. The two denominations had very little in common. Each attached quite a different meaning to the word "Primitive." To the Primitive Wesleyans it meant holding tight to John Wesley's High-Church notions—

* "The Bible Christians closely resemble the Primitive Methodists in character and spirit."—Rev. J. Telford : "Popular History of Methodism." "There is a striking resemblance between this body and the Primitives."—"The Revised Compendium of Methodism," by James Porter, D.D.

no service in church-hours, no sacrament except at the hands of the Church clergyman— notions that the Wesleyan Methodists had quite properly discarded. What *we* meant by "Primitive" need not again be stated. The Primitive Wesleyans ran off with John Wesley's antique garments and having arrayed themselves in them, said: "We are the true followers of John Wesley—the primitive Wesleyans." The Primitive Methodists cared not one jot for the out-of-date clothes. What they were anxious about was to catch his spirit and to follow his methods of evangelisation. A year after Hull Circuit had ineffectually flirted with the Primitive Wesleyans, Conference by resolution opened the pages of the *Magazine* to Mr. O'Bryan, the originator of the Bible Christian community, and articles from his pen appeared there dealing with passages in his own life and with the question of female preaching. The observations which these articles drew forth from Hugh Bourne on "the remarkable similarity between the two bodies as regards their practical recognition of the ministry of females" have already been given (vol. ii. p. 3). This interchange of courtesies might easily, one thinks, have led on to a union of the forces and fortunes of the two denominations. But neither was this to be. Each denomination took its own course, like the rivers Severn and Wye which rise near together and then diverge, but only to approximate again and to mingle their waters at last in the same broad estuary. It may be this last feature is a parable of the future, as the other features are a parable of the past, and that it is to a broad United Methodism we are tending.

