

## CHAPTER VIII.

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# The Story of the Churches.

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**A**MONGST the Makers of the Circuit, and in the Making of the Circuit, it is to be remembered always that even the members least widely known have played a part, and to the united life of the Circuit, every Society as a whole has been a contributor. In this chapter some account is given of the life of each society. It is necessarily brief, and in some points a hint only is afforded, but an attempt is at least made to give the main outlines of the story—local tradition will fill in the rest.

### BRINKWORTH.

Mr. Heath's arrival at Brinkworth in 1824 caused a great stir, and some uproar, but no great amount of persecution raged. The stones carried to fling at the preachers were not flung, and save an occasional shot of rotten egg, insulting words and interruptions were the most formidable items the

missionaries had to encounter. It is on record, however, that James Whale, one of the earliest converts, was much persecuted, and as he stood at the street corners to preach, he was pelted with stones, eggs, mud, etc. Those who have heard Mr. Stephen Matthews describe the "coming of the preachers" to Brinkworth need no enlightenment. "Come and taste along with me, Glory! Glory! Glory!" was the invitation, and men flung down their scythes, covered up their pouches and rubbers, and off to the meeting. Charles Matthews, born 1757, and awakened under the second sermon that was preached, opened his house for Class and Prayer Meetings. Preaching services were held in many places; on the Green; in Abraham Young's carpenter's yard, at Hatherleys; and in a loft over a cart house just above the Manse; then regularly in a cottage near York Farm, which used to stand opposite the home of Mr. S. Matthews. One of the first homes for the preachers was that of Mr. W. J. Hitchcock's grandfather. The first Camp Meeting was held just above the present Manse, in a field called the Farm Hill. Prayer Meetings were held at one time in a Mr. Spencer's house, and beer was sold in one part of the house while prayer was ascending from the other. Beer and Bible, Pubs and Prayer Meetings, are unnatural alliances and "things were not very pleasant there, sometimes,"

A Sunday School was early established, and Mr. Isaac Spencer was the first superintendent. It has flourished from the beginning. Of the men who "carried stones in their pockets to fling at the preachers," many were converted, two of whom became travelling preachers, viz., Aaron Sly and William Horsell, the latter of whom went out as such to Australia. The early local preachers included Joseph and Aaron Sly, James Horner, C., J., S., J., and R. Matthews, Abraham Cutts, Simon Waite, John Dixon, and Peter Ford.

A Chapel was built in 1828. For some years this had an earth, or mortar floor, and was stoned when money could be raised for the purpose—a number of working men leading the way  
 CHAPELS. in this matter. The seats were forms—probably those still in use in the school-room. The first pews put in were of the old "horse box" type, and so there was no need for "Classrooms" in those days, the horse-boxes served the purpose admirably. This chapel cost £295, seated 230 people, and was opened with a debt of £235! The first minister's house, now the caretaker's, cost £192. A New Gallery was put in in 1839. The Jubilee Chapel was built in 1860. The Foundation Stones were laid on February 23rd by Mr. Jacob Humphries of Wootton Bassett, and the preacher was Rev. R. Davies of London. It was opened on August 12th, with Revs. Murray Wilson and R. Heys as preachers,

and £50 were raised that day. The cost of this chapel was £590 of which £450 remained as debt. It seats 260 people. With the cost of the Assembly Hall, 18 , caretaker's house and other improvements, the total has been raised to £980, on which only about £100 remains as debt at the present time. Repairs and modernising alterations in 1904 cost £325.

Because the foundations were so well laid in the past, the church has grown very solidly. At the present time it is in every way a worthy monument to the work of the fathers, and bears creditably the honor that belongs to "the mother of us all." Constant migration from the land often causes a decline in numbers, as at the present, but the *strength* of this church is great, and "good old Brinkworth" is the pride of the Circuit. The number and quality of its most influential "families" constitute a guarantee of strong life for the future.

## BROAD TOWN.

This village has the honor of having the first chapel erected within the present Circuit, and the history of the church there is one of the brightest. The members of the Humphries' and Miles' families, and others in the earlier days labored magnificently together for the salvation of men, and brought the church to a high



state of efficiency. Among the first converts were Mary Hunt and Abraham Woodward. Thomas and David Hunt, John and James Bezzant, James Tuck, besides those named above, are remembered for their

work in the past. They were not without persecution, as the account of a Revival  
 A DRINKING TABLE. thereat previously given, shows, and it is on record that at the Camp Meetings, a table was set up in the field, for a drinking bout, by the revellers, in the face of the preachers. At its greatest reach of power this church numbered as many as seventy-eight members, and for nearly half a century was a tower of strength to the Circuit. With over a hundred scholars, thirty-nine teachers, and fourteen local preachers in active service at one time its influence may be estimated. For a long period the "Broad Town Sunday School Plan" appeared on the Circuit Plan—presumably for others to learn therefrom. Its Day School and its Burial Ground added to its prestige. Its S. School was one of the first formed in the Circuit.

Its second chapel was built in 1842, at a cost of £236. In 1858 an end gallery was added "for the children during the public service." The stones of the present chapel were laid on June 13th, 1866. H. Tucker, Esq., a county magistrate, gave a suitable address thereat, and a donation of £10. The Opening Days were Dec. 13th and 16th, with Rev. C. T. Harris of Bristol, as special preacher. At the Tea Meeting

there were 300 present. The cost was £420, towards which £195 was raised—a good sum for those days. The old chapel is now used for Sunday School purposes. Recent renovations of chapel and school have cost over £90, and a debt of £50 remains on the premises at the present time.

To see Broad Town in power and might once more would rejoice the whole Circuit. Broad Town Primitives have been scattered all over the country and beyond the seas; the influence of this church rolls on in unseen paths. The way to triumph is the way our fathers trod. Let our friends

THE take hold of the Sunday School, lay  
 FUTURE. themselves out to capture and train the young life, and at the same time take up the work of reaching the large number of people who are careless and indifferent “outsiders”; base these works upon prayer and faith, and they will not only “hold the fort,” as they now so bravely do, but will march to new victories. The Lord come down with power upon the Church!

### WOOTTON BASSETT.

The Church here has been noted for the many-sidedness of its life and influence. After once getting well on to its feet, tho' it had a struggle to do so, it has run well. A long succession of men and women of influence made it for many years a centre of life to the Circuit, and in a considerable degree, to the

District. The names of Smith, Humphries, Tuck, Ind, Gantlett, Watts, Wallis, Strange, Hunt, Trow and others were well known, and some of them were names to conjure with. Though the ranks of the stalwarts are reduced in number, life and power still goes out to the surrounding villages, and will do yet more so, in the coming days, once again. With a suitable sanctuary, a solid body of members, an efficient band of office bearers, the Baptism of Fire is wanted, and the Glory of the Lord will be seen, and sinners will be converted—and the town needs it.

The first missionaries had to meet with great and violent opposition; persecution ran high. "Their glowing zeal and love could not be quenched, tho' they often had to bear the insults, rage and threats of unholy throngs in the streets." After a time they obtained a cottage for their services, and then took the "Long Room" of the old Royal Oak at £10 a year, in which a good work was done and many were converted.

This room being wanted for a ball room, it had to be vacated, and the church had to return to the little cottage. In 1831, two houses and a garden were bought on the present site; the houses were made into a chapel, and the garden behind was let. The purchase money was £110 and costs of alterations, etc. brought this up to £160—£88 was the amount

borrowed on Mortgage. In spite of the possession of a chapel, however, the spiritual work PROGRESS. was much supported by cottage prayer meetings, and many converts were won by house to house visitation, and in 1837, "Friend Preston" writes that "perhaps there are few societies which will surpass this in labours and travail." In 1839, during three months "forty have been converted and thirty added to the societies."

In 1838, the Foundation Stones of a new chapel were laid, and the old was pulled down. On Sunday, March 25th, the Foundation Sermons were preached. At 6 a.m., Hugh Bourne preached to the Sunday School; at 9-20, the town was processioned, prayers offered and short sermons preached; and at 10 o'clock, Sister West, of Frome, preached in the old chapel. At 11 o'clock, processioning as before; at 1-30, Sister Miles, of Broad Town, preached a powerful sermon on the ground; and Bro. Bourne preached after her. "This was a fine service." At night, "Sister West and Bro. Bourne" again preached; a powerful prayer meeting followed, and "three professed to be saved by grace through faith."

Sunday, August 19th, was the "Opening Day," and

this was the programme: 5-30 a.m.,

A BIG PROCESSION with singing, to the chapel;  
PROGRAMME. 6 a.m., a Prayer Meeting; 9-30, Open  
Air Prayer Meeting at the top of the  
town, and then Procession to the chapel; 10 o'clock,

in the chapel, preacher "Bro. Heys"; 1-30, "met for processioning"; 2 p.m., sermon by Bro. Pope, from Bath; 5-15, Prayer Meeting in the chapel; 6 p.m., sermon by Bro. Foizey, of Stroud. Monday, somewhat similar proceedings. The first cost was £368, of which £245 remained as debt, which for a Society of thirty-three was heavy; the seating accommodation was for 263. Since then much has been added. In 1841, a gallery was put in for about £50; enlargement took place in 1859 at a cost of £500; and in 1901-2, a new screen at the entrance, communion rail, new organ and other alterations cost about £260. The vestry at the back is being considerably enlarged at the present time, and a site of land and cottages, with outlet to a side street has just been purchased which will afford every facility for the future. The seating accommodation of the chapel is 310, of the enlarged vestry about 120, and the total value of the property is about £1,200, with only a small debt.

Out of the burden of so heavy a debt at the opening of a new chapel, an improved method of raising money originated, which spread rapidly through the Circuit and then right through the Connexion—an immense boon to the whole of our church. Its value has been so great that it deserves a lengthened notice. The following is from the "Journal Notes" of Mr. Hugh Bonrne. "When a chapel is opened, it is usual forthwith to drop all

further personal exertions, and trust to seat lettings and anniversary collections. And such was the case here. But happily Divine Providence awakened them for this . . . . A friend made them a donation of several collecting boxes.

When they had their old chapel, if three pounds were collected at an anniversary, they thought it excellent. But when their attention was awakened, they fixed their minds on raising THE GOLDEN SYSTEM. twenty pounds at the next anniversary. A number promptly came forward, gave in their names and engaged to raise the sums of money; some greater and some smaller, according to the circumstances and opportunities of each. The sums were to be raised by begging for the chapel, or given out of their own savings, or raised in such ways as Divine Providence should open before them. There was evidently a divine move . . . . The anniversary by this means reached a total of £26, which was a great boon. By the good hand of God upon them, their zeal, vigor and faith increased, and they pursued their noble course for another twelve months, and the anniversary of 1840 produced £45 16s. 6d. . . . Later, among the rest, a number of boys and girls gave in their names to raise five shillings each . . . . It cultivates the talents of the little people; for they have to study an agreeable address, and a nice behaviour. And in pressing their point, the children



tell people that it is a good cause; and they use the best words they can find." This was the beginning, but it was another illustration of "Behold how great a fire a little spark kindleth." At Highworth, Clack, Chiseldon, Brinkworth, Purton Stoke, Stratton, the system (variously described as The Wootton Bassett System, The Wootton Bassett Chapel System, The Golden System, The Golden Chapel System), was quickly introduced, and soon put a new complexion on the face of chapel debts; a way had been found, a providential way, of dealing with these monsters. Hugh Bourne was more impressed with its value the more he saw of it. He soon began to advise those seeking his counsel, to adopt The Wootton Bassett System. Next he wrote letters, prepaid, to where

he thought the information would be useful; then a regular budget of letters  
 ITS EXTENSION. was sent off to the Circuits, with a second edition; three thousand enlarged circulars were printed and distributed over the Connexion, and the magazines soon contained plentiful and glowing accounts of the successful introduction of the new system. Newcastle, Darlaston, Nantwich, Leeds, Dudley, Blackburn, Sunderland, etc., quickly adopted it and with gladness, and probably no part of our church failed to follow suit. Wherever debts were found, this system was taken up. It was inevitable that someone should say, "We have used this method before"; but documentary evidence fully sustains the emphatic statement of Mr. Bourne that

“It didn't open out as a system until it originated at Wootton Bassett.” It remains a joyful fact for the Brinkworth Circuit in general and Wootton Bassett in particular, that it has thus been privileged to send forth a system that has made a way out of great financial difficulty for thousands of our churches, which is in constant use still, and likely to be as long as chapel debts are contracted and have to be destroyed.—*The Golden System.*

A further fact which Wootton Bassett and the Circuit remember with greatest pleasure, is that in Wootton Bassett the famous Pickett family lived. Coming here from Monckton near Winterbourne,

Mr. Moses Pickett (led into the joy of pardon by a tract handed to him by Bro. William Rowles), and his excellent wife entered upon a life of great usefulness, and in the Wootton Bassett Sunday School and British School their family was educated, and led to membership in Christ by this church. The career of Mr. S. Pickett, of Leicester; Mrs. Moore (wife of Rev. B. Moore, of Stockport); Mrs. Barber (wife of Rev. — Barber, Australia); Rev. James Pickett, General Missionary Secretary; Rev. Hy. J. Pickett, of Northampton; and Rev. F. Pickett, of Plumstead, London, are watched and rejoiced in by the whole Circuit — another contribution to the Primitive Methodist church, of the highest value,

It remains for us to notice the Day Schools of Wootton Bassett, and the Town Mission thereof of 1870. The Day Schools were opened in 1842, at a cost for purchase and alterations of £400, and until 1858 were Primitive Methodist Day Schools, with regular supervision by Connexional Courts. At that

date they became "British Schools," and in 1904-5 became "Council Schools." Our church retains the right to use the schools for Sunday School purposes, and they are so used, cleaning and warming expenses only having to be paid. The first schoolmaster was Mr. Tuck, whom our people sent, or assisted in sending, to Borough Road Training College. Since then the following have been schoolmasters: 1858, William Bullock; 1866, William L. Williams; 1866, Richard Leigh; 1867, Henry Whittick; 1873, James Smith, who "has continued unto this day," and fills his post amidst great general regard and esteem for his ability and genial personality.

For a twelve-month, ending September 1870, a Town Mission was conducted by our church. At that date, probably the Circuit bogey—Economy, intervened, and it was abandoned. While it lasted, it did very good work, modelled on the lines of the "London City Mission." Miss Lloyd, a woman of experience and a devoted Christian worker, rendered great service. During twelve months 4,500 calls were made to homes, and nearly 600 sick visits were paid.

A number of people were led thereby to attend the House of God, and some were brought into the New Life in Christ, as a result of the Scripture Reading, Tract Distribution, etc., that constituted the work of the Missioner, and the Mission must have been a great blessing to the Town.

### TOCKENHAM.

In this village "the fire burns always before the Lord." Having to struggle, like many other churches, for "a place for its feet," this has been done with dauntless vigour. On the Circuit Plan and in the Account Book, Tockenham and Grettenham are put together for many years, and the first separate report of Tockenham as to membership is dated March 1844. The members numbered nineteen, and a small separate quarterage was sent six months later. Prior to the erection of its chapel, the meetings were held in cottages, first at the Red Lion and The Tangle cottages, where large congregations were gathered. The first missionary is reported to have been the noted Joseph Sly, of Brinkworth. A feature of Tockenham Primitive Methodism was its powerful cottage Prayer Meetings, conducted in three or four separate places, and the constant and sturdy processions. The men of the past who made this church their home who are chiefly remembered

STALWARTS. are James Smith, A. Simpkins, Jasper Hatter, David Little, John Clark, Richard Pickett, William Thomson, T. Hunt and

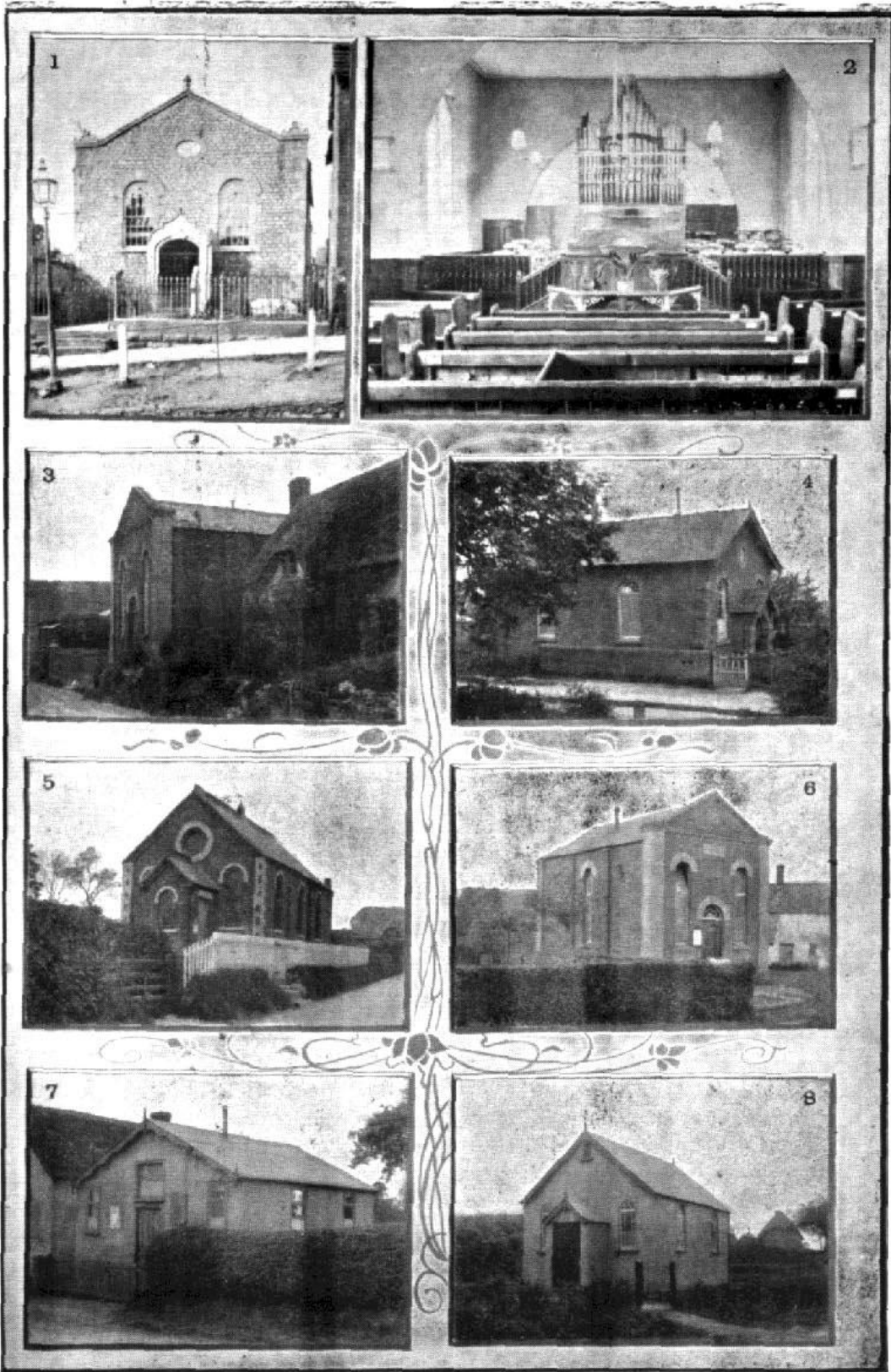
Thomas Young. Richard Matthews was the first S.S. superintendent, and Eli Holloway was super for thirty years. William Thomson, a farmer, was a noted local preacher of a very sturdy type, who used "to fight the Devil" in the pulpit while preaching. His grandson, Mr. W. H. Thomson, of our Newbury church, is one of the best Sunday School workers to be found "in a day's march." George Hatter, local preacher, man of prayer, saintly in life, and Eli Holloway, of like mind and spiritual influence, have left behind them most precious memories and inspiring examples. Thank God, others are ready to stand in their places, and the work continues, the fire burns on.

Land for a chapel was at length obtained, after many disappointed hopes and some unkept promises, and this chiefly by the aid of Mr. William Rumming, of Grittenham. The chapel was opened in 1863, at first cost of £180, which has since been increased to £280; the present debt is £20. The seating accommodation is for 120, and the chapel is well filled, the school well attended, and the church full of life and power. Of late years, the visits of Mrs. Hubbard, Evangelist, have been a great blessing to the neighbourhood.

### GRITTENHAM.

Here we have "A Chapel in a Field," built as near to the old "preaching place in a cottage" as





1 & 2, Wootton Bassett.

- 3. Tockenham,
- 5. Winterbourne,
- 7. Hook.

- 4. Bushton.
- 6. Lydiard.
- 8. Preston.





1. Mr. M. PICKETT.      2. Mr. S. PICKETT.      3. Mrs. M. PICKETT.  
4. Mr. FRANK PICKETT.    5. Rev. J. PICKETT.    6. Mrs. B. MOORE.  
7. Mrs. BARBER,      8. Rev. H. J. PICKETT.    9. Rev. F. PICKETT.

possible. Services were held in this cottage, tenanted by Mr. W. Dixon, father of Robert Dixon, the present society steward, from time immemorial till the chapel was opened in 1894. For nearly forty years persistent attempts were made to secure land, but from Lady Holland, a Roman Catholic, the landowner, this was impossible. A site was at last obtained from the Powis Family. One curious result came from these efforts of our church, that is, a State Church School was built, and the vicar of Brinkworth promised to supply a curate to attend to these expressed religious needs. There were "jumpers" amongst us at Grittenham in those days, and a humorous proposal was made "to capture the Church Schools and turn them into a chapel." It was suggested that if the "jumpers" went to the services there and turned them into Primitive Methodist meetings, the parson would be frightened away, and our people could then apply for the vacant building. A fine scheme no doubt, and it at least kept up the spirits by giving something to joke about it. The building is a neat iron one, which cost £134, had £40 debt left at the opening, and is now debtless. The School dates from 1901, and is well attended. The families of W. Rumming, Gough and Collingbourne have well served this church in the past. Missionary meetings in the old cottage have been known to send up over £14 to the funds.

## BRADENSTOKE.

—*A struggle with Hyper-Calvinism.*

Until recently (1902) this was planned as Clack, but the present one is the correct name for the place. It will be remembered that here was erected the third chapel in Wiltshire, in 1827. There were then twenty members in society, and this chapel cost £73, held 110 hearers, and had a debt at first of £40. The following items in the earliest account book are of

much interest. Land £2; beer for  
ITEMS OF carters 2s.; beer at Barncis 2s. 10d.;

COST. beer for the carpenter when making the  
pulpit 1s. 6d.; beer at Emmets putting  
in the floor 3s. 9d.; the boy, day's nip 3d.; beer for  
house rearing 4s.; turnpikes' horse kip 3s.; ditto at  
Seagry 2s. 6d.; do. Menots 5s.; do. Tenises 3s. 10d.

Like the first Brinkworth chapel this, too, had an earthen floor until 1833, when boards were put down.

In 1887 a tastefully designed new chapel was built to hold comfortably 150 people, at a cost of £522.

The debt of £205 left on this chapel was somewhat of a burden and was only extinguished by the

unceasing dogged determination of Mr. James Franklin and others, who in season and out of

season labored at this object. A glimpse at the past is shown by the following from the pen of Mr.

Preston, in 1837. "I found a good chapel," he writes, "but much behind in paying its interest, with

a thin congregation and no society. Persecution had run very high here, but by the kind interference of

the clergyman it was suppressed. The work has revived somewhat and eleven fresh members have been added chiefly through the labors of Bro. James Franklin, who has been diligent in getting subscribers at a farthing a week; financial matters have improved." At the present day the society is still somewhat weak, but there are healthy signs for the future. At Bradenstoke it has been a severe struggle with Calvinism as well as open sinfulness, but this is the Day of Death to Calvinism, and Methodism is expecting victory in this place as elsewhere. May God save the people !

## PURTON.

—"*Strong and of a Good Courage.*"

"From Little to Great" sums up the history of the church at Purton. One of the earliest places visited by our missionaries in 1824 or 1825, no way was found for the establishment of a church until 1829. The name appears in the account book for the first time in June 1828, with 8s. 7d. to its credit, and its first membership of twelve is reported a year later. Its progress was very slow for twenty years, and its members were apparently very poor. The erection of a chapel in a suitable situation, the present one, in 1856 marked the beginning of a new era. The first meetings of the struggling and persecuted church were conducted under an elm tree in Witts' Lane, and there the Class Meetings were held

OPEN-AIR  
CLASS  
MEETINGS.

for some time. Then came services in Mr. Taylor's house in the Common; Mr. Thorne's house by the Station; a Carpenter's Shop owned by Thomas Stacey; back to a cottage again in the Common, and then a cottage was bought in "The Row," and turned into a chapel in 1843, at a cost of £123, two of the trustees being Robert and James Haskins. This chapel seated 120, but was in an out of the way place, and not much progress was made. At last a better opportunity came, and the church was alert and strong enough to take it. A cottage and garden were purchased at Mount Pleasant, on which was presently built a new chapel, 40 feet by 26 feet. The old chapel sold well, and considerably helped towards the erection of the new. This cost about £300, a half of which was raised at the time—a remarkable performance at that date. In the cottages, in the old chapel, and in the new, sinners were converted; the evangelistic spirit was ever present at Purton. In 1852, a writer states that "in contrast with twenty years ago, the moral condition of the village has improved. The village violence that I

MORAL met with when I first travelled in this  
ELEVATION. Circuit, 1832-33, has been subdued by the doctrines of the Cross, and now we worship in the open air without fear. Untiring zeal and beneficence have worked wonders in this and other villages in this circuit." Thus Rev. S. Turner, ever a keen observer. The opening of the new chapel was marked by a considerable improvement in all



directions ; "the congregation was nearly doubled, the seats being nearly all let, and sinners have been saved." A great enlargement of the building took place in 1893, at a cost of £450. This gave a little extra seating accommodation, and provided a much more roomy building, with school-room, class-rooms, etc., and much more beautiful too.

One of the first members was Mr. Thomas Embury, who was converted at Purton Stoke, and joined or helped to form the new society at Purton, and considerably helped to build it up.

VETERANS. Robert Goulding, still living and at the age of 92 still able to attend the means of grace, was a member at Purton Stoke for twelve years, and has been a member at Purton for the past fifty years, he has been a good helper. Among others well known to the present generation, who have now passed away, and in their day loved the cause, were Bros. Eatwell and Garlick, Bros. James Haskins, C. Gardner and S. Westmacott. These were "good Primitives." Mr. Westmacott was one of the strongest men in the Circuit. A profound theologian, a clear argumentative preacher, a sturdy fighter for righteousness, independent in action, and a friend both true and kind, he was "a man, a hiding place from the wind." Among those still living who have rendered conspicuous service, Mrs. Haskins, Mr. J. Sweeper and Rev. G. Fowler must be named. The first is and has been one of the most devoted and



useful Christians to be met with. For some time a local preacher, she has for many years worked as a Sunday School teacher, and in many other ways. "Wrapped up" in the Connexion, she has ever been one of its most loyal supporters. Mr. Sweeper removed to Purton from Wroughton about thirty-five or six years ago, and has been steadily growing in influence ever since. In reference to work, he may be called "The Ever Ready." His "share" of work for Christ has always been his utmost, but when that is done he counts himself as "an unprofitable servant." Working in ways too numerous to mention, he is above everything else "A Friend," and is most highly esteemed by the whole of the right-living people of the parish.

A sketch of Purton without special notice of Rev. G. Fowler would be very incomplete. This veteran minister is beloved by all to whom he still ministers so abundantly in the parish where he resides. From October 1st, 1853, the day  
REV. G. on which he first left home as a preacher,  
FOWLER. he had, up to July 1906, preached 13,557  
times, not counting Missionary, Temperance, Chapel and Sunday School Anniversaries, which numbered not less than 1,443—a total of 15,000. During fifty-two years, he had attended every Circuit Quarterly Meeting of his Circuit, save one. In dealing with books, etc., he has been "a mighty salesman before the Lord," and is still busy. His works continue, his charity never fails.

The church at Purton is the largest in the Circuit, and so is its Sunday School, while it has local preachers to the number of fourteen. Its officers are experienced and able, and its contribution to Circuit strength is great in every way. Of slow growth, it has grown strong, and its best days are yet to come. Amen !

## PURTON STOKE.

—*A Majority Church.*

One of the earliest places missioned, Purton Stoke has also been one of the most satisfactory fields of operation. The society was formed not earlier than 1830, and in February 1832 a site was obtained from Mr. Jonas Bathe and a chapel was built, the members numbering twenty-six. The building cost £160, only £10 of which was raised by the opening, and seated 84 people. It stood about opposite to the present Post Office at Purton Stoke. Unfortunately the heavy debt became a burden, and the members were unable to bear the expenses with any comfort. "But providentially Messrs Wm. and Jas. Rummey took a farm in the neighbourhood, and they felt determined to see what could be done to reduce the debt, and things began to assume a different aspect." In 1855 the debt stood at £40, but at the anniversary fifteen months later the debt was all paid off, and best thanks were "given to Messrs W. and J. Rummey, Messrs Clark, Hewer, R. Titcombe and A. Stephens,

and to all our friends who came up so nobly to the help of the Lord." The present chapel holds 140, and was opened in 1868. It cost £273, of which £98 was left as debt at the opening; it is now debtless.\* In 1886 sanction was given to purchase land for school purposes, but this was only accomplished in 1905, at a cost of £24. Plans for a schoolroom are being prepared, which will give much needed facilities for the most valuable work that can be done at Purton Stoke, viz., the teaching and training of the young people. The work of this church has been much assisted by Mr. Rumming, of the Ponds Farm, and Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Iles, in the past, and at the present time, amongst many worthy ones, the Bros. J. and S. Titcombe hold a position of great influence and affection in the minds and hearts of the people. The late Joseph Clark A LEGACY. left a legacy of £30, a most useful help in the new building project. In conclusion, we note the remarkable fact that in a

\* The building of this chapel was a high occasion. It is recorded that when a new public institution in Ireland was to be built, it was decided that the materials of the old building should be utilised in the erection of the new, and that the old building must not be pulled down till the new building was ready. At Purton Stoke this remarkable performance was not attempted, but the old chapel was pulled down, and the materials helped to build the new. To do this economically, the members undertook the work at the close of their ordinary day's toil. They still love to tell how the bricks of the old place came down, were loaded up, and with a whoop and a shout and a "glory", the "human horses" rushed them up the little hill on to the building site. If they were younger they would like to do it again, but fortunately real horses are plentiful to-day at "Stoke" and this will not be necessary.

population very widely scattered, and numbering at the outside some 250 people, three-fourths, a good majority, are worshippers in our church or attend the Sunday School. At Purton Stoke, ours is the "established" Church, but Free.

## HOOK.

*—Tribulation and Faith.*

A Chapel was built at Hook sixty-seven years ago (1840), but was successfully, if not rightfully, claimed by the Lord of the manor, and at a valuation had to be handed over to him—a terrible blow to the church. This occupied the position of the present Police Station, and it is believed, is included in that building at the present time. Driven out, our people once more occupied a cottage—the one above the chapel, which was rented, a ceiling taken out, and so "a gallery" provided. A small iron chapel was built in 1886 and enlarged in 1889 at a cost of £91, on which no debt remains. Hook has done good work. Remarkable revivals have occurred there with wide reaching results. It was at  
 MACEDONIAN Hook that a poor woman, converted  
 PIPPINS. in a meeting conducted by Rev. S. Turner, out of gratitude to God, consecrated the fruit of an apple tree to the support of the spread of the gospel of our church; and later we read that the sale of six of these apples, Macedonian Pippins as they were appropriately named, produced 7s. 6d. for the Funds. Nowadays

we have her spiritual followers in the Circuit who are consecrating calves, hens, honey, etc., to the Centenary Fund. Mrs. Harriet Barnes, a local preacher in the earlier days, greatly helped this society, and Mr. Chas. Price, a godly carpenter, was, until he died, a stalwart and able spiritual worker. This village, somewhat derelict materially, presents great difficulties, but Hook will live and labor on worthily for Christ.

## LEIGH.

—A "Wayside" Community.

In no place has the work of our church produced a greater moral reformation than at Leigh. When our fathers began their work there at Gospel Oak in 1834, the morality of the people was very low. "The parish was noted for its thieves. They were punished as the law directed, but the evil continued, until the farmers despaired of keeping anything that could be carried away. Some notorious characters got converted, however, and the gospel destroyed the evil the law failed to remedy. The farmers, noting the effects, at once offered help in the erection of a chapel." In 1840 we find that the Gospel Oak services were held in a chapel which "belongs to Mr. Davenport, who allows us to preach in it free of expense." Leigh itself appears on the Plan first in April 1836, and in March 1837 Leigh and Gospel Oak (coupled together until the end of 1847) report twenty members. The first Connexional property there was



a one-storied "wattle and daub" cottage, in which a good work was done and many converted, purchased for about £5 in the year 1859. Enlargements and alterations turned this into a chapel, which served for a few years until the present building was erected in 1867, at a total cost of £233; a debt of £98 left at that date has been extinguished. Of those now deceased, the Young's, the Selby's and the Curtis' are best remembered in honor for their work's sake. Henry Curtis deserves a more extended notice. In his unregenerate days he was "a terrible fighting man," and after conversion he was the same—though he fought now with spiritual weapons. His conversion was on this wise: Summoned to the Police Court for a slight offence, he was fined, but feeling that the sentence was unjust, he went to gaol rather than pay. In Devizes gaol he was converted; in the dark cell the heavenly light came to his soul, and henceforth he was a good soldier of Christ. "He became a downright good man, looked up to by everybody. He was very plain in his preaching, but very earnest." The church to-day inherits the earnest spirit of such men, and is full of promise.

## ASHTON KEYNES.

—*A Fortress Held.*

Ashton Keynes is a beautiful village, watered by the higher waters of the Thames, four miles west of Cricklade, with a population in 1901 of 867. Our



church there consists of only nine members, with no Sunday School, and a chapel dating from 1839, well built, comfortable, and substantial, and with seating accommodation on gallery and floor of 155. It cost £239 of which £69 was raised at the time; and at that period there was a population in the village of 1,300, with our membership standing at nineteen. That reduced population is doubtless a chief cause of the many difficulties of our church. When the pillars of a church are taken away, or removed, with none left to fill the vacancy, the church must languish for a time, for living pillars require time to grow.

The name appeared on "The Plan" first in 1833, but our local missionaries were driven out by persecution; and failed to establish themselves until 1837. The change came with the conversion of Miss Susan Saunders, who became a local preacher, enlisted the sympathy of her father for the infant church, and also his protection for the preachers. In 1837 he rented a house for us to preach in, and in 1838 had his own house licensed, and this was the preaching room till the chapel was opened, May 3rd, 1840. This was built by Mr. Staley, a builder who was in membership with us, on land bought by Mr. Saunders' son and given to us in lieu of a site his father had given before he died. Mr. Saunders was a large grazier and cattle dealer, a man of respect and influence, and his word and example

had considerable weight. He was buried in our burial ground at Wootton Bassett, amid a concourse of hundreds of people. Mr. Preston's notice concludes thus: "He had a wish for Primitive Methodism to be fully established at Ashton Keynes, and he left ground and twenty pounds towards a chapel. He had a great wish for all his children to be converted to God. Three of them are, and our prayer is that all may be saved of the Lord." In 1863 we read: "Primitive Methodism in this village has had almost every kind of opposition to contend with, and has had many fluctuations, so that about two years ago it seemed on the very verge of utter ruin, but a kind providence watched over it for good. At its lowest state, a family, the Westmacotts, all Primitives, were providentially removed here, and they took a lively interest in the cause. Great improvement occurred, and the church determined to make a desperate effort to put up a gallery, and a new inside to the chapel, outhouses, etc., at a cost of £60." It was a great time at the re-opening; a large public meeting was held, and amid great rejoicing it was announced that £42 10s. had been raised. "This was very largely due to the labors of our energetic secretary, Mr. Samuel Westmacott, who was heartily thanked for his services." The highest membership, thirty-one, was recorded in 1865, while it has been as low as three, and up to twenty-five since then. The cause of decline has been the same—removals. Until recently, it would seem as if a point as low as any

in its history had been reached, and the period 1888 to 1905 witnessed a sustained FLUCTUATIONS. struggle against difficulties and discouragements that is perhaps one of the most courageous in the history of the Circuit. Barely able to pay working expenses when all was done, the doors were kept open by the devoted loyalty of the Gingell family in particular, while Miss Darter is also one of the most loyal and true Primitive Methodists to be found anywhere. Battling with ill-health and the straightened circumstances that ill-health and a large family entailed, it is wonderful that Mr. and Mrs. Gingell, and in late years Mrs. Gingell and Miss Darter, alone as active members, were able to sustain the cause; and their work is worthy of the highest appreciation. The gospel ship at Ashton now sails in calmer seas, but even at its worst it showed a vitality that was remarkable—"it could not die for the life of it." The following are the main points in the present renaissance: Three years ago, and we fear for some long time before, the appointments at Ashton Keynes had been flagrantly neglected. At the September Quarterly Meeting the matter was brought up in a serious manner, and in response to a question, "Well, brethren, we all want to help Ashton; won't we all go when we're planned?" the preachers practically pledged themselves that Ashton Keynes "should be attended to." That pledge has been fairly kept, tho' not altogether, and the tide then began to turn. A valuable help came

to the Society when Mr. and Mrs. N. Phillips took a farm there, and then when Mr. P.

RE- Selby married and settled there.  
 ENFORCEMENT. There is now frequently a congregation of forty, some young people have been added to the church, a Y.P.S.C.E. is at work, the chapel has been renovated and some new seats put in; and Ashton Keynes will again become strong, and we hope in these changed times, lastingly strong. A forward movement must now take place, and a Sunday School if possible be established as the very best possible guarantee of a work of permanent value. Even as recently as twenty-five years ago Ashton Keynes, a beautiful village, was notorious for its moral delinquences, and supplied more cases to the police courts than any other similar place around. It therefore needs Primitive Methodism, and needs it red hot, and plenty of it.

## CRICKLADE.

—*Triumph Postponed.*

The ancient town of Cricklade is a town girdled in. Its fence is not a high wall, but a ring of unpurchaseable land. Therefore the town is cribbed and confined—extension is impossible. One result of this is the constant depletion of its young life; there is no room for them to settle. This in part explains the difficulties and slow progress of Free Church life therein; the youths and maidens of the Sunday Schools do not remain in sufficiently large numbers