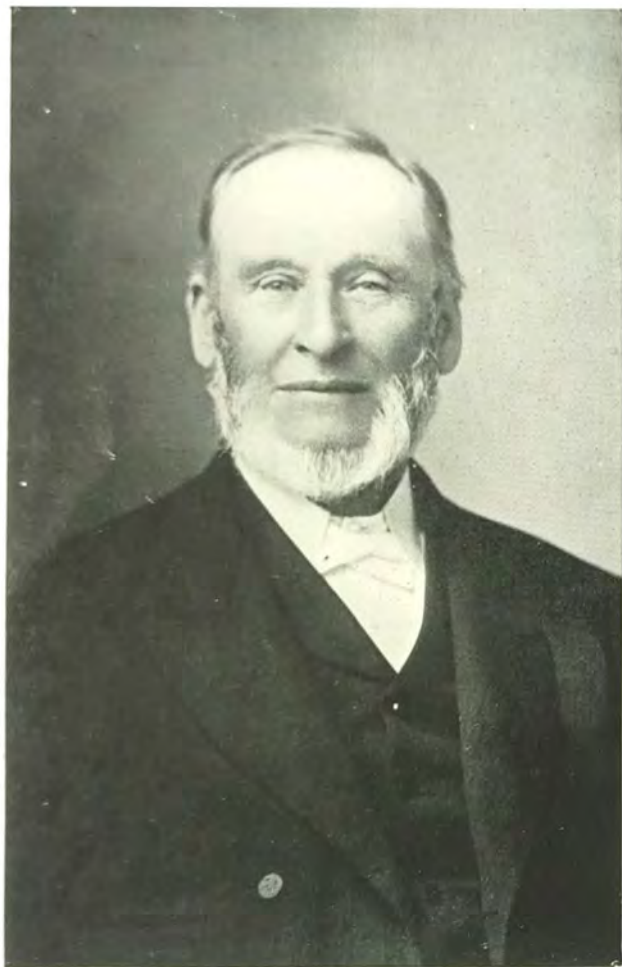




Remember me please to all who
have not forgotten me
With kindest wishes remain
Yours truly
Thomas' Champness

THE LIFE-STORY OF THOMAS CHAMPNESS

BY

ELIZA M. CHAMPNESS

WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

London

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FOREWORD

I HAVE finished my task. When I began I had no idea it would be so difficult; and, in the hour of its fulfilment, I acknowledge very gratefully the help that has been given. Friends have sent much-prized letters, many of which, though the limits of the book forbade their insertion, have guided my failing memory, and enabled me to gather up the thread of incidents and facts which would otherwise have escaped notice. Others have furnished details that enhance the interest of the biography, and many whose actual work does not appear have suggested lines of thought which I have been glad to follow out. Some parts of the book are written by other hands than mine, notably the chapter on preaching, and the account of the tour round the world. And in nothing have I been more helped than in the sympathy and prayer with which the Methodist people have kindly waited all through the months for the appearance of this book, which I hope will not disappoint them.

ELIZA M. CHAMPNESS.

May 1907.

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The Life-story of Thomas Champness

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY, PARENTAGE, CHILDHOOD

THOMAS CHAMPNESS came of humble parentage, but was proud to think that he was of ancient lineage. For himself, he was content to be the happy 'child of grace divine,' recognizing his indebtedness to the parents whose beautiful example and teaching influenced his whole life. But he also took pleasure in tracing his ancestry, and the part some of his forebears had played in the history of his country.

The name Champness, otherwise Champeneys, Champounois, &c., is of French or Norman origin, either from Champnois (a native of Champagne), or from Champigny in Normandy. A Champneis 'came over' with William the Conqueror, and the name is on the Battle Abbey roll. The family seems to have settled and received grants of land in the West of England.

Passing by earlier records, we learn that 'one Sir John Champneis came to London, and became Lord Mayor in 1534-5, the year Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher were executed for denying to Henry VIII the supremacy of the Church.'

Several persons of this name are mentioned in

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Reformation times, among whom was Anne Champness, who was burnt at Canterbury as a heretic in 1556, with four others. Foxe says, 'They were burnt at two stakes and one fire together, and when the fire was flaming about their ears did sing psalms.'¹

A John Champneis, who came to Essex in 1548, taught that 'a man after he is regenerate in Christ cannot sin with the inner man (he could with the outer man).' This heresy Cranmer compelled him to recant, and he had to destroy his books and do penance before the preacher at Paul's Cross, with a faggot on his shoulder.

Anthony Champneys, a Jesuit, made some controversial stir, and wrote numerous theological books.

In 1701, Justinian Champness was one of the 'five Kentish petitioners' who were imprisoned in the Tower for petitioning Parliament, but who triumphantly vindicated the right of the people to present petitions, which right has since remained unquestioned.

Of all these, Thomas Champness liked best to think of the martyr whose voice was raised to God in praises while the fire was flaming about her ears; and all who

¹ Of this Anne Champness Foxe states that 'when she appeared before the judge & his colleagues, it was also objected concerning the same manner of confession. Whereunto she answereth in these words and sayeth; that she wyll not be confessed of a prieste, & addeth moreover, speakinge unto the Priestes, that you priestes are the children of perdition and can do no good by youre confession; and lykewise, speakinge unto the Judge & hys assistantes told them that they were subverters of Chrystes truthe. And as touching the sacrament of the altar, she said it was a naughty & abominable idoll; and so utterly denied the same sacrament. Thus persisting & persevering in her former sayinges & answeres was condemned the saide xviii day of the saide month with thother above mentioned whome also suffered quietly & with greate comforte for the right of Christes religion.' Day of her death, January 31, 1556.

knew him will reckon him a worthy descendant of the man who, being imprisoned in the Tower, 'triumphantly vindicated the rights of the people.' In a sermon which appears in his last published book, he says, on the question of ancestry: 'We can give our descendants something better than gold. There was a certain Anne Champness who was burned at the stake. I should like to believe that her blood flows in my veins. Perhaps it does, and so I hate the word "priest" as I do the plague!'

The name is found in Essex documents as early as 1247; and the Epping branch, which changed the spelling of the name to Champness, seems to have been fairly large in the early part of the eighteenth century.

John Champness, grandfather of Thomas, was himself a remarkable man in many respects. An accident in his childhood crippled him for life; but his intelligence and evident taste for drawing obtained for him the help of certain benevolent men, and he was apprenticed to the trade of pattern-designing, which he followed for some time, later in life holding the position of cashier to a firm of block-printers, with whom he remained over thirty years. He was a Strict Baptist, and a controversialist besides, for he wrote to various clergymen letters in defence of his principles which show him to have been a man who dared to think for himself. He died in 1862, having married twice, and brought up a large family.

His son, Charles Champness, the father of him whose story I am to write, was born in 1813. His early life was spent as a 'prentice-boy and handicraftsman in what is now part of London's East End, but was then a marshy

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tract of land, dotted about with villages and old-world towns, lying between the beautiful forest of Epping and the flowing Thames. Industries of varied kinds flourished there then, as now, and the weavers of Spital-fields sent their woven silk to be made into printed handkerchiefs by the block-printers of Epping and West Ham. Charles learned the old-fashioned trade at a time when it was on the eve of being supplanted by machinery, and, with many others, suffered by the inevitable changes of that period of transition.

He married young, and it was on this wise. A family named Seymour, with five daughters, lived near ; they were neighbourly and kind, especially at the time when the mother of Charles Champness was taken ill and died. The friendship grew ; and some time after his mother's death, Charles sought the hand of Susanna Seymour. He was very young, and Susanna was not in love with him ; but lacking courage to tell him so, she persuaded her sister, then a bright young widow, to go and break the news to her suitor. When he heard that the younger was not for him, he said to Mary, 'Then I shall marry you!' And marry her he did, after a courtship of about two years. From a fragmentary record, written in his old age, I quote a few sentences which form a link in the chain of the family history :

We were married on the 3rd of April, 1831. For a time we shared the house with Mary's mother, in what was called the Marsh in Stratford, and afterwards we went to Angel Lane, Stratford. Here, in Chipperfield Court, our two first boys, Thomas and John, were born. I was young and thoughtless, but, I hope, kind to my love. She was all that a young boy of my sort needed to keep me right. And I

can say she was a wise, good wife to me then, and all her forty-two years. I honour her name now. The two boys were christened at West Ham Church. For two years things went on as before. Then bad trade began, and they reduced the price of our work first 5 per cent., then 25 per cent. more. This broke up the place, as far as our work was concerned. The firm offered my father that, if my brother William and I wished, we could stay and have good work and money. But we did not wish to be 'knobsticks'; so we left, and were on trade pay thirteen weeks. We two brothers had made it up to walk to Manchester and try to make a living. But William got work, and so father paid my fare on the coach, £2 2s. The journey was twenty-six hours in cold April, 1834.

In the depth of the next winter, word came for the little family to follow him to Lancashire. Travelling was a painful and serious business in those days; no comfort could be had without paying for it, and not much then. Rich folk journeyed in their own chariots, by no means of the most luxurious type; commercial travellers and middle-class people hired post-chaises, or took coach for distant parts, and men made their wills before hazarding their lives on the Great North Road. It was a long and troublesome journey, and the working man's family had to bear much discomfort. Thomas Champness could not himself remember it; but I have heard the mother tell with bated breath of the horrible, cutting wind, and the cold of the day and night on the outside of the lumbering coach. The two babes were nearly frozen, though her care of them was incessant; and she herself fared worse than they did. 'They were good little fellows,' she lovingly said; and when she spoke of the welcome her husband gave them, her eyes would fill with tears.

It was like going to a foreign land ; the rough speech of the North, with the tall factory chimneys, impressed Mrs. Champness, and everything seemed strange to her for a while.

Neither she nor her good man ever adopted the Lancashire dialect ; though their sons gloried in it, as 'Lancashire lads' should, Charles and Mary Champness always retained the soft-sounding clearness of accent they brought with them from the Essex marshes, and their ways were marked by a definite refinement all their lives, for they were 'gentle-people' by nature.

They do not appear to have thought much about personal religion at this time, but it was not long before they came under Christian influences. While living in lodgings at Stockport, whither he had travelled in search of employment, Charles Champness was invited by his landlady, a good Methodist, to go with her to chapel, and there, under the remarkable preaching of the Rev. George Osborn, then a young man, he was awakened to the sense of his peril and his need of salvation. He did not at once find peace, but he used to go on Sundays and weekdays into every place of worship he found open. One Sabbath day he strolled into All Saints' Church, Manchester, where he found a preacher after his own heart, and went there every time the church was open, gathering help from the pulpit, and making sure he had found the religious home he needed. But it turned out that the clergyman was only a supply, and when the rector returned he did not help the poor man seeking after the light. This led him to begin to attend the Wesleyan chapel in Grosvenor Street, and there he found rest to his soul.

So, after all [says his son, in the little book *Early Days*], we might have been Church folks, and not Methodists! No one can tell how much we, as a family, owe to the social element in Methodism. Betty Lee had made father feel that before he left Stockport, and when once he got among the dear people at Grosvenor Street he found things very different from All Saints' Church. There he had gone in and out, and no one had said a word to him except from the pulpit; but in the Wesleyan chapel he found kind friends ready to ask after his welfare and invite him to the class-meeting. One cannot but feel that Christianity is indebted to Betty Lee. She never had her name in print before, but she has fairly earned the right to a place in the chronicles of God's Church. She little thought that Charles Champness, her lodger, would have three sons who would be preachers of the gospel, and that among their converts would be ministers and evangelists in this and other lands, whose spiritual children would be numbered by thousands. If we all meet in the Paradise of God we shall have to salute the dear old saint who began this work by asking her lodger to go and hear George Osborn.

The character of Charles Champness may well be summed up in the words spoken by Jesus of Nathanael. 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.' A man of sterling, simple faith; once consciously saved, accepting God as Master and His gospel as the rule of life, God was his King, God's Word his guide, and he simply followed God's commandments. This did not always bring him worldly wealth; but he had joys no money could have given him. He was blithe and optimistic to a degree; an idealist whose visions did not always attain fulfilment, but invariably made him happy. A most industrious man, naturally a loving husband and father, his heart was like the 'good ground' prepared by the grace of God. In this 'good ground' the

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'seed of the kingdom grew and brought forth fruit.' The children realized the change from the old ways. Godless companions ceased to come to the house; the Bible became a treasure, and its stories were made known to the eager little ones about their mother's knee; they were introduced to Sunday school and chapel, and learned the delights of family religion. Thomas, being the eldest, had the earliest experience of these things, and the great change impressed itself vividly on his childish memory. He remembered how, when his parents thought it right that their children should attend the Sunday school attached to the chapel, his mother, like the true lady that she was, went to the school they had been used to attend, and, stating her reasons for removing them, thanked the superintendent and teachers for their kindness to her children. Of the superintendent it is recorded that—

He was surprised, and though sorry to lose us, was much gratified at the attention mother showed in calling upon him. He said that often enough children had left their school for another, but this was the first time a mother had called to see him before taking them away.

Then there was the day school! What would the Education Authorities say if they had to send inspectors to such places as that where I and my brothers were taught the mysteries of the spelling-book! I can see one of the schools now: it was 'up an entry,' as we say in Manchester, or what would in Leeds be called a 'ginnell,' that is, a narrow passage. At the end of this was a little cottage of two rooms, one over the other. Here hundreds of children first began to climb the ladder of learning.

From the dame-school he was passed on to a boys' school, where 'the lads were rough and sometimes

cruel,' but the master was 'very gentlemanly and sedate.'

One of the poets has sung of the English boy :

The brave, free-hearted, careless one,
His dread of books, his love of fun.

There was no 'dread of books' in the boy Thomas Champness. 'Love of fun' there was in plenty, and this often got him into trouble. It was difficult for him to be grave, or to allow others to be so. 'Mischief' was what the teachers and schoolmasters called it; what it really indicated was an intensely active and buoyant spirit, not easily 'led in harness,' not always conformable to rule and order, and needing guidance and admonition rather than punishment. But the love of books was born in him. All who knew him as a boy tell how he would read eagerly, intently, almost everything he came across. Fancy the little fellow at school, gazing into the book-case of his schoolmaster, containing what was called 'the school library'! He 'longed to be one of the privileged few who were allowed to take these books home to read.'

One day [he says] I summoned up courage to ask the master to grant me the boon of membership. I can see myself now, a little lad, *in a white pinafore*, short of my age, and trembling as I made the request. 'No,' said the master, '*you are too little!*' He did not, could not know that not a big lad he had would prize the books as I would. It may be I did not lose much, yet I feel I did then suffer a loss which has not yet been made up.

After a while, a day school was begun under the chapel where we attended, and I was sent to that. The master was a queer compound! He must have been very passionate, for he would sometimes throw his ruler at the boys; still,

he had some good points. He could tell a story in a matchless manner, and it was he who gave me my first idea of the beauty of history. How dramatically he used to tell the stories of the past, and fascinate us with tales of warriors and philosophers in bygone times ! I shall never be out of that man's debt, though he was at times cruel, at least, one could not help but think him so, when he made one's stupidity the reason for violence.

School days, however, had to come to an end ; the boy could read and write and do a few sums, and now work must be sought. He was 'a very little chap,' but he must be roused early in the morning and sent off to the factory. All his life he would shudder at the sound of a loud bell—hideous reminder of 'the signal for beginning the day's slavery.' This was before the passing of the Factory Acts, and the lives of the little children were indeed made bitter to them. Of this time Thomas Champness wrote in after years :

Since I have had children of my own, I can understand mother saying that she has gone to the door and wept bitterly, as she watched her little son going to work. But there was no help for it, and I don't know that I am any the worse now. Children nowadays are protected by the laws of the land, and it is well ; but I like to think that in those days I helped my mother to get bread for the others younger than myself.

He does not appear to have been long in this mill, but long enough for the memory of its sorrows and solaces to abide with him. Other 'places' were sought, for he had to earn his share of the daily bread. He was for some time employed in a solicitor's office. Of this place he says, 'I had not half enough work here.' This was a thing he could not have borne very long ; if he could not be at work he would have been in mischief,

and the temptations were very strong ; in fact, the danger was greater than he knew, and it is well that he had to leave the office for some place where continual occupation left the devil less chance to ruin him. I can well imagine that his next situation, at Messrs. Hale & Roworth's, Booksellers, in King Street, suited him well ! Fond of books and reading, even the outsides of the volumes in a bookseller's shop would have a charm for him, and how delightful to be the first errand-boy in a new shop !—

I got the place before the stock was placed on the shelves, and helped the masters to polish their counter. My work was to take down the shutters, brush out the shop, dust the place, and then be ready to take out parcels. What a lad I was to walk ! Broughton, Cheetham Hill, Longsight, Old Trafford, all over the suburbs I had to trudge. Not many lads worked harder, but I liked it and was very happy.

While working as a warehouse-boy he met with an adventure which, as he says,

nearly ended my life. Under the engine-house there were some vaults which were used as stores. . . . To fetch these stores I had to go down the steps into the firehole, and go past the boiler into the vaults.

One day I went down as usual, little thinking what was to happen. There was some kind of a well under the floor, covered with a trap-door. I had walked over it many a time, not knowing of its existence ; but this day some one had been looking into it for some reason or other, and had not put the trap-door on, so I walked in without knowing where I was going ! What a surprise for a lad thirteen years of age ! I don't remember touching the water, but I do remember coming to myself and feeling, ' I am going to be drowned ' ! Then, as now, though a great coward before danger, when I came to it I was steady, and, lad as I was, I pulled myself together, and

thought what had I better do. Sure enough, I saw a book I had read some time before, telling those who were in danger of drowning to keep quiet and not to struggle, and especially not to put their hands over their heads; so I forced mine down somehow; I got hold of an iron pipe, and began to climb by its aid, till I was at the top, and came forth, to the surprise of every one who knew the dangerous spot I had been in.

One of the first thoughts I had was, God had spared my life to be a preacher. Though I was not a good lad, I had many thoughts about good things, and quite intended some day to become a Christian.

The rest of this chapter is almost entirely autobiographical. I have compiled it from two booklets written by Thomas Champness more than twenty years ago. I should find it difficult to be as picturesque in any description of his home and childhood as he is himself in the paragraphs which follow.

John Rattenbury was in our circuit about that time, and at his best as a preacher. Eh, but he was a mighty man! and his voice used to make me wince! There was something in its very tones that vibrated through my soul. How he could say, 'Sinner, come!' Oh dear! it was enough to lift you out of your pew, whether you liked or not. I dreaded him coming to the chapel, and used to watch him as soon as he came into the pulpit, to see where he would open the hymn-book. If he gave out a hymn from the middle of the book, 'Believers Rejoicing,' or 'Seeking Full Redemption,' then I felt, He is going to talk to the good people, I shall get off; but if he opened at 'Exhorting Sinners to Repentance,' or 'The Goodness of God,' or 'Mourners Convinced of Sin,' I gave up, and knew I was in for a very sorry time. Never shall I forget his preaching to the young; it cut me up, and I can see him now, with his black hair and wonderful eye, with his hand beckoning you to Jesu's feet; and yet I could resist all this!

We often had local preachers, of whom the most popular was a hired local preacher—a Lincolnshire farmer, Mr. George Nicholson, whose memory I found fragrant in the Louth Circuit many years later. He was a wonderful man to talk, both in the pulpit and out. He often used to preach in the open air, and could get a congregation easier than most men.

At these open-air services my father and several others would stand round to help in the singing. How well I remember some of them! There was one who earned his bread, as I afterwards earned mine, laying bricks. It was his place to stand in front of the chair, and Mr. Nicholson would use his head as a book-board, and would thump his skull as he was wont to thump the pulpit, and the dear fellow would stand like an anvil. One Sunday, however, he appeared with his head adorned with sticking-plaster, having had a fall from the scaffold during the week. Mr. Nicholson jumped on the chair, and, forgetting the accident, called out as usual for Brother Baguley; but, said he, 'Not to-day, Mr. Nicholson; not to-day,' tapping the sticking-plaster as an excuse.

There were some fine men among my father's companions. I can see them now! None made a greater impression on me than Mr. Williamson. He used to wear a long kerseymere topcoat, and in his pockets (so deep they seemed!) he carried tracts and missionary notices. It was from him that I got my first ideas on missions. He used to come to see us on Saturday evenings. Father was not the man to shirk any of the duties belonging to him, and used to bath us boys on Saturday nights. After our tub we put on our clean night-dresses, and were allowed to sit awhile round the fire, looking like a lot of choristers. Good Joseph Williamson often came in, and one time he brought out of his deep pockets a copy of *The Missionary Notices*, with a picture of Mr. Freeman preaching in Ashanti. It was a very crude picture (if I recollect rightly), but the story fascinated my young heart. Little did our friend suppose that the round-faced lad sitting there in his clean nightdress would some day talk to that Mr. Freeman on the same African coast! but so it was. . . .

For many years we sat in the free sittings at chapel. They were just in the right place—not upstairs, but near the door on each side, with a high screen at the last one from the pulpit, so that any one who wished to hear a sermon or a prayer without being seen could do so. Mother used to call it ‘Nicodemus’s corner.’ In chapels nowadays the seats near the door are the places chosen by what are called ‘the principal friends,’ and the poor, and those who are not well dressed, must be content to walk the whole length of the aisle, and, if late, run the gauntlet of all the eyes of those in the pews. I like the old way best, though.

From my earliest recollections of my mother I know that she was my father’s greatest friend and most trusted adviser. She was older than her husband, and had not only a good judgement, but keen instincts that hardly ever failed her. She could read character like a book, and used to have promptings and spiritual leadings like one of the old Friends. What a wonderful gift mother had of expressing her ideas! It was only very seldom any one heard her pray in public; but she used to call us children round her and pray so as to bring a blessing on us. She had a laconic style, and could say, in a few pointed words, what was difficult to forget. When she was angry she could talk in splinters, and her words could not be easily got out of where they stuck, but would prick and fester in the conscience. I shall never forget some of her sayings. Though only a poor woman she was ladylike in sentiment and action. For instance, she used to say, ‘Be sure you say “Sir,” when you speak to one worse dressed than yourself.’ She could not bear cowardice, idleness, or untruthfulness. I am not sure which was most contemptible in her eyes. Sometimes she would resent disobedience by irony or sarcasm that hurt worse than blows. She once reduced me to abject submission for some act of rebellion by saying, ‘I am told that the poor old people in the workhouse are allowed tea and sugar only when their friends take it to them. I hope my children will bring me an ounce of tea sometimes.’ Oh, dear! I cried with grief as I saw myself walking up to the workhouse

gate with a small parcel of tea and sugar to be left for Mary Champness! I felt sure that such conduct as mine would end in a heart so hard that it would shut the mother in the work-house, and I promised myself that I would be the best of boys in the future.

She did not go to chapel in the morning. It was the one thing in which she would never obey her husband. Sunday's dinner must be cooked on Sunday. He, dear man, would rather have had her by his side at the morning's service, especially when it was some preacher he loved, than the best dinner ever cooked, but she was inexorable. 'No, Charles,' she would say, 'you don't get a nice dinner all the week, but while I'm living you shall have one on Sundays.' And so she did not get out in the morning, but she went to class in the afternoon, and chapel at night.

The baby always went to chapel, and there was a host of them! I, being the eldest, remember the others longer than they can remember me. Somehow mother had the secret some women have not, of keeping the baby quiet. Father made with his own hands (for he was a clever amateur carpenter) a footstool for mother to put her feet on in chapel. And there it was, in our free seat. I am only a poor man, but I would give something handsome for that footstool!

Ah me, for the days of lang syne, gone, never more to return! How those good and happy people we called father and mother wrought and toiled for their children! With what joy they watched us grow up! How anxious they were for us to turn out well! How they prayed for their offspring, and laboured with their prayer to train them up in the good old way! All God has done for me and by me, every soul that I have been permitted to turn to Christ, as well as those whom I have helped to bear the sure cross which comes to all, I owe to CHARLES and MARY CHAMPNESS, who made my early days a time for sowing the seed of which it will take all eternity to reap the harvest.

Of this good mother one of her daughters says :

She was the mainspring of our home life ; while my dear father was all that was good, he was very severe, and mother was just as loving and forgiving.

To all this I can add my personal testimony. I only knew my husband's mother in her later days, but she was worthy to be praised. A woman of great sagacity and penetration, Mary Champness had the motherly gift ; kindly, loving, and warm-hearted, she could help the weak without deeming herself superior to them. A most industrious housewife, she yet found time to cultivate her mind ; she was remarkably fond of reading, and would lose herself in a romantic love-story like a schoolgirl, even when the weight of years was upon her. As a young woman she must have been delightful, and I never wondered that her sons and daughters should revere and love her. It was true of her that 'the heart of her husband did safely trust in her.' The love between them deepened as the years went on, and they had joy and comfort in their children.

CHAPTER II

THE YOUNG MAN—AT HOME AND AT WORK

WHERE so many influences combined to make religion appear the most desirable duty of life, it is small wonder that Charles and Mary Champness saw their young people growing up towards God. There was no lack of cheerfulness, merriment, and laughter in the home; but at the back of all there was the serious purpose of the father and mother, and their daily prayers were known to each other and to the children. The friends who frequented the house were Christians, and, as would have been said in these days, they moved in 'an atmosphere' of religion.

Thomas Champness writes concerning this :

Both our parents were in earnest about the conversion of their children. It is as yesterday, so deep an impression did it make on my mind, that I heard my father say something that burned itself into my soul. It was a summer's day; there had been the lovefeast at our chapel, and mother had not gone. It was tea-time when father reached home. He sat down at the table, and mother helped him to a cup; but a little afterwards, when she looked at him, she saw he had not tasted. 'Charles,' said she, 'what is the matter?' He replied, 'I have been to the lovefeast, and have heard other folks' children rise up and speak of God's grace, but no child of mine was there.' Oh, but it cut me to the heart!

It was one Sunday, during this time, that my father took me a long walk, and I saw for the first time the town where

I now live. Rochdale would be eleven miles from home. At that time, and for many years afterwards, there was in this town a somewhat eccentric but useful Baptist minister of the name of Kershaw, who was intimate with my grandfather, a Baptist of the Baptists, one of the strictest of the sect. Mr. Kershaw had been to London, and had preached at the chapel where my grandfather was a deacon, and my father was anxious to know how his father was, and how he looked. Accordingly, as he could not afford to ride to London, he would walk some Sunday to Rochdale, hear this Mr. Kershaw preach, and then ask him how the old man looked. That was the plan; so one fine Sunday morning we set off to walk, and trudged the road in grand style; but to our dismay Mr. Kershaw was not at home that day, and we had our journey for nothing!

However, it was an outing, and we would make the most of it; so, not to return by the way we came, we walked on to Oldham, and back to Manchester. The Rev. William L. Thornton was preaching in Oldham Street Chapel, so we called in and heard him. I shall never forget how stiff I was when the time came to leave. I staggered along the road, and was some time before I could stand upright; but it was a glad day, and father and I had a grand time.

George Street Chapel, Hulme, was the spiritual home of the family for many years. No wonder memories of those days should have survived for long in the hearts of such a household.

One of his brothers says:

We lived in a street behind Duke Street, called Abraham Street, and quite near to George Street Chapel, the place of worship we attended for so many years.

Another of our homes was 27, Leaf Street, still near 'our chapel.' Several families who attended the chapel lived in this street, and were our friends and companions.

I remember that Tom had to take his turn at rocking the

cradle, but he was a great reader, and he would avail himself of this opportunity to read, for he had a piece of twine tied to the cradle, while he stood at the window reading, and so absorbed was he that he was often found rocking when the child was fast asleep.

For several years father was detained at his employment from six a.m. till eleven p.m. He was a foreman, having two sets of men under him, so that the machinery was going both night and day. At such times mother would gather us around her, and I can remember how we would spend the evening in telling tales by turns, till bedtime came, and in her husband's absence she would read the Bible and pray with her boys. Father was apt to be very strict, and would punish disobedience or other wrongdoing very heavily. But the rod never brought my brother Tom to repentance; he would stand any flogging without giving in, and father had to try another way. He had only to say, 'Tom, I see grey hairs on your mother's head, and they are caused by your bad conduct,' to bring the lad to sorrowful tears.

My husband's brothers and sisters all have recollections of his kindness of heart, his helpfulness and affection. It is very beautiful that such memories should cluster around the early life of one concerning whom loving words could be spoken right to the end of his days.

His eldest sister writes:

I was so much younger than Tom that I only remember him as a young man. He used to have to 'mind' us girls on a Sunday night when we were too young to go out. Then on weekdays I remember him as the bricklayer. Once, when he had come into dinner at twelve o'clock our sister Sarah, then a very little girl, had been run over close by our own door, and he picked her up and carried her down to Deansgate to the doctor, who said she was not hurt, but

we were to keep her in bed for a day or two ; so Tom carried her back, and on his way home he bought her a big doll.

Another sister writes :

Tom was full of life and fun with us little girls, and when it fell to his lot to mind the house, we all knew we should have a delightful time. He would play with us or get us round the fire and give us some useful object-lessons. One I can remember was a long clay pipe, with which he used to try and teach us how they make gas from coal. He liked to teach us to be truthful, and never to be idle ; he liked fair play and everything straightforward in all our games. Some of our girl-friends have wished they had a brother like Tom. He would give us coppers, but we had to earn them, either by cleaning an extra pair of boots for him, or doing something ; we have run half a mile for a halfpenny, but Tom was satisfied we had earned it. I have seen him preach in George Street Chapel with three fingers and a thumb wrapped up ; being a brick-setter at that time he often hurt his hands. He was a rare reader ; mother has left him sitting at the kitchen table reading when she has gone to bed, and has found him there in the morning, and he has gone to his work as bright and thankful as if he had slept on a feather bed.

His brother William says :

One of the main features of my dear brother's life was his wonderful industry, and as I remember him in the days of long ago that is the strongest point about him. My recollection of his constant industry reaches into every day of his young life. I well remember, when he was only eleven or twelve years old, how he would be called up at 5 a.m., father bringing him a thick piece of bread, and whilst dressing he would eat it, then say his prayers, and be off to work by 5.30, and not get home till 7.30 in the evening. I remember how hard he had to work, but there was no word of complaint. I can see his broad, merry face now, as on

the Monday he would sit down to his tea, and, as he ate it, read from a book procured from the Sunday-school library the day before. This he would thoroughly enjoy until he had to do something for his mother, or until nine o'clock, when she would open the Bible and read from it, mostly the Psalms, or some portion from the Proverbs. As she read she would give a strong, sharp, emphatic tone to some of the words, to remind her children of something wrongly done or left forgotten during the day. Then off to bed, a piece of candle being given with the kind good-night kiss, and a warning to be careful of the light. Tom would bring out of his pocket a bit of newspaper or a small book, and read for a few minutes, before the call came, 'Is your candle out?' Then he would have to say his prayers and undress in the dark.

For some time it was my joy to work with him at the Brook Street Mill; and only a few years ago, when talking over old times, he said, 'Eh lad, thou used to be asleep as we went to work!' Since my dear brother's death, I have been in thought back to the old days and the then familiar scenes, and can remember a certain barber's shop, kept by an enterprising man who used to put books in his window, and re-arrange them every Friday. Tom would say, on our way from the mill, 'Let us call at the shop, and *see if he has turned a fresh page!*' Great was his joy if he found fresh food for his ever-hungry mind. If by any chance he missed the connexion of a tale he would try and get some lad to buy that book, and then lend it to him, or tell him the story. Borrowed books were eagerly devoured and quickly returned, and such was his love of reading that in the winter he would get the Sunday-school librarian to lend him two books at a time.

When Tom was fourteen or fifteen years of age he was an expert cricketer; he was a tricky underhand bowler. Near to our home there was a large piece of land, upon which the Hulme Town Hall now stands. Often in the summer months he would have me up before 4 a.m. that we might have an

hour or so of cricket before we went to work. On our way to the open space he would 'knock-up' several other lads, and then, with two bricks on end and one across the top, we would have a fine game. It is quite true the pitch was not a perfect one; my brother would soon have us all out; he could put a lot of work on the ball, and alter his pace every time, and once he had got us all out we would have quite a big leather-hunt, for no ball came amiss to him; he would play them all.

A few times we got him to play in a club match, and he always fielded at point when it was not his turn to bowl. It was seldom he lost a catch, for he seemed to cover half the field. In after years, when I have had the pleasure of spending a few hours with him on the Old Trafford ground, I was always much interested in the remarks he made, which not only showed how closely he followed the game, but also the keenness with which he could see the points of interest in batsman, bowler, and field. He was very fond of watching 'Johnny' Briggs bowl, and would talk of the way he carried his head with the ball. Of course, when he was in his teens he was very much occupied with his trade, and it was seldom he could have any time for games except in the early mornings, but he was a keen sportsman when he had the chance. About this time he met with an accident which very much tested his powers of endurance. I used to go with him twice a week to the doctor, for he had a bad leg as the result of this accident, and the doctor said he ought really to have laid up; but he would go to his work, and 'proud flesh' formed, and at every visit to the doctor there was the 'bluestone' used, and for some hours after the pain was most severe, and he would put his arm on my shoulder to get home. Then he would spend a few hours turning over in bed, and yet at five o'clock next morning he would have the leg dressed by mother's skilled and tender hands, and go off to work cheerful and happy. He would say, after he had been at his work an hour or two it would get easy, and so he was quite happy. He was happy now from another cause, for he had been to the Cross of the Lord Jesus. With him it

was once for all, and he would say that he never lost the consciousness that his sins were gone. He must have had many a cross from the age of fifteen to twenty, but I never remember him saying so. His faith was simple but strong, and he counted it all joy.

Trade Unionism had not much influence in those earlier days; a man could work all the hours of the clock if he liked, and Tom put in all the time he could. I remember, when the window-tax was on, he was busy blocking up windows when other folks were in bed, for I did the labouring for him; and at one house, where the owner agreed to pay so much per window, he earned enough to buy some books. Bricklayers and others at that time were paid in public-houses, but Tom's master was a good Methodist, and so he would pay his men at his own house. He was no book-keeper, and so Tom had to go every Saturday about five o'clock. I can see him now—cleaned up, and, as he would have said, with his 'chapel-going coat on.' He would examine each man's time-sheet, and enter details in a book kept for the purpose, and then the master would pay. This would perhaps keep him till 9 or 9.30, and was a serious matter. When he began to preach, an arrangement had to be made by which he could go earlier, and get the time-sheets ready, so that he could leave and be home and at his preparation by six o'clock. How different things are now! I remember, when I went to the Brook Street Mill, part of my duty was to shake the hanks that came from the dye-house. We had all sorts of colours. The black dye I liked well, and the blue, but the scarlet was very knotty and full of bits of dye-wood; and many a time, when Tom knew the scarlet was about, he would come round and give it a shake-up, and make my little heart glad: he would do it so well and so quickly. Then, with a kind and encouraging word, he would fly off to his own job. Coming up from the mill we had to climb a steep 'brow,' and there used to be an old man with a handbarrow selling vegetables. He was often about as we came out for dinner, and Tom would get hold of the barrow and push it up the street to the top for him. The dear old man

would follow, almost out of breath, to say, 'Thank you, my son !' It was his nature to be always helping somebody.

He was very much in request as a workman when he grew older, and ladies would come to the house asking that he would go to re-set their grates, or put the boiler right for the next wash. I remember that some would even wait for weeks, till the master would let Tom go.

His youngest brother says :

One of my earliest recollections of Tom is, I was not well, and my mother thought that a visit for the week-end to some friends at Radcliffe would do me good. After working all the week, my brother Tom took me on the Saturday afternoon. I trudged by his side across Manchester, but soon got tired, so he took me on his back and then across his shoulders nearly all the way. I well remember our resting several times going up the hilly road. We returned on the Sunday evening, and so tired was I that he had to carry me nearly all the way back, some ten or twelve miles. I know it was to encourage me to keep walking that he kept me supplied with sweets by the way.

During the late 'forties a public fast was proclaimed—the cause of which I do not remember. Service was held at Radnor Street Chapel, and we were present. Father carried out the fast very strictly, and we only had a small piece of bread for breakfast, so that by the time the service was over at noon we were very hungry. There was a big congregation, and as we slowly passed out of the chapel two gentlemen caught sight of each other. 'Hullo !' said one, shaking hands with the other ; 'you here ? Come and have dinner with me.' We lads looked at each other, and when we reached the street our Tom told father what we had seen and overheard. Said he, 'If those swells think it right to have dinner on a fast-day I think we ought to have some too.' He persisted in this theory all the way home, and told of the little scene, and his own views about it to mother, with such eloquence that she

quite saw it from his standpoint, and we fared much better than we should have done but for Tom's strong feeling and eloquent reasoning.

Tom was wonderfully fond of reading ; nothing came amiss to him. When anything special appeared in the papers, particularly at the 'Budget' time, he used to read in *The Manchester Guardian* the speeches of John Bright and other leading men. He read them, not merely once, but many times. Doubtless his strong Radical views started with his early reading of these speeches, coupled with the chats he had with mother. She liked to have these particular speeches read to her, and as Tom went through them would comment by the way.

When he was working near home, so that I could take his breakfast or tea, he would tell me to be sure and remind mother to wrap the bread and butter in *something he could read*. Then, wherever he was working, on a roof or in a cellar, he would read all there was to read while he ate his food.

At various odd times, and generally during Conference, some friend lent father *The Watchman*. Tom used to read it, but considered it very slow and poor.

During the Chartist riots in Manchester two of us went to Stevenson Square and Lever Street and saw the rioters pulling up cobble paving-stones with their knives. When we returned home and told what we had seen, Tom strongly expressed himself in favour of the rioters and against the authorities. He lived to see the various privileges and rights that Radicals and Chartists then worked and fought for granted, and all through his life his sympathies were very strongly with the working classes. If in his younger days he had taken to politics instead of the ministry I think he would have been a long way up, if not at the top of the political ladder.

CHAPTER III

CONVERSION TO GOD

THE great change in Thomas Champness which we call conversion came somewhere between the years 1849 and 1853, when he was about twenty years old. During one of the last years of his life he wrote down and placed in my hands this fragment of autobiography, which tells the story.

MY CONVERSION

From the time my father and mother were brought into the fold of Christ, they did all in their power to win their children. I often say that I am my parents' convert. The consistency of their lives, and their great and constant unselfishness, greatly impressed me.

When quite a child, the Bible was a fascination to me, and my young heart was greatly touched by the stories of Holy Writ; but the first time I felt anything of the love of Jesus Christ was at the re-opening of George Street Chapel, or it may have been the opening of it, for it was a long time ago. Father told me how he took my brother John and myself. He was a poor man, and not able to give much, and the children could give nothing, but they would take up room. One of the magnates of the circuit tried to keep the man with the children back, but he was never turned back in his life; most likely he was not one of that sort, so he pressed forward. The preacher was Robert Young. He spoke on the sufferings of Christ; this is all I remember, but the impression can never be erased. For the first time in

my life I felt my little heart touched by the story of the Cross.

—It was many years after that I came again into contact with the preacher. He was the Superintendent of the City Road Circuit when I was a candidate, and I was billeted in that house! (But of this farther on.)

It was my father's practice on Sunday evenings to read and explain the Bible, and offer prayer. For many years we saw very little of him; he worked till late at night, so we were in bed when he came home. But Sunday he gave to his children. I have heard some of the greatest preachers of my time, but never was so affected by any one as when father was speaking to us on Sunday nights. It would have been well for me if I had yielded in those days, but bad company and vain desires prevented me.

When about thirteen years of age I was greatly moved by a sermon preached by a very remarkable man, the Rev. —. He was pale, and had a deep voice, and a most moving manner. He preached from '*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*'—and I *was* almost persuaded. How well he preached! There was something most moving in his delivery. I can see him now, and hear his tones! Ah, if I had yielded then, what a difference it would have made to my whole career! Preaching would have been taken up earlier, and instead of being a candidate at twenty-five, it might have been twenty, and the Institution! All along my life, punishment has been meted out by reason of ignorance and the want of ability to study. Let me, however, be thankful for such help as the Lord has given.

My younger brothers were converted before myself, but I seemed hardened and unlikely. However, my mother never gave me up. She had destined me for the ministry, and she let me know it. Often would she say, 'The Lord will answer my prayer, and I shall see you a minister.' The story of Monica, the mother of Augustine, was a great comfort to her. When I was worse than usual she would say, 'This is not the way to the pulpit, my son.' And I knew she was right,

and that preaching was my duty ; but the love of company, as well as the desire after sport, kept me back.

It had always been a joy to me to think of the time when, my apprenticeship over, it would be easy to find work in some distant place, where racing and boxing would be practicable. It had always been my desire to see a prize-fight, and few Methodist preachers know as much as myself of the exploits of the great fighters. Ben Caunt and Bendigo were the great champions of that time. How I longed to see them set to !

About that time (1849-1851) Alfred Barrett came to the circuit (Oxford Road). He was a very nervous man. It was distressing to see him when he began the service. How his jaw dropped, and his whole frame trembled ! but when he began to pray he did better, and by the time sermon-time came he was his own man. It was a curious thing that this highly spiritual man should touch my coarse mind, but he did, greatly, though very few folks knew. Most likely mother knew, for the preacher who touched me touched her. How she seemed to understand me ! and when the man in the pulpit was knocking at her heart, I knew !

After a while I was persuaded by a young local preacher, called John McLean, to go to class. It was Enoch Harrison, the superintendent of the Sunday school, a popular and earnest man, who put my name in his class-book. I have heard many stories of his excellence, but none of them too great to be believed by any one who knew him. It must have been somewhat of a trial to him to have such a dullard in the class, going there nearly every week, and apparently getting no nearer to the light. My soul was in earnest, but somehow, no one put the truth before me as it could be grasped. If any man ever needed a teacher who could show Jesus the Substitute, it was myself. The fifty-third of Isaiah was the line that should have been made prominent.

Our house was a small one for the number who lived there, and there was little opportunity for retirement ; so early in the morning I rose and lighted the fire, and then studied the Bible

for myself. Perhaps it was well that this should be the case, for the plan of salvation after a while became plain to me, and has never been obscured since. Enoch Harrison, though, was at his wits' end! He had never had such a case. Two years of seeking and no finding!

One class-night, John Smalley, the chapel-keeper, was Mr. Harrison's substitute. He was an original thinker, plain and somewhat dogmatic, but thoroughly good. When he spoke to me, he said something of this sort: 'Thomas, the Bible says, "Ye shall find Me, when ye seek Me with your whole heart."' It was a hard saying, but it did me good, for it made me pray more than ever.

Gradually, however, the truth came to me. Very slowly I saw that my sins had been punished, but so gradually did the darkness pass I never could say exactly when I found peace. It might have been said that it was like a train coming out of a tunnel, very slowly; so much so that one could not tell when it began to be light; but the light came, and there has been no tunnel in my experience ever since! It was twilight for some weeks, though not the twilight of evening, but of the morning!

One day it came into my mind that I would go and see John McLean, the man who took me to class, and who tried to help me many a time. It was in my heart to ask him if he thought I might rejoice a bit, as the darkness was not so great. When I reached his house he saw me coming, and when we met he said, 'Tom, you need not tell me what you have come for! You have found peace, for I see it in your face!'

Happy indeed was the poor seeker! And very soon people knew there was a change in my feelings. Not so much in my conduct, for I had been living a strict life for some time. How the hymn-book helped me! And indeed things were altered. Formerly, if a religious biography came into my hands, I read it as far as the man depicted found salvation. That was all I cared for. James's *Anxious Inquirer* was a little help, but there was too much of it. What I needed was to see that

Jesus had borne my sins in His own body, and that I had not to bear the punishment, since He had done so.

As there was no date, so there was no doubt of Thomas Champness's conversion. He did not become a strait-laced, narrow-minded Christian either; but though, as he says, his outward conduct remained the same, the sunshine came in and lit up all his life; his 'feelings were different.'

The men of varied gifts and of different grades in the social life of the Methodist Society and Sunday school at George Street, who were made useful in bringing Thomas Champness to Jesus, deserve honourable mention here. First, there was *John McLean*, the devout local preacher, who kept his eyes open, and 'button-holed' the youth who was so outwardly good and 'strict,' and yet was manifestly unhappy. This man had the spiritual insight which God gives to soul-winners, especially to those who are on the look-out for seekers after light. He came at an opportune moment; and, the invitation to class having been accepted, the way was open to further effort and prayer.

Mr. William Champness tells us of *Enoch Harrison*, the class-leader, a Cheshire man, who began life as a farm-boy. He got a little education at the village school, and when he reached his teens he came to Manchester. Step by step he climbed the ladder of commercial enterprise, until he became the head of a large business house.

When Tom first knew him he lived about a mile from George Street. He was always the most attentive officer of the school—there on a Sunday morning at 8.55, and in the

afternoon at 1.55. Bright and cheerful, kind and thoughtful, he won his way with both teachers and scholars. He was for some years a great force in the school and chapel. Liberal and full of resource, we boys felt that to get his smile was to get something worth having. He took great interest in the social life of our family, and was one of those gentlemen who thought 'Tom too good to be a bricklayer. He always hoped to see him a preacher. He and his family were bound up with ours in a remarkable way, and when he was taken with the brain fever from which he died, my father went to nurse him, and never left him day or night. He died a young man, and was a great loss to his home, his business, and the Church.

It is characteristic of Manchester that her sons who prosper in life should care for others, and in spiritual life this is no less true. Manchester has more than *merchant* princes to-day; there are yet the Princes of God, the Israels who have 'power with God and with men, and prevail.'

It seems almost an anti-climax that, after all, a few plain short words spoken by the humble chapel-keeper, *Old John Smalley*, should be used by the Holy Spirit to bring Thomas Champness to the point of decision; but so it often is: a simple phrase, a message through a very ordinary channel, may open up whole fields of thought and feeling, and change the course of a life.

Around the Sunday school, in many cases, cluster the friendships of early youth; and in his time Tom Champness, as he was called, gathered to himself a little knot of chosen companions, who formed a small 'league,' or 'band,' and were known as 'The Lads.' They were four in number. The Rev. William Armistead, himself a veteran minister and former missionary, writes concerning this happy group:

I was one of the four 'lads' who were chums in those early days. Eli Sowerbutts, another of us, became the secretary of the Manchester Geographical Society, and died a year or two ago. Joseph Hallworth still survives, after a prosperous career in Manchester. My memory, I am sorry to say, does not supply me with much of incident concerning the earliest years. I think we must have been together in the day school, but Tom was nearly three years my senior. I do not remember who was his teacher in the Sunday school before he entered Mr. Somerset's class. Mr. Somerset put all his scholars under such obligation to him by his care for them, long after they had grown up and passed into the world, that all others seemed to 'the lads' only like stars in the firmament of which he was the sun. I entered the ministry in 1858, a year later than my friend.

The tie of friendship between these four 'lads' was tenderly cherished by Thomas Champness all his life; though circumstances severed them from each other, they were all dear to him. I remember being with him at the last service held in 'dear old George Street' before the place was handed over to the Manchester Mission, and how deeply his feelings were stirred as he greeted his old chums 'Eli' and 'Joe,' as he always called them. With many others present on that occasion, he felt overflowings of heart, as memory recalled the associations of that hallowed building, but he would not allow either his friends or himself to mourn the past. How cheerily he reminded them in his address that they had 'not come there to buy a coffin for George Street,' but to 'rock the cradle' of the new Mission that was coming the child of Hope and of Faith, that should arise and carry on the glorious history of the kingdom of God in that much-loved place!

Mr. Henry Somerset, to whom allusion is made by

Mr. Armistead, was another of those grand men who helped to mould the Christian character of Thomas Champness. His influence was that of a cultured Christian teacher, a man who could write beautiful and inspiring letters to the young men under his care ; one who combined in his conduct strength with gentleness, saintliness, and common sense. He was the friend, not only of Thomas Champness, but of his father and mother ; and his name and memory were held in great honour by my husband, who ever spoke of him with the deepest respect and affection.

There were others connected with George Street who had long prayed for the conversion of this lad with the bright face and the almost ungovernable spirits, *T. T. Pearson* and *Richard F. Allen* among them. It was of the latter that Thomas Champness said many years after to a friend at Gee Cross, Hyde :

I remember on one Sunday afternoon at George Street I had got some trouble with my teacher, and the superintendent, Mr. R. F. Allen, took me into one of the vestries to talk with me. You know the kind of man he was, full of sympathy and love ; he talked to me in his own loving way, and the tears came into his eyes. Now, if he had thrashed me I could have stood it, but I could not stand his tears ! But when he put his hand on my head, and said, ' Now Thomas, why cannot you be a good boy, like Joseph Albiston ? ' that steeled my heart, and I felt as if I could have punched Joe Albiston's head !

Perhaps the good superintendent forgot how easy it is to go too far ! But the patience and forbearance of these good men had a greater effect than they knew ; the memory of their kindness remained with Thomas

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Champness, making him patient, tender, and forbearing with hundreds of young men in after years.

The 'Joe Albiston' of whom mention is made here became a life-long friend of his old Sunday-school mate, whom he has survived, being an honoured and beloved minister in Australia.

CHAPTER IV

THE CALL TO PREACH

ALWAYS a diligent reader, Thomas Champness became, after his conversion, a most eager student, especially of the Word of God ; and from the memory of his own experience he would, in after life, encourage and stimulate the industry of other young men. He had small patience with the young fellow who made excuses for ignorance, remembering how he had worked hard for his living and yet had found opportunity to teach himself, as well as to learn of others, how to understand the Bible. One of his favourite sayings was, 'The way to learn to be a preacher is to preach.'

Anxious as he was to get on the Plan, it was with fear and trembling that he went to interview the Superintendent minister on the subject.

One evening [he says] I came home from my work, cleaned myself, and set off to the Super's house. I was shown into the kitchen, and had to wait there while the maid went to tell her master that 'there was a lad in the kitchen who wanted to see him.' When he came into the kitchen my heart failed me, and I devoutly wished that the floor would open and swallow me up ! The Super, a big, stout man, stood over me, and said, 'What is it you want, my boy?' Somehow or other I managed to stammer out that I wanted to be a preacher. The reply was, 'But are you aware that the local preachers of this circuit are a very superior class of men :

a *very* superior class?' There was no more to be said, and I was thankful to find myself safely outside!

This reception was almost enough to discourage the young working man, but he felt the call to preach, being at the same time conscious both of his ignorance and of his latent powers; so the rebuff of the minister only sent him to his knees, and to his Bible. And in obedience to the Divine Spirit, as there seemed to be little chance of getting on the Plan, he determined to preach without being properly authorized. Borrowing a chair from his mother's parlour, he began on a piece of waste ground near by. I have heard him tell how the love of Christ constrained him so that he could not contain himself, but must tell his neighbours and friends of Jesu's power to save them. Very soon large gatherings held on this waste ground attracted the notice of 'the preachers' meeting,' and they gave him an opportunity to prove his acceptability; he was sent out 'on note,' preparatory to being proposed as a local preacher.

Examinations had now to be faced, and there was not much leisure for study. One of his brothers tells how—

For some time before going on the Plan as local preacher, he studied hard and late. This caused him oftentimes to talk and ramble in his sleep. In the early morning of his examination he was thus talking and rambling while asleep, evidently going over questions and answers. I particularly noticed his answer to the question on Repentance. Later on, I told him how much he had talked in his sleep, and mentioned that I thought he seemed most troubled over the answer on Repentance. He asked me what answer he had given, and when I told him as well as I could remember, he exclaimed: 'That is right; it is just what I wanted, and what I shall say. What I could not work out when awake has come to me in my sleep!'

Having successfully passed these examinations he became in due course a local preacher 'on trial,' and was soon fully employed. He was speedily known as a soul-winner, for he seldom preached without seeing conversions. In this connexion a story came to my knowledge quite recently. One Monday morning, on going to his work as a bricklayer, the young 'local' was accosted by one of his mates with, 'Well, Thomas, any souls saved last night?' 'Yes, glory be to God! Two!' was the joyful reply; on hearing which another of the men, himself a preacher among the Primitives, cried out, 'Thomas, I wish I could say that!'

All this time God's hand was guiding; very soon Thomas Champness outgrew the bricklaying, and with it cast off the rough exterior which may have caused the minister to misjudge him. The need of earning his living was as great as ever; but he aimed at self-improvement, and promotion came to him in the way of his duty. The change came about on this wise, as one of his brothers tells:

He went to work where they were building some cottages, and before the end of the first day the foreman came to him, and said, 'You are doing too much work; you must do less; keep time with the next man.' Tom said, 'I am here to lay bricks, and I shall do an honest day's work or none.' The man replied, 'Well, the other men will not work with you.' So Tom had to leave. This was just before the final step which altered all his life's course. I remember one evening when I got home, he said, 'Well, Billy, lad, I've laid my last brick.' By this he meant he had left his trade. Mr. Potts, who was a local preacher, and had an insurance office in the city, had made an opening for him as his assistant, at the request of Mr. Ralph Waller, of Withington. Tom had been entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Waller to dinner or tea when he

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had preached at the old chapel at Withington, and the old gentleman was kind enough to do him a good turn by using his influence with Mr. Potts on his behalf.

There were other kind friends interested also in Tom ; and when he had been with Mr. Potts some time he was told that there would be some clerks needed for the Art Treasures Exhibition about to be held in Manchester. He made a written application, and was sent for. There were a lot of all sorts, and Tom was chosen for one. The General Secretary, Lieut.-Colonel Hamilton, took him into his office and made him his letter clerk. All letters came to him, and he prepared a ' digest ' of them, and put it into a book kept for the purpose, entering the number of the reply, so that any one could see at a glance the subject-matter of the letter and refer to the reply.

He had a good memory, and was orderly and industrious, so that he found favour with his superiors. The colonel and other officers showed him many acts of kindness. Tom made it a rule to do each day's work in the day, and that kept him many times till the small hours of the morning.

In the meantime the evolution of the local preacher is incidentally described by some entries in the *Minute Book* of the Oxford Road Circuit at this period, for a copy of which I am indebted to a Manchester friend. The young candidate was, as has been said, 'on note.'

March 12, 1855.

Local Preachers' Quarterly Meeting, Oxford Road Circuit.

Thomas Champness has been heard by Mr. Allen.

T. Champness to be heard by Messrs. Gibbs, Butters, and Swindells, and report to the next Quarterly Meeting.

Rev. John Vine presided.

June 11, 1855.

Rev. John Vine, Chairman.

Messrs. Champness and ——— remain on note another quarter.

Brother T. Champness is to be heard by Messrs. Allen, Makinson, Waggett, and Willshaw.

Sept. 10, 1855.

Rev. J. J. Topham presided.

It was resolved that Thomas Champness and _____ have their names introduced on the Plan on trial.

Dec. 3, 1855.

Rev. J. J. Topham, Chairman.

Messrs. Prescott, Slater, and Willshaw are appointed to hear Brother Champness and report to the next meeting.

March 3, 1856.

Rev. J. J. Topham, Chairman.

Brother Willshaw moved, and J. Potts seconded, that Brother Thomas Champness be received on the full Plan.

Also Brother Champness is one of the names that may be appointed in the open air, Medlock Street, and River Street.

Monday, Sept. 8, 1856.

It was agreed to have a week of Special Services at Rusholme. Messrs. Willshaw and Champness to arrange the preaching.

Monday, Dec. 8, 1856.

Rev. J. J. Topham presiding.

The week of Special Services at Rusholme not having been held as agreed at last meeting, Messrs. Willshaw and Champness are requested to make arrangements for the same during the present quarter.

Arrangements for Watch-night Service at Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Messrs. Makinson, Champness, and Stafford.

It was during his local preachership that another most helpful friend came into close contact with Thomas Champness's life, one to whose wise counsels he always felt greatly indebted, and with whom he

was associated for many years—the beloved Thomas Willshaw of Manchester. Mr. Willshaw was, as we have seen, one of the ‘brethren’ officially appointed to ‘hear’ the young man. And no doubt he was one of those local preachers referred to by the Super (of the interview in the kitchen) as ‘very superior’; but being ‘superior’ did not make Thomas Willshaw anything but a sweet-natured, kindly, and considerate friend of young men; and we may be sure that it was in the true spirit of brotherly kindness that he listened to the ‘trial sermon,’ which may well have been one the notes of which I have found among my husband’s private papers, labelled—

EARLY SERMON WHEN LOCAL PREACHER

Lighthouses.

I. Joash, a promising young man, 2 Chron. xxiv.

1. His attention to the advice of his servants.
2. His zeal for the house of God.

II. His fall.

1. Began to keep bad company, 17.
2. Neglected the house of God, 18.
3. Hardened himself against reproof, 19.
4. Became ungrateful, 20–22.
5. Punishment, 24.

III. Lessons to be learned from him.

1. That early promise is often blighted (guilt and innocence).
 2. That we should pay attention to the advice of those who are older than we.
 3. Shun bad company.
 4. Never neglect the house of God.
- To accomplish this, get our hearts changed.



From a Daguerreotype.

THOMAS CHAMPNESS, WHEN A LOCAL PREACHER:
AGE ABOUT TWENTY-FOUR

They were life-long friends ; and though there is no record of Thomas Champness having been, as a young man, a member of the celebrated ' Thomas Willshaw Theological Class,' he was always a welcome visitor there, and became one of its vice-presidents. He loved and revered his friend, and the affection was heartily reciprocated. Only by a little while did the elder precede the younger to the eternal blessedness of heaven ; now they are again together in the holy and happy state of the saints above, and who can tell their joy as they sing the praises of Him who guided them both in paths of loving service through long and useful lives ?

The *Circuit Minute-Book* has this one more reference to the young preacher :

Sept. 7, 1857.

Brother Champness having been accepted as a missionary to Sierra Leone, his name be dropped off our Plan.

It would be easy to moralize on the apparently cold formality of this official record ; no word of cordial or loving commendation of the ' brother,' no mention of his life-long association with the church, or of his godly parentage. Simply and barely recording the fact, with no poetic fancy or prophetic insight, not even the prayer of ' God speed him,'—merely '*Dropped off our Plan.*'

But this was only a 'Circuit Minute-Book' ! There was no indifference among the praying friends who had watched over him from his youth up. They would remember how often they had sighed as they met him Sunday after Sunday, and longed for him to be converted to God. Then, too, he was the son of good

Charles and Mary Champness, and the men who knew their history, and honoured their useful lives, would rejoice with devout gladness as they prayerfully commended their young friend to God and sent him forth as their own representative to the heathen world. Of course they made him the subject of a presentation, and for many years he carried their silver watch about with him, wearing it out in missionary service. I have the old watch yet, with its inscription :

Presented to Mr. Thomas Champness, by his friends in the Manchester 5th Circuit, on his leaving England for Western Africa as a Wesleyan missionary, September 15, 1857.

You see, they had not got used to his being dubbed 'Reverend.' In fact, it took years for some of these kind but near-sighted people to '*discover*' him ; and he was wont to amuse himself at times as he thought of the half-unconscious patronizing attitude of some towards him. Whether he was mistaken or not, he certainly thought that to them he was always and only 'Tom Champness,' who used to be 'the worst boy in the school.' But this, again, was not the feeling of his own best friends, who could see, in the bold, high-spirited lad and the diligent youth, the promise of a great life that should be spent in the greatest of all service.

The appointment to foreign mission work was to himself the realization of his dreams. Always the thought and purpose of his life had been to be a preacher, and the eager boy who had listened to the *Missionary Notices* being read at his father's fireside had imbibed a love of adventure which now ripened into a longing to be one of those who should 'go out into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' In

His own way God had enabled His young servant to overcome his disabilities, and by patient industry and manly courage to fit himself for his life's work, so that when the time came for him to leave the Art Treasures Exhibition for Western Africa, he bore away with him, as he has often told us, a letter of recommendation 'that would have got him a job anywhere.' Henceforth his course was marked out. God had placed His hand upon him, in the full vigour of manhood, and was about to say to the Church, by the Holy Spirit, 'Separate Me Thomas Champness for the work whereunto I have called him.'

A letter sent to us since his death gives a vivid picture of the ordeal in London which decided his future career.

BEDFORD, *Nov.* 18, 1905.

The Rev. Thomas Champness and I first met at the District Synod held in Manchester in the year 1857. We were examined by the Rev. Dr. Hannah, at the July examination in London. We were both billeted in John Wesley's house, with the Rev. Robert Young, who was Superintendent of the City Road Circuit, and President of the Conference. We slept together in one bed. He was so nervous about the approaching exam. and trial sermon that he had not been able to shave himself for two or three weeks. Yet, when on the Monday we stood before the Exam. Committee, and the usual question was put to him as to the extent of his offer, he replied: 'I offer for the world.' The President inquired: 'Will you go to Africa?' 'Yes, if you send me.' 'Will you go to Sierra Leone? Before you answer, let me tell you that Sierra Leone is the white man's grave. In front of the Freetown Chapel there is a row of graves on each side of the walk, and a young missionary lies in each grave; some of them lived only a few months. Will you go?' With the greatest calm-

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ness imaginable he courageously replied : 'Yes, if you send me.' The heroism of that prompt reply I shall never forget. And, as is well known, the Conference did send him ; and a few weeks later he sailed to the land of the white man's grave.

I wish to pay this tribute to his memory, for he was one of the bravest men whom I have known.

RICHARD HARPER.

CHAPTER V

THE MISSIONARY: SIERRA LEONE, 1857-8

THERE is no part of this man's life-story more thrilling and romantic than the period of his missionary career. What a rapid march of events ! One year from the time when he was received on Full Plan he came forward as a candidate for the ministry ; and then, almost before his friends had time to realize it, he was accepted, and under orders for the foreign field. With no college training, with next to no experience, he was sent to one of the largest missionary circuits in Methodism, with a membership of nearly four thousand, and with difficult circumstances awaiting him, of which, by-the-by, he seems to have known nothing when he set out. Those at the head of the Missionary Society were wise and far-seeing men ; George Osborn, one of the Secretaries, was acquainted with the young preacher's family, and probably 'knew his man.'

Thomas Champness, we may be sure, had no fear. He was young, robust, and enthusiastic ; the fire of youth was in his blood ; life was all before him, and he was ready for anything in the service of his Lord and King. To his father and mother it was honour indeed ; the answer to their prayers, the realization of their highest ambitions for their first-born son. There was little time to think it all over before he was gone. Last

visits to friends, leave-taking, parting, and then—the new life began. It was ‘a future all unknown’ to the young preacher. He set out with a light heart, happy to have been chosen for foreign work, full of eager interest and delight in the new scenes which unfolded themselves to his view. He at once began to keep a journal, and from the entries therein the letters which were so welcome at home were composed, and posted once a month—for there was then no such luxury as a weekly mail. His father and mother treasured these letters, and during recent years they have passed into our possession. From them, and from passages in the journal, I propose to quote as required. In these modern days, accustomed as we are to stories of missionary adventure, there are yet some who will like to know how Thomas Champness found it in the ‘fifties,’ and how the missionary work of those days was accompanied and crowned by the blessing of God.

Before leaving he spent some days in London, as the guest of the Rev. George Osborn, who, as Missionary Secretary, no less than as his father’s friend, ever showed him great kindness. On Sunday, September 20, he preached at Bayswater, and, in a letter to his parents, he says :

When I got into the pulpit, who should I see in the congregation but the Rev. William Arthur! Oh dear! I did tremble, and was fit to drop. But I did better than all my fears, and before I was half-way through had perfect liberty. He wished me to go to supper, but I declined. He then shook me warmly by the hand, and wished me God-speed.

This was a pleasant incident, to be remembered with joy during the many years he was privileged to enjoy the friendship of this great man.

WESLEYAN MISSION HOUSE,
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE,
October, 1857.

MY DEAR PARENTS,

I arrived here on the 13th inst., was very kindly received, and, from what I can gather, am likely to be very happy.

On September 23 I left London for Plymouth. A valedictory service was held at the Devonport chapel, where Bro. Cooper and I were ordained; the service was conducted by Mr. Osborn, who preached the charge. I am sure you will be delighted to think that Mr. Osborn should ordain me; several other ministers assisted, one of whom was Mr. Geden, father of our Mr. Geden. . . . Nothing could exceed the kindness of the friends in Devonport and Plymouth. . . .

Sept. 24.—After spending the morning with Mr. McKenna, his wife and sister, I embarked on board the ship *Gambia*; . . . took leave of Mr. Osborn, and felt it extremely, he having been very kind. Mr. McKenna informed me that he is likely to go to the North of England next year; if he should be near Manchester, I should like you to see him, and thank him and his lady for their kindness to me. They took me to see as many of the beauties of Plymouth as time would allow. . . . Mr. Osborn and a gentleman named Pope very kindly hired a boat, and got all our luggage on board for us, without our troubling in the least. At 5.30 we left Old England; it was very hard to bear, but it is the will of God. 'The love of Christ constraineth us.'

Mr. Bridgart did not go with us, he comes out next month; so there was only Bro. Cooper and myself; but we met a clergyman on board who is going to Freetown to take charge of the 'Lady Huntingdon' churches. He is very agreeable, and we found his company very much to our taste. . . .

He suffered much from sea-sickness, but soon recovered, and was able to enjoy his first sight of land. On October 1 he says:

Landed at Madeira, an extremely beautiful place ; it seemed like Paradise to me.

Oct. 2.—Saw the Peak of Teneriffe, sixty-five miles distant. Arrived there at night ; it had a very picturesque appearance by moonlight.

4th.—This was a happy day. I was much more comfortable than on the preceding Sabbath. We held divine service ; the bell was rung for all hands to clean themselves and come to 'church.' A meat-safe with a sloping top covered by the Union Jack made a very good reading-desk. Mr. Trotter, the clergyman I told you of, preached a first-rate sermon from 'There go the ships.'

5th.—Saw many porpoises ; we were in very deep water ; the sailors hove the deep-sea lead, but could not get a bottom. I am told that some parts of the sea which we sailed upon are one mile and seven-eighths deep. 'How marvellous are Thy works, O Lord !'

6th.—Saw shoals of flying-fish. They are very curious. I thought they were birds, but I soon found out my mistake. They are about the size of a mackerel, and have fins which expand like wings, and when pursued by larger fish they leap out of the water, and by means of their fins keep out of the water for some short time.

7th.—Very fine day, but a stormy night, much lightning, and the sea lit up with a phosphorous light, sparkling like fire. Arrived at Goree, a small island, held by the French, and very strongly fortified.

9th.—Arrived at Bathurst, River Gambia, which looks very picturesque from the sea. Went on shore with Mr. Cooper, who is appointed to the Gambia Mission. Was kindly received by Mr. Gurney (the resident missionary, now going to Lagos), dined with him, and had a service in the evening at the chapel, a congregation of five hundred people. Mr. Trotter preached from 'Father, the hour is come,' after which I spoke, and Mr. Cooper concluded with prayer.

We left the next day.

11th.—Held service again ; Mr. T. urged me to preach, but I declined. He preached from 'So he bringeth them to their desired haven.'

13th.—Early in the morning sighted Sierra Leone. A few miles from the harbour we came alongside a 'Slaver,' which had been captured near Lagos, containing 230 slaves. A party of the man-o'-war's men who took her brought her to Sierra Leone, and we towed her into the harbour. She is a splendid vessel, a Yankee, built for quick sailing. When the poor wretches felt themselves moving towards Freetown they gave a great shout of joy ! Poor things ! many of their number have died from dysentery caused by overcrowding. The ship will be broken to pieces, to prevent her ever being used for the same purpose again. Landed at Freetown, and was made very welcome by Mr. Teal, who is the only English preacher in the town, Mr. —, the Chairman and Superintendent, having gone to Teneriffe by the last mail for his health, as he was suffering from fever and depression of spirits, brought on by the loss of his wife, who died of fever lately.

This is a very beautiful place ; the mission premises are built on the hillside near the barracks, and command a beautiful view of the sea. While I write, at my study window, I can look out and see a beautiful cocoanut-tree waving its graceful branches almost within arm's length, orange-trees laden with fruit as full as any apple-tree ; and such luscious oranges, better than those you buy in England.

Mr. Dillon, the other English preacher, who is at Wilberforce, a few miles from here, has come down to see me. He has been nearly four years in the Colony, and not been seriously ill yet, so you see this place is not so bad as it is painted. There have been plenty of people to see their new preacher. They nearly all ask how I left you and the rest of my friends ; then they say : 'It big job to leave frens, bery hard ; much hard work ; we glad to see you, sah ; when you preach ?' Another says : 'We often go to ship to look for preacher, but he no come ; very glad you come, sah,' and so they go on, bidding me welcome in the best English they can muster.

I preached my first sermon on Thursday evening to a good congregation, from 2 Thess. iii. 1.

I hope the friends will send me plenty of letters. You cannot tell what a comfort they are to me. Even the letters I received before I left London are read with great interest many a time. Newspapers, too, can be sent for a penny; so tell the friends that if ever they have a newspaper they think will interest me, to send it. If you can ever get a London *Times* send that. I have seen some of the things which the ladies made, and I can assure you they were gladly received. Mr. Teal says the box was one of the most useful ever sent. What we want most are shirts and trousers to fit boys from six to fourteen years of age; many of them wear nothing but long shirts. Do not send pin-cushions or things of that sort, however useful they might be in England, seeing there are not many pins here.

I hope the cause of missions will be assisted at George Street through my being here. If I am to leave my bones here I shall never regret having left home, for I am sure many souls are saved through our efforts here.

Yesterday was my first Sabbath in the Colony. I preached twice, and met two classes for tickets (there were seventy-five members in the two classes), lectured the children in the Sabbath school, and I can assure you I was properly tired, but this morning I am all right. I do not think there is any occasion for alarm; I am strong, and have a good constitution. I am, and intend to be, very cautious. I wish you could have a peep at my comfortable and clean bedroom and study; I am sure you would be pleased.

Nov. 18, 1857.

MY DEAR PARENTS,—I was delighted with the letters received from you and other friends. If you could have seen the eagerness with which I was looking out for the mail . . . with telescope in hand I was scanning the horizon, with the hope of seeing what contained treasure of mine! Presently we thought we saw smoke; then it disappeared. Again we thought we saw it,

until at last the mail hove in sight, and as soon as she dropped anchor we boarded her, for we expected our Superintendent, who, as I told you, has been to Teneriffe to recruit his health. We found him on board, and brought him on shore in the boat; he is much better. . . . As soon as dinner was over, the boy brought our letters, and everything was suspended till we had read them, which, so far as I was concerned, was no small affair. I hope my father will keep up his 'diary' style of writing, for by writing by degrees he does not forget anything; only I want him to use good ink, as in the latter part of his letter.

The dated paragraphs in these letters are specimens of his own 'diary' style of writing. As letters could only be mailed about once in a month the plan of noting down noteworthy incidents made his correspondence fresh and exhilarating.

On October 21 rode over to Wilberforce to see Mr. and Mrs. Dillon. This is a most beautiful place, on the top of a high hill, looking off into the Atlantic. Mrs. D. is a coloured lady, very accomplished, having had a good English education.

22nd.—Visited some of the day schools; was much pleased. You would laugh if you heard some of these youngsters shouting out the multiplication table, &c. They made me very welcome, shouting all at once, 'Good morning, sah!'

Nov. 2.—Visited Bathurst day school, had all the elder ones round me, and after a little exercise in arithmetic gave them a lecture on coal. They were much delighted, and crowded round so as not to miss a word. The teacher listened as eagerly as any of the rest.

8th.—I preached at the Lady Huntingdon Chapel . . . the people did open their eyes, and 'clerk' in fine style. . . . I am told I am getting a character for plainness of speech; the Lord give me grace to improve my one talent! I dined with Mr. Trotter, but during dinner was seized with toothache,

and all the afternoon was in great agony. I went to Dr. Bradshaw to have the tooth extracted, but he said there were four decayed, and if he took one he must take all. I could not afford to lose four of my teeth, and agreed with his advice to bear the pain with patience.

9th.—Visited Dr. B. again, for I was in great pain. He applied some nitric acid to my teeth, and they have been a great deal better. With regard to your question as to white people; very few attend the services. . . . One pew would hold them all. But there are many persons in a good station in life who have obtained good positions by their own thrift—mulattoes or West Indian-born men; all, or nearly all, the refined people attend Bathurst Street. It is our 'Radnor Street' as far as congregations are concerned. Among them is the Colonial Secretary. I often call to see him, and spend the evening. He is very clever, and very good company. I find I need to be well up when I speak at Bathurst Street, but somehow I have lost all fear.

11th.—Had a prayer-meeting at Bathurst Street to bid farewell to some of our friends whom we are sending up the Niger to explore the country, and see where we can fix mission stations. These men were stolen from Central Africa, brought here in slavers captured by our cruisers, have been educated and converted, and now have gone back to preach to their fathers and relatives, and to find out the most suitable spots to fix European missionaries. This is a great work, and we expect great results. It was a fine meeting; the chapel was crowded, and after the men had all spoken, we—that is the ministers—spoke to them and to the people.

18th.—Mr. Coe, my new colleague, arrived from England. After breakfast I went down with him to the ship to get his baggage. On my return to the mission house I heard that an aged minister, a Mr. Brown, who was out here forty years ago, had arrived. I have since seen him; he is a nice old man, sixty years of age. I think it is a great mistake for him to come out here, but he has pleased himself.

Sunday, 21st.—During the afternoon attended Buxton

School. Most of our scholars there are adults, and it is interesting to see old men and women learning to read. I sometimes give these old folks a lesson. I go up to an old man poring over his 'G-o-go' and I say, 'Well, dada, you know how to read?' 'No sabby, massa.' 'Ah, no sabby? How that?' 'Him hard!' Then I begin; but I cannot put it on paper. I wish you heard me; you would laugh.

Dec. 2.—This morning early I set off to Aberdeen, about four miles distant, to preach missionary sermons. Rode as far as the creek, and there took canoe; crossed over to the other side. On arriving at the beach, I saw a heap of wood, and on the top of it an empty porter-bottle. I said to the canoeman, 'Dada, what bottle lib there for?' 'Him gregree' (charm), said he. 'Ah,' said I, 'he no good.' He then told me that the people would not steal the wood so long as the 'gregree' was there. Mr. Teal, who was with me, laid hold of the terrible 'gregree,' and flung it into the water, at which the canoe-man laughed heartily. We then proceeded to the teacher's house, where we made some tea, which we had brought with us, and got breakfast. We then went to the chapel, where I preached from 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.' We spent the rest of the day on the seashore. At night we held the meeting, at which, of course, I had to speak.

1858. *Jan. 1.*—This is the first day in the New Year. I pray God that it may be the best year I have seen. May I be holier and more useful than ever.—Amen.

About one o'clock Mr. Teal, Coe, and myself set off to Fowrah Bay, to see the new Bishop. He received us very kindly indeed. On my return I called in at Mr. Trotter's chapel; they had invited me to the tea-meeting. As the representative of the Wesleyans I had to make a speech, and, from what I hear, gave satisfaction.

11th.—The mail is in again, and, praise the Lord, all is well.

12th.—Tea-meeting at Zion Chapel; it was a very grand affair, and we had some excellent speeches. I did not make a speech, but when the vote of thanks to the ladies was passed,

the chairman said he thought some bachelor ought to respond. I jumped up, and said, 'I am a bachelor, but it is not my fault,' &c., &c. I had the luck to get into the vein for a few minutes, and got such cheering as I little expected. It seems I have got my name up famously through it.

13th.—Mr. Gurney, who is going down to Lagos, has landed here, and I have spent some time showing him the place.

Jan. 19, 1858.

MY DEAR PARENTS,—I do not know how you find it, but the time goes very quickly with me, and the mail comes in before I realize that the month is gone. I can see that my probation will be over directly, and if I have my health, it will be very pleasant; but I do not even hope to have health all the time. Europeans must expect sickness, and you must not be alarmed if you hear that I am down with fever; it is what all my countrymen have to pass through. Mr. D—— very kindly suggests my not doing too much; but what can we do? Our people are only babes in Christ, and need a great deal of care; we must look after them well if the cause is to go on; but I shall be as careful as possible, consistent with my duty.

You ask about the seasons; I shall, from time to time, tell you what kind of weather we are getting. Just now the Harmattan wind is blowing, and the natives are wrapped up to keep themselves warm; it is a cold breeze from the east, much disliked by the people; we new-comers, however, open our waistcoats so as to get as much of it as possible. We are now in the dry season, and shall have no more rain for months. Some days it is very warm indeed; this morning I am sitting at an open window, in a suit of white, glad of a breath of fresh air.

You also ask what the people do for a livelihood. Well, they follow different trades. We have blacksmiths, tailors, farmers, shoemakers, fishermen, printers, butchers, carpenters, painters, masons, besides a host of traders. The people are very fond of trading, and are always glad to drive a bargain. There is a

great gold trade carried on here ; men come down from the interior, three months' journey, on camels, bringing gold, which they exchange for Sheffield and Manchester goods. So that this is a lively place ; you would be much struck with it.

On December 20 I was not well enough to preach. On the 21st felt a little better, but not able to read. 22nd, Mr. Wilson, our native minister at York, called to say he was about to return to his circuit, and would be glad to give me a bed. I consulted my colleagues, and then I and Mr. Coe decided to go for a few days. We hastily packed a few things, and set off about two o'clock. After a pleasant sail we arrived at York about 9 p.m. After a cup of tea we retired. When I came to lay me down, my first thought was that the bed was stuffed with branches of trees, it was so hard. You used to think my bed at home was hard, and I liked it well, but this was dreadful!

23rd.—Had breakfast, and then sallied forth in search of adventures ; rambled to the shore, and sat under the shade of a large tree growing close to the beach. Presently a girl from whom I had bought some oranges brought a small bench for me to sit upon. I next discovered that I was in the neighbourhood of an ants' nest ; for before I was aware of it I was covered with black ants, which bit me severely. I soon beat a retreat, but though I left their territory they continued to bite me, and Mr. Coe had to beat them off with his pocket-handkerchief before I could get free.

24th.—Early this morning we took boat again for the Bananas, some small islands a few miles farther down the coast. As we passed along we saw thousands of fish, mackerel and all, in shoals. Many times, too, did we see the terrible shark, which came very near our boat. A man would have no chance for his life if he fell out of a boat here ; the sharks would have him directly. When we arrived at the Bananas we met with Mr. Reader, an English merchant, on his way to Sherboro' country, trading ; he had called at the island on his way down. He was very friendly, and told me that there were on this island plenty of caoutchouc trees, which might be cultivated here to advantage. Took boat

again, and sailed over to the little town of Kent, a most beautiful place. The Church Missionary Society here has a beautiful house and church. We have only a small chapel. Arrived at York about eight o'clock. This is Christmas Eve. I can lay myself down; there is no occasion to keep awake—no band of singers will assemble around my window, singing of the Saviour's birth. I am not in England, but in Africa; but still one likes to draw pictures of what is going on in the old home.

25th (Christmas Day).—How different to last Christmas Day! I thought much of home, and should have liked to have sat around my father's table once more, but not to stop! I am in my right place, and I feel very happy in my work. At ten o'clock I preached at York Chapel to a large congregation on the angel's message to the shepherds. It was a good time.

26th.—We stayed indoors all day until evening, when we took a long walk into the country. It was very amusing to watch the children (who very likely never saw a white face before) run as if they saw a wild beast.

27th (Sunday).—At ten o'clock Mr. Coe preached a good sermon from Gal. v. 1. In the afternoon I preached at a little chapel at the other end of the town. In the evening, Mr. Wilson, who is appointed to the Gambia Mission, preached his farewell sermon, after which Mr. Coe and myself spoke. The large chapel was crowded.

28th.—Returned to Freetown. As we were going to the boat I heard cries and screams. We rushed to the place and found that a snake, one of the most poisonous kind, had got into one of the houses and frightened the people; and little wonder, for they said its bite was death. When I saw it, it was among some stones and bushes. I got a large stick and soon dispatched it. The people screamed with delight, and clapped their hands and shouted, 'Tankee, dadda; tankee, dadda!' We then set sail towards Freetown. We rode in the boat as far as Sussex, where we got out and walked along the beach to the next village, where the boat met us. Between the two villages we had to cross a river in a small canoe, made

out of the trunk of a tree, just the inside scooped out ; it was with the utmost difficulty that I could keep my balance, and to get more on one side than the other was to fall into the river. We took boat again at Hamilton, and arrived at Freetown about midnight, half famished ; the wind having been against us, it took us nine hours to accomplish the journey. When we got into the mission house we made our way to the larder and soon demolished some ham and bread, and then sought our couches.

29th.—During the day I called to see old Mrs. Rock, one of our members, who had been bedridden two years. She was very grateful, and very happy in the prospect of soon going home to her rest. Old Dadda Rock was almost frantic with delight at my calling to see her, and kept saying ‘Tankee,’ and ‘My young minister,’ &c. In the evening I went to the Church Missionary meeting. Mr. Teal made the speech of the evening, and I was delighted, and proud of my colleague.

30th.—Studying a sermon on ‘The Barren Fig-tree.’

31st.—Concluded my sermon and preached it at the Watch-night at Gibraltar Chapel. It was a soul-stirring scene. When I got there, a little before the time, I found the chapel filled, and some of the people sitting outside. During the sermon I was obliged to restrain myself, or the people would have been unmanageable. After I had spoken a local preacher said a few words, but I had to request him to stop, there was so much excitement. The people seemed like those we read of in Mr. Wesley’s *Journal* ; they fell down as if in a fit, and some of them foamed at the mouth. I was quite calm, but you may be sure very excited, and I fully expected to have some illness after it. I again mounted the pulpit, and spoke a few words of advice in a soothing manner to the penitents upon the plan of salvation and the way of faith ; they seemed to drink it in, and five persons found peace through believing. I was glad when midnight came, for I was completely exhausted. During the night we were visited by a tornado ; such thunder I never heard.

CHAPTER VI

THE MISSIONARY: SIERRA LEONE, 1858

THE letters and journals, which form an almost continuous narrative of this year, are written in a picturesque style, making the scenes they depict very real to us.

Jan. 5, 1858.

MY DEAR PARENTS,—A steamer is about to leave the harbour for England, and I shall just have time to scribble a line to say that I am very well and very happy. I hope you are all the same. I thought a good deal about you on Christmas Day, and should have liked to have been with you.

Our District Meeting commences to-day, so that I am sure of having plenty to do for the next ten days, it being to us what the May District is at home.

We have two young men 'coming out' (Natives), and I am appointed as one of those who are to hear them; so you see how soon things change. Only the other day I was preparing for the terrible District Meeting, and now others will have to preach before me. Do not suppose that I am getting proud. Oh no. I do not think I have ever felt more of the spirit of humility than I do at present. I believe I am growing in grace as well as knowledge. My labours are being blessed to the people's good, and I am sure that I am much beloved by them, so you see there is everything to encourage one.

I am now quite well, which is a great mercy, for this is a bad climate for Europeans, and we are compelled to take great care of ourselves.

I hope your missionary meeting passed off well. Some day I hope to stand on George Street platform myself and tell of my missionary life.

Feb. 19, 1858.

I feel grateful for the many kind things said about me at the different missionary meetings, and I wonder how it is that I should have drawn forth so much sympathy; but I cease to wonder when I remember that I am a commissioned preacher of the gospel which is to save the world—it is my position and not myself.

Jan. 24.—Preached at Bathurst Street from ‘Seek ye the Lord while He may be found.’ Afternoon, attended a love-feast at Zion Chapel. I wish you could see one of our lovefeasts. There is no waiting; the difficulty is to keep the people quiet; they are very excitable, and have not the same notions about keeping their feelings to themselves as you have in England.

25th.—Spent a good deal of time to-day in writing a fair copy of my sermon on ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ I find it good exercise to write out my sermons; they assist me in composition, and if I can write out a good many sermons they will be something for me when I return.

26th.—Read a little Watson’s *Institutes*, &c., and then went to visit a sick member; returning, I heard the sound of a drum, and saw a large number of persons crowded round a body of men, hideously dressed and painted; one of them represented Satan, and they were dancing to the sound of the tom-tom. I stood watching them a little time, and then beckoned them to stop drumming, and the people called out to the dancers to stop; they did so, and I began to address the people in as solemn a manner as I could, showing them the wickedness of these licentious dances. The dancers, afraid that I should spoil the fun, began to drum again for the purpose of drowning my voice, but the crowd insisted upon them being silent; I spoke again to the people of death and judgement; in the meantime the drummers sneaked

off and began their performance farther on. However, the greater part of the people stayed, and I continued to preach to them. When I had done, I said: 'Well, now, is it better to serve God or the devil?' 'God,' cried the people; and then I left them, amid cries of 'He talk good; tankee, dad-da. Tankee, white man!'

I then called to see James Turner, one of our Bathurst Street leaders, and to my great delight I heard that my sermon the day before had been made useful. I praised the Lord for that! It seems that a man who had been a member some years ago, but had not been to chapel for years, had heard something said somewhere which the Holy Spirit applied, and he thought he would go to chapel. He came to Mr. Turner and said, 'I want to join class.' 'How is that?' 'Oh,' said he, 'I go to meeting yesterday, and I see one white minister. He say, "I not know you, I cannot read your heart; but God knows you, and if you are a sinner, you will be lost if you die."' The Word was quick and powerful, and the man is reclaimed. Praised be the name of the Lord!

Mr. Turner asked me if I had been out in the work before I came here. I said 'No.' He said, the people say: 'How is this young man know we black people, and he talk just as if he had lived here all his life?' You must not suppose that I talk to them from the pulpit in broken English. Oh no; but I do aim at simplicity of style, and try to make the Word of God plain, and by the blessing of God I have succeeded very well.

Feb. 4.—At half-past six this morning set off from the Queen's Wharf on an excursion with Mr. Trotter; he was going to a place up the river for the purpose of arranging with the chief respecting the establishment of a mission at one of his towns. Mr. T. very kindly invited me to accompany him, so with one or two more we set off. We had a fine boat, and four men to pull us. R. Elliott, the pilot, accompanied us, as he is familiar with the rocks and banks with which the river abounds. There were Mr. Trotter, myself,

Dr. Witt (an American missionary who is also a surgeon), and Mr. Chardin, a gentleman who is trading ; so we formed a very nice party.

The Sierra Leone river is very fine, three or four miles broad ; and as we passed along we saw pelicans and eagles flying over our heads ; the scenery on the banks was very pleasant. We rowed up to a place called Tasso, where we landed and breakfasted, after which we set off. At Tasso we fell in with the captain of a ship which is taking in a cargo of timber ; he was very kind, and insisted on our calling at his ship as we came down again. We promised to do so. We passed a place called Bants Island, which was once one of the strongholds of slavery. It was one of the first slave dépôts, and was very strongly fortified ; it was taken by the French during the war after three days' fighting, and was never used for slaving afterwards. The ruins of the fortifications are very picturesque.

The scenery is charming ; the river is studded with beautiful islands covered with tropical vegetation. About 5.30 we arrived at our destination, and were very kindly received by Mr. Bentinck, one of the 'Lady Huntingdon' people, who is trading in timber. He has got together the people on the Sabbath day for divine worship, and has a few children in a school. Mr. Chardin and Dr. Witt went into the bush for the purpose of shooting a little game ; it got dark, but they did not return, so we began dinner without them. After a little while Dr. Witt came in and said that he had lost Mr. C. somewhere. So at once we despatched parties of natives with torches to search for him ; they carried torches to frighten away wild beasts, which abound in African forests. After three or four hours' searching, firing guns, ringing bells, burning blue lights, &c., they managed to find him. When he came in, his clothes were saturated with the dew, and he had a very narrow escape of fever. Dr. Witt gave him some medicine, which he had brought with him, and, by the blessing of God, he was all right next morning. It was well that he was found, for African forests are not like English ones,

where you never meet with anything worse than a fox. In Africa you stand a chance of making a leopard's supper !

5th.—The next morning I was up in good time, and went to see the sunrise, and I am not surprised now to see so much fever on this coast. It was just like a November morning in England ; the vapour rising from the river was like fog, while the stench which rose from the mud and mangrove-trees was sickening—the smell was like that of putrefying flesh. We in Freetown have the malaria blown to us on every breeze. We had prayers, and then set off in a body to see the king of the place. We took our guns with us to protect us from any leopard or alligator that we might meet with. We found the king in his palaver-house, seated upon a kind of throne, with his sword-bearers and messengers with him. He speaks very good English, having been educated in Freetown ; he treated us very kindly, was affable and pleasant. He promised Mr. Trotter that he would protect the missionary and try to persuade the people to send their children to school. We thanked him and then bade him good morning. So you see the Lady Huntingdon Society, though a very feeble one compared with ours, has mission stations out of the Colony, while we have none. I have offered to go into the Tunicee, or Susso country, as a missionary ; but the Chairman says that till some one is sent out to take my place I could not be spared, and the Committee refuse to send us any more men, pleading want of funds. What is to be done ? Are the heathen to perish, and the gospel at their very door ? For we are but a few miles from them ; but they must have some one to settle among them and learn their language. I will go, though the station would be an unhealthy one ; for I believe that Africa will have to be converted by the means of Europeans. There has been a good deal said about using native agency ; but the fact is, our native ministers are not willing to go. We had a stir in the District Meeting because they wished to send me or Mr. Coe away from Freetown, while they stayed there.

It seems strange, no doubt, to you that men who have been trained for the purpose of taking these out-stations wish

Europeans to go, while they take Freetown, where medical aid is to be got at so readily; but such are the facts of the case. The people in the Colony are, for the most part, nominally Christian, while out of the Colony heathenism abounds. I will go among the heathen as soon as the time comes; but I will not leave Freetown to go to York while there are native ministers to go. I think you will see what I mean, and I believe I am right in taking this position; but Mr. Teal will give you particulars when he sees you. . . . But I have left my story.

After seeing the king we returned to breakfast, and then started towards home. We rowed down to Tasso, where we found the ship *Imaum of Muscat*. We went on board, and received a hearty welcome from the captain, who had provided a first-rate dinner for us. He was very kind, and did his utmost to make us comfortable. We started for home and landed by eight o'clock, highly delighted with our excursion. Trips of this kind are very beneficial, as they form an agreeable change.

Thomas Champness was fortunate enough to see Livingstone in Africa, and would in after-life make use of his 'good luck' by telling of this incident in the course of his mission services. In a letter to his parents at the time he thus describes the great man:

We have the great African traveller, Dr. Livingstone, here. His vessel called here for coals, and so we have had a peep at him. . . . He is very like his portraits, looks very determined, and just the sort of man to do what he has offered to do.

Also, Mr. Campbell, the Consul at Lagos, is about to visit Manchester to report on the facilities for growing cotton in Africa. Lagos is about 1,500 miles from here, and is near the very nest of slavery. If Mr. Campbell lectures on Africa, be sure you go to hear him.

March 20, 1858.

Since I last wrote, I have had another touch of fever. I rode over the mountains to Gloucester, and as I rode homewards I felt very poorly. I got a cup of tea and went to bed, but not to sleep, for I was soon in high delirium. Strange to say, I cannot get even a little fever without becoming delirious. The doctor was sent for; he gave me some medicine which, by the blessing of God, soon lowered the fever and the delirium too. I used to think that nothing could have mastered me; but Sierra Leone fever soon makes one as weak as an infant. . . . I was also suffering from a large boil or carbuncle on the cap of the knee, which added to my weakness. I was taken ill on the Tuesday, and on the Thursday morning I got up to have my bed made; but was so weak that I fainted away. Mr. Coe and Mr. Chardin tried all they could to bring me to, but in vain. They then lifted me into bed, and got ether to bathe my forehead, and by that means got me out of the faint; but they said I looked like a dead man. I soon got all right, and now feel tolerably well, for this place.

Mr. Coe has had fever too, but is now recovered. . . . My work is still a great pleasure to me, and Sunday is my best day, though we have to work very hard, meeting classes, &c. God is owning my labours, souls are being saved, and I have every prospect of usefulness. What am I that God should use me in His service? Pray that I may be kept faithful, and that nothing may occur to compel me to leave this interesting field of labour.

His colleague, Mr. Coe, was very seriously ill at this time, and the rest of this letter is taken up with the description of the anxiety felt as to his condition, Towards the close there is this beautiful story:

4th.—To-day I visited a woman sick with the leprosy. It was a most distressing sight to see the poor creature lying in a miserable hut, no one to help her, no one to say kind words to her, often hungry and thirsty. My heart bled for her. But

amidst all this affliction she is very happy ; thoughts of the Saviour and of the home above keep that poor sufferer in a state of content. She said, ' Sometimes when I am very sick, and hungry, and in great pain, I pray, " Lord Jesus, take me home, so that I may be at rest." Then I say, " *What?* Do *you* tell the Lord what He must do ? " Then I say, " Thy will be done." '

16th.—This day I heard some good news, viz. that on the Monday evening after I preached at Portuguese Town the prayer-meeting was very well attended, and many persons were converted to God. Not only there, but also in their houses, they were led to cry mightily to God, and about fourteen persons found peace. The Lord be praised ! Pray that many more may be brought out of darkness into His marvellous light.

The next letter begins by explaining delays in the mail service, and, as will be seen, deals with many interesting experiences.

May 13, 1858.

MY DEAR PARENTS,—Your kind letters, with those of others, have quite cheered me. . . . The reason you did not hear from me sooner was that the mail steamer *Gambia*, after leaving this port, had to return, having broken her shaft, and so all mails were detained for a month. To make matters worse, the *Armenian*, which was down the coast, got aground at Old Calabar, and did not leave here till the first of April. In the meantime, however, a man-o'-war was sent with the mails to meet the Brazilian steamer at Teneriffe ; this vessel carried them to Spain, and from Spain they came to you. . . . We are anxiously looking out for a new man next October (two of the missionaries having left for England). . . . I do not know whether I shall have to go to the Niger or no ; but I am in God's hands. . . .

You ask me what kind of leaders' meetings we have. Well, at our Buxton Chapel we have often thirty leaders present,

and they take a great interest in the affairs of the society. Of course, in a large society like ours there are cases of discipline, and many times, young man as I am, I have to preside at the trial of members, and then exclude or put on trial, &c. May the Lord give me the grace I need !

April 20.—I received an invitation to a wedding dinner ; one of the Church catechists, a native, was married to the daughter of one of our native ministers, and so I attended the party, in company with the Chairman. It was held at the house of Mr. Ezzidio, one of our principal merchants, and a very sumptuous affair it was. These people like to imitate English manners, and it was a first-rate affair. Many ladies, some black, some coloured, and very intelligent and agreeable. After an hour or so I left, and rode up to Gloucester, where I preached to a few people, then rode home, and took the boat to the mail-packet, which was on the point of leaving, to bid farewell to my friend Mr. Chardin, who I think will call to see you. He has been very kind to me.

22nd.—Another slaver has been brought in.

25th.—Six o'clock, gave tickets at Gibraltar ; preached at ten from Rom. v. 1. The people sometimes stopped me by their excited cries of 'True, true !' and made it difficult to proceed. Gave more tickets ; visited Zion School, then off to another school ; at 5 p.m. went out to Grassfield, a part of the town where the poorest people live, many of whom know not God. I preached in the street to a great company of people ; then rode on to Buxton, where I had a very large congregation to hear me from Isa. lvi. 6.

26th.—Went to the new chapel. The work is progressing very slowly ; I make the men do it well, and if they do any bad work I am sure to find it out. They are quite astonished at this, and say : 'Neber see minister sabby like dat man ; he sabby too much !' So, you see, I am likely to be useful in more ways than one.

The workmen did not know they had an 'expert' among them !

May 3rd.—This morning at seven o'clock Mr. Walker, one of our schoolmasters, called to ask if I could go to visit a young man who was dying. I found him very ill. I talked plainly to him about his soul, and he seems very anxious ; but what dependence can be placed on death-bed repentance? After breakfast I went to see another sick person ; in the afternoon I rode over to George Lewis again, and found him still unprepared for death, but very much concerned. He asked me what prayer he should use. I said, 'God be merciful to me a sinner, for Jesus Christ's sake' ; he promised to say this, and I left him. May the Lord have mercy upon his soul ! Met W. Smith's class and held missionary prayer-meeting at Zion Chapel.

4th.—This morning rose early and attended the five o'clock prayer-meeting, and was then preparing to go to see George Lewis, when Walker knocked at my door to say that he was dead. Poor fellow ! the night before, when I left him he said, alluding to his spiritual condition, 'I hope when you come again you will find a change.' When I entered the house again it was to follow him to the grave. During the day I visited three sick persons, and in the evening interred poor George.

5th.—Early this morning rode over to Wilberforce ; Mr. Dillon not very well. Spent a happy day with them, and then preached in the chapel from 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found.' After the sermon held a prayer-meeting, and I believe good was done.

It was rather hard that, having taken so much interest in the chapel about to be built, Mr. Champness should have been prevented from being present at the stone-laying ; so it was, however, as the following further extract from the letter shows :

14th.—Felt unwell.

15th.—Worse : not able to get up ; sent for the doctor. . . .

21st.—Blessed be the name of the Lord, I am once more

able to write. Since my last entry I have been very ill. On *Sunday, 16th*, feeling much better, I ventured to take my appointments. Rose at six; gave tickets at Portuguese Town to two classes. At ten, preached from 'Behold, now is the accepted time'; baptized three children; met another class. Rode home much fatigued, and after a little time felt myself getting more feverish; about five o'clock I saw that I should have to give up all thoughts of preaching, and sent for Dr. Bradshaw, who pronounced me very ill, and so to bed I went, and took powders, &c. I have had very little delirium this time, only a little talk about pistols. But it has been a sad time to me, for on Wednesday the Governor laid the foundation-stones of our new chapel, but I could not go out. The doctor said, 'If you go out you'll be down for a month'; so I did what he said, but it was rather hard! While I have been sick, a man who came out with me has died of dysentery. He came out as an engineer, but he has died and left a family in England. I am not quite well, but much better, and hope to get to work directly, for we are very short-handed, and my being sick makes it awkward.

23rd.—Ten o'clock, preached at Buxton on 'Prepare to meet thy God.' A large congregation, and very attentive; I hope some good was done. Met three classes, taught my Bible-class, then rode on to Bathurst School, and addressed the scholars. After tea preached at Krootown from 'Being justified by faith.' Mr. Dillon has been down to-day, taking appointments; I have enjoyed his company very much.

25th.—Rode over to Wilberforce for an hour or two's chat.

26th.—Visited Bathurst day school and one or two sick people. This is Whit-week. You are enjoying yourselves. I could like to be with you.

I see I have made an allusion to the Niger, and I had better explain myself. You must know that there is a great river called the Niger which runs through the centre of Africa. The Church Missionary Society and ourselves are sending men to explore the countries on the banks of that great river, and to see where would be eligible stations for missionaries. Our

men are now waiting on the island of Fernando Po for a steamer to ascend in, and as they are only schoolmasters I do not think they will make much out. There should be some one at their head, and I wrote to the Committee offering to head them up, but my letter went down in the *Candace*, so it is no use my thinking any more about it, for the steamer will arrive, and they will be gone up, before I could get an answer. Perhaps it is all for the best. Our cause is still on the move, and the people are still very kind. They are getting more and more fond of me, if I may judge by what I hear.

While these men were up the Niger, Mr. Champness corresponded with one of them ; in an old 'letter-copying' book I have found one of the letters, containing the following interesting paragraph :

I am glad that you have so well employed your time. It is good to use every moment well, for we never know when we may have to lie down and die. 'The night cometh' is my motto, and I try to do as much as I can while the day lasts. . . . While you are up the great river, work hard for God ; remember that He is a good Master, and pays good wages. . . . Try to be as useful as you can, so that many people may be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth through your instrumentality. You are sure to have difficulties to contend with ; but there is nothing to be obtained without labour, and the crown which God will give must first be won. . . . Be watchful over your own heart, that it may not be a source of grief to you. . . . Give my love to the other brethren. I shall be glad to hear from any of them.

A year later, writing to a friend in England, he says :

The men who went up the Niger have returned to this place, and have brought word that there are great and important openings for the preaching of the gospel. This is very cheering, and I hope and pray that the Church will awaken to

its duties and press into the open doors. We are hoping that our Missionary Society will send out men from home to supply the poor needy Eboes with the bread of life.

Many years have gone by, but I do not hear that this prayer has been answered ; it may be that through the revival of missionary zeal the way may be made plain. In any case it is good to know how Thomas Champness's heart went out in prayer for the heathen who were so near to him, though he could not himself go to them.

July 12, 1858.

I was greatly rejoiced and truly thankful to hear of your wellbeing, for if anything should happen to you while I am away, it would almost break my heart ; as you know, I love my family very much. . . . You seem to have become quite low-spirited about me ; why you should be so I cannot tell, for though I do have fever sometimes, I always get better in a few days. Why, I am stout and strong, and able to eat a good dinner every day. . . . True, I am not so ruddy as I once was, but I am getting yellow instead, and when I come home again you will see that I am very little the worse for residence in the tropics. You speak of my coming home. I know that pure love dictates your words, but you do not know all the circumstances ; I am likely to *live* here, and as that is the case I cannot remove, though I will not go to live on any station where I cannot procure medical attention. . . . I am happy in my work, my people are very affectionate, and God blesses my labours ; therefore, while I appreciate your paternal love, I cannot come home, but I do ask your prayers. I am in the Lord's hands. Oh for more of the mind that was in Jesus Christ, that I might labour with increased self-sacrifice ! . . .

With regard to the box. By all means send the magic-lantern slides ; I can make good use of them. When I come out from England next time I will bring out a complete set of Scripture slides. There are many things I have not now which

I will bring out, if it is the Lord's will for me to come out a second time. I want a good microscope, among other things; for you know I have to make things plain and easy to be understood on other days besides Sundays. Also, I meet a very interesting Bible-class on Saturday evenings; we have been three months studying the history of Joseph, and have not finished it yet. To these young men I am much attached, and am glad to have the privilege of training them.

On *Sunday, 20th*, I preached at Zion, Portuguese Town, and Bathurst Street. . . . *21st*.—Heard that the Sunday evening sermon was made a blessing. *Sunday, 27th*.—Preached at Portuguese Town from John x. 27. I tried to show that a man cannot be a Christian without pleasing Christ. . . . At two o'clock held a lovefeast in the same chapel, and in the evening went to Buxton Chapel. The people came very late; and after I had begun to preach they came in droves. I shut the book, and instead of going on with my sermon, lectured them on the subject of punctual attendance at the house of God.

29th.—Rode to Fowrah Bay to see the Bishop, who has been ill. He is improving, but looks very pale and thin. . . . The rainy season has set in. It rained all day, and I suppose we may expect more or less rain every day.

July 2.—As I was returning from Wilberforce, my horse trod on some black ants that were creeping along the road. They bit the horse severely, and made him very restive. It was too dark to see them, but they soon made me conscious of their presence, for they got on my legs and bit me, and I pushed home as fast as I could, so as to strip and clear myself of them.

6th.—Rode up the mountain to Gloucester. As I was going, my horse shied at some oxen and threw me off; but by the blessing of God I received no injury.

8th.—Mr. Dillon came to town, and after spending the day together we went to a meeting at Mr. Trotter's church. His Excellency the Governor took the chair, and I had to take a part; was assisted to speak with great freedom.

9th.—This evening the mail came in. All well, bless the Lord. Mother has sent me *Hedley Vicars* as a birthday present. It was very welcome.

13th.—Called to see Mrs. Trotter, who is down with fever.

20th.—Since the last entry I have been very sick. Fever and diarrhœa have brought me very low, but by the blessing of God I am now recovering, and this evening preached at Bathurst on 'Be not weary in well-doing.'

22nd.—Mr. Dillon came down to-day. In the evening preached at Krootown to the largest congregation I have seen there in the week evenings, and a good time we had.

27th.—My friend Mr. William Smith is married to-day. Attended lunch at Mr. John Ezzidio's. In the evening held society meeting at Ebenezer. . . .

31st.—Received a note this morning from Mr. J. B. Elliott telling me that Mr. Trotter is ill with fever, and asking me to preach for them to-morrow. As I had no appointment in the morning, with the Chairman's leave I consented. Went across to see Mr. Trotter, found him in bed; fever. Met my Bible-class in the evening, and although very wet, had a goodly number there.

Aug. 1.—Very wet. I was very unwell during the night. Felt all right in the morning. Went to the Lady Huntingdon chapel and preached from Heb. xii. 1. Felt unwell in the afternoon, lay down and felt better after an hour or two. Should have preached at Zion in the evening, but the roof is so bad that the chapel is not fit for persons to sit down, so we had no service. Walked over to Mr. Trotter's and spent an hour or two with him.

2nd.—Spent the morning with Mr. Trotter, and in the evening rode over to Mr. Pratt's. This is one of the most opulent of our native merchants. He lives in a beautiful house about two miles from town.

3rd.—Mr. Trotter much better this morning. In the afternoon rode over to Brookfield and found no one there; the chapel is in a ruinous state, not fit to enter; a few people

came from their homes when they knew I was there. Must bring the matter before the Buxton Leaders' Meeting.

4th.—This morning the wife of the Lord Bishop died; she was quite a young woman, only thirty-two. She had fever, which brought on premature confinement, and in a few days she sank. Called to see Mr. Trotter; found him not so well as yesterday. Paid my wedding-call to Mr. and Mrs. Smith, then passed on to Bathurst, where I preached from Matt. xxvi. 1-13. I alluded to the death of the Bishop's lady.

5th.—According to the circular which I received yesterday, at eight o'clock this morning attended the funeral of Mrs. Bowen; there were many persons present. All the European ministers were there, the Governor, the naval officers from the men-of-war in the harbour, the officers of the garrison. Of course, all wore their uniform, and a very solemn sight it was.

15th.—At six o'clock gave tickets to two classes; at ten preached from 'What are these which are arrayed in white robes?' baptized fifteen children, then met two more classes. I had a poor, barren time while preaching. In the afternoon introduced Mrs. William Smith to the class in Zion school, which I have been teaching for some time. Rode over to Brookfield and met the people, made arrangements with them respecting their chapel, then gave them an address and rode home to tea. 6.30, preached at Bathurst from the rich man and Lazarus; had a very good time indeed; felt the power of God with me.

In his letters to his parents and friends, Mr. Champness made little or no reference to the state of things in the district; but it must be understood that this year 1858 was a most trying one for the European missionaries of the Methodist Church at Sierra Leone. Early in the year the General Superintendent had manifested an unkind and unbrotherly disposition; one

young minister returned home in consequence of his conduct, and Mr. Champness had to take a firm stand on a question of administration, by which it was proposed to send Englishmen to stations remote from medical aid, as native ministers declined to go. Some remarks in letters already quoted are explained by this circumstance. As time went on, other trouble arose, as the result of which the Missionary Secretaries in London felt justified in recalling the General Superintendent, and pending the arrival of his successor it was arranged for the Rev. R. Dillon to take his place.

It was in the middle of August that Mr. Champness wrote in his journal :

This day Mr. — left for England ; the Committee have chosen Mr. Dillon to act until the new Superintendent arrives. . . . I went out to the Cape with the steamer, and felt it very much when I came to bid Mr. — good-bye ; but he is gone now, and I hope the new Superintendent, when he comes, will be the right man in the right place. Lord, send us the right sort of man !

Somewhat later in August he writes to his parents :

This is just the place for me ; the people are extremely kind and loving ; and all that I want is more religion, more holiness of heart, more resignation to God's will, and more love for souls. . . . You seem to think that I bring on fevers by excessive labours, but what can I do ? A missionary has work to do to which preachers at home are entire strangers. Our schools, day and Sabbath, need a great deal of looking after, and many other things there are which I cannot stay now to write about. One of our leaders said to me the other day, 'Massa, you work too hard ; we want you live with us many year, and so you must go softly, softly.' Other people

think and say that because I knock about so much I shall soon be like an African, and when they hear of my being sick, 'Ah, dat man ride out too much' (meaning a great deal), 'he get plenty sick. Well, wait a little ; African say, " When pickny begin to walk he falls down nine times, then he walk good." ' So you see there is a division among the people !

25th.—Had appointment at Portuguese Town, but took a young man with me whom I wished to preach. He tried, and did his best, but floundered about a good deal. After the sermon met three classes, and was very tired ; but that is a thing of course.

Sept. 3.—Was visited by two men of the Kroo nation ; one of them, who is a Christian, brought me a 'fetish,' which had been given to him by one who kept it as a sort of idol ; he found it would not do him any good, so he gave it to the Christian.

4th.—Have heard this morning that the remarks made on Wednesday evening at Bathurst did some good. 'Master,' said a poor woman to me, 'dat do me plenty good ; it comfort me very much, it tell me all that in my heart.'

5th.—Preached on Krootown Road, to a very large concourse of people, from 'Worship God,' and a very nice time we had. I took the 'fetish' with me, and explained to the people, many of whom were idolaters, how foolish it is to trust in such lying vanities. I never preached to so large an audience, and I had to lift up my voice so as to be heard by them all.

All through the autumn of 1858 Mr. Champness had frequent fevers, but kept himself fully employed. Letters of this part of the time are lost ; but the journal was well kept up, and records many blessed times in preaching, when the power of God was realized by the preacher and yielded to by those who heard the word. On October 13 he celebrated the anniversary of his arrival in the Colony by an act of renewed consecration to God, and was rejoicing in an interval

of good health. 'What a blessing I am so well!' he writes one day; and then, almost at once, comes the announcement of the return of the dreaded fever. His letter of November was brief, for a sad reason. I have heard that at times during this part of his stay in Africa he was too ill to write, but insisted on *addressing the envelopes* of his letters, so that his mother should not be alarmed by the sight of a strange handwriting.

Nov. 19, 1858.

You will be surprised and grieved at receiving so small a note as this, but I have been very unwell, and am only slowly recovering from the worst fever I have had yet. . . . Two Sundays have been spent in the house. . . . Sickness has been my Heavenly Father's way of drawing me to Himself. . . . In the midst of fever, I have felt that I could repose upon the Almighty, and, while my body has been weak, my soul has been strong. . . . We have not yet received the reinforcement, and my illness has been awkward. . . . But God, who sends all, knows what He is doing. . . . I have written this by piecemeal, just as I felt myself able to do it.

In December came the much-needed reinforcements:

The mail which arrived on the 11th inst. brought out the new Superintendent and his wife, together with Rev. J. J. Wray and his wife and child, with a young lady, the sister of Mrs. Wray. . . . Mr. Bridgart, the new Superintendent, is a fine man; has hitherto been very kind. Mr. Wray is to take charge of King Tom's; he is likely to suit, from what I can gather.

Christmas was spent at the mission house, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Bridgart, and was 'very comfortable.' A day or two later, the Bishop of

Sierra Leone came over to see him, and finding him yet weak from fevers, invited him to his residence for a few days. The journal records that—

The Bishop was exceedingly kind, and did all he could to make me happy. He nursed and tended me most hospitably, and wished me to stay longer; but I felt much better, and knew Mr. Bridgart would want me, so I returned this day (30th) in the Bishop's boat. The mission house is *home*; Mr. and Mrs. Bridgart have done all they could for me, and I feel as if I were their younger brother. The Lord reward them for their kindness.

CHAPTER VII

THE MISSIONARY: SIERRA LEONE, 1859-60 —A VISITATION OF YELLOW FEVER

New Year's Day, 1859.

ANOTHER year has come ; I pray that Thou, O God, wouldst grant that this may be the holiest year I have lived. . . . My soul, think of thy responsibilities, and live near to God. More grace I want, to live out of self, and be devoted to God's service.

Such was Thomas Champness's prayerful meditation at the beginning of the New Year, which was destined to be a time of such trials and responsibilities as he had never yet experienced. After the new year's church and social festivities came the District Meeting, under the chairmanship of Mr. Dillon, recorded as having been a time of ' much love amongst the brethren.'

January, 1859.

No doubt you have been alarmed at my having fever for so long, but you know I am in Sierra Leone, and cannot always be as well as in England. . . . Looking over the past, you will come to the same conclusion as myself, that it is not for a Champness to doubt the goodness of God. We have had so many proofs of the Lord's kindness that we ought to be always ready to say, 'All things work together for good to them that love God. . . .' It is settled that I am to go to Wilberforce in April. God, who has been my guide hitherto, will assist me to bear the additional responsibility, and will make my way plain.

And now, I suppose I must tell you something about my new colleagues, and will begin with my Superintendent, Rev. John Bridgart. He was sent to us from the Gambia Mission, and is a young man, but a wise one ; I am very happy with him. He is likely to be popular here, as he is about to have our tumble-down chapels put in repair. Mrs. Bridgart has lived in Liverpool, and has only been on the coast a little above twelve months. Mr. Wray (the tutor at the Training College at King Tom's Point) is of a good Methodist stock. He was trained and sent out as a schoolmaster ; is married, and has been keeping a school at Oldham for some time. Mrs. Wray is a nice body, but since she arrived has had nought but trouble. About three weeks ago she took fever, which brought on premature confinement ; the poor babe died about thirty minutes after its birth, and Mrs. Wray has been in a precarious state. By the blessing of God, I believe she is on the way to recovery. My other colleague, Jabez Hulbert, is a young man from Bristol, dark-complexioned and handsome. He is living at the mission house, and when I go to Wilberforce he will occupy the rooms I now have. So you see we have got a fresh set of hands, and I believe the work of God will prosper. Pray that when I go to my new circuit I may be blessed by God, and made more useful than I have been.

In March, severe fever again prostrated Mr. Champness, and through this he was most kindly nursed by Mr. Hulbert, who was proving himself to be a fine missionary in many ways. The loving intercourse of the brethren was, however, destined to come to a speedy ending, and the next entries in the journal describe some of the unexpected and mysterious ways in which the faith of those on the field is put to the test.

After the fever had somewhat spent itself, Mr. Champness was sent up to Wilberforce, the circuit to which he had been appointed.

80 THE LIFESTORY OF THOMAS CHAMPNESS

On March 30 he says, 'Mr. Hulbert has gone to bed with fever,' and continues his journal as follows :

WILBERFORCE, *March 31, 1859.*

This morning I came up here. May the God of all peace be with me during my stay !

April 1.—Oh, sad day ! This morning I received a note from Mr. Bridgart, informing me of the dangerous sickness of Bro. Hulbert, and begging me not to come down ; but I could not stay, and so I and Mr. Dillon set off to see him. On our way we called at Mr. W. Smith's and found that Hulbert was dead ! He was dead when Mr. Bridgart wrote the note, but he durst not tell me so all at once. Poor Hulbert ! he was my dear friend. Although he had not been with us for three months, yet we all loved him. I have seen few men so deeply pious as he. I can hardly persuade myself of the truth. I did not stay until the funeral ; Mr. Bridgart persuaded me to leave, and I found that to stay was to make myself very ill, so I came up at once.

3rd.—This morning I attended the service at Wilberforce, but could not preach, being still very poorly. Mr. Davis preached, and I baptized a child belonging to a Kroo-man. After the sermon I spoke a few words to the people, asking them to pray for me, which no doubt they will. Oh, how I long for health, that I may labour with energy ! Sad to tell, about four o'clock I heard that Mrs. Bridgart had departed this life. As soon as I heard, I sent for the men and was carried to King Tom's, where I met poor Mr. Bridgart ; he was in sad trouble and worn out with incessant watching. Dr. Bradshaw states that Mrs. Bridgart and Mr. Hulbert took the disease when at Wellington, where they missed the tide, and were compelled to stay in their boat fast in the mud for two hours. We were obliged to send for the doctor to Mr. Bridgart, who was very ill ; the doctor got him to bed, and we then retired, with the exception of Mr. Wray, who stayed up.

4th.—I spent the day at King Tom's. Mr. Bridgart slept well, and is much better.

April 6.—In the evening met a few of the members, who have joined themselves into a society for the repairing of their chapel.

10th.—Preached in the morning at Aberdeen; when I arrived there was no one in the chapel, so I took the opportunity after preaching to ask them to come earlier. In the afternoon the carriers took me to Newtown, where I preached from 'God so loved the world.'

18th.—Having written my letters, set off to town to post them. Stayed all night with Mr. Trotter; I find Mr. Chardin is sick with fever; if possible, he is to go home by the next mail, but I have my fears, for he is very ill. He has only been back here about six months, and had very bad fever soon after he arrived; now he is down again. Mr. and Mrs. Dillon are also to go by this mail.

A new Superintendent having arrived, the way seemed clear for Mr. Dillon, whose furlough was overdue, to return home; accordingly he and his wife left by the April mail.

19th.—Breakfasted for the last time with my dear friends Mr. and Mrs. Dillon. After doing a little business in the town dined at Mr. Trotter's, and in the evening went aboard to bid farewell to my friends. The Governor came on board; he is on his way to England. He came off in his own barge, and was saluted by the guns of the garrison and men-of-war in the harbour. Mr. Chardin was brought on board very ill and weak. Said 'Farewell' to my dear friends Mr. and Mrs. Dillon. May God bring my friends home in peace.

Now begins the sad record of a visitation of yellow fever which swept over Western Africa that year. The Colony of Sierra Leone suffered very heavily;

82 THE LIFE-STORY OF THOMAS CHAMPNESS

Mr. Champness was wont to speak of that time with trembling, even in his latest days—the time when nearly every European sickened, and many, both native and foreign residents, were struck down by this awful scourge.

22nd, Good Friday.—Preached at Aberdeen from Luke xxiii. 33. Felt very weak indeed. All the night before I was feverish, and thought sickness was coming on; but, by the blessing of God, the fever passed off. In the evening held leaders' meeting at Wilberforce; heard from the Murray Town leaders that God blessed His word last Sunday. At the prayer-meeting held that evening the chapel was crowded, and several sought and found peace. We have preaching at 4 p.m., and sometimes the people have a prayer-meeting at seven. By having preaching early I can get home in good time, which is very comfortable, as the roads are bad and dark.

29th.—Set off early to town, breakfasted at King Tom's, and then visited Dr. Bradshaw, our dearly beloved and faithful medical man, who is very ill; if he is spared until this mail leaves he is to go to England, as it is his only chance of life. It is a great blow to us. The Colony is very sickly.

May 2.—Mr. and Mrs. Trotter are staying at Goderich, and, according to an arrangement made, I went there to see them. My horse not being well, I walked; found it a long way. Since I came to this place I have not walked so far as this; but, by the blessing of God, I am getting stronger than ever.

3rd.—Spent the day in study; in the evening W. Smith called. I hear from Mr. Wray that Miss Marshall is down with fever. It is to be hoped she will be spared, for we have suffered much affliction lately.

7th.—Rained hard all day. Mr. Bridgart came up in the evening, and is to stay a few days here; may God grant that the change may do him good, for he is very poorly, and, if he does not alter soon, will have to go home.

9th.—Very tired to-day; have done nothing but rest; was obliged to go to town in the evening to see Dr. Bradshaw, who is about to sail for England by a man-of-war which is going. Poor fellow! he is much reduced; it is a question whether he will reach England. The Lord preserve him!

10th.—Have heard that Mr. Chardin died a few hours after the packet left the harbour, and that Mr. Dillon read the Burial Service over him. Poor Chardin! What a shock for his poor wife, who is expecting him home by this mail! He died at sea six hours after the ship sailed.

17th.—Went to town early this morning; breakfasted at W. Smith's, then on to the mission house, transacted my business, and then called on Mr. Trotter, who is unwell. Mrs. Maer called while I was there; she is going home invalided. Poor Mr. Brooks has lost his wife, and is now left desolate. In the evening we held the Missionary meeting at Buxton, Hon. J. F. Smyth in the chair; the meeting was very good. Stayed in town all night.

18th.—Came home early; married two couples; in the evening Mr. Bridgart came up again.

Sunday, 22nd.—Preached at Aberdeen, and met two classes for tickets. In the afternoon a violent tornado came up and prevented me from going to Newtown; the wind and rain were terrific.

23rd.—Mr. Trotter came up from town to spend the day; I hear that Mr. Oldfield is dead. Mrs. Roach, of Congo Town, was buried by me to-day.

24th.—Spent the evening at Mr. Rhodes'; poor man, he will not be able to stay here; he is going to England by next mail.

25th.—Dr. Abbott called to see Mr. Bridgart; he tells of more deaths, and that the Bishop is dangerously ill. I went to hold the leaders' meeting at Aberdeen. 26th.—Heard from Mr. Rhodes that the Bishop is worse.

28th.—This morning at eight o'clock the good Bishop of Sierra Leone, Dr. Bowen, died. The Church at Sierra Leone is passing through deep waters. May God help me to watch,

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that I may be ready. This evening went down to town and stayed with Mr. Trotter, so as to be ready for the Bishop's funeral.

29th.—Bishop Bowen was interred this morning at seven o'clock. After the funeral I rode to Congo Town, where Mr. Bridgart preached, and I met two classes for tickets. In the afternoon I felt too much fatigued to attempt going to Lumley.

31st.—Preached at Wilberforce from part of the Sermon on the Mount.

June 1.—Heard that Mrs. Trotter is dangerously ill. In the evening held a meeting at Congo Town to talk to them concerning their chapel.

6th.—Rode down to town; found Mrs. Trotter very unwell the doctor gave no hope. Spent the day with Mr. Trotter and stayed up all the night. About four o'clock Mrs. Trotter fell asleep in Jesus.

7th.—Busy all the day with arrangements for the funeral; in the evening read the Burial Service in the chapel, while Mr. Jones read the service at the grave. Mr. Millward invited me to stay at his house all night.

8th.—Early this morning set off with Mr. Millward to the prayer-meeting at the National School. This day has been appointed by the Governor as a day for fasting and prayer. The meeting was well attended. At ten o'clock Mr. White, of the Mendi Mission, preached at Mr. Trotter's. I read the prayers for him. Went back to Mr. Millward's, then in the evening preached for Mr. Trotter from Jonah iii. 10.

8th.—Heard this morning of the deaths of Mrs. Quin and Mrs. Jones.

12th.—Preached at New Town from Heb. iv. 9. Met the Society for tickets. In the afternoon preached at Congo Town from 'Blessed are those servants.'

13th.—Have been very ill during the night; better this morning.

16th.—Mr. Bridgart settled with me, handed over the accounts, &c., and left me in charge of the District.

20th.—In the morning preached at Mr. Trotter's from 'The wages of sin is death,' &c. In the afternoon dined at Mr. Bridgart's; we all had prayer together, and commended each other to God. Mr. Bridgart then embarked, and I went to preach Mrs. Trotter's funeral sermon. The chapel was crowded. Then took boat and bade Mr. Bridgart good-bye.

23rd.—Had a good deal of fever last evening, but by the blessing of God got better as the day got older. This is a sickly place, and one needs to live very near to God, for one cannot tell when the Lord will come. How I shall enjoy the rest prepared for the people of God! The Lord be praised that I was brought to know my sinfulness, and also to know the greatness of Jesus as my *own* Saviour. I cannot help wondering sometimes whether I shall live to reach home again, or whether I shall lay down my life and work together in this place. God only knows; but, blessed be His holy name, having peace with Him, why should I fear? Nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ! Yesterday I was sermonizing, and felt it good to muse on the text, 'The love of Christ.' Oh, what love! and what that love has bought for me!

July 19, 1859.

MY DEAR PARENTS,—It is a pleasure to sit down to write to you once more. Somehow, it strikes me that if I was merely trading here I should not have such dear and long letters from you, nor should I take so much pleasure in writing.

The work in which it is my privilege to be engaged is an ennobling one. To be a preacher of the gospel, and to be preaching to men in a distant and sickly country, seems to add dignity to my position. Not that I would feel proud, but still, as the Queen's Commission makes a man a gentleman, so the commission from the King of kings to declare His truth to the perishing heathen makes even poor Thomas Champness something, and I tell you I would not exchange my lot with any man.

My joy was great when the mail arrived, and brought me word of your welfare ; but judge of my sorrow when I opened a letter from Mr. Cooper, of the Gambia, in which he told me of the death of my dear friend and Superintendent, Mr. Bridgart. You will be sure that it shocked me greatly. When I bade him farewell, he was very low and poorly, and it appears he got worse, was very ill at the Gambia, and the morning after leaving there he died, and was laid under the blue wave, until the hour when the sea shall give up its dead. . . . Sierra Leone has to mourn over another faithful and devoted labourer ; the Church of Christ has lost a useful member, a man well fitted for the post he occupied. I have lost a true friend, one only too kind and indulgent. The general knowledge he had fitted him especially for his work here ; an architect by profession, he could carry out all our schemes for repairing our old chapels, and building new ones. He knew something of medicine, too, and could prescribe for many of our people who were too poor to apply to a doctor. He was a good nurse, as I have cause to know, for I have reason to be grateful for his kind attention to me when he first came, and found me sick. Oh that God may raise up some to take the place of these who die in the work !

We need more men, and I am of opinion that the time is come for entering new doors of usefulness now opening in Africa. I shall write to the Committee respecting opening new missions in the interior. We need about six men, three for this place and three to be set to work in the interior. For my own part, the providences through which we have been called to pass have made Africa dearer to me. It was the deadliness of the climate, and the consequent need of labourers, which first drew my heart to Sierra Leone, and the same cause is still making it more and more dear. For this I am grateful to God, and hope and pray that the feeling may continue, and wax still stronger. Jesus Christ and His great cause are worthy of all that can be done.

I would the precious time redeem.

The Colony is in a much healthier state than when I wrote last, but the yellow fever has made awful ravages among us. Many have been called away, some of them unprepared. Did I tell you that we had been visited by a company of Roman Catholics, with a Bishop at their head? There were four of them, and a Bishop: they are all dead! On the evening that I preached Mrs. Trotter's funeral sermon, among the hearers sat an English captain. The text was, 'Blessed are those servants whom when their Lord cometh He findeth watching.' The next Sabbath that captain was laid in his grave! Many such sudden deaths could be recorded. But, blessed be God, amidst all this sickness my own health has been remarkably good, better than it has been for months, and my face is becoming ruddy again. Last Christmas it was not so. The doctor talked of sending me home; now I am looking as well as when I came out. But fevers have made sad work with me. My nervous system has had a fearful shaking. Perhaps the strong medicines I have been compelled to take have something to do with it. Still, there is much to be thankful for. My circuit and sphere of labour is exceedingly interesting, and, if one may judge from what is said, God has given me favour in the sight of my people. This is a great deal anywhere, but more especially among Africans, for if they do not love you they will not care to hear you.

Since writing the above we have again been called to part with dear friends. Three of the Church Mission family are no more. Two of them were dear friends of mine. Oh, pray for us, for if we are taken what will our dear people do? But 'the Lord reigneth.'

WILBERFORCE, *Aug. 15, 1859.*

Since last mail my old enemy (fever) laid me aside for a day or two, but nothing to speak of. It appears to be as Dr. Bradshaw said: fever has taken out of me all that is inflammable, and I may expect not to have any more *severe* fevers. Of course, the climate takes more and more effect the longer one stays; but still, God willing, I shall weather out my

time, and then home to recruit. Oh, how happy we shall all be if spared to see each other again! During the epidemic, which carried off so many, my health has been better than at any previous time. Let us praise the Lord for it!

We hope that we shall get out some men early in the season, for we are very destitute of labourers. The harvest is white, but the men are not here to gather it in. Surely, out of the great number of candidates, some will be found ready to give up all for Christ; and no one should come here who is not prepared to give up *all*. One of the most trying things in connexion with this mission is the constant change. No sooner do you become acquainted with the work, and able to do it, than you are laid up by fever after fever, and perhaps at last obliged to flee for your life to some more genial clime. Then there is parting with dear friends, who are either taken away by death, or are obliged to leave to save their lives. This month Mr. and Mrs. Wray, with their sister and infant, are obliged to leave for England, if Mrs. Wray lives to see the mail for home arrive. She is, while I write this, in a very precarious state, and very little would remove her from us for ever. This is a sad blow to the mission, as Mr. Wray was eminently fitted for the duties at King Tom's. What we shall do is more than I can understand, but we hope and pray that God will send out others to do the work. Mr. Wray has your address, and will no doubt call if he comes to Manchester. Mr. Trotter is also coming home by this mail. He intends calling at Manchester as soon as he can. So you may expect him soon after you receive this. He intends staying with you for a night. Make him as comfortable as you can, for he is a dear friend of mine. Show him as much of the town as you can, as he is a perfect stranger, and wished to see 'the lions.' You cannot think how delighted I was to hear about the repainting of the chapel, and that George Street people had been so liberal. The dear old place! Oh, how I should like to see it, and it would be a dear place to me if it was *never* cleaned! How many times have I sat within its hallowed

walls, listening to the voice of God's servants, and I hope to do so again.

The rain is falling fast while I write, for we are in the middle of the rainy season. Of course, when it rains I am obliged to stay at home, as to get wet is to take fever. I attribute the little fever I had the other day to getting wet coming from an appointment. You must know the rain here is so heavy that even the good overalls I have are of little use. Just as I finished my letters last mail, my dear friends Mr. and Mrs. Millward died within a few hours of each other, and were carried in the same hearse to the same grave. They were dear friends of mine, and I feel their loss very much. It will be a great blow to the Church Missionary Society. May the Lord raise up others to take their places! What with deaths and removals I am almost alone now. Mr. Brown and myself are the only Europeans left in connexion with our Society.

Aug. 27, 1859.

Heard this morning that the Hon. T. F. Smyth, Colonial Secretary, is dead of small-pox. I saw him last Sabbath, when he was in good spirits, and expected soon to be well; but God knew better, and had something better in store for him; he has gone to his rest. I have lost another good friend, and so has every right-minded man, for he was the friend of goodness wherever he saw it. The Churches of Christ have lost a champion. What God means to do with this colony is yet kept from us, but we cannot help saying, 'Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth.'

2nd.—Unwell all day, feverish at night. During the night compelled to waken my servant, thought I was going to have bad fever; had all the symptoms.

3rd.—Got better during the day. Got up, but very weak.

4th.—Blessed be God, all right to-day. What a mercy that I am allowed the privilege of having another Sunday in health! I was afraid there would be no preaching done by me this day. At six o'clock, got up and went to the chapel, gave tickets to

Bro. Davis's class ; much pleased with the state of the people. At ten o'clock Mr. Davis read the prayers ; after prayers, I baptized four children and two adults. One of these I felt much interested in, as he was one of the liberated Africans on board the prize which we towed into the harbour when I came here on October 13, 1857. Blessed be God ! This is fruit, another trophy to the cross of Christ. There are no slaves among the redeemed in glory ! Oh, why should there be any of those bought by the blood of Christ wearing the chains of slavery ?

WILBERFORCE, *Sept.* 15, 1859.

I am very busy, and shall be heartily glad when the new Superintendent comes out, so as to relieve me of the heavy duties devolving upon me. It appears there is some difficulty in getting a man to take the place ; why it should be so I cannot tell, as the epidemic has passed away. Then, again, we have European officers coming out, as well as merchants ; surely then, ministers ought not to make any objection to labouring here. Our people are praying for those of us who have been spared to them, and to the Lord of the harvest, that He would thrust out more labourers. Oh, how rejoiced I shall be to see some come out to our help ! To be the General Superintendent of this place requires an amount of wisdom and prudence not often found in men of a cheerful and kind disposition, and none but those who are kind will make their way among Africans. To a man of this sort a more pleasant field of labour, independent of the climate, cannot be found ; at least, so it appears to me. *Sierra Leone is my second home.*

And now I must turn to another and more painful topic. The mail brought me news of a very saddening character. Poor Mr. Cooper ! I feel his death very much indeed, for, as you remember, we came out together, and were ordained together at Devonport, the night before we sailed. He was much beloved by the Society at the Gambia, who are in great sorrow. The yellow fever has reached the Gambia, and, as it did with us, is carrying off nearly all the European population.

A young minister named Peet is there at present. He wrote to me last mail, and I am anxiously waiting to hear from him again. Whether he will be alive next mail or not it is hard to say. He is quite a young man, and I feel very much for him. Pray for the cause at the Gambia, as well as for Sierra Leone. This was not the only bad news I got. Miss Marshall, the sister of Mrs. Wray, was also taken from her friends by death a few hours after she left this place. She, like my dear brother Bridgart, sleeps under the blue wave until the resurrection morn. Miss M. was very unwell when she left here, and indeed left to save her life, but she was not allowed to see her native land. Little did I think, last December, when she landed here in all the sprightliness of youth, that she would not live another year. I am sure Mr. and Mrs. Wray are in sad trouble, poor things ; they did not expect such a stroke.

WILBERFORCE, *Sept.* 21, 1859.

You seem to wish I was at home, and if my business were any other than what it is, I should come home at once, but for the present my duty is to remain here, at least till more help comes out. Mr. Osborn wrote me an exceedingly kind letter, telling me to come home at once if I think it necessary, and assuring me of the prayers of the Secretaries. God bless him for the kind words and the kinder deeds he has ever shown me ; may the Lord break the same bread to his children if they ever need it ! If we get a supply of ministers by the next mail I should be glad, but the yellow fever at Sierra Leone has frightened most of those who otherwise would have come. At any rate we may expect some early next year, and if so I may begin to think of dear old England, so do not be surprised to see me in May (D.V.). But do not make too sure ; I may be detained till '61, and if so it will be for the best, as I have much to do before I leave. It will be a hard thing to leave my dear people, even for the few months I intend to remain in England, and I can hardly bear to think of leaving them at all ; but God will bring all things right in the end. You cannot think how dear to me Sierra Leone has become ; for though

there is much to try my faith and patience, yet it is a most interesting field of labour, and if the young men who are labouring in some of the wretched circuits in England could see how happy we are here, they would not stop to be harassed, but would come out at once. The dangers to which we are exposed become in a short time quite a matter of course, and I believe my heart is as light and merry as it ever was. Taking all things into consideration, I would not change places with any man, not even to have my choice of English circuits. I hope to be permitted to spend many years of usefulness in Sierra Leone.

Another slaver has been brought into the harbour having nearly 500 slaves on board. Poor Africa ! thou art still doomed to have thy children torn from thee and sold to the cruel planter. When shall this dreadful traffic cease ? Not till the countries which are now heathen are brought under the dominion of Jesus Christ.

Oct. 3, 1859.

Have again been laid aside with very severe affliction. Indeed I gave myself up, but God heard the prayers of my people, and raised me up once more. The people have shown their affection more than ever. I love them now more than I did before. The rainy season has not yet passed away. It is raining heavily to-day. I do not think I must stay here through another rainy season. Whichever way the Lord leads I must follow, but if the way is clear I shall go home in June.

28th.—Was much pleased with an action of one of my members : he brought me 10s. as a thank-offering to the cause of God. The way he did it added to my pleasure. The Lord reward him for it !

30th.—A slaver, with upwards of 400 poor beings on board.

Nov. 5.—Was sadly hurt this morning. One of my leaders and local preachers brought me his class-paper and plan, stating that he has fallen into sin. Lord, keep me from the temptations of the Evil One !

Nov. 11.—The mail came in, bringing good news from

home. All well. The Committee give me leave to return. Cannot accept their kind offer till relief comes out.

In a letter to his parents dated December 15, 1859, the missionary gives way to his longing for news from home, and for home itself. The mail was late; no letters had come, and, in view of the trying events of the time, it is not surprising to find him in this mood.

Sometimes, nay often, in my dreams I go home, and see you all; then wake to find myself in Africa. Never mind; it is a long lane that has no turning; some day I shall really be with you. Only last night I was dreaming of home and thought I saw you both. So happy we were! If we are so happy in the thought of meeting each other in this world, where we must part, how happy shall we be when, in the New Jerusalem, we meet to part no more!

You will be glad to hear that I keep as well as can be expected; indeed, to judge from my looks, you would think I had just arrived from England. But I am not near so strong as I look, and do not expect to be until I take a change. Some of these fine days the mail will carry me to England, where no doubt my strength will soon return. How I long to get into the fields and see the daisies! We have flowers of the most brilliant kind, but I would change them all for the sight of a single daisy! . . .

The mail came in on the 16th, bringing me good news from home; praise the Lord! She also brought Rev. Wm. West, Superintendent of Cape Coast, from Teneriffe, whither he had been for change. . . . Mr. Osborn has informed me that the two young men who have volunteered for Sierra Leone are coming out next mail. You may be sure I shall be glad to see them.

After the death of Mr. Bridgart the Missionary Committee endeavoured, without success, to find a successor for him as Chairman of the District, and in

December Mr. Champness received instructions to act in that capacity at the Yearly Meeting in January, 1860. He had, of course, been 'Acting Chairman' for some months; but the official letter was at once welcome and necessary. It was expressed in very kind terms, and was greatly prized by Mr. Champness.

WESLEYAN MISSION HOUSE, LONDON,
Dec. 23, 1859.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—The pressure of business connected with the departure of two brethren for Sierra Leone prevents our writing as fully as we could desire; but we observe briefly: (1) It is a subject of deep regret that we have not as yet been able to appoint a suitable Chairman of the District. Under the circumstances, the Committee deem it desirable that you should take the chair at the District Meeting, and conduct the business according to the order prescribed in the book, and followed on previous occasions. You will read this letter to the Meeting, as your authority for taking the chair, and we have no doubt that the brethren will give you all the support and assistance in their power in bringing the business to an orderly and harmonious termination. Were the Meeting regularly constituted by the appointment of a permanent Chairman, several matters would have to be treated of in this letter; but in the present temporary and provisional state of things, we will only add our best wishes for the health, usefulness, and comfort of all the brethren. (2) The grant for the next year, in consideration of the reduced staff of the District, is £——. With due care, this will meet the ordinary expenditure. (3) We send with this two preachers: Messrs. James R. Berry and Thos. W. Blanshard, whom we commend to your fraternal regard, and, with you, to the blessing of our common Lord.

For the Secretaries,
(Signed) GEORGE OSBORN.

REV. THOS. CHAMPNESS.

Christmas found him again down with fever, and the friends whom he had invited to 'keep Christmas' with him, and partake of the good things his mother had sent, must have had rather a melancholy time, as their host was 'very unwell all day.' New Year's Day, 1860, was spent in weariness and pain. Not until January 10 could he write in his journal, and record the arrival of the two new preachers promised in the Secretaries' letter. To his joy, he recognized in one of the newcomers an old friend. 'The mail arrived bringing two ministers, one of whom is my old friend Mr. Blanshard. Praise the Lord, O my soul.' The brethren bore with them the letter of authority, and in the ordinary course of things the District Meeting should have been held in January; but the journal says:

Feb. 7.—This day the Annual District Meeting began its sittings. I had arranged for 31st January, but before the day arrived was seized with fever, which raged with violence for some time. We sat for the next four days, and on the evening of the 10th were hospitably entertained by Mr. Ezzidio to tea. We had the most harmonious District Meeting I have yet attended, for which I thank God and take courage.

11th.—This evening the mail arrived from England, bringing Dr. Bradshaw, whom I was very glad to see. Good news from home. Mr. Blanshard has been appointed to this circuit, as I am unable to take the work. I heard him preach at Murray Town this evening from Abraham's call, and was much cheered by it.

19th.—Early this morning the mail from the coast arrived, and, as I expected Mr. Gurney, I went to town, but found that Mr. West was ill and Mr. G. had stayed at Cape Coast.

March 9.—Have been spending the week in town; Tuesday, 6th, we had our S.S. Tea-meeting; it was a very grand affair indeed.

12th.—Mail arrived, bringing good news from home. What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits !

21st.—Have been for a few days up the Sierra Leone River ; we had a most delightful time, and enjoyed ourselves very much. Returned on Monday, 19th, and have been writing letters since. . . .

This is the last entry in the journal ; a month later Mr. Blanshard had to write and tell Mr. Champness's parents to look out for his arrival in England, as it was necessary for him to leave at once.

He returned home by the April mail, in the company of Mr. and Mrs. West and Mr. Gurney, who were invalided at the same time. In writing to advise his parents of the return of their son, Mr. Blanshard says : ' It was in his heart to have stayed with us much longer, and the people as well as myself would gladly have kept him, but as his health is not so good, we have concluded it is better he should come home. We have been living very comfortably together, and I shall miss him very much. You would be pleased as well as amused if you could see the people coming to bid good-bye to their minister. They tell him to say " How do " for them to his father, " How do " to mother, " How do " to brodder and sister, and conclude by hoping that he will " walk good." '

So he bade farewell to his loving people and his loved work, and to the land where he had suffered so much. The voyage did wonders for his health ; one of his brothers tells how ' My father and I went to Liverpool to meet him. After waiting for some hours, an advance-tug came alongside the landing-stage ; it contained the purser of the ship, and we anxiously asked him if Mr. Champness was on board. He replied,

"Champness? Oh yes; he was carried on board almost dead, but he has been the life of us all on the way home."

In the three years of West African life Thomas Champness had witnessed many changes; the new arrival of 1857 was an experienced missionary in 1860, having out-lived or out-stayed all who had greeted him when he first set foot in Sierra Leone. Always accessible to friendships, those made on the mission field had great charms for him, and one at least of his co-workers survived him to cherish the memory of their loving intercourse. The Rev. Robert Dillon, described in the letters as 'my very dear friend,' loved to hold in remembrance the happy days spent together in Sierra Leone, and counted it a privilege to have enjoyed Thomas Champness's regard and affection to the end. Of his work as a missionary Mr. Dillon wrote :

In 1857 he arrived in Sierra Leone, having been appointed to the Freetown Circuit. I had already been in the colony three years. . . . We were at once drawn together by some natural affinity, and this was the beginning of a friendship of forty-eight years. . . . The three years of his ministry in the colony greatly endeared him to the African people. His winsome personality and free social nature gained him troops of friends. As a preacher, too, he gave evidence of those characteristics which attracted crowds in England; he was greatly in request for special sermons and addresses. We have stood side by side on the missionary platforms of the Church of England and other Churches. He always spoke to the point, direct and pungent. How popular he was, to be sure !

This kind friend's appreciation was reciprocated; Mr. Champness loved and honoured Mr. Dillon, and

when, in May, 1905, he was preaching at Coalbrookdale, he sent to ask his friend to come and see him. They met in the vestry after a powerful service. Mr. Champness wrote: 'Dillon walked over from Madeley, where he was preaching, and we had half an hour together. I wonder if it was our last meeting; I felt it solemn to meet once more.' To Mr. Dillon he said, 'I have not long to live; my work will soon be over; I wish you to tell the Conference that I have been a faithful Methodist preacher, greatly attached to its doctrines. May the Conference be true to these doctrines, to its discipline, to its genius of adaptation to the needs of the age.' His friend attended the Conference of 1906, and faithfully fulfilled the last request of the man he loved. It was an interesting and pathetic conclusion of their intercourse on earth.¹

¹ This beloved friend went home to God on March 8, 1907, while this book, in the writing of which he took great interest, was in the press. He had frequently expressed his wish to read the record of his old comrade's life and work, but God has seen fit to take him up into the higher communion of the saints above, and they join in the chorus of praise to Him whose will 'is done in heaven.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE MISSIONARY: ABEOKUTA, 1860-1

ALTHOUGH Thomas Champness left Sierra Leone an invalid, he did not spend an invalid's furlough. The sea voyage tended to restore his health, and the short summer in England not only set him up in this respect, but so far recruited his strength that he was thought ready to go out again in the autumn—this time accompanied by his bride. During this second term he did not keep a regular journal, probably because he had company, and did not always need such an outlet for thought and feeling. Of his letters home some are lost ; those I have, though very interesting, chiefly refer to matters of local and family importance. The journal does not begin at once, and the first entry is a summary of what had occurred down to its date in March, 1861 :

Since the last entry in this journal many events have taken place. My health broke down completely, and I was absolutely compelled to leave Sierra Leone, or leave my bones in that inhospitable country. Much as I had suffered, it was hard work leaving, perhaps never to return. I embarked on board the *Athenian* (Captain Lowrie), 21st April, 1860 ; and after a pleasant voyage landed at Liverpool on the 12th of May. Reached home the same evening, and was received as one from the dead by my dear friends. In a few days I left for London to see the Secretaries. Was exceedingly well received, put up at Mr. Osborn's ; the day after was taken sick with bronchitis and strong fever. Was very ill for some time, was

kindly nursed by Mrs. Osborn and family. Stayed in London six weeks ; taken ill again, returned home. Went to the Isle of Man with father and the Somersets. Came home and went to Conference ; stayed with Mr. Osborn again, and enjoyed it very much.

After Conference went to spend a few days with my friend Dillon at Salcombe ; thence to see my new friend Mitchell at Buckfastleigh, Devon. There I met with the young lady who is now my wife ; the Lord bless our union ! From this place to the home of 'Miss A.'s friends, to ask permission ; then to London for a day or two, and then home. I put some time in at Manchester and the neighbourhood. On the 6th October received a letter from Mr. Osborn asking me to return to West Africa. I replied in the affirmative at once, and after three days set off for Devon to ask my dear Mary to accompany me ; she at once left for home. I brought her to Leicester, and then went on to Manchester. Spent a fortnight getting ready, and then to South Grange, the home of Mary, where I stayed another fortnight. We were married at the Parish Church, Bishop's Itchington (there being no possibility of having the knot tied at a Methodist chapel), 14th November, 1860. Left for London, saw the Secretaries and a few friends ; in two days left for Manchester. Spent the next six days among my friends, and on the 24th November we sailed for Lagos. We reached our destination December 21st, stayed a few days at Lagos, and then on to Abeokuta.

Since we arrived we have had much sickness to contend with, but have been cheered by the divine presence and blessing. In consequence of sickness I have not preached often, but have now begun to take my regular work.

Abeokuta has to be reached by way of Lagos, where a British Colony flourishes. Here landing is always difficult and sometimes dangerous, owing to the bar formed by the silting up of vast quantities of sand brought down by the rivers from the higher lands.

Many will have heard Mr. Champness describe this bar, with its perils. Never shall I forget the first time I listened to the story; how, as he pictured the scene, I saw the huge breakers, heard their roar from afar; trembled as the little boat rose 'stem on' to ride the tremendous wave, and sighed with relief as the last of the mountainous billows sank behind her, and 'smooth water' was reached. The terrible shark, too, with his black fin just above the water! How I shuddered to think that the slightest deviation from the course would roll the boat over and over, and the hapless missionaries would be lost in the jaws of the monsters that swam around among the breakers! Sometimes I wonder if any missionary meeting in these days *can* be as thrilling as were those when I first heard Thomas Champness, thin, pale, and worn, tell the dramatic story of his experiences. Then, again, I know that the romance of missions goes on all the time, and the heroes of the Cross still battle with all this, and more, for the sake of the Lord who died to save us all. They still sing His praises, still do His will, and always there are found those who will go forth at His command to 'preach the gospel to every creature.'

A letter to his friends at home thus describes the arrival at Abeokuta, with its attendant discomforts and adventures:

At first we had much to put up with. Our house was in a wretched state. Never shall I forget how my heart sank when I saw it for the first time—the plaster falling from the walls, the thatch blown off, and no furniture in it. It looked most poverty-stricken. To make matters worse, our furniture was left behind at Liverpool. It was at the *dépôt* in good time; but, owing to the number of passengers, our luggage, with that

of many others, was left behind. Fortunately we took a good supply of wearing apparel with us. . . . When the later steamer arrived at Lagos, the month after we had left for Abeokuta, the bar was so bad nothing could be landed, so our tables, chairs, beds, clothes, &c., were taken down the coast ! By the time the packet returned to Lagos, and the goods were landed, the River Ogun was almost dried up, so the canoes bringing our goods up were delayed, as there was not sufficient water to float them ; so everything must be taken out and carried over the sand to deep water. Fancy our destitute condition : no flour, or, as the boy said, ' no anything ! ' Providentially I had secured a box of arrowroot at Sierra Leone ; but think of my sorrow when my dear wife was ill, and longing for a bit of bread-and-butter, and I had none to give her. Yes, we had a little hardship at first ; now that is all over ; the house is like a new one. . . . When the native friends come in they say, ' Ah, the white man has come ! '

We have a nice Society, worshipping in a mud chapel ; very neat and picturesque it is. But the population—my heart sinks when I think of the people. ' Wholly given to idolatry ' is the best description of them. . . . Still, victory must follow the faithful preaching of the gospel. Oh, pray for us, we entreat you !

The conditions of missionary life in Abeokuta differed greatly from those in Sierra Leone—the latter being a prosperous British Colony peopled by negroes and mulattoes, or West Indians—men of varied nationalities, all living under British rule, more or less civilized and christianized. The Freetown Methodist Circuit had over three thousand members ; most of the people spoke English of a certain kind, and it was taught in the schools and used in the churches, so that the missionary had no new language to learn. Abeokuta was distinctly heathen ; our Methodist Church was but newly planted there, and numbered only a few over a hundred members,

some of them being Sierra Leone men, who had gone there to trade or to work. The language was 'Yoruba,' one spoken by a great number of the tribes, and the country all around was heathen ; human sacrifices were not yet done away with, and idolatry, with all its evils, flourished exceedingly. This was, indeed, a true mission field, such as appealed most strongly to the heart of the man who had longed, even when at Sierra Leone, to go forth to the Niger and preach to the heathen there. We can understand with what interest he would take up this new work, and how earnestly he would long to be made useful in bringing these poor idolaters to the knowledge of God.

Writing to the Missionary Secretaries a letter, part of which appeared in the *Missionary Notices* of August, 1861, he says :

It affords me great pleasure to write to you from this place, of which I had heard so much, and where I had often longed to labour. I have now the desire of my heart, and am permitted to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Egba nation. Many times in Sierra Leone have I heard three of our members who were stolen from this land speak of it as a place where the ministers of Jesus would be listened to with attention and respect. Sometimes one would say, 'Ah, massa, suppose Egba people take the gospel, the country will be good to live in.' This is true ; the country is one of the finest in Africa ; its resources are as yet but partially developed ; but, as religion opens the way, we shall see important changes take place. 'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.'

Our faith has already been severely tried. Both Mrs. Champness and myself have had very severe attacks of fever : but we hope it was our seasoning, and that for the future we may be preserved from such severe attacks.

Letters of a somewhat earlier date describe the country, the town, and the climate, as well as give some idea of the work which constantly occupied the days of the missionaries.

April 29, 1861.

MY DEAR PARENTS,—The place is full of idols, and those of the most debased character ; they literally ‘bow down to blocks of wood and stone,’ and offer sacrifices to red feathers, shells, palm-nuts, and other senseless things. We—that is, Bro. — and myself—have begun to preach in the streets and market-places. It is easy to get a congregation ; people listen to what is said, and often express their gratification at what they hear ; but, alas ! such is the deceitfulness of sin and the debased state of the human heart, that they often, while convinced that the words of the missionary are true, continue in idolatry. As yet it has been in vain to attempt to persuade any of the great men of the land to leave their idols. By becoming Christians they would forfeit their dignity, their riches, and perhaps their life. The other day a man came to me, and after a long talk declared that he knew the Christians were right and that he was wrong. ‘But,’ said he, ‘if I give up heathenism they—that is, the idolaters—will kill me.’ He is a priest among them. He has promised to give me his child when he is a little older, that he may be taught a better way than his father. I have not given this man up yet, but shall strive to win him to my Saviour. Lord, help me !

We are entering upon our first rainy season, for we have two—the ‘former and the latter rains.’ There is an interval of something like two months of fine weather, beginning in August—very different and much preferable to Sierra Leone, I should think, for in that place the rain is continuous, and is very trying to persons subject to ague. The climate of this place appears to be much better than that of Sierra Leone ; the fevers, although very trying, are not so deadly.

June 6, 1861.

Blessed be God, we are very well, quite robust and strong for Africa, though since last we wrote we have been in sad straits, having had very severe attacks of fever. I was struck down first, and two days afterwards dear Mary took cold, and was completely prostrated by intermittent fever and ague. Dr. and Mrs. Harrison, of whose arrival and friendliness I told you in my last, have both been down, and were so ill that for a time they were in great danger; they were both ill together, and just when we were, so that again I had to be doctor.

Referring to the death of the British Consul at Lagos, he writes in August:

If he had lived I think he would very soon have settled the war which is still raging at Ijaye, but now there is no prospect of peace. I do not know what will become of this country if peace does not take place soon, for all commerce is stopped for the present, which, as you may easily understand, impoverishes the people very much. Besides, it checks the progress of the gospel. Men's minds are unsettled; they cannot listen to the word of life, and say, 'Wait until we have conquered our enemies, then we will begin to think about religion.' Oh, pray that peace may be established very soon.

As I have never yet said much about Abeokuta itself, suppose I give you a little information. You must understand that forty years ago the population of this country was much greater than at present. A civil war which broke out depopulated the country, and rendered it almost desolate. There was a very large town called Owu, where a large market was held; traders from all parts of the country visited it and bartered their produce. On one occasion a man from Ijebu was killed in a quarrel; the people of Ifa (a town said to be the oldest, and from whence the whole nation, according to tradition, came) interfered, and inquired 'why blood had been shed in the *market*?'

The Owu people, confident in their own strength, defied the

Ifa king, and slew his messenger. This outrage roused the whole nation ; a large army was formed, composed of men from all the towns, who marched against Owu, and besieged it ; the people were exceedingly brave, and resolutely defended their town for seven years, when, emaciated and weakened from want of food, they were obliged to surrender. Thousands of them were sold into slavery. When in Sierra Leone I heard an Owu man describe the siege. Many an Owu man is toiling in America. After taking this town, the army, flushed with victory, and spoiled for industry, having become idle and savage, thought they might go against other towns ; they did so, and very soon the Egba tribe was torn asunder by wars and tumults, town after town was destroyed, and the inhabitants either put to the sword or sold into slavery. In its turn the army was divided, and they fought with one another, until a war chief named Shoddakeh, with his followers, retired to this place, then a forest, and sheltered themselves in a cave under the rock ' Olumu.' Here the chief was enabled to defend himself from his enemies. After a while, others joined his standard, and soon he became quite formidable. As his followers increased, they began to build themselves houses ; and as they were the remnants of large town populations, they called their collections of houses by the names of their ancient dwelling-places ; thus, the township we live in is called Igbore, after the large town of that name. So with Oko, Itoko, Itoku, Owu, Aké, Igbein, Ikija, and more than a hundred others. All these townships are rapidly increasing, and although once at a distance from each other, are now extending their borders, and in some instances strangers cannot tell where one town ends and another begins. The whole of them are encircled by a wall, about five feet high inside, but as a trench of something like ten feet deep has been dug outside, the wall is really fifteen feet high. There are about five gates, where the trench is crossed by a wooden bridge, which is of course destroyed when an enemy approaches. The town is rapidly enlarging ; already a wall has been built outside, and about a mile from the old wall, so as to give the people room to build. The

farms extend for twenty miles around the town, and in some places, thirty miles from the walls, the land is in cultivation by the inhabitants of Abeokuta. Many of our members are farmers, so that we seldom see them, except on Sundays. We have no good roads and bridges as you have in England. In our journeys, if we come to a stream, we must plunge boldly in and make the best of it. . . .

All this refers, of course, to Abeokuta as it was in 1861. There are many changes now ; the missionary of to-day has the luxury of railway travel, and the resources of the country have been greatly developed ; but still there is heathenism and superstition, and idolatry has not yet disappeared, though the gospel wins its widening way.

July 2, 1861.

I like the foreign work more than home duty, and when the time comes, if it ever should, for me to settle in the home work, I shall feel like 'Jack ashore,' and no doubt, when troubled by 'rusty' circuit stewards, shall long for the land where I was everything, and managed my own affairs myself ! I do like preaching to the heathen ; there is something like mission work here, when I can go out into a market, and, standing under some shady tree, preach Christ to the people with the certainty that not one of them knows anything of the salvation of God. Oh, it's far before Sierra Leone in that respect, and if I had but acquired the language, so as to preach without an interpreter, it would be a still happier thing. I often go out before the sun gets hot, and, taking my interpreter with me, go to one of the numerous markets. I tie the horse to a tree, and then we sing a verse, often the following :

Come, O Thou all-victorious Lord,
Thy power to us make known ;
Strike with the hammer of Thy word,
And break these hearts of stone.

While singing, there will gather round us from fifty to a hundred people, who have thus an opportunity of hearing of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world's sin. Of course, many go away after listening for a minute or two, but others take their places, and, as it was with the Apostles, some mock, others say, 'Wait a while ; when the enemy with whom we are at war is defeated, we will listen to the word of God, but just now our hearts are scattered.' Sometimes I am discouraged, but I remember that it is my work to sow. Perhaps another may reap it. Never mind, 'the sower and the reaper shall rejoice together,' and, oh, what a time of rejoicing it will be !

The war is a great hindrance to the spread of religion. Did I tell you anything about the war ? I think not, but will do so now. You must know that about fifty miles from this place there is a town called Ijaye ; the people are not Egbas, but Yorubas. The nations inhabiting this part of Africa are divided into three or four tribes, all speaking the same language, only somewhat different dialects ; the principal tribes are Yoruba, Egba, and Ijebu, the former being the most numerous ; their principal towns are Ibadan (300,000 inhabitants), Ijaye, and Oyo.

Aré, chief of Ijaye, refused to submit to Oyo, the principal, though not the largest town (the king of Yoruba resides at Oyo), and defied the king to compel him to submit. Oyo called upon Ibadan to help him. Ibadan, nothing loth, complied with the request, especially as there was a chance of getting a large number of slaves. The Ibadans, although living in a most fertile country, refuse to work for their bread, and ridicule those who do. They prefer to steal, and thus keep the country in confusion, 'going out in bands,' lying in ambush by the wayside, kidnapping the passers-by, or, going out in larger numbers, taking some town, putting to death all who oppose them, and selling the rest. . . . The Egbas of Abeokuta sent to the Ibadans to ask them why they thus troubled the country, begging them not to renew the strife that had ruined the country years ago, and asking them to

make peace. 'What?' said the Ibadans, 'do you Egbas, you palm-oil and cotton people, ask us to make peace? Nay, but prepare yourselves for war, for when we have shaved the front of the head, we shall certainly shave the back!' Which, being interpreted, meant that when they had conquered Ijaye, they would take Abeokuta. . . . Several battles have been fought, and now the Ibadans have been driven back. But they are all cowards together; if the Ibadans had any pluck, they would keep on; and then the Egbas are traders, and will not risk much to save their neighbours, though they would fight to keep Dahomey away. In the meantime, all trade is stopped, the road to Lagos is stopped, and no oil can be taken down to the coast.

These tribal wars continued more or less, and all good and useful work had to suffer. The history reminds one of the wars of the Old Testament, when 'the Syrians went out by bands, and took away the little maid out of the land of Israel.'

ABEOKUTA, *July 2, 1861.*

Yesterday was held the Missionary meeting at Aké Church, C.M.S. I had been invited to speak, and did so. We set off early in the morning. Shouldn't you like to have seen us on our steeds? We put up at Dr. Harrison's, and at eleven o'clock went to church. It is the largest building in the town, and holds seven hundred people. There is a tower and a clock, so it looks quite English. The place was filled with people. Of course everything was done in Yoruba. First a Yoruba hymn, then a Yoruba prayer, then a sermon by the Rev. C. A. Golliner, one of the C.M.'s, on Matt. ix. 37, 38. This was in Yoruba too, then a speech by your son Tom. I took Fiji, and got on pretty well for me; this had to be interpreted also. Then a speech from the Rev. T. King, a native C.M.; then a speech from Rev. A. D. Phillips, an American Baptist, also in Yoruba; then four of the native converts were called upon, then a prayer, then the collection. Oh, if you could have seen this! Instead of going round, the people

brought their cowries, and threw them down in a heap : there were something like ten bags. When you consider that there are not less than 20,000 shells in one bag, you can imagine what a heap of money there was. A bag is worth 18s., or forty cowries for a halfpenny. Besides this, there was £10 in silver and gold. We dined at Dr. Harrison's, and then rode home, somewhat weary, and not sorry to get to our own home. For, after all, there is no place like it.

We are both well, and as happy as anybody in England, I think.

July 25, 1861.

This morning before breakfast I rode out and preached in the market ; then had something to eat, and sat down to study Yoruba ; then had my boys in arithmetic. Sometimes, instead of the boys, I have the masters, the first of whom is going through a course of theology ; the assistant master is being instructed in grammar and history, and comes in with the others for arithmetic. Then I have Mr. Bickersteth's son learning grammar and a few other things. On Saturday evenings I have a most interesting Bible-class ; in fact, it is as much as I can manage to keep the irons from burning, but if I have health I shall be able to manage. Since I came here I have read a great deal, and am doing my best to furnish my mind with useful matter. I should like, if possible, to be a better scholar when I return to England than I am now, but much will depend upon my health. Pray that God may give me vigour of mind and body, and a quenchless love for the souls of the poor heathen around me. Oh, the dreadful darkness Satan has placed these people in ! But not too great for the beams of the Sun of Righteousness to disperse.

I had a most interesting congregation this morning ; only two or three to begin with, but soon quite a nice little group. They attentively listened to the news of the Saviour's love, and when I had finished said : ' Thank you ! thank you ! ' One woman addressed the others, and said, ' It is quite true what the white man has said. We ought to pray to God. ' ' Yes, ' said they, ' We will go to Ilé Olorun (God's house) and hear

more.' But I am afraid they were, in more senses than one, wayside hearers. 'Never mind,' cry faith and hope, 'some will bear fruit.'

ABEOKUTA, *Jan. 1, 1862.*

We had a quiet Christmas Day, but a very happy one. I preached at ten o'clock to a chapel full of people. Mr. Phillips, an American Baptist, and a great friend of ours, spent the day with us.

On the 9th of December we held our Missionary meeting, which was a complete success. The chapel was crowded, many members of other churches being present, thus aiding us not a little. The chair was taken by no one greater than Tom. The meeting was addressed by Rev. G. F. Bickler, Rev. J. L. B. Wood, and Dr. Harrison, of the C.M.S., the Rev. A. D. Phillips and the Rev. J. Stone, American Baptists, as well as my colleague. After the speeches came the collection, which entirely baffles description. The people brought their cowries and laid them down at our feet, and soon there was a considerable billock, being literally 'a heap of money.' You know the war has made our people exceedingly poor, so that they could not do as they would; but they did great things, with the collection and donations. After the meeting we had all the speakers to dinner.

Last night was Watch-night; we had a fine time of it. I left at 1.30 a.m., but the people continued until break of day, singing, perhaps shouting. They had gone in about seven p.m., thus spending some eight hours in worshipping God and rejoicing over their mercies. There was good done: many found peace in believing, some of them very young, others old and greyheaded. Some of the latter, when giving tickets last Sunday, I had admonished to make haste to Christ, as their day was nearly over; they are now able to rejoice in God their Saviour. There was, of course, as always with our people, plenty of noise, more than I like; but the Master was there, so I could not say anything. Besides, when they were heathen, they shouted for Shango and Obbatala, their idols, and may they not shout for Jesus? . . .

CHAPTER IX

THE MISSIONARY: ABEOKUTA, 1862-3

THE second year in Abeokuta began happily. Both Mr. and Mrs. Champness were hopefully learning the language and working diligently, frequently riding out together to visit some of their people, or to enjoy friendly intercourse with the missionaries of other Churches who lived at a distance. Everything seemed to promise a happy and useful career, and much interest was aroused amongst English Methodists by letters published in the missionary literature of the time. The personal records, however, are lost, only a few entries in the journal, and one or two letters, having come to our hands.

A good work was done among the children. Several girls were taken into the house and taught housewifery, as well as other things; and boys were handed over to the missionary to be brought up in Christian ways. The story of one is told in the journal :

April 21, 1862.

I was informed that Jonah's father was staying at — and intended, if he was not allowed to take the boy, to seize the old woman. He was sent for, and a noisy conversation commenced, but the upshot of it was that I felt we *must* give up the boy for the present, or perhaps a prosecution would arise. However, he promised sacredly that he would himself give me the boy to teach for him, and that he would bring him on Saturday. Whether he will do so or no, remains to be seen.

One thing is certain, he will not be able to make the boy a heathen, and Jonah will take the first opportunity of coming back to me. When the rest of the children heard that Jonah was to go with his father, they were much troubled, and poor Elizabeth wept. She thinks poor Jonah will never come back. I gave Jonah's father a present, in the hope of showing that I meant well by them—a looking-glass, and one of the fancy glasses. . . .

22nd.—This morning, to my great joy, Jonah came to school. . . . Saturday, 26th, Martin came to say that Jonah's father wished to see me, to talk the palaver about the boy. Accordingly we went over, and to our great joy, in the presence of the family, Jonah was formally handed over to me.

Meanwhile, as opportunity came, he preached by interpreter in the markets, and by the wayside, as well as in the chapel, and had the joy of seeing the people become interested, and some even eager to hear the gospel. One and another would bring their idols to him, saying they were no longer worshippers of Shango, Ifa, or their former gods; and then, after probation, were received into the church by baptism. In June he writes to his parents:

War is ruining everything. A town called Imakun has been taken by the Egbas; the inhabitants were brought here in droves, and have become slaves. . . . Amidst all this, we keep gaining a little, a very little ground. Two weeks ago I baptized five adults, four of whom have been converted since the beginning of the year, and have been under instruction ever since. I meet the baptism candidates' class every Monday morning. Some of these had forsaken their idols three or four years ago, but had not received forgiveness. We do not baptize until we have evidence which causes us to believe they are converted to God.

Mrs. Champness was a fine missionary ; she was rapidly gaining a knowledge of the language, and had already begun a good work among the women and girls, when, to her husband's great grief, she was stricken down with what proved to be mortal sickness, for after three weeks of great suffering she passed away on September 23, 1862. The sorrow of that time is too sacred for us to unveil.

What this terrible bereavement meant for the one who was left behind can be well understood by those who have suffered in like manner. His wife was a beautiful Christian, well informed, cultured, and accomplished. She had been engaged as a governess in families where her work had been appreciated, and her character had grown in usefulness and Christian loveliness. As a girl she was lovable and attractive. One of the friends of her youth, an old schoolfellow, has thus described her : ' I remember Mary Archer perfectly—her appearance, her quick movements, and her expressive face. She had a very bright nature, a very clear musical voice, and her features readily expressed any emotion present in her mind. She was naturally independent, but was always ready to give help to any who needed it, and it was always given in the kindest manner. Her ideals were high, and her life agreed with them. I should think she would develop the highest characteristics of a noble woman. Her influence on those around her must have been good. These are recollections of close on sixty years ago, but are as vivid to-day as they were then.'

After entering the particulars of the sad event in his journal, the bereaved husband adds : 'I mean to give myself more fully to the Lord ; to study the Word of

God more and to work harder. Lord, help me to do ^c
this, for Jesus' sake. . . .

There is no further entry in the journal till March, 1863; but letters tell of the loneliness, and the determination of the missionary not to allow sorrow to keep him from his duty:

I have received great kindness from all the missionaries, have spent some time with each of them; at first I could not bear to stay in this house, but now I am getting the better of my grief, and can give myself to my work. My poor people were in great distress, and feared I should not stay with them now. Several of them came to me one night, saying, 'Master, we pray to God to show us what to do, we now come to tell you what we think. You are fretting and sorrowing too much. You will die, and leave us; then who will teach us? You have many friends here, who will be glad to have you live with them; please hear what we say, and go to some of them and live there. Come to see us now and then, and we shall know that you are still *our* white man; but if you weep until you die, what shall we then do?' I took their advice, and went away, and stayed with the American Baptist missionary at Alabama; they have always been very kind to me; I am in much better health now. . . . In reading the Word of God, I came upon what seemed to fit my case. Reach your Bible, and read 1 Kings xix., verses 4 and 5; you will see what I mean. . . . 'The Word of God is *tried*!' Let infidels prate as they will; we who have encountered Satan, and been mauled by him in the fight, know that the promises of God are 'yea' and 'amen' in Christ Jesus. The Bible is more precious than ever.

Christmas would have been a trying time but for the kindness of missionary friends:

After preaching on Christmas Day, I went over to Alabama, where my friend Phillips resides, and partook of his hospitality

for a day or two, taking all my children with me, six in number, all as black as ink ! They are company for me ; they speak no English, so I have to speak Egba with them. . . . The girls are my house-servants, going to school regularly, keeping the house straight between times. Their names are Joanna, Elizabeth, and 'Martha Greeves,' the last-named being supported by friends in England ; the boys are Jonah, Daniel, and Thomas, the first four being each about thirteen years old, the two last-named about seven. Jonah cleans the knives and boots, but as soon as the little ones can do this I shall put him to the carpenter's bench ; of course, he will still go to school, like the others, from nine till two.

It is interesting to know that one at least of these 'children' is now living. When our son came home from Abeokuta in 1905, he brought with him a gift for his mother, from 'Joanna,' now a grandmother, the widow of a native minister, and the leader of a society class in a neighbouring town.

It was a good thing that the missionary had these children to look after ; their company kept him from dwelling too much on his troubles, and their ways beguiled many a weary hour. He writes to his father :

You would laugh heartily if you could see this little group gathering round for a chat with me between evening prayers and bed-time. I am not man enough yet to pray extempore in the language, so I read a prayer and a chapter. People say I read very well. . . . Some of these days I shall manage to get on without a book. . . . It needs a good deal of impudence at first ; often I stand and talk at a fellow who does not understand a word I say ; however, I persevere, and mean to be fluent some day, by God's blessing. . . . Oh for the gift of tongues !

Owing to the intertribal wars, the Governor of Lagos stopped the road to the coast, which was inconvenient

for peaceable people. Writing in February, 1863, Mr. Champness says :

Did I tell you that the Governor has blockaded this place? Well, somehow or other, Mr. — got permission for me to have some boxes carried up overland, so, to my great joy, three arrived last night. I was reduced to my last candle! Now I can go on for months. There was not a single shilling in my cash-box, so I had to leave my schoolmasters unpaid; however, Mr. — sent me £5, so you see we are provided for somehow or other. . . . The new chapel takes a great deal of my attention. . . . Besides that, we have during the last few weeks opened a small place in a very dark neighbourhood; not a chapel—a preaching-place—just a roof to keep off the sun and rain, open sides. We get a nice little company on Sunday afternoons. . . . As soon as practicable I mean opening another of the huts, and have little doubt they will be of great use.

It was the custom of the Dahomian nation to come out to fight and catch slaves at a certain season of the year. Rumours of their approach would send all the men of Abeokuta out to the walls, to prepare their defences against so dreaded a foe; and in March, 1863, the news was brought in that the 'Dahomians were not far off.'

It was a time of peril; Mr. Champness tells the story in his journal:

March 7.—Those wicked and bloodthirsty Dahomians are now at Ibara, a small town about seven miles distant. We expect to be attacked before this time to-morrow.

8th.—Preached in the morning from 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble.' Very few men present; they are all at the wall.

9th.—I have had a narrow escape! In company with Mr. L—— started out to look for the enemy. We crossed the river, and went a few miles, but did not see the camp; we

were about to go further, when, to my great surprise, about twelve of my people came up and entreated me to return. While standing, we saw six Egbas about a quarter of a mile before us; they were afterwards taken by the Dahomians. Most likely if our people had not come up we should have gone on, and been taken. How did it happen? 'Who preserveth thy life from destruction.' Lord, help me to spend my spared life to Thy glory.

16th.—Still undisturbed. Preached on Sunday from 'In this world ye shall have tribulation.' The men are all at the wall. Can see the camp from Owu Hill.

21st.—Went to Aké; saw the camps from there. Many of the Egbas have been taken to-day; they go out in the hope of catching Dahomians, and are caught themselves. Joshua Osobba, once one of our members, has been taken; he was with the heathen, and fell into the hands of the enemy.

Fever next laid hold of the missionary, accompanied this time by alarming nervous symptoms; after a shivering fit he lay helpless and unable to speak for more than two hours. His native servants feared he was dying, and sent for the doctor, who at first thought him unconscious, but after he had been in the room a few minutes he observed a slight movement in one eyelid, and said, 'He knows I am here,' and applied restoratives. Mr. Champness himself has said he heard all that passed, but was quite unable to communicate with those around him. He writes of this experience:

It was very trying, but, thanks be to God, it passed away as suddenly as it came. Afterwards I got up and ate a hearty dinner. Slept well, and rose on the 23rd all right, and, with Mr. M——, repaired windows. . . . I hear the Dahomians have left Ibara; the Egbas have gone out and burned their camps. . . . Had a delightful prayer-meeting, but only one man to pray; that was Mr. —; he seemed to see the matter

in the right light. If the enemy have really gone without fighting many lives have been spared. Never again ought I to doubt or mistrust God. Indeed, all through, my mind has been most comfortable. If I had been taken, it would have been a short way to heaven.

24th.—Worked hard at the glazing again, and am quite worn out. . . . Mr. Phillips and Mr. Ashcroft called this evening on their way back from Ibara ; it is quite true the enemy have gone. What a mercy ! not a blow struck ! If the Dahomians had attacked this place and been driven back by the Egbas there would have been no living with them, they would have been so conceited. As it is, there is no room for boasting.

May 4.—Rode over to Mr. Phillips's to breakfast ; called to see V——, who will be ready to begin on Monday [this was the man who was at work on the new chapel]. The Lord prosper us in this thing ! At the leaders' meeting had to exclude more members for adultery ; Lord, undertake for me. The leaders, seeing me much discouraged, came in afterwards and begged me to be patient, assuring me that the Lord had blessed the work of my hands, and that if I leave them they will perish. Lord, do Thou put Thy hand to the work. Quicken us every one, that we may work harder for Thee !

Troubles came thickly upon the church at Abeokuta ; there were those among them who needed constant discipline ; and reproof, both public and private, was given. Mr. Champness's health was in no condition to stand the strain ; but he did not give up. His discipline was tempered with great forbearance, and he did his best to win the erring ones back to God.

7th.—Rode over to the new chapel ; expected to find V—— at work, but did not. Rode on to Mr. Wood's (C.M.S.) to breakfast. Mr. —— came in, and we talked over E——'s affair at great length. He does not seem to see that he ought to send E—— away. The people came again in the evening, when I told them I should give L—— a little longer trial.

The Missionary Secretaries, alarmed by the reports of his ill-health, kindly recommended that Mr. Champness should visit Lagos, and go for a short sea-trip to Porto Novo. He did so, and enjoyed the change :

I had lots of adventures on the journey ; on the first day it rained heavily, and I was wet through when I got to the place where we were to stay the night. Next day we set off to — ; here a party of Egbas seized all our boxes, and wished to prevent us from going on ; this caused no end of talking, the result being that we got our things again. Just before we laid down to sleep a messenger brought private word that a company of men had gone out of the town, and meant lying in wait for me on the Lagos road, and, taking my boxes and horse, kidnap my carriers. However, I went to bed, and slept well ; next morning I sent to the chiefs to ask the reason of such conduct ; so we had a grand talk, and after all I was allowed to go on. By the good providence of God I had not a single mishap all the way.

Porto Novo ; this is a place in the direction of Dahomey ; indeed, it is considered by that amiable being the King of Dahomey as a portion of his territory. We came by canoe, and part of the way I was very unwell. . . . Never yet have I seen a place so entirely given up to idolatry. It is fearful ! Serpents are the principal gods ; but at every street corner you see a loathsome clay figure representing ‘Elegbara’ (Satan). It makes me long to learn the language, so that I may lift up my voice for Jesus. You must not suppose that I am altogether dumb ; this morning I had an animated conversation and discussion with a priest, who told me that when God made the black man he gave him these idols, but when he made the white man he bade him worship the true God. We had it very strong ; of course the priest did not know all I said, nor I all he said, but quite enough for him to have no reason for saying, ‘No man careth for my soul.’ . . . Since writing the above I have been very ill, but am now better : not able to write much ; I am in Lagos, and scarcely know



THOMAS CHAMPNESS, THE RETURNED MISSIONARY, 1863:
AGE ABOUT THIRTY-ONE

when I shall start for Abeokuta. My poor body is covered with boils.

P.S.—I have been ordered home by the doctors, so may leave this year.

25th (to his parents).—You see I have got safely back to my people, for which I ought to feel thankful, for two Europeans travelling the same road a few days before were robbed. . . . As you heard, my health was not good in Lagos, so travelling in my weak state was almost too much for me.

29th.—The new chapel is roofed, and will be ready to open before I leave, all being well, so there will be my mark in Abeokuta when I am not there myself. May our good Master cause it to be the birthplace of many souls. Oh, if I could stay but two or three years longer! but there can be little doubt that my health will never be what it ought to be until I return to England for a season. All things going on rightly, I expect to leave by the September mail. . . .

Before this letter closes he is looking forward to advocating the claims of Africa in England, and says, 'Poor Africa; it does not get its share of notice. Oh, if I could but talk like "Fiji" Wilson!'

In a few months he was in England, worn and shattered; subject to frequent and furious attacks of fever, yet eager to begin to talk of his beloved Africa, which, though he was never to see it again, was destined to be linked with the name of Champness by many ties of missionary toil, for, in after-years, the *Joyful News* Mission had its representatives there, and, besides this, it was one of the joys of his last happy year on earth that a Champness was a missionary in Abeokuta. On April 11, 1905, he wrote to a dear friend:

In 1857 I sailed out of Plymouth for Africa; and on Thursday I go to that port to welcome home another Thomas

Champness, who has laboured on the very spot his father left forty years ago. I am quite excited thinking about it. Well do I remember my father coming to meet me when I returned. I see him now as he ran along the river bank. Some day he will welcome me on the Canaan side of Jordan, if only I am faithful to the end.

Our old companions in distress
We haste again to see.

We are all well. I am old, and though I often preach eight times a week I am often fatigued beyond description; but God helps me to interest the poor and the ignorant.

So the old warrior looked back on his field of battle, and forward to the glad welcoming of the blessed ones whom he was so soon to join. His ministry in Africa left its mark; God greatly blessed his labours, the people loved him, and to this day there are old men and women who tell with affection of their first resident missionary, Thomas Champness.

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The return to England brought Mr. Champness before the public in a manner quite unexpected by himself. It was the Jubilee Year of the Wesleyan Foreign Missionary Society, and great meetings were to be held all over the land. Dr. George Osborn, one of the Missionary Secretaries, was the President of the Conference for that year. He had always taken a great interest in Thomas Champness, to whom his kindness had ever been much more than official duty required. His letters were full of loving sympathy and encouragement, especially in the times of special trial both at Sierra Leone and Abeokuta; and in many ways George Osborn seems to have felt for the young missionary an affection which reminds one of Paul's love for Timothy;

a love which did not fear to admonish, as well as to cheer and direct.

On his part, Thomas Champness had been taught from his youth up to admire and venerate the man to whose ministry his father and the whole family could trace the beginning of their Christian life; and, as he grew into manhood, had felt the honour and privilege it was to have Dr. Osborn for his friend. Thus it was very beautiful that on his return home in the autumn of 1863 Dr. Osborn should invite him to be his assistant for his presidential year. Very gratefully was the offer accepted; in his diary Thomas Champness wrote:

Sept. 15.—Received a letter from Dr. Osborn, President of the Conference, offering to take me as his assistant; replied thanking and accepting. Who would have expected such a mark of esteem from so great a man? What am I, to receive such privileges?

Sept. 16.—Left home for London; arrived at Lloyd Street before ten; kindly received, have a comfortable room. Lord, help me to walk wisely.

Dec. 7.—Dublin, breakfast meeting, Centenary School; public meeting, spoke, bad time. If I had my own way I would speak no more.

He travelled with the Doctor thousands of miles, and was a frequent speaker at the great meetings of that memorable year. Worn and ill as he was, his earnest and powerful advocacy was such as to arouse the sympathy and move the heart of Methodism. There are many now living who date their own first enthusiasm in the cause of foreign missions from the time when Thomas Champness, fresh from the field of his labours and his sufferings, pleaded the cause of Africa—‘Poor Africa!’—till his very voice brought

tears to the eyes of strong men, and swept away all feeling except that of the desire to help and save the heathen. Dr. Osborn used to watch over his health; after an exciting meeting, when the speaker would be greatly exhausted, he would gently hint to their kind hostess the restorative properties of 'a good meal,' and would see his young friend well cared for wherever they went.

So, in labours more abundant, and with the best possible environment, the year passed away; strength returned, and some degree of health, though recurrent fever symptoms precluded all thought of a return to West Africa. By the time the Conference of 1864 drew near he pronounced himself well able to take an English circuit *pro tem.*; always he meant to go back to Abeokuta, but the Lord had other work for His servant.

CHAPTER X

FIRST ENGLISH CIRCUITS: KINETON, 1864 —BANBURY, 1865-7

AT this point I begin to write from my personal knowledge of the man who for forty years was my honoured and beloved husband and friend.

It was in the autumn of 1864 that Thomas Champness came into the Kineton Circuit, and that my acquaintance with him began. It was understood that before he could return to West Africa for a third term of missionary service, Mr. Champness needed another year in the home land, and the Conference, by his own wish, appointed him to the Kineton Circuit, where the chapels were mostly small, and the country air was considered likely to benefit him. It was practically a circuit of villages, Kineton itself being a quiet old-world little town, 'twelve miles from everywhere,' as Mr. Champness said, cheerily describing his new location. In a letter to his friend the Rev. W. Armistead he says, 'I shall be quite out of the world at Kineton, but quiet is what I need, and although it is what people call a poor circuit, it is just the thing for me. It is the home of my late wife; Mr. Archer is one of the circuit stewards.'

He was in feeble health; but the cheerful bravery which made possible the long walks from village to village carried with it life and hope to the struggling little places, and there are yet living some who remember his inspiring ministry of a year in that 'poor' circuit.

His mother and one of his sisters came to keep house for him, and made their own mark by helpfulness and kindness among the people.

At about the twelve-mile radius, up over the historic battle-field and ridge of Edge Hill, lies the town of Banbury, where I was born and brought up. We were Wesleyan Methodists; my father was a local preacher, and our home was ever available for 'the preachers.' Banbury Circuit had formerly included Kington and all its villages; it now adjoined it, and the minister at Kington exchanged with the Banbury ministers about twice a quarter. Though a help to Kington, this arrangement had not always been a thing beloved of the Banbury people, who 'liked their own men best,' as they said. Perhaps they had good reason for their preference, perhaps not; I am only stating a fact. When, on the 'Plan,' some of our town friends saw the name of the Kington minister, whoever he happened to be, there was wont to appear the lengthened visage which, being interpreted, meant 'We don't like it.'

It was said that Banbury people were proud. Very likely they were. If so, their pride was to have a fall, for very soon after the Methodist year 1864 set in, there were whispered rumours such as these: 'Do you know Mr. Champness, the new Kington minister? He has asked to be planned in the *villages*; says he will not come to Banbury.' 'Why not?' 'Oh, he says Banbury people don't care to have the Kington minister in the town pulpit, so *this* minister prefers to go to the villages!' Of course, this could not be kept up, and before long Mr. Champness was preaching in the town chapel, and in the course of events it came to pass that he was a guest in my father's house.

One thing led to another, acquaintance ripened into friendliness, and in the spring of 1865, when I was about to pay a visit to some London friends, it was perhaps not surprising that Mr. Champness should ask for my address, intimating that he had business which would shortly take him to town, and that he would like to be allowed to call and see me. He came, and was received by my hostess, who told him that I was, in company with her daughters, at the school, preparing for a tea-meeting. And there he found us all, very busy. I remember him taking out of my hands the two plates of bread or cake I was carrying to one of the tables, and the scarcely disguised amusement with which my companions greeted him. He stayed to the meeting, of which I remember little besides the fact of his presence, and the ovation he received when he rose to speak at the call of the Rev. Luke H. Wiseman, the minister in charge. He returned with us to the home of my friends, and left at a late hour, having asked and obtained leave to call the next morning. My hostess was a wise, motherly woman, and when I came downstairs to breakfast she said to me, very gravely and kindly, 'Now, my dear, you ought to understand that if you go out to-day with this gentleman, you must be prepared to listen to all he may have to say to you.' I thanked her, but did not at first realize her meaning; she saw this, and continued, laying her hand on my arm, 'You must not go out with him unless you are prepared for what he will almost certainly say to you.' I forget how I answered, but life seemed to me to have become all at once a very solemn and sacred thing; and it was a grave young woman who set out on that day's expedition.

We went into London by my favourite route, the river. It was in the days of the old Thames steamboats ; but, dingy and dirty though they were, I dearly loved to be on the river highway. As we crossed the gangway—was it a coincidence, or what?—on the paddle-wheel my companion noted the name of the boat, the *Matrimony*. Later on in the day, after I had made a certain promise, in answer to one of ‘the things he had to say,’ I was smilingly reminded of the voyage we had taken on the boat *Matrimony*, and favourable auguries helped to make us merry on that auspicious tour of London which we took together. It was a happy day for us both ; I know it was for me. It seemed as though at last the dream of my life was to be accomplished, and I was to be the wife of a missionary, and to share in his great life-work.

Congratulations poured in upon me ; I took them all quietly ; they were no surprise to me, for was I not indeed happy and honoured in my prospects ? He deserved all I could give, and was worthy to be loved and admired and praised ; and through all the long years which followed, though there were, of necessity, trials and difficulties, there was nothing to shake the happy conviction that I had won the love of a great and noble soul, and that whatever honour came to me came for the sake of one worthy of it all.

We were married in August, 1865, at the New Wesleyan Chapel, Marlborough Road, Banbury ; and after a fortnight spent in the Isle of Wight and with friends in other places, we returned to our own home, the minister's house at Banbury ; for my husband did not, as we had hoped, succeed in persuading the Missionary Committee to send him back to Western

Africa. Year after year at the District Meeting he made the offer, but his health was never good enough to stand the tropics, and frequent attacks of fever made it plain to all except himself that he must not go.

Of our mutual disappointment it is not necessary to speak ; and in the joy of his work among the country places of his new circuit Mr. Champness found continual comfort. Though he was often 'down with fever,' he soon recovered, and was at work when others would have been resting ; up early in his study, out among the people, and then off into the country to preach or hold Missionary meetings : away to some distant city for an anniversary, and home again with ever-fresh delight, sometimes very weary, but always eager and hungry for work, and happiest when most fully employed. Lionel D. Reay, his Superintendent for the first year at Banbury, was a man of fine intelligence and earnestness, a former West African missionary, who had preceded him at Sierra Leone. We lived near each other, and very beautiful was their friendship. How they would talk ! What hours of the night, after the day's work, they would sit up together, sermonizing, and discussing grave and difficult theological points and Connexional problems. And how genial was the intercourse that cemented a friendship which nothing but death could sever ! That first year was always remembered with loving delight. The two men were nearly of an age, and were more like brothers than senior and junior colleagues. Together they mingled with the social life of their people, and among the friends of my youth we had a very happy time.

The ministry of those two years in the Banbury Circuit was not without its fruit. As in Africa, so in

England, the one desire was to preach so as to save souls. The great ambition of Thomas Champness was to bring men to Christ. I remember how he would pray for this, how he would grieve when no fruit appeared, and how greatly he would rejoice over a good case of conversion.

He wrote no lengthy diaries, and grew less inclined for writing at all ; but, on the other hand, I have recently received a letter which gives testimony to the blessing and success attending his preaching, and is only a sample of the way in which his ministry was always helpful to the seeking soul. The writer says :

Forty years ago, I was residing at Cropredy ; at that time I was a gay and thoughtless young man in my twenty-first year. On the last Sunday evening of 1865, by a strange providence, I was led into the old Wesleyan chapel. Mr. Champness was the preacher ; the service had commenced when I entered, and there was a full congregation. I found a seat in the far corner of the gallery ; the whole service was most impressive. The text was Rev. iii. 20, and as I listened to the earnest appeal made therefrom, I resolved, God being my helper, to 'open the door and let the Saviour in.' There was an after-meeting, to which of course I stayed ; there were seven or eight penitents, of whom I was one. Mr. C. soon made his way to me, and his kind way of dealing with me I shall *never* forget. He said, 'Well, my young friend, you feel that you are a sinner?' 'Yes, sir,' I said. He continued, 'I suppose you think that if you were to die in this state you would go to hell?' 'I know I should,' I replied. 'Oh no, you wouldn't! Jesus died to *save* sinners, and He would save you.' (I was weeping very bitterly.) He said, 'It is people who don't weep and pray who go there.' Before the meeting broke up he had placed me under the care of Mr. T. Cherry, with the request, 'You look after him!' And let me say Bro. Cherry was faithful to the charge. On the evening of January 14, 1866,

I obtained the joy of pardon, and I thank God, from that time to the present moment I've never lost it. This took place in the old class-leader's cottage after the service in the chapel. Some three months later I left Cropredy and came back to my native village to commence business as a shoemaker, and here I have been ever since. A few years after my conversion I was asked to preach, which I did, after many misgivings. About this time I met Mr. Champness at Banbury, and asked his advice about preaching. 'By all means,' he said, 'preach, and continue so to do as long as people will come to hear you.' By a reference to an old Circuit Plan, date 1872, I find my name at the bottom, my number 46; you will see where my name is now on the enclosed Plan.¹ I am most unworthy of this position and honour. I owe it all to dear Mr. Champness. Oh that I was more worthy of such a father!

From the diaries kept in these years I quote :

WATCHNIGHT, BANBURY, *Dec. 31, 1865.*

Mr. A., a student, spoke of our individual experience of God's mercies. I talked fifteen minutes and prayed. L. D. R. [Mr. Reay] spoke sweetly from the thought that the year which came to us as a friend was dying, and that the bells were ringing to herald the birth of another such friend.

Jan. 6, 1866.—Preached at Banbury from 'The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.' I had a very good time; there was a large prayer-meeting, and some good done. L. D. found peace.

A Sunday in his old circuit of Kington.

At Tysoe. A good congregation; preached from Jeremiah's roll that the king cut in pieces. At Oxhill we had a great crowd of people. A poor woman stopped to speak with me after the prayer-meeting whose husband had died under very sad circumstances the Sunday before. She means to join the people of God.

¹ Nearly at the top (E. M. C.).

A revival broke out in Banbury, and the meetings for prayer were especially blessed. One night he asked the people to stay for a second prayer-meeting, and six found peace. As many as sixty people would attend the seven o'clock morning prayer-meeting, at which he delighted to be present. One who has happy recollections of these times has written as follows :

He was a regular attendant and leader of the Sunday morning seven o'clock prayer-meeting. One morning, being a little late, Bro. G—— commenced ; after too long a prayer Mr. Champness opens the door and pronounces the benediction, remarking, 'Our brother has prayed for everybody ; now let us begin again.' Pointing to the brethren, he says : '*You* pray for town preachers, *you* for the country preachers, *you* for Sunday-school teachers, *you* so-and-so ; let us be definite ; eighteen prayers are better than eight.' The action had good effect on all ; we had good meetings after that.

Other characteristic reminiscences are sent me by the same friend.

Meeting our class for Quarterly Tickets, Mr. Champness opened the book to mark the ticket moneys. Beginning, he said, 'How much ?' The answer was 'The same as last' ; others following suit. Mr. Champness said, 'Stop a bit ; you are by this supporting the ministry. Am I worth more than last quarter, or is your position to give as last quarter ? Some can give more, some not so much, and some cannot afford to give at all ; put yourself into it ; make it a means of grace.'

I was a member of the Prayer-Leaders' band ; we numbered about sixty, being divided into companies of about six, to assist by outdoor services or cottage meetings, or in some of the near country chapels. Holding a service in Cherwell (outdoor) prior to Marlborough Road, I had to hold forth, and spoke of the witness of the Spirit, Mr. Champness confirming the truth, telling the folk that if they doubted it, or would have

further instruction, he would be glad to see them at No. 3 Calthorpe Road, 'to-morrow morning from nine to twelve.'

Not many of the people are left who were known to us in those days, in Banbury or its villages. Many have died, others have left the neighbourhood; a few still survive, and the children of our old friends recall the kindly personality and faithful ministry of Thomas Champness with affectionate remembrance.

When we had been at Banbury about a year and a half, my husband declared his intention to leave at the following Conference. In vain there were protests, official and social; he loved the people, but he would not stay. Privately I asked him why. He said there were many reasons; and very lovingly he told me he had sometimes feared that his wife was a little in danger of getting too settled 'among her own people.' 'And,' said he, 'it will be better for *you* that we go away from a place where you have been all your life.' This I understood, and quite believed him to be as wise as he was kind; for, while it was very pleasant for us both to have my father's house always open, and the old home-life ready for us to share in whenever we pleased, yet it was not the best training for a Methodist preacher's wife who wished to help her husband in his work. And in my heart I was glad to be at last going away with my own man into the real experience of 'the itinerancy.'

CHAPTER XI

IN A YORKSHIRE DALE: OTLEY CIRCUIT, 1867-70

FROM Banbury to Otley in Yorkshire is a long 'remove,' and it was quite at the close of a bright September day that we reached Burley-in-Wharfedale, where we were to reside. When we alighted from the train, we were met by a friend of my husband's, a vigorous old minister, formerly superintendent of the circuit; he had in attendance an antiquated vehicle called a 'fly,' into which we all had to get, Mr. Champness in vain protesting that 'he would rather walk.' 'Walk?' indignantly exclaimed our friend; 'walk? No, sir; you must ride, of course. You could but walk if you were in Africa!' So we all rode down the short distance to the house, in state; the new minister, his wife and babe, his sister-in-law and servant-maid, *plus* an array of bags, baskets, and boxes, with our ministerial guide perched up on the box by the driver. Many a time this quaint entry and introduction to our new circuit was recalled with amusement, especially when in the course of duty Mr. Champness had to 'walk,' even though he was not 'in Africa.' Our knowledge of the locality must have been very limited, for I remember that we had addressed all our heavy luggage to 'Burley, near Leeds,' a place some miles away; the result being that we were for some days without it, and could not

get 'unpacked' ! That did not trouble Mr. Champness, and the time was utilized in walks and visits in which I had a share, so that we might the sooner get to know the place and the people. The neighbourhood was full of charming features : the high moorlands on either side of the fertile dale ; the winding river Wharfe, with verdant meadows and thriving farm-lands ; and the populous villages and scattered hamlets dotted here and there, formed a lively and ever-interesting panorama. The preacher's house was small and old-fashioned, but pleasant for situation, and felt very home-like when once we were settled. Otley, two miles and a half down the Dale, was the starting-point for the preachers on their rounds. There the other two ministers resided, and thither Mr. Champness had to repair to join them in the 'conveyance' which took them to country appointments on Sundays and weekdays. It could not be called a *wide* circuit, being mostly bounded by the moors which hemmed in the Dale on both sides, but it was certainly in those days both *long* and large. Within three miles of Ilkley on the west, it stretched away to within two miles and a half of Harrogate.

As Mr. Champness had five extra miles to reckon on many of the journeys, and the train service was not available late at night, the return from Otley had to be accomplished on foot. Sometimes during the first three months he was so weary after preaching and driving several miles that it was with difficulty he walked home, and he feared that he would be unable to do the work of the circuit, especially as with the autumnal gales there were times when the river would suddenly rise and overflow its banks. *Then*, the road from Otley to Burley would be flooded, and the traveller would have to go a

long way round by a higher road. It was, however, in the hearts of some of the kind Otley friends to arrange matters so that Mr. Champness should be driven through to his own door after the other preachers had left the conveyance, and thus the difficulties were partly overcome. Since then, some of the outlying places have been allotted to other circuits, which must have improved the conditions; but years afterwards, on stormy nights, when rain was beating on our windows in other homes, my husband would look out into the darkness and say, 'This makes one think of Wharfedale.' There were many circumstances to render the Otley Circuit very dear to Mr. Champness. Friendships which have lasted all the succeeding years were formed there, and to the end of his days his heart warmed to the good Yorkshire people, Otley being one of the places he visited yearly.

Burley-in-Wharfedale is itself a most interesting place, and the life there was never dull. The large mill where most of our people were employed, being partly run by water-power, was pleasantly placed near the river-side; a good school built by the mill-owners stood in the centre of the one long street; not far away rose the spire of the church, and on the opposite side of the street, rather nearer our home, our own beautiful chapel, then newly built. Some of our people had scarcely transferred their affections from the old chapel to the new, and it was not until Mr. Champness had been there some little time that he was able to win over these members of his flock to a hearty acceptance of the new state of things. He worked and visited, and gave of his best in preaching. He soon knew every home, had a cheery word for all he met, and made himself their friend as well as their pastor.

We had a sprinkling of rich and well-to-do residents amongst us, and living in and near Burley were several Bradford mercantile magnates, as well as both partners of the firm who owned the mills. One of these partners was the Right Hon. W. E. Forster, M.P., afterwards famous as the author of the Education Act of 1870, and later as Chief Secretary for Ireland. Mr. Forster had a charming house called 'Wharfeside' at Burley, and to this he and his wife and family used to come in the intervals of his busy parliamentary life. Closely connected with Methodism, and of considerable influence, was a wealthy family living at one of the mansions in the village. The father was a devout Churchman, but took a fancy to Thomas Champness, and used to come to chapel sometimes. He received very special blessing under the preaching, and one Sunday evening, while at the Lord's Table, a great and definite peace came into his soul. Not long afterwards he was taken ill, and shortly passed away. Mr. Champness visited him in his sickness, and was privileged to hear his dying testimony to the power and grace of God, as he said :

Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.

This gentleman's wife was by birth and upbringing a hearty Methodist; she was generous, kindly, and sensible, and in many ways she used her influence towards increasing the comfort and happiness of her pastor's family. We never lacked anything she could do for us, and intercourse with her was of the kind that reaches the intellect and opens out the way to the higher social joys of the Christian life.

Amongst our people there were many true-hearted men

and women of God, who were as lights in the world—men of prayer, women of purpose and power, ever ready for good work that had to be done. The circuit was well furnished with hospitable homes, where the minister was welcomed and beloved.

Mr. Champness greatly enjoyed his visits to the villages, and was never better pleased than when he could persuade his wife to go with him to some of these beautiful and picturesque places. With home duties, and little children depending on their mother's care, it was not often easy to get away, but we managed it sometimes, and at one time or another I think I saw in his company much of Otley, and most of the country chapels and pleasant homes. Then we had visitors, who liked to go away up the dale to Bolton Woods and Abbey, and other places where the railway had not then penetrated, and this meant occasional delightful drives, and joys such as the companionship of cultured Methodist friends can give. It was not all Methodism, either, for we had pleasant intercourse with the other Churches, and I well remember one most idyllic excursion 'out of bounds,' a day that was a happy memory, to be spoken of in later and very recent years.

There was no bridge over the Wharfe at Burley in those days; I am not sure there is any now. You either had to go three miles up the river to Ilkley, or two and a half miles down to Otley, to get to the scattered villages and hamlets that lay above the 'sweet fields beyond the swelling flood.' But at Burley there is a ford below the weir, and a row of moss-grown and rather slippery stepping-stones served us, if the river was not 'in flood,' as it sometimes was. On the occasion I have mentioned we went to a Church Missionary

Society's meeting. It was a lovely day, and the speaker of the evening, the Rev. George Roper, was our guest; he was an old and esteemed friend of Mr. Champness's West African days. The two missionaries had spent a lively and happy afternoon together, recalling their African experiences, and fighting their battles over again. Then, as the time drew near, we set out, crossing the shining river by the stepping-stones, and following the field-paths on the other side to the tiny village of Askwith; and there, on the lawn of the Rectory garden, the Missionary meeting was held. I can see now the gathering of the village folk, and recall the intense gladness with which Mr. Champness sat and listened to his friend, and in his turn spoke on the needs of the heathen, and the way in which, on the foreign field, the servants of God toiled lovingly side by side, with no thought of divisions or sectarianism. It was one of the joys of his life to recognize and bless God for 'the communion of saints,' and to tell us that 'out there we are too near the enemy to care about which regiment we belong to; we all want to fight the foe, and win souls for our King.'

Thomas Champness had frequent reminders in these years of the malaria of West Africa. Again and again he would come home shivering and sick, to be nursed through a fever, and to experience the prostration following an attack; then, a brief change of air, and back to work again, generally without waiting for the permission of the doctor. 'Nothing like getting back to work,' he would say; and it was this constant industry and zeal that enabled him to keep pace with the claims of his circuit, and won for him the love of his people. In this circuit, too, his colleagues became his very dear

friends. John S. Fordham, formerly missionary in Fiji, was one; a man of singular sweetness of character, thoughtful and reflective as a preacher, with a fine intellect, and a loving heart. There was also James Kendall, a native of the Dale, a man of sterling worth and uprightness, sound judgement and discretion, a faithful minister and comrade.

In our many years of itinerant life it has been my care to preserve Mr. Champness's diaries, pocket-books, and papers. But unfortunately the record of the Otley Circuit has been lost, and I can only find the journal relating to part of the third year. It is, however, typical of the whole period, and the extracts I am able to give will serve to illustrate what he used to term 'an idyllic part of our life.'

EXTRACTS FROM JOURNAL, 1870

Jan. 1.—To-morrow I preach at Burley. We are in a low way at present; not that we have no conversions—we have these at times—but we want unity. We don't hold together enough. Lord, help me that I may begin well the first Sunday. O Lord Jesus, I would be Thine more than ever. Help me! Blessed Spirit, without Thy power all will be in vain. Come to my help!

Sunday, 2nd.—Seven o'clock prayer-meeting, only three present, but very hopeful about the day. I think God will hear prayer and save souls. Preached in the morning from 'Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?' Covenant service in the afternoon, fifty present. The Lord help me to keep my vows! At night preached from 'God so loved the world'; not a very good time; the chapel was too warm—68 degrees. At prayer-meeting Mrs. — in distress, some children affected. Have arranged for special services this week. All classes meet on Monday,

Tuesday and Wednesday we shall have prayer-meetings, and I preach on Thursday.

6th.—Preached at Burley from 'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.' Spoke very plainly to our own people as to the fact that we are not more anxious to save souls. 'The Bride' is dumb!

Sunday, 9th.—Otley; good congregation. Preached from 'Thou hast thrust sore at me.' In the afternoon I buried a child and called to see a few sick. At six o'clock preached from Acts ii. 37. The largest congregation I have seen in the chapel. Large prayer-meeting, but not much result; at least, compared with what we ought to have got from such crowds.

Monday, 10th.—Visited in the morning, 11.30 started for Lincolnshire, reached Dogdike station about 4.30, then drove nine miles in a gig. Meeting at Stickney well attended. The flat country is very dull and uninteresting.

12th.—Reached home safely at 2.17; rested in afternoon. Not well, but went to preach at Otley; special services from 'The Two Voices.' Some good done. We had several great rough men at the Communion-rail.

As the three years' term was nearing its close, invitations to circuits came in. The Trowbridge Circuit had already written, and now, on January 23—

The post brought an invitation, or rather a letter, from the steward of Pembroke Circuit. At the seven o'clock prayer-meeting ten present. One of the —'s seeking mercy. Preached from 'The Mark' (Ezek. ix. 4). Sweet influence all through. At Woodhead in the afternoon. The chapel very cold, no fire; hard work to preach, but got on pretty well. Administered Sacrament. In the evening I preached at Burley. Some young people seeking mercy.

24th.—A letter from Guiseley Mechanics' Institution asking me to speak at soirée on Shrove Tuesday. Visited all morning; visited in Old Bramhope; preached at Bramhope from

'The Lost Sheep.' More than fifty adults. One young man in great distress.

26th.—Home from Leeds 10.17 a.m. Evening preached at Timble. Called to see Miss D——; found her very peaceful. She has been comforted by a passage from Wesley's *Journal*. I must ask her to show it to me. I was much interested, and thankful for what she said.

27th.—Sermonized. Tried to get my new sermon on 'The Fall of Jericho' into form for night. Preached it with a great deal of feeling, but it is crude and unfinished. After the service attended a lecture on Switzerland at the Lecture Hall. Photographs very beautiful; the lecture was not very popular in style—and read! Young men's class; good time together on 'Duke of Marlborough.'

29th.—Worked hard at 'Jericho's Fall'; enjoyed it very much, and hope it will be useful. Good band-meeting, twenty-four present.

31st.—Preached at Otley from 'The door was shut.' Very bad time. A drunken man came in by the side-door during the sermon. A large congregation, and good done. 'Not by might nor by power.' I question if I ever preached worse, and there were fifteen seeking!

Sunday, Feb. 6.—Driven over by W. Fawcett to Leathley; preached from 'The Fall of Jericho.' Bramhope in evening, good congregation.

Arthington; took a new text, at least not the one I had intended; preached from the 'Horrible Pit,' and administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. When I got home found letter from — enclosing £5 as a thank-offering for mercies received and good obtained under my ministry.

8th.—Sermonized, being very wet. Then up to Menstone and preached. There has been a wonderful work there, many of the young people have experienced a saving change. There are others seeking. I have promised to preach a sermon to the young on Sunday.

9th.—Otley at night; some good done. Father with me; came home together. After I retired I was very ill.

10th.—Ill all day; could not go to Bramhope. Fordham kindly went for me.

11th.—Still very unwell.

12th.—Remained home all the day.

Sunday, 13th.—Though very weak, preached at Burley from 'Taking up the Cross.' In the afternoon rode up to Menstone in a cab; preached from 'I love them that love Me.' Administered the Sacrament. Many of the new converts present. At night Burley, 'Lost Sheep.' By God's help got through the day's work.

14th.—Started for Manchester for a few days' change.

Sunday, March 6.—Started early for Stainburn. Preached with great comfort from Jas. i. 27. Met Morrell's class; think they will have a revival soon. Weeton in afternoon, same text, but not so good a time. Evening, Pool; preached on the Philippian Jailor; rather straitened, but four penitents, two of whom found peace.

7th.—Preached at Bramhope; met Benson's class. Very much fatigued after the service.

Fatigue and exhaustion culminated in a serious illness, which caused an interruption of his work for some weeks. His next entry in the journal came on

Friday, 25th.—Since writing above I have been very ill with African fever and ague. I have been to South Grange and Banbury for change. Came home to-day fatigued with the journey.

Saturday.—Very weary all day. Band-meeting, good attendance, twenty-seven.

Sunday, 27th.—Did not get up for prayer-meeting. Preached in morning at Burley; nice congregation, subject 'Paradise Lost'; very good time, but slow; had to be quiet to keep the points in my memory. Afternoon, preached at Woodhead, from 'Pure religion.' Near a score from Burley present. Evening, Burley again, good company, 'Jailor'; good time, but much excited. Mr. and Mrs. Atkinson (*née* Farmer) were

there twice. Did not stay to the prayer-meeting; too much exhausted.

One of the penalties of popularity is described in the next entry in the journal. The sermon referred to was one which brought great blessing to the people, and was seldom preached without 'signs following.' At the same time it was rather disconcerting to the preacher to have people following him about, and he had to choose the lesser of the two difficulties as he kept to his chosen text. The sermon, as well as the preacher was popular, for it was on a later visit to this circuit that a good old farmer asked him, 'How's th' jailor? Have yo' had him oot lately? Aw cud like t' hear th' jailor again!'

Sunday, April 3.—Did not go to early prayer-meeting. Otley in the morning, very good congregation; preached from 'The Shunammite Woman.' Am but feeble and nervous. Afternoon at Askwith, beautiful walk, but was tired; preached from 'Paradise Lost.' At night preached from 'The Jailor.' Some of the people who follow me about must have heard this sermon four times at least. Two young women seeking mercy, one of them Mr. —'s daughter. Came over the river home.

April 17.—Morning, seven o'clock prayer-meeting; seven present. Preached at Burley from 'Two Groups at Easter Morn,' new sermon; large congregation. Afternoon, Menstone, same sermon; Sacrament, sweet time. Night, Burley, 'Easter Eve,' new sermon. Lord's Supper. Not enjoyed the day much, been too little on my knees. Very depressed and sad at night; tempted to give up preaching; Lord, help me!

18th.—Otley; called to see some sick. Miss D—— said, 'I am often most happy when worst in health.' Met Missionary deputation at Mr. Sinclair's to dinner, tea, and supper. Peter Mackenzie preached a grand sermon on 'The Witnesses of the Resurrection.' There was one great poetic idea, in which he

compared this world to a hearse carrying the body of Christ, moving on in sight of the angels! Large congregations. At the night meeting, Levell gave us a fine speech on India, beautiful opening remarks on the missionary scheme owing nothing to novelty; it was 'not a launch, but a voyage.'

Sunday, May 8.—Seven o'clock prayer-meeting, a few there; good meeting. 10.30, Burley. Very unwell, poor time in prayer. Preached from the Parable of the Sower. Visited in afternoon. In evening preached at Burley from 'Fled for refuge.' Some good done, I trust.

9th.—Went to Otley to see E. D., who is very ill; then we all went to spend the week at Leathley—children, servant, and all. Walked over to Weeton; preached to about thirty, from 'Joseph of Arimathea.'

10th.—We had a beautiful walk. Rambled about Lindley Wood, up as far as the works at the reservoir. In the afternoon rode Mr. Robert Kendall's mare to Huby. Very unwell; preached from 'Naaman'; some good done.

11th.—Wet all day. Preached at night.

12th.—Visited Farnley Hall. Much taken with some of the 'Turners' and the frescoes in the dining-room. Came home; preached at Burley from 'Well done, good and faithful servant'; thirty present.

This week at Leathley, at the house of Mr. Robert Kendall, one of our country friends, was a most delightful time for us all. It was reckoned as a holiday by Mr. Champness, none the less because the evenings were, without exception, taken up with preaching. The walks through Lindley Wood and the visit to Farnley Hall were, each in their own way, seasons of great delight. The one drawback that I remember was the precarious state of his health, of which he himself took very slight account.

May 17.—Started for the District Meeting at Wakefield, at eight o'clock. Stayed with some very nice people, members

of the Establishment, who made me very welcome. Got through the business quickly, had a sweet conversation on the work of God ; numbers up. I hear the Chairman means to send me to Pateley Bridge ; God guide us right !

Wednesday.—District Meeting ; good attendance of stewards. D.M. laymen recommended that £120 should be the minimum for married ministers in dependent circuits. What's the use of passing such laws ? Circuits will not be interfered with.

The summer of 1870 brought with it more fatigue, and a sort of depression that made preaching rather sad to him. He was leaving a kindly people, and a circuit where God had greatly blessed his pastorate, and where many had been brought to Christ through his ministry. The act of severing such ties made him ill ; he liked the itinerancy, but the actual time of changing was always trying to his nature. His appointment was to Oxford Place, Leeds, where another minister had been invited, so that the stewards were not exactly satisfied ; and the journal records :

August 7.—The post brought a letter from Mr. —, steward of Oxford Place. It was far from a pleasant letter, and annoyed me very much ; but before I began my sermon at Hawksworth forgot and lost sight of it.

9th.—Heard that stations are confirmed, and it is to be Oxford Place. I wrote to Mr. — as follows :

'MY DEAR SIR,—I am sorry that you and the friends at Oxford Place have not been able to obtain the man of your choice. I could not see my way to follow your suggestion to write and make my appointment to your circuit sure, nor have I interfered in any way. However, now that the stations are confirmed, and it is settled that I am to be your minister, I shall come cheerfully and do my best to serve you.

'I remain, dear Sir,

'Yours truly,

'THOMAS CHAMPNESS.'

It only remains to be said that this gentleman proved to be one of the most attached friends of the new minister, that he and his family dearly loved Mr. Champness, and that not a shadow marred their loving and life-long intercourse.

CHAPTER XII

LEEDS (OXFORD PLACE), 1870-2

WHEN the Conference of 1870 appointed Thomas Champness to the Leeds (Oxford Place) Circuit, the feeling that some of the leading men had wished it otherwise caused him some anxiety at first, but this was not for long. He knew that though the past history of the circuit told of great prosperity, and contained many notable and noble names, yet to some extent its glory had departed. The huge chapels of Leeds, crowded as they had been in the time of John Rattenbury and others of his day, were now only thinly attended ; and though the membership was large, the wealth and prestige of Methodism were rapidly migrating to the suburbs and residential neighbourhoods within rail distance of the growing and grimy city. From his own observation, Thomas Champness felt that God had a work for him to do among the many faithful Methodists whose business and duty required them still to reside among the smoke and grime, and whose affections clustered round the hallowed walls of old Oxford Place and the other no less well-beloved chapels in the circuit. It was therefore with much sympathy as well as hopefulness that he came to Leeds, and from the first he captured the hearts of his people.

I remember how he met his family at the station ; he had been on a brief holiday 'between circuits,' as

he liked to do ; and we came from Burley-in-Wharfedale to find him awaiting us on the platform with his own hearty 'Welcome to Leeds.' On the way through the busy streets he spoke of the great need he felt of the divine power, and as the cab drew up at the door of our house in Hanover Street he turned to me and said, 'We shall be very happy here.' Smiling faces awaited us ; the wives of the circuit stewards had exerted themselves to provide for our comfort, and were ready with kindest greetings and hospitable preparations. We learned to know them, and found that our first reception was only the beginning of their goodness to us and ours.

We arrived on Thursday, September 1. During those first busy days Mr. Champness found or made leisure to prepare for the opening of his commission by prayerful waiting upon God, as well as by conferring with his Superintendent, the Rev. Wm. Tyson, on the state of the church.

Saturday, 3rd.—To-morrow I begin my work. The Great Master must help me, or I shall fail ; but I don't feel much anxiety about it. He has never left me yet. God helping me, I mean to make my mark in this great town ; there is much to be done, and room for the greatest exertion. I must be watchful over my own heart, that is the great thing. All other things will be influenced by that. At the band-meeting this evening fifty present. The men spoke too long, the women not at all !

Sunday, 4th.—Seven o'clock prayer-meeting, eleven present. Everybody seemed very pleased to see me. 10.30, Oxford Place, better congregation than I expected. Three children baptized, and I very much enjoyed that service. Preached from 'Barnabas' ; very good time, but I think many of the people would not think it respectable enough for Oxford Place.

Still, I think it will prove attractive to some, especially the poor and unlearned. May God make me a blessing to that great chapel! *Afternoon*, went to visit the schools at Oxford Place; spoke in the girls' school from 'Singing, as a Preparation for Heaven,' and in the boys' from 'A Forgiving Spirit'; enjoyed it much. The Sunday-school people seemed delighted to see me. In the evening at Hanover Place; good congregation, and a happy time from 'He that believeth.' *A lad found peace*. Just as I was despairing of good being done and about to close, while I knelt at the rail, he came up, saying, 'Sir, I want to come to Jesus.' Praise the Lord!

In the spirit of prayer and faith Thomas Champness threw himself heartily into the work at Leeds, mingling with his people freely in the meetings, and visiting them in their homes. The pastoral work was, of course, very heavy; there were many sick and aged of all classes, and, rich and poor, they claimed and received his loving attention. To those who never could attend the services he would go and 'preach over' his sermons, describing to them the beautiful and helpful gatherings at the house of God, from which they were debarred by affliction. His people felt that he loved and thought of them in prayer, and thus the bond between them and their pastor became very sweet.

When he first preached in Oxford Place, and indeed in the other Leeds chapels, he was much impressed by the number of well-filled family pews; and he set his heart on winning to Christ the bright lads and sweet-faced girls who sat there with their parents. Before he had been many weeks in the circuit he began a Bible-class for young women, another for little girls, and a little later a young men's class for Bible study and mutual improvement. To these classes he gave

some of his best in exposition of the Word of God, and enjoyed the love and confidence of the young people to whom he ministered. He was not merely their teacher, he was their trusted friend and adviser. They came to him with their troubles, and were always sure of his sympathy and prayers. A great number of young people thus came under his influence, many of whom were converted and joined the church. How they loved him ! And many now in middle life would testify of permanent blessings gained through those classes.

In the social life of his people Thomas Champness held a very high place. This was remarkable everywhere, but nowhere was it more noticeable than in Leeds. By his genial Christianity he won the hearts of mistress and maid, master and servant alike ; and as he never forgot that he was a servant of the heavenly King, so he was faithful in word and deed that would represent his Lord. I can recall so many welcoming smiles and greetings, so much of love shown to his family for his sake, that my heart is overwhelmed as I think of our dear Leeds people, of the homes always open to us, of the sweet voices of many now passed into the skies. How they will have welcomed their beloved friend to their heavenly mansions, and how glorious will be their fellowship there !

It was not long before the congregations began to feel the charm and power of his preaching ; the young people especially rallied around him, and conversions among them affected their godly parents with holy joy. In his own opinion he was at his best in preaching at this time ; at all events, in after years he used to refer to what he called his ' Leeds form ' if he had felt any

specially 'good time'; and certainly he could sway that great audience in Oxford Place as he pleased, first to laughter, then to tears. The effect was not merely emotional; conviction seized upon the sinner under the power of his burning words, while many were like Lydia, 'whose heart the Lord opened, as they attended to the things that were spoken.' His joy was great when souls were brought to God, and there was scarcely a Sunday when this joy did not come to him: from that first day when the lad approached him saying, 'Sir, I want to come to Jesus,' right onwards there were always some inquirers penitently seeking the Lord. Very early in that first winter his journal records how on one Sunday at Holbeck he had

a good time in the morning, and a large attendance at the love-feast in the afternoon, twenty-five speaking within the hour. At night there was a large congregation, and as I preached on 'The Last Prayer-meeting' I had great power. Many stayed to the prayer-meeting, about twelve young people came forward, and six or seven found peace. Happy day for me! Stayed with —; after supper his daughter called her father upstairs; she was in distress, she came down, we prayed with her, and she was made happy.

And again, on Sunday, October 30 :

Oxford Place in the morning, pretty good time from 'The Christian Race.' Lovefeast in the afternoon, about three hundred people, twenty-eight spoke, very good. There was a large congregation at night; preached from 'Choose ye this day,' &c. I had a very good time, but was very hoarse. About twenty penitents.

The prayer-meetings after Sunday evening service in Oxford Place had always been held in one of the

rooms beneath the chapel. This practice Mr. Champness desired to change, but he waited till he knew his people, so it was not until November that he made the experiment, after much private prayer, for tact was needed. During the previous week, he called on some of the leaders and principal members, telling them of his wish, and his reasons for it; then asked them, one by one, if they would support him by remaining to the prayer-meeting and taking part. The promise being given, he boldly said, at the close of his sermon on Sunday night, 'We shall hold the prayer-meeting here, in the chapel,' and invited all to stay. Many were taken by surprise, but very few left. He understood how to disarm opposition, and at the same time how to win the approval of all who wanted to see God's work revive. That prayer-meeting was fruitful in results; ten or twelve penitents came forward, among them being the son of one of the circuit stewards.

Quoting from the journal :

Monday, Nov. 21.—Visited in the morning. Afternoon met Mr. Booth's class. Preached at night at Oxford Place to about 150 people. Very sweet and hallowed time. Leaders' Meeting. Supped with Mr. H——; much enjoyed a chat with him.

Nov. 22.—Very low-spirited about the pastoral work; feel as though I shall never be able to overtake it all. Visited a little. Went to Shadwell; preached to eighteen people from 'Jacob and the Angel.' Read in Chalmers' *Life*. I need to be like him, striving against love of praise. I am sadly too fond of it.

So the routine of the work went on. Memory recalls the early rising for study, then family worship and punctual breakfast, followed by the round of daily

engagements and pastoral work till late in the day, with very brief intervals for meals, followed by evening preachings and meetings, which would hold him to a late hour at night, when he would arrive home spent and weary, and, as he would say, 'almost too tired to pull my boots off.' Yet he was never too weary to be cheerful; never did he grudge the hours of such days; and I do not suppose some of the loving people ever found out how weary he was. The fact was, the pastoral work, though most delightful, was telling upon him. He writes in the journal during this winter: 'I sat up thinking much if I ought to stay a second year in this circuit. I am so overworked with pulpit and pastoral claims, and constant demands on my time.'

The high pressure at which he was working in Leeds could not be kept up; health became again an anxiety, and it was with difficulty that the work was done during the latter part of his first year. At the same time it was a period of wonderful success and blessing, and only those who lived in the house with him could know how perilously near to breaking down was the man whose labours were lifting his circuit, and filling its half-empty chapels.

In August, 1871, Mr. Champness was taken seriously ill, and as soon as he was able we went to Matlock for rest and change, thence on to Derby to spend a day or two with the Rev. John and Mrs. Fordham, returning in time to begin the new Methodist year. He was not well, and would have done wisely to have taken a longer holiday. On his first Sunday he preached with great effort, and felt much dissatisfied with himself, the fact being that he was more fit for his bed than his pulpit. The next day he wrote in the journal: 'Some one called

to say how ill I looked in the pulpit, and to ask me to take care—frightened my wife.'

For some weeks after this it was manifest that he was near to breaking down; his friends became anxious about his health, and one day

Mr. Gatecliff and Mr. Tilburn (stewards) came in and gave me a great talking to about doing too much, and so on. I have promised to do less and to take no extra work besides present engagements, till after Christmas.

On the same day he writes, 'Out all day seeking dinners for District Meeting.' Then in the evening

Preached at Hanover, but the stewards being with me till near time to begin, I got all astray, mixed up the divisions, &c. Supped at ——'s; heard of a prayer offered at Holbeck, 'Lord, help Mr. Champness to do less and others to do more.'

Gradually strength came back, and with it buoyancy and the power to grasp the pulpit work and enjoy it. The death of the Rev. Thomas Vasey, a man whom he admired and loved, made a deep impression on him, and he was stirred to fresh zeal. On Friday, October 6, as was his custom, he kept the Quarterly Fast.

Fast Day.—Prayer-meeting at 8 a.m., fourteen or fifteen present, very sweet time. Also at twelve; nice, but not so good as morning; more there, though. Met the children; sweet meetings. Good prayer-meeting. Met the young men, about thirty; arranged for subjects and time of meetings.

About this time an aged saint whom he had constantly visited passed away. Father Jeffery was only a poor man, but greatly beloved; and when, on a Sunday evening, the funeral sermon was preached, it is thus recorded:

Large and overwhelming congregation. It is not by might, for I have often preached better sermons and seen no fruit; but, thank God, had a large number of people seeking—at least twenty.

And the following Sunday, at Hanover Place :

The chapel was nearly full; I preached on Josiah, a sermon to the young. Did not seem to be much feeling, but there must have been, for we had fifteen or sixteen penitents.

This was the kind of 'fruit' that rejoiced his soul, and cheered him on all through this winter. He was much drawn out in prayer for greater spirituality, and there is no doubt this was one of the times when he sought and obtained a fresh hold on the promises. He felt his own constant need of divine grace and power, and was continually in prayer. God answered him with sweet assurance of His favour, and led him into the secret place of His power.

After a visit to Harrogate about this time, he records :

I preached to a good company from 'The door was shut.' Rather tied up, but in the prayer-meeting was blessed indeed. Mr. Henry Reed spoke. He asked all that felt themselves washed from all sin to stand up. I *was* standing, and I dare not sit down. I felt I did belong altogether to Christ and meant to live to Him all my life. *My soul is Christ's own, for ever.*

This definite realization was a great help to him. I remember how he said it was like a renewal of his covenant with God, and that preachers and all Christian workers need such seasons of consecration if their work is not to become perfunctory and mechanical.

But to narrate all the events of the wonderful two years in Oxford Place would be to fill a volume. Life

was then, as always with Thomas Champness, very full of incident and interest. His family now numbered four, one baby having been born in the preacher's house. The work outside increased rather than lessened, and there was a continual battle with ill-health, known only to his most intimate friends, for he carried cheerfulness about with him on his visits to the sick and poor, and brightness into every home. Yet it became evident that two years would be the limit of his stay in the circuit; once and again the stewards begged of him to 'keep quiet,' but how could he? With his own eager spirit to enforce the claims of the crowded chapels, and the longings with which he knew his sick people awaited him, especially when an epidemic of small-pox raged in our midst, and frequent calls came to visit these urgent cases, how could he 'keep quiet'? It was all he could do to keep pace with these claims, and yet be free for the 'outside appeals' which were inevitably coming more frequently upon him.

As I write I am overwhelmed with the recollection of that second winter, when he was surely, if slowly, going forward towards certain breakdown. There would be bright intervals, when the work was a delight, and hope would rise in our hearts; then he would come in faint and weary, have a restless night, become very ill, and all engagements would have to be cancelled; there would be a hasty journey away to the sea, or some country resort, partial recovery, then back to Leeds, and the same thing over again. How we tried, in those days, to persuade him to rest! how he would promise, and really mean it, but be quite unable to fulfil the promise to 'keep quiet'! And so the time went on, and in March he had to tell the kind stewards that he must

leave at the next Conference. Even then, we did not realize how ill he was. An invitation from the Accrington Circuit came, and he was quite inclined to accept it. Even when very ill, he had some grand times in preaching. Thus on April 7, 1872, he writes :

Oxford Place in afternoon. Children's service, grand sight, chapel full of people ; spoke on Timothy knowing the Scriptures. At night on 'Remember now thy Creator.' One of the grandest times in my life ; some good done.

For these 'grand times' he had to pay in fits of exhaustion and illness. Thus :

Tuesday, 9th.—A hard and long day visiting. Preached at Holbeck. *Wednesday.*—Very poorly ; can hardly crawl.

Sunday, April 28.—Preached at Oxford Place from Lazarus carried by angels ; not well, poor time. In the evening I had a better time ; some good done. A remarkable case of a lady from Ireland who got to the chapel by mistake. I was taken ill coming home.

A week at Boston Spa followed this illness, and soon afterwards the Saturday evening Young Women's Class had to be given up. 'Told my class not to come again ; feel unable to prepare anything for them.' This, I think, was the first real admission he made as to the failure of brain-power. He felt himself unable to think or read. 'A good night's rest' would set him up for a day or two, cheerful hope would arise, and for a short time all would be bright ; but at each recurrence of illness he grew more weary and faint, and at length he consulted a specialist as to his health. A course of electric baths did some good, and a visit to Ilkley was also of service. But in the first week of July came the collapse, which was to us as the valley of the shadow of

death. Rallying from a terrible fit of faintness and exhaustion, he determined to consult the most experienced physician in Leeds, and together we went to Dr. Chadwick's—only to be told that he must not think of preaching or taking a pastoral charge any more. The physician declared him to be threatened with, if not already suffering from, softening of the brain ; and as we walked on our homeward way, along the hard pavement of the Leeds streets, how he prayed ! How he besought the Lord ! And then, how wonderfully he turned to comfort me and to make plans for me and the children ! He decided to ask for leave to retire for one year, and to reside at Banbury, so that I and the little ones might be near to my own family when the inevitable (as he thought) separation should come. But I never believed in the great doctor's theory of 'softening of the brain.' There might be, and doubtless was, what in these days we term 'brain fag,' and the sentence to a year of cessation from all work and care was wise and effectual, as we lived to prove.

A Leeds friend writes her reminiscences of her beloved pastor :

When the Rev. W. H. Thompson came to Oxford Place Circuit, he heard so much of Mr. Champness wherever he went—in meetings and in the homes of the people—that he thought, 'This Mr. Champness must be a very special man, for his praise is in all the circuit ; I'll hear him for myself, if possible, the first time he comes this way.' It was not long before he was able to gratify his curiosity, and having heard him, Mr. Thompson said he was not surprised at the people's love for him, and would say in the pulpit or in the class, 'As good Thomas Champness said,' and so on.

Mr. Champness was always ready to lend a helping hand. Once, when he was going out of our house, some men, working

at house-building next door, were struggling with a large step to get it into its place, when Mr. Champness, at once taking in the situation, got over the fence, and the stone was in its place in one minute. He turned and left the men standing gazing after him in astonishment.

Here is another instance of his kind thought for others. A man who used to work occasionally for us—who had a large family, and who had been without work a good deal during that winter, and his wife ill—told us that Mr. Champness called at their door one morning, and handed in a parcel of tea, saying as he did so, ‘Here, Mrs. W——, I have just had a present made of this, and I thought you needed it more than we do,’ and was off almost before she had time to thank him.

And what a man of faith he was ! I remember him coming to see me one very stormy time during that long illness I had. The wind had been so high, and was still raging, that I had hardly slept at all that week. He said, ‘Let us pray about it.’ He then told the Lord all about it, and asked that if it might be His will the wind might settle, so that we might have a quiet night. He had not left the house more than five minutes when the wind settled, and we had a perfectly calm night. He had such power with God in prayer that he seemed to get *a great deal of his own way !*

CHAPTER XIII

BANBURY : A YEAR'S REST, 1872-3— GUERNSEY, 1873-4

By the generosity of the Leeds friends we were enabled to rent and furnish a pleasant little house at Banbury, and there we spent the following year.

Mr. Champness seldom entered a church or chapel during the first three months. The Friends' Meeting-house attracted him, and in their quiet meetings for worship he communed with the Source of strength and grew refreshed. He passed whole days in the open air, by the side of the slowly moving streams and brooks, with fishing-rod and line, and with one or more of his children for company. Here brain and body alike rested, and he laid in stores of pure air and restfulness. A letter to an invalid friend at Leeds gives a graphic picture of his life at this time.

BANBURY, *Oct. 5, 1872.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am in poor trim for letter-writing ; my poor right hand is queer to-day ; but still, I have persevered, and have got some letters done ; but most likely you will have heard through Mr. H—— how pleasantly our lot is cast.

Considering all things, I don't know that I could be more comfortable, and really I am becoming more reconciled to this enforced silence, and only hope not to become a lazy

loafer. If you could but peep in at my little parlour you would be delighted with its really snug and yet artistic beauty and comfort. But our home must be seen to be appreciated. My wife and children are well, the latter especially. Baby runs like a race-horse. I spend a great deal of time in the open air, and find nothing else does so well for me.

Sometimes I bring home a fish or two; to-day we dine off one I caught yesterday. And then the charms of Nature in field and wood, sky and grass, unfold themselves to me, while now and then I catch a new idea or illustration that may be seen after many days. We have many friends in the neighbourhood, and so I ought never to be dull. From some of my symptoms I am persuaded that I only stopped just in time to save me from a catastrophe.

However, I am very hopeful of recovery, and of once more preaching to you and others.

As a fisherman he was more persevering than successful, and would frankly own that his pleasure in the act of fishing must not be measured by the fish he caught.

After about six months of this kind of rest, he was appreciably better, and began to attend and take part in meetings for prayer and Christian fellowship; and at length he found he could preach again. So, to his own surprise and to every one's delight, the Leeds physician was proved to have over-estimated the danger, or, as seems more probable, to have prescribed for his patient more successfully than he had expected. It was very beautiful, when spring came, to witness his almost boyish joy over returning health. The pure country air was as new life to his veins, and he began to look forward with longing to the time when he should resume his work. In the meantime another daughter was born to him, and, almost at the same hour, his dearly loved mother was called home to God.

BANBURY, *May 2, 1873.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Many thanks to you for your kind words of sympathy, which I know come from the hearts of all of you. My dear mother's illness was but short, yet was exceedingly painful, and from beginning to end had no alleviations except those supplied by God's grace and the love of those about her. She died well, and was more sure of her acceptance when face to face with the king of terrors than ever before.

You will have heard that we have another daughter; both she and her mother are doing well.

Both these events, occurring within a few hours of each other, touched his sensitive nature greatly; but he was better able to bear the excitement than he would have been but for the quiet influences of his country home. And, though he could not be said to be robust, yet he was so much stronger by Conference time as to be ready to go to Guernsey, an appointment chosen for him and accepted on account of the salubrious climate, and the comparatively light duties involved.

Our family had increased to five, and grandfather Champness now became an inmate of our home, after the death of his devoted wife. Guernsey was a thorough change to us all, and our children especially enjoyed the thought of life by the sea. We had a commodious house in the town of St. Peter Port, with a large garden wherein grew beautiful flowers and fruits. Mr. Champness soon knew his people, and was assiduous in visiting them. There was then no railway in the island, and of course it was before the time of electric or any other cars; so pastoral visitation was made part and parcel of walking-tours, and he would often spend the best part of the beautiful autumn days in going from place to place, calling here and there, in outlying hamlets,

farms, and cottages, taking tea by the way at some friend's house, and home in the early sunset ; then to some preaching-service or meeting. After Leeds it seemed very easy work, yet it proved quite enough for Mr. Champness's scarcely recovered strength, and he found the climate enervating. Still, it was all very beautiful ; the sea always within an hour's walk, and the quiet country lanes leading down to most lovely coves and bays. Seldom a week passed but we made some excursion together which brought us to the shore, and the sea-breezes invigorated his frame ; he grew stouter, and looked better than he had ever done in my memory.

Soon he began to grasp the preaching, and God's blessing came down. The records of the Sundays tell of great attention on the part of the people, and here and there of conversions. Some in their homes, others on the way home after preaching, some in their pews, some at the Lord's Table, and others whilst about their daily work, were drawn by the Holy Spirit and yielded to be saved by grace.

At the first Quarterly Meeting the numbers were seventeen down, and only one on trial. This was dispiriting ; but Mr. Champness felt, as he often did when others were sad, quite disposed to be encouraged, and set himself and others to pray for a revival of God's work. These prayers were answered ; a revival broke out in several parts of the circuit, and many were brought to God.

The journal kept in Guernsey gratefully records some of the success which attended his ministry there.

Sunday, Nov. 2.—Seven o'clock prayer-meeting ; thirteen of us. 10.30, took Jack to Morley ; nice company for so boisterous a day ; expounded the 18th Psalm, preached on

'The Bundle of Life.' Had a nice time, resting in afternoon. Preached to a good company at Ebenezer; expounded Heb. ii. 1, and preached on verse 9, 'That He should taste death for every man.' A large number stayed to the prayer-meeting, but I could not persuade any in chapel to surrender. After two had prayed, invited to the preacher's vestry any who felt anxious; to my great joy five came, all 'Rohais' boys.

Sunday, 23rd.—Chapel very full at Rohais; good time on 'Bundle of Life.' Sacrament; some stayed who were anxious, but did not come to the table. Had a prayer-meeting for them, seven seeking.

Friday, 28th.—Met Mrs. G——, who tells me that some of those who have been brought in admit that they have absented themselves when I preached; were afraid of the word.

Monday, December 8.—Miss L—— called to tell me that she had found peace.

January 5, 1874.—B—— in to say that his servant found peace in their house last night.

In a letter to his invalid friend at Leeds of about this date he also mentions the revival, and gives a happy picture of our home life.

GUERNSEY, Jan. 9, 1874.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—We all thank you for your kind wishes, and return them with interest. God bless you all with the happiest of years.

Tell your brother that he must not forget how much we are obliged to think of him when the *Mercury* comes. We seem quite well posted up in the news of dear old Leeds. The first thing I look for is the 'Preachers' Column,' that I may know who the popular men are, and what chapels are being opened, S.S. sermons preached, missionary meetings, &c.

We have had good work at one of our country places, and have added some of our best young people in that congregation. One of my colleagues was made very useful there, or else for a long time the cause here has been growing feeble.

The people are not united, so there is always some one or other of them 'fratching.' They are all very kind to us, and try to make us comfortable, but these small places tend to make folk narrow-minded.

You need not caution me about doing too much. I work at about half-speed ; and, indeed, can only do about half as much as I once did. Vigour does not return as I should like ; still, I am preaching very much in my old form, and manage to get good congregations, and to keep them awake.

During this week I am holding special services at one of our outside places. I think it the best for one man to take the whole week, then he can follow up his own blows. I go again to-night for the last time. We have had some good cases of conversion—all ages, from fifty to seven years of age. Some of the new texts that have come up in Guernsey I should like to preach to you. 'Virtue is gone out of me,' 'Give ye them to eat,' 'He whom Thou lovest is sick,' are among them ; but the one I like best is the Christmas one (Luke ii. 15-20).

Wife and bairns are all well. The youngsters do so enjoy the sea ; their ideas and ours are considerably enlarged ; they talk quite learnedly about stem and stern, masts, yards, paddle-wheels, &c. We saw a launch the other day, and they repeat it often in the nursery by sliding a bench down another amid shouts and cries of 'Yeave ho !'

The Lord be with you.

As ever yours,

THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

Not the least enjoyable part of the Guernsey life was the brotherly intercourse with the ministers and people of other Christian communities ; and, as at Banbury, so here, Mr. Champness frequently attended the meetings of the Society of Friends, once recording : 'This (*Thursday*) morning I worshipped with the Friends ; only three of us ; one spoke and prayed. *Monday*.—A minister of the Friends called upon me with C—— and

the other, as well as a companion, a sort of "Silas," who gave me a book.'

The Friends' quiet meetings were always seasons of refreshing, and he invariably came from them strengthened in spirit. His colleagues in the ministry also were very loving and friendly, and altogether the prevailing brotherliness made the spiritual atmosphere agreeable and healthy.

A children's class which began with about a dozen soon grew to an average attendance of sixty; then a deputation of young men came to ask him to form a Bible-class, which request delighted him greatly, and the class, which started with sixteen members, grew to much larger numbers as the winter came on. It will be seen that the Guernsey work filled up the days happily, but not heavily, and it looked as though the year was going to be full of brightness.

But this was not to be. The spring of 1874 came in with long-prevailing easterly winds, and there was much sickness, especially among the children. Soon whooping-cough became prevalent, then epidemic; and there was scarcely a house where this terrible disease did not make its way. Up-grown people as well as children were attacked, and several fatal cases occurred. Still, our own children kept free for some time, and we hoped for the best. On February 23 Mr. Champness returned from a week's visit to England to find all five of the children poorly, and we had a sick house for some weeks, till on March 18 two of our darlings succumbed to the disease. Arthur, two and a half years old, had always been a delicate child, and we were not surprised to have him very ill; complications set in, and the doctor had given us very little hope of his recovery

from the first. It was otherwise with Johnnie, our dear eldest boy, the brightest, merriest, and most joyous of them all. Yet for him the messenger came swiftly, and bore him away before we could realize the truth.

They were but babes, but both of them left their mark on the family. The elder was a beautiful singer, and his clear, sweet voice was always ringing through the house. How often has his father thrilled a great congregation to tears by telling the simple story of Johnnie's song! and how the memory of it has inspired him in the hour of conflict and encouraged him in times of despondency, as he seemed to hear the sound of his lad's voice singing :

Come and join the army, the army of the Lord ;
 Jesus is our Captain, we'll rally at His word :
 Sharp will be the conflict with the powers of sin,
 But with such a Leader we are SURE TO WIN.

.

In his journal are these entries :

March 18.—Had intended making and preaching sermon on 'They need no candle,' but both my dear boys died. Johnny fainted and did not come out of the faint (ten o'clock in the morning). Arthur died at 11.45 that night.

19th.—Was very ill ; thought I too should die.

He rallied, however, on the Saturday, and conducted the funeral service for his two sons, who were laid in the same grave, side by side. Our second son, Charles, and our dear little baby, were also very ill. It was a time of great suffering for us all, and Mr. Champness was so terribly prostrated that we feared he could not recover from the shock. God comforted us, however, and we were thankful to see our little ones gradually

getting better. One of the friends kindly lent us a cottage away by the seaside, and there the dear children got round again ; and we all rested after the stress of our time of trial. In July, by the doctor's orders, I took the children to England ; in August Mr. Champness followed us ; and so we bade farewell to lovely Guernsey and our precious grave in the Foulon cemetery.

From that time until his own death, thirty-one years later, we had no break in our family circle, and no funeral from our door.

CHAPTER XIV

LOUTH, LINCOLNSHIRE, 1874-7

WITH our three surviving children I went to Banbury, to my father's home ; and there our dear little son, who had become like an infant for weakness, regained the use of his legs, and health came back to all. Mr. Champness ought also to have come away, but insisted on remaining in the island till the end of August, preaching his last sermon on the 23rd, and witnessing 'several conversions.' He was very weary and exhausted, and the short time before joining his new circuit was scarcely sufficient to recruit his strength. But there never was much time spent by him in holidays. No man more truly enjoyed a holiday, but it must be brief. He could crowd a great deal of enjoyment into a short space of time, and once wrote of a day's outing, 'I have been all day *actively lazy*.' This expression gives a good idea of his holiday-making. Intensity, vividness, the power of resting and recuperating rapidly, might be called something peculiarly his own. He could assimilate all the sea-breezes or country air he wanted while other people were getting ready to begin. Then he was fain to get back to his work. Thought and mind were already there ; for perhaps his leisure moments were his best times for making new sermons. In a few days he was eagerly beginning his ministry in the Louth Circuit, and

rapidly made himself at home among his Lincolnshire people, whom he grew to love most heartily.

There might not be apparently much to excite enthusiasm in a quiet town like Louth, nor in the villages scattered over such a wide area. But Thomas Champness was enthusiastic as to his new circuit. He was a great student of human nature ; everything and everybody interested him in a way, and became part of his own possessions, over which he rejoiced as one that finds great spoil. He quickly discovered any beauty of Christian character, and, reading between the lines of many a life, he came upon the realization of his highest ideals of heroism. The history of the Louth Circuit told of the bitter days of the struggle of 1848-9, and we had among us saintly men and women who had fought that battle on their knees, and by their prayer and faith had kept 'the Society' together during those stormy times. The peasantry of Lincolnshire, too, appealed to his pride of race. The descendants of the men who were 'never conquered by the Norman,' the tall, strong, slow, shrewd, and capable hinds and labourers, the dwellers in fen-land and on wold, attracted and interested him with a constant and charming freshness. And dearly did he love preaching in the picturesque country villages.

There were long distances to be traversed ; for, as the circuit stretched away east and west of the railway, the outlying places could only be reached by means of the circuit 'conveyance'—a rattling old gig or dogcart, with horses of varying degrees of 'un'-excellence. But the preachers were wont to drive out early, and spend their afternoons in visiting, their evenings in preaching, then pick each other up at some cross-road, and drive leisurely home, conversing on the topics beloved of such

good men, often reaching the town late and weary, but the happier for the work done, and Mr. Champness nearly always ready to recount some of the day's experiences to his wife.

The first Sunday, September 3, was spent in Louth, and was a good specimen of a full day. He was up early, and records that he had

a lively time at the seven o'clock prayer-meeting. I think they were pleased to see me. I met a class at 9.15, and preached at 10.30; congregation rather thin, many families away on holidays; preached from 'The Barrel of Meal.' At 2 p.m. I talked a bit in the Sunday school on 'Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest'; 2.30, met two classes; 6 p.m., service, better congregation; preached with liberty from 'The Christian Race.' Administered the Lord's Supper to a large number of communicants.

At first he found difficulties. 'I have not the key to these people yet,' he said; and, as he meant to win them, he set himself to find the way to their hearts. He had been quick to notice one peculiarity about the Lincolnshire peasantry. He found that the labouring men on the farms were partial to red waistcoats. Why was this? In a country unmarked by specially romantic scenery, where one great rolling field joined itself on to another, where the houses were scattered, the roads level, and the whole landscape, as he had once said, 'dull and flat,' as contrasted with the hills and dales of Yorkshire, why did the men blossom out in crimson and scarlet? Was it a livery? No! Of their own free will they spent their hard-earned money in red waistcoats. Then there must be a reason. 'I have made a discovery,' he said. 'I know why they wear red waistcoats; they love a bit of colour, and they need it. Dull preaching won't

do for them ; such as these will never be caught by drab sermons.'

So he set himself to the work of catching these men in red, and if he blazed out in 'colour' that might shock the respectably dull, he little cared, so that he might win the peasantry to Christ. And he succeeded, as perhaps few ever did, in gaining the love of the Lincolnshire men. 'Your husband is such a hinteresting man,' said one of them to me ; and that others thought so was manifest. They thronged to hear him. In one place where he had preached to 'a chapel-full,' while they were making the collection at the afternoon service, one of the chief men got up and said, 'You mustn't go and tell folk what a preacher we've gotten, or the chapel won't hold 'em to-night. Keep it snug !'

One way in which he sought to 'catch men' was to speak to them by the wayside. This he would do in a very winsome fashion. Beginning with some remark as to the quality of the weather, or the season of the year, he would glide into a pleasant conversation, and never failed to carry with him the sympathy that made his ministrations welcome. Then a few plain, sometimes strong words, and the wayside hearer would find that it was a man sent from God who was speaking, and the gospel message and invitation were given so winningly that it was indeed a hard heart which could resist the earnest word. An instance of this kind is given in a story recently told to a member of our family in Lincolnshire :

When Mr. Champness first entered the Louth Circuit, he used to stop people and speak to them in the lanes of the villages, used to introduce himself as the new preacher, and invite them to come to hear him preach, a habit which is

remembered with affectionate respect by some still living in the circuit. One man who received this invitation in a Saltfleetby lane, replied that 'he did not belong to that village, but that when he came to Theddlethorpe to preach, he would be there to hear him,' a promise which was fulfilled in due time ; and some time afterwards, when Mr. Champness was holding a mission there, this man was converted under the preaching. The first time tickets were renewed after this, Mr. Champness said to this man, that now he had got out of Sodom, he was to get on in the right way as fast as he could ; then turning to the wife, who sat beside him, and who had been a member several years, he said, 'But you never mind how fast he goes ; you always keep well ahead of him.'

It was not only to the poor, or in the country places, that his services and his personality were an attraction. Some of the *élite* of Lincolnshire Methodism worshipped in the Louth Chapel at that time, and their sons and daughters have ever since then been faithful to the love of their youth, remembering 'the days of Mr. Champness' as the golden era of their Christian aspirations. He was wont to say that in all the years he never found any people like these, so cultivated and thoughtful, and at the same time so critical and appreciative. Sermons which he dared to preach in Louth were, to use his own words, 'good enough for anywhere,' and in no society had he more delightful Christian companionships than in the bonny Lincolnshire Methodist homes.

A member of one of the largest of the families that used to drive in from the country to the Sunday morning service in Louth Chapel in those days, a Lincolnshire Methodist who has ever been a personal friend of Mr. Champness, wrote me on hearing of his death :

Mr. Champness has been a hero in my eyes since I first knew him ; that was when he came to the Louth Circuit. I remember him on the platform with Punshon, and always delighted in any opportunity of listening to him. He has been so brave, so strong, so tender and lovable. No other minister had the same place in my affection ; and now this splendid comrade has been taken. . . .

Whether in town or country he was greatly beloved ; he made himself so completely one with his people that he knew all their joys and sorrows ; it was because he loved them that they instinctively sought him when in trouble, and this was perhaps the great secret of his power. The charm of his presence won the young people of our families (often rather shy of the ministers), and he gained the love and confidence of young men in a remarkable way. What happy times they spent together ! and how truly he manifested himself to be the true servant of God among men, never forgetting his duty, commending his Master to those who drove him in their father's or employer's traps from place to place, or ministered to his needs in the homes he visited !

There are many still living in Louth Circuit of whose affection for Mr. Champness it may be said :

Nor time nor pain nor grief can rend
What God hath given.
From Him the golden links descend,
Wind round the heart, and upward tend,
And death itself can but extend
The chain to heaven.

The journals are fragmentary, and those for 1875 are lost, but on January 1, 1876, he writes :

Blessed be God! May this be the holiest and most useful of my years! We had a good Watch-night. I spoke from 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.' I used with effect illustration about a ledger—1875 filled, 1876 blank pages.

On Sunday, 2nd, he preached at Louth, and had a grand day, crowned with three or four cases of conversion.

On January 4 he writes :

Donington. Went out for a long round of visits, and was much pleased, though very tired. Had an afternoon's quiet 'dig' into the Bible, and got out a reading on Abraham's intercession for Sodom. We had a large congregation—ninety people—and deep attention, but no results; and yet I feel something will come of the service. There were two young women lingering outside the chapel; I think they wanted me to speak to them. I did so, and shall hope to see them, converted. (N.B.—These girls were 'brought in' the next night.)

This week was spent in villages on the Wolds—Donington and Goulceby—and was distinguished by a remarkable incident which occurred one night.

The journal tells the story :

I preached with power to a large congregation from the words, 'Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.' We had several conversions, among them a man and his wife. She found peace first, and came and talked with her husband. He said, 'Hast thou found peace?' 'Yes.' 'Then don't let me give up till I find it.' When she was made happy, she prayed, 'Lord, tell my father! Tell my father that Thou hast pardoned me.' Her father was a local preacher, and had gone to heaven. The husband was trembling and crying for hours; one after another talked to him. He said, 'If my mother was

here, she would talk with me.' At last I got the pulpit Bible, and showed him Isa. liii. 6. He saw it and believed. To use his own words, 'I got more good from the Book than aught else.' 'The entrance of Thy Word giveth light.'

The services of this week were fruitful in conversions. Mr. Champness stayed out, spending his mornings in visiting in the villages and outlying places. 'One day,' he says, 'I met with an elderly woman, who tells me she and her husband were brought in a year ago, when I preached from "Choose ye this day"' (a favourite sermon for the beginning of the year). The weather was stormy, but good congregations came, and on Thursday night the preacher 'reached home at 11.30,' and entered in his journal, 'Grand week! Praise the Lord!'

Later in January, at Grimoldby, on the other side of the circuit, there was 'a great breakdown,' with nine conversions.

It was partly to set him free for this special work within the circuit that Mr. Champness had an assistant for the latter part of his term, and also because the Connexion was beginning to claim him as an evangelist outside circuit limits. One mission he held at Spilsby, where a quiet but abiding work of God began, and on the last night he records 'more good done than any other night.' Saturday of this week has this characteristic record: 'A day's rest, I *meant*, but was running about a good deal.'

One notable thing marks the Louth years, that is the series of Saturday night open-air services. Louth market-place was (and no doubt is) crowded on Saturday nights; folk from the villages, as well as the town dwellers, were abroad, and in these crowds Thomas Champness found his congregations. A great

lamp in the centre of the irregular 'square' was an ideal 'stand,' and he resolved to preach there every Saturday night when he was at home. In the winter the lamp gave a fine light, in the summer it was a rallying-place, and when the services became known, there was no lack of a band of sympathizers ready to receive the preacher. There was no harmonium, no platform, no singing-band or choir, no hymn-sheets—only the preacher and his wife, the latter having to start the tunes. When the cobble-stones of the market-place were likely to be damp, a hassock, or 'buffet,' as the Lincolnshire people call it, was carried for his wife to stand on. Nothing but a downpour of rain *at the time* stopped the service. It might have been a very wet day, or the clouds might threaten a deluge, no matter! I have known the service to be held even when a 'tidal mist' came up from the North Sea, thirteen miles away, and that was almost as wet as rain. But generally the weather favoured the preaching. On certain nights he would preach from the daily newspaper, and, whatever might be his theme, he always spoke 'straight and plain,' at times startlingly so. One man is reported to have said, 'If anybody else said the things Champness says, they'd stone him in Louth streets.' Never hesitating to rebuke sin, he spoke the truth in love, and the Holy Spirit carried the word home to many a heart.

Once a year the great hiring fair is held: it is the season when the farm-servants are wont to leave their situations, or hire afresh for the next year, and the 'May-day time' is synonymous with a general migration of families from one end of Lincolnshire to another. On the Saturday night, at one such time,

several wagon-loads of families, their household goods piled around them, halted in the market-square, and the text that night was, '*And when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent, the spirit of Jacob his father revived.*' Those who know how Thomas Champness could make a Bible story fit every-day needs, will see how he would refer to the kindness of the farmers who lent their wagons for the little ones and the women to ride; was it not like the Lord, making a way for them to leave earthly things and seek 'a better country, that is, an heavenly'? how he pleaded for hopefulness—the future had something in it to revive the spirit and make hope to blossom; how the journey of life was to be by means of the provision Jesus has made for us—to take us from famine into plenty, to the goodly land where no want can ever come; Joseph, a type of Christ—and so on; memory only faintly catches up the far-away message, but I can hear the loving, winning tones of the voice as I write. God blessed that service to some who were that night 'wayfaring men,' and might never hear the voice of the preacher again.

The story of 'Punch and Judy' has been told elsewhere, but not from behind the scenes. That was also on a 'fair' night, but I am not clear if it was the night of the 'wagon' sermon. I think not. We set out together from our home near by. As we entered the square, there was Punch and Judy 'toot-tooting' away at the lamp. At the shop doors stood some whom we knew to be not very favourable to these open-air meetings; they were looking at one another, their expression saying plainly, 'What will Champness do now?' As we walked across, he remarked, 'How is

this to be overcome? "Sanballat" and his tribe are glorying over us, but we must go on.' Then suddenly he turned into the shop of one of our Methodist friends, and we went upstairs to their drawing-room, and waited a few minutes. 'Stay here till I come back,' he said, 'I'll go home and pray.' After a short time he came again across the square and beckoned to me, and when I got down to him he said, 'It's all right; the Lord has shown me what to do. Come along.' And together we approached the 'Punch and Judy' man, to whom Mr. Champness spoke with the politeness his mother had taught him. 'Good evening, sir. My wife and I have been used to holding a short service on this spot at this hour; now, if I promise to be done within the hour, would you object to going down the other end of the town for that time, so that I can preach?'

'Not a bit,' said 'Mr. Punch'; 'not a bit. We'll roll up, *and stop and hear you, sir*; won't we, Jim?' And 'Jim,' the partner, heartily assented, and proceeded to 'roll up.' The two men stood by Mr. Champness' side, and joined in the service, and at the close he announced, 'The performance will now commence,' and Punch and Judy resumed their notable exhibition. So we had *their* crowd and *ours* too, and 'Sanballat' and his tribe were not to be seen as we returned through the square.

From the three years' ministry much blessing resulted; the calls from all parts of the country were many and constant, and his work grew beyond all circuit bounds. Life was very full; his colleagues were kind and even indulgent to him, and arranged matters so that he should be free to go away. He

never neglected the country places, but would give 'extra nights' to those which he had been obliged to miss, driving out specially to preach in the remotest and smallest places in the circuit, after having been away to Leeds, Bradford, or elsewhere for part of the week. Looking back on this time, I can see how secure he must have been in the love of his people, and how full every day was with his multiplied labours. It was a happy term of three years; friendships were made that can never be broken, whole families were blessed under his pastorate and ministry, and his own experience in the work was of the happiest kind.

CHAPTER XV

LONDON: CITY ROAD, 1877-9

WITH scarcely a break, the change was made from Louth and its villages to City Road, London, and the new work began. Recalling the experiences of these years, I can see how much his ordinary duties were supplemented by the labours Mr. Champness undertook on his own account. If he had been content to be merely a London minister, there would still have been plenty to do; but he could not rest satisfied, was always eager to begin something fresh, and ready to help others. City Road Chapel is the resort of strangers. Methodists from all parts come to worship in John Wesley's chapel, to visit John Wesley's house. So, life in that historic residence was interesting, though we were liable to visitors at all hours, and that was not always convenient. The minister's chief concern, however, was with his congregations and his Church.

The first time he talked matters over with his Superintendent (the Rev. John Baker), he heard sad things of St. John's Square, his own special charge.

Sept. 1.—Saw Mr. Baker, who seems down about the circuit, especially St. John's. Says only one-third filled; and though no debt, it cannot pay expenses. 'Fear not, thou worm Jacob, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, I am thy God.' I mean to throw in all my strength. God help

me! At the other end of this book [his journal] there is the history of past success achieved in the Lord's name in Leeds. His arm does not grow shorter. It seems they had hoped to have been helped out of the difficulty by a new street improving the chapel off the face of the earth!

Sunday, 2nd.—Morning, St. John's. Not 100 present, besides choir and school. Good time on 'Cana.' They say the congregation was larger than the average, so it is poor. *So much more room to mend!* Met two classes, and spoke in the school on 'Bear ye one another's burdens.' At night, the old chapel at City Road looked well, as the lower part was filled, the galleries partly so. Although no organ, the singing was good. I had a fairish time on Luke vii. 50. There was a large company to the Sacrament. The table is small, so that it is long and tedious, but the stewards manage well.

A fortnight later, on Sunday, 15th, he writes :

St. John's. Good time on 1 Sam. xvi. 11. Several Yorkshire people there ; about twenty-five people more than last time on Sunday.

There was at St. John's Square a good Sunday school, and a well-trained choir, the organist being Mr. C. J. Dale. Some of the families attending there and at City Road lived a long distance away, and in many cases came out of loyal attachment to the places they had known and loved all their lives, passing other and newer Wesleyan chapels on their way. And all around there were thousands of homes without God, and untouched by any Church! That was enough to drive any man like Thomas Champness to prayer.

At the Quarterly Meeting the report was, sixty down, four on trial, debt £168. And the following night he preached at City Road on 'Why could not we cast him out?'

Whenever possible, he delighted to attend the noon-day prayer-meeting of the Y.M.C.A., at 165 Aldersgate Street. Here he often, by invitation, gave the address, and by his cheerful faith in God he greatly encouraged some of the most ardent Christian workers in the world. Men like T. B. Smithies, T. A. Denny, Henry Moorhouse, W. Forbes, and many other well-known Christian philanthropists were eager to meet him, and eager to have him speak and preach. From one week-day's entry in his journal it will be seen how this extra-parochial work entered into his life.

Tuesday, March 24.—9 a.m., Whitecross Street. 2 Kings ii. 20. 1.30, Young Men's, Aldersgate Street, 'Bring me a new cruse.' Evening, Hornsey Hall; had a good time, though only got up to speak at 9.50. M'Auslane, Fleming, Chown, all spoke well. [The names here mean much to those who knew the men.]

Then, he never missed an opportunity of hearing the great preachers, especially Spurgeon and Parker, thereby getting his own soul strengthened and helped. The fame of his preaching soon spread, the chapels filled up, and some conversions encouraged our Society. He began to take hold of the young people, and had a children's class on a Saturday afternoon, averaging sixty in attendance all the winter months. The smaller chapels and mission-rooms in the circuit gave him much to think about; they were so necessary, yet so inadequate, and though in the midst of crowds, they were so *empty*! One of these small places connected with St. John's Square was Gee Street Mission. Mr. Champness took great pains with this place, by specially arranging services, mothers' meetings, and temperance

missions there. Work among the very poor of London must always be arduous, but in these days there are many helps that were unknown in the time of which I write. It is well that this should be emphasized by recalling the discouraging conditions under which such work was done before Settlements, Sisters of the People, and organized Missions came into being amongst us. The spiritual forces which were to revolutionise London Methodism were always there, but hidden away in back streets and alleys, where the foundations of the great building called 'the Forward Movement' were being laid. Mr. Champness realized his limitations, and, not being able to do all he would, he did all he could.

Abiding friendships came to him in London Methodism, too, and the sons and daughters of our families were won by his loving care for them.

One of these friends had been a sea-faring man, and to him and his beloved family Thomas Champness was deeply attached; his friendship was one of the 'hundred-fold more' things that to him fulfilled the promise of the Lord to all who had left 'homes' for the sake of the kingdom. And in London, as elsewhere, he found in the duties that lay nearest to him the happiness that made him so helpful to others.

Among these duties was one which touched his home life. His children very early learned that the home, as well as all else, belonged to God; and if for no other reason than the object-lesson to them, it was worth while to have the railings in front of John Wesley's house decorated with a large gospel placard, which attracted crowds of the passers-by. One of these home-made placards had a striking picture of the Passover, and drew crowds to look and read, so that

the policeman would come on the scene with his 'Move on ; pass along, please.' What became known as the 'Placard Mission' was an outcome of this, some philanthropic ladies sending money to pay for the production, and placing on walls or hoardings, similar placards to those we exhibited. As another part of this enterprise, Mr. Champness found a poor out-of-work man, fitted him up as a sandwich-man, with a gospel placard behind and before, and paid him 2s. 6d. a day (plus a good meal) to carry the message of salvation up and down the streets. He could have found *many* men, but had not many half-crowns ! There was also an understanding with our Bible-woman that whenever we cooked a joint of meat she should have a portion for some sick or needy person, and the good lady soon got to know when it was 'hot-meat day' at our house and at the Superintendent's. One had to do what one could, and not being able to feed and help *all*, to help the nearest.

Open-air services outside St. John's Square chapel attracted crowds, and it was also a practice with Mr. Champness to go out alone, or with some member of his family, and sing and speak in some of the 'courts' of the slums. I occasionally accompanied him, and we have stood in the middle of a dingy court, with not a person in sight, except perhaps a slatternly woman or two sitting muttering on a doorstep, the only sign of life being the stealthy drawing up of a blind, or the hurried opening of a window ; but we knew there were listeners behind those forbidding walls, and, as Mr. Champness would say, 'an audience, though not a congregation.'

In ways like these, and in other ways, the gospel

was preached, and results had to be left, with earnest prayer, in the care of Him who has said 'My word shall not return unto Me void.'

The morning service at City Road was liturgical, but Mr. Champness used to begin with a hymn; and, referring to this in his journal, he says, 'Some who were in the vestry objected to my commencing with a hymn, but I shall have the management of the service in my own hands or leave.' In Louth he had been accustomed to begin the morning service with a brief prayer: he had no stereotyped plan; rather he chose to lead his people out of the old ruts, though always he lifted the service, by his own characteristic and infectious enjoyment of divine worship. Nothing was more *like* him than this variation of form—which never for one instant allowed people to forget that they were in the presence of One who must be worshipped 'in the beauty of holiness.'

During the two years many visits were made to other parts of the kingdom; he was much in request for anniversaries, and was once, at least, away on Home Mission Deputation work, in North Devon. The Thanksgiving Fund, as it was called, was inaugurated in 1878, and meetings to introduce the scheme for raising £250,000 were held all over London and the provinces. Mr. Champness spoke at several of these meetings, and I think it must have been this object that took him to Ireland in May, 1879. He was away a week, preaching and speaking at Belfast, Dublin, and other places, while in January of the same year he visited Newcastle-on-Tyne, and in company with Ira D. Sankey held a very successful mission in the Circus, with services and meetings in many of the chapels. Crowds

came together; the great singer attracted many, and the pointed and powerful preaching bore much fruit. Mr. Sankey's appropriate singing of solos which illustrated the sermon delighted Mr. Champness—he felt how greatly the song helped to fasten the gospel message on the heart:

NEWCASTLE, *Jan. 12, 1879.*

Preached at Brunswick in morning from 'Jesus saw their faith'; good melting time. Afternoon, Circus crowded; rather muddled; fear I was not heard; but as I preached on 'Absalom,' once they tried to get up a cheer. Sankey sang 'I'll stand by you till the morning.' Circus again at night, very crowded; good time on 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' Sankey followed with 'In the silent midnight watches.'

14th.—Spoke from 'Why could not we cast him out?' Sankey not in quite so good voice. Went with him to the Penitentiary; spoke from 'Come unto Me.' He then sang 'Where is my wandering boy?' It broke them all down. He prayed and spoke well. At night, Sankey sang wonderfully 'Yet there is room.' Many inquirers.

Sunday, 19th.—Went with — to speak at a free breakfast on 'Come unto Me.' Good time at Brunswick in morning, and full Circus in the afternoon. Full again at night; hundreds went away. I preached from Heb. ii. latter part of v. 9. Many inquirers dealt with at Blakett Street Chapel.

One real holiday he took; in the early summer of 1878. His friend Mark Guy Pearse arranged it with him, and a royal time we had; down at Bude, by the 'thundering shores,' living at Lake Cottage, lent us by kind Mr. Pethybridge, of Launceston. To be on a holiday with Thomas Champness was to experience concentrated enjoyment. How he revelled in those

hours and days of 'active laziness,' to be sure! A service at some village chapel would fitly close the day, and new joys came with the morning. Years afterwards, when we again went to Bude, he would recall this, our first visit, and the delicious scent of the thymy downs. 'We shall remember those days in heaven!' he said.

So the time went on, and the hand of the Lord was with him, guiding this time towards the North country. He had known and loved Alexander M'Aulay for years, and was much impressed with the wisdom of his idea of District Missionaries, who, freed from circuit work, were set apart to hold revival missions, stir up the churches, and seek to bring in the 'outsiders.' So that when he was himself invited to go to the Newcastle District as its first District Missionary he willingly consented. He had some time previously told the stewards he must leave City Road at the end of his second year. The historic 'Wesley's house' did not suit the health of his family; his wife especially had suffered from frequent attacks of illness; so one Sunday morning, in the vestry, he said to the dismayed officials, 'I have heard a Voice saying unto me, "Arise, get thee out of this city,"' and, against all remonstrances, he 'arose and went'; and by the providence of God came down into 'the canny North' after the Conference of 1879.

It was while in the City Road Circuit that he published his first volume of sermons, entitled *New Coins from Old Gold*, dedicating the book to his father, through whom he had 'first learned that the gold of that land is good.'

CHAPTER XVI

DISTRICT MISSIONARY, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, 1879-82

THOSE who knew Thomas Champness could not fail to be impressed by his strong faith in God. It entered into every part of his life, and he had a habit of observing and accepting everyday experiences as signs of God's guiding care. This gave him an extraordinary ease of spirit, and enabled him to meet 'the changes that are sure to come' with a calmness that seemed at times almost supernatural. In case of a sudden and unexpected call for decision he would say, quite as a matter of course, 'We shall be guided.' This expression became almost a proverb among his personal friends, and was borne out in its constant fulfilment. I never knew the time when his faith in this divine guidance failed him, in things either great or small.

It was in accord with this habit of mind that he held himself free to break through the ordinary observance of the 'three years' system of the Methodist itinerancy, and that he did not feel troubled when for health's sake, or for other reasons, he felt it right to leave a circuit before that time had expired. If the pillar of cloud moved, he was quick to see and ready to follow it. Thus, at the end of two years, at the call of the Home Missionary Department, he went from London to

Newcastle-on-Tyne as District Missionary. He had seen much fruit to his labours; the congregations, both in City Road and St. John's Square, had increased, and his strong, original, and forceful preaching had made its mark even in London. But there were many things that drew him out of the great city, and he felt that he could for a time do more and better work for God outside the boundaries and limitations of circuit life. For some time he had felt drawn towards special mission work, and had followed with great interest the zealous labours of his friend Edward Smith and others in that direction, so that the invitation to Newcastle-on-Tyne came as an answer to prayer. Concerning the appointment, Mr. T. H. Bainbridge, of Newcastle, writes:

The relations between Mr. Champness and myself as representing the Newcastle District Mission were peculiar. I had previously heard Mr. Champness preach, and, influenced partly by me, our Committee decided that *he* and no one else was the man for this District.

Mr. Champness, from the first, aimed straight for decisions for Christ. To use his own words, he 'threw his reputation as a preacher into the Tyne as he crossed the High Level Bridge,' and I know he studied and wrote and preached and made everything subservient to bringing people to Jesus Christ.

This was, indeed, the spirit in which the missionary entered upon his arduous work in the North. As a District Missionary he had to a large extent his own way. He was responsible to the local Home Missionary Committee, and was under the direction of the Chairman of the District, arranging with him as to the places to be visited; but he had a free hand as to methods, and, being determined to use every available means to

bring the gospel to the people, there was plenty of scope for his originality. He had no cut-and-dried system of 'ten days' and 'five days' missions. Sometimes three or four weeks were claimed by one neighbourhood ; at other places he would find four or five days long enough. Where he could get the help of the church he eagerly accepted it, and was charmed to have those who were already saved at his side in open-air services. He was always devising new ways of reaching the people. Now it was a big hand-bell with which he would herald his approach ; and again it was a large, crude, but effective canvas picture mounted on a pole and used as a text for a rousing and loving appeal. Sometimes he went out by himself, and shouted up and down the streets of the colliery villages words of blessing and words of warning, often as a voice in the wilderness of shut doors and unwilling ears.

This is not a family history, but it would be impossible to keep his family out of the story of Thomas Champness's life and work. His children were amongst his best helpers, for by his own enthusiasm he made them to feel that it was at once a duty and a joy to use their little gifts of voice and skill in 'helping father.' Their childish voices were very sweet ; one of them had a little violin, and was too young to feel shy and constrained before people. The father had a way of sweet appreciation that made it easy for the children to help him, and all the time, almost unconsciously, they were themselves being enlisted into service for God. It was after going with his father to one of his meetings during these years that one of his little boys said to him, 'Father, I believe you have

converted me!' Telling this in his diary, the father adds, 'I hope he has indeed cast in his lot with Jesus.'

Newcastle suited the children ; their health improved ; the sea was only twelve miles away, and frequent visits were possible. Their spiritual life was nurtured in many kindly ways, not the least being the influence of the Jesmond Children's Service on Sunday afternoons, when Mr. T. H. Bainbridge took such pains to make the Bible interesting to the young people. It was a happy time for our children, and I believe God did give to us a special blessing. It was not for nothing that my husband was so much in prayer for us while he was away, and could write, as he did, 'I want to see you and the children, but for the Lord's sake I must learn to deny myself the pleasures of home. But I shall enjoy the few days I have with you. . . . The Lord bless you. Tell C—— that I wished for him and his fiddle to-day. . . . We have been out preaching to the pitmen. It is very hard work, as the people do not come out to the doors, but I very much enjoy it. Tell C—— the fiddle is the thing to bring them out of their holes!'—and so on. The messages being read out to the bairns at home from 'father's' letters, it can easily be seen how the blessing came. Such a life of active service for God was bound to have its sanctifying influence over the loved ones, and home became more than ever the sanctuary hallowed by God's presence.

Early in the Newcastle days, with money earned by his pen, Mr. Champness bought a good portable harmonium, and was perhaps the first Methodist evangelist to use one in open-air work. When we began to take it out we were a little afraid of spoiling it, so carried it in its black packing-case. The process of

taking the instrument out and setting it up attracted great attention, and generally we had a crowd of small boys and girls close round us. Once, as the black box was opened, an awe-stricken boy cried, 'What is't? Is't a coffin?' Later, a waterproof cover was made for it, and the little harmonium went up hill and down dale with us for many years, in Northern pit 'Rows' and Lancashire villages, on Blackpool sands and in Rochdale streets; and it is not dead yet! It was money well spent, for the little harmonium opened the way for the gospel to many a heart.

Details of the work it is impossible to give, except by a few extracts from journals and diaries. The years were full; intense activity and increasing usefulness marked every step. Sometimes health failed; always there was the liability to recurrent attacks of African fever; a week in a 'malarial' neighbourhood would at any time lay the worker low, and over-fatigue brought frequent breakdowns; but, on the whole, Newcastle was a successful, and certainly a happy experience. As with his children, so with others, Mr. Champness had a way of appreciation that made it pleasant for workers to assist him; it seemed quite natural that one and another should join themselves to him for the work. Thus it was with Miss Parsons, Mrs. Edmondson, Mr. Lancelot Middleton with his cornet, Mr. Owen, of Hartlepool, and others, his 'helpers in Christ.' During these years he kept up his interest in young men who were beginning to preach, several of whom came to him in the early mornings of his occasional visits home, and got their first lessons in sermon-making and Bible study. Were they not like the first swallows of a summer, harbingers of a coming host?

For the sake of many who will cherish it, I here insert extracts from a journal which Mr. Champness kept for inspection by the Rev. Alex. M'Aulay, his 'Chief,' and the head of the Home Missionary Department. It was written up from daily notes and letters, and went on through most of the Newcastle term. The portion here given may serve as a sample of the great variety and scope of the work, which, as duly reported to headquarters, was such as to cause great thankfulness to God.

NEWCASTLE, *Sep.* 27, 1879.

Have spent the best part of three weeks in this town of Blyth and neighbourhood. Our practice has been to have an open-air service in some pit-village at the time of day when the men were just come in, before they went to bed. A number of us sang as we walked between the rows of cottages, stopping every now and then for one to speak for a few minutes, then going on again with a song, and stopping again, and another speaking; in this way we had a large audience if but a small congregation. One woman, who seemed quite sixty years of age, was thus caught in the gospel net.

At the beginning of the time I was much helped by Mr. Cawood (Lay District Evangelist), who sings as well as he speaks.

One of the Sundays I had Children's Services, and these have been made a blessing. I took quite fifty names of children wishful to serve God. Leaders of juvenile classes have been appointed, so we hope these little ones will be cherished and nurtured for God.

It is but right to say that I was much helped by the local preachers and others, and never wish to have better helpers than the men who have stuck by me all the time I have spent in Blyth.

When the last day of the services came, it was thought best to gather the new converts together, so after the Bible-

reading in the afternoon we had a little tea-meeting, after which I spoke to those who had been brought in—at least, as many as we could get there. It was a most profitable season.

At night, after the short sermon, we had a general Fellowship meeting, and after an hour most delightfully spent I asked if there were any anxious souls; if so, invited them, when eight persons came to the communion rails and found peace. May the good work go on!

I feel very happy, and when going about among the pit villages felt *more like a missionary* than I have done since I left Africa.

THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

HIGH WEST STREET, GATESHEAD (INCLUDING LOW FELL),

Sept. 28—Oct. 15.

Had a fortnight's mission here. Every day I spoke at some workshop in the dinner-hour. A large number of children and young people were brought to God; among the rest a boy, whose father, formerly a local preacher, had wandered from God. On the Saturday night after I left, the lad said to his father, 'Please to wake me at six o'clock in the morning, as I want to go to the prayer-meeting.' This woke the father, and at night, during the preaching of Mr. Walters, of Bradford (missionary deputation), he made up his mind and came out to find mercy. He has now rebuilt the family altar, and is, with his family, living to God.

From High West Street I went up to the Low Fell in the same circuit, and stayed from the Sunday to the Wednesday. On the Sunday a little girl was convinced of sin, and said to her friends (alluding to the truth I had pressed home that sin is a filthy thing and will not be allowed in God's clean heaven), 'I feel dirty.' At night she came forward, and went home saying, 'Now I am clean, and I am happy!'

Each of the three week-days we walked over to some pit village, and sang and shouted the gospel between the 'Rows.' This was made the means of rousing some, and we had a great outpouring of the Spirit, and more than a hundred souls

professed to obtain salvation, the greater part, though, after I left. The minister and friends took hold of the thing, and carried on the work in triumph.

PARK ROAD, NEWCASTLE, *Oct. 19—Nov. 2.*

Here for three Sundays, and the week-days between, I laboured hard. Each week-day at noon I spoke at Armstrong's works, giving nine addresses there. We had some interesting Bible-reading services in the afternoon of the second week. We had a few cases of conversion, some of them most interesting. One man, a porter at the Central Railway Station, I have seen several times since. He and his wife were soundly converted, and he will prove a good helper.

On the whole I was very much cast down: working very hard, I seemed to move few, but my preaching did not suit the class of mind I had to deal with, so that it was most likely my fault that we did not succeed better.

STANHOPE, WEARDALE, *Nov. 3-10.*

Mr. Cawood was taken ill and so could not go to Stanhope. I had a few days on my hands, which I should have given to Park Road had I been successful there. That being the case I thought it best to go to Weardale, where I worked for eight days inside the chapel and up the hillside among the quarrymen, but did not make much out after all.

CHAPTER ROW, SOUTH SHIELDS, *Nov. 15—Dec. 4.*

Worked for three weeks in this interesting town. We had good success among both young and old. One case interested me much. A man who is what is called a 'trimmer,' working in the hold of a ship stowing away the coal, and who has been in the habit of spending at least a pound a week on drink, was brought in on the Tuesday. When he got home, he sent the wife to pay 'the shot' at the public, but, being early in the week, he had only run up 2s. 8d. It is a remarkable case, and has caused a stir in the yard where he lives.

We had a grand time one afternoon among the children. I never saw so good a work of the kind before. And what is better, the youngest of the ministers and his wife meet them every Saturday.

The snow was against us, but on the whole this is the best work I have yet seen.

We finished up with a Communion service, at which many of the converts were present. I attribute much of the success to the way in which the minister and friends worked to make things go.

JARROW, SOUTH SHIELDS, *Dec. 7-16.*

This was disappointing, for though I had two Sundays and up to the Tuesday of the second week, I made but little out. There were a number of young folks, and among them a prodigal. One man told me he had not been in a place of worship for twenty years. He was very ignorant and dark, but promised me that he would learn to read.

From thence to London, where I had the pleasure of meeting the other District Missionaries. It was a good time.

On Christmas morning.

Christmas holidays. A sermon to the young at Bensham Road. Revisited Blyth; met the children and preached.

As it is holiday time there is not much to be done, so we have filled up the days as we could. Mr. Landale, a young man who has been in China for three years, but who wants to see some evangelistic work done before he returns, has joined me. He has taken M.A. at Oxford, but has not taken orders. He is a Presbyterian, but was connected with the China Inland Mission, though at his own charges. We have been working for a few days together at Washington, in the High West Circuit. We sang and shouted the gospel in two of the colliery villages, and one day at noon had a good time at Cook's works. When we were singing round Usworth Colliery (on a very wet day) a child brought us out from one of the cottages a quarter of a loaf! We saw a few awakened, but not

many; we should have done better if we could have stayed longer, but hope it has not been in vain. One woman of eighty years of age came up to the communion-rail.

The year 1879 is past and gone. Remember not our sins,
O Lord!

THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

Jan. 2, 1880.

We began the year in the Brunswick Circuit, Newcastle. Much pains had been taken by the ministers, as well as several active laymen, to prepare the way. The Superintendent wrote a circular letter, which was taken to the houses by a band of ladies and gentlemen. Part of the time we were assisted in the musical part of the services by the Rev. C. S. Reader, who gave effective and interesting variety by solo singing. Nothing could be better done than the preparations for these services, and richly were the workers rewarded. Mr. Landale, to whom I referred in the last page, helped me in my open-air work and with the singing band. We had an interesting conversion as one of the results of good open-air singing. A little girl said to her mother, 'I should like to go where these singers are going.' The mother followed the singing band, and was laid hold of by the truth, and has joined the Society. Her leader told me that she has given good testimony to the power of the gospel.

I conducted a fortnight's Bible-readings in a suburban chapel, which were increasingly well attended.

The second fortnight we shifted the ground of our operations to Clarence Street, in the same circuit, and had a large number of conversions. Each day we held dinner-hour services in different workshops, which were made all the more popular by the kind help of a number of ladies who led the singing. Altogether I had greater satisfaction in these services, especially at Brunswick Chapel, than in any others held in the District. Not only was there careful preparation made for my visit, but the people were under gracious influences before I began, and

so I had the joy of reaping what others had sown, in tears, it may be, but certainly in painful industry.

Jan. 31—Feb. 5.

Spent in the Wolsingham Circuit. For some time a lady of the name of Parsons was at work in the town of Wolsingham. Assisted by the ministers, she had been made a great blessing. The town is much under the influence of infidelity. Strange to say, a number of infidels attended our services, and one who 'came to scoff remained to pray.' We missioned the streets thoroughly, and roused up the whole of the place. We should have liked to hold a dinner-hour service in a mill, but were not allowed. However, we determined not to be beaten, and so held an open-air service each day by the roadside, and caught the men as they returned. The second day we went we found the men waiting for us, and each day had an increased congregation. We should have been content if we had been allowed *one* service with the men inside, but, as it turned out, the refusal to allow us inside was over-ruled for good.

Feb. 7—March 11.

These four days were spent in the Shotley Bridge Circuit. We had two centres of operations—Blackhill and Leadgate; but we missioned the streets of Blackhill, Consett, Dipton, Medomsley, Derwent Cottages, Annfield Plain, and East Castle and Lanchester, besides taking the train and going over to Tow Law, where Miss Parsons, co-operating with the minister, was holding services. I generally preached in the chapels in the afternoon, but worked the streets in the morning, returning to my centre at night. From some reason or other I had less than ordinary success in my night services, but the street work paid me well. In Blackhill a notorious drunkard was awakened by seeing us out in the snow shouting the gospel, and has joined the Society. His wife testifies that they have never been so happy before. At Tow Law, a woman was awakened by the street work, and was brought to peace at one of the evening meetings in the chapel

a fortnight after. At the class-meeting on the Sunday after his conversion the reformed drunkard said, '*This time last week I was waiting for the public-house to open that I might quench my thirst.*'

'Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants.'

SUNDAY, *March 14, to March 25*

were spent in the Bensham Road Circuit. This was, so far as the town chapel was concerned, a failure. I did not seem to interest the people sufficiently to get them to chapel excepting on the Sundays. Added to this, the General Election was on the *tapis*, and of course many of the best workers were drawn into the conflict, so that I had not their valuable assistance. But this was not the greatest difficulty: I seemed to have less divine power with me than I had been accustomed to.

Seeing that as the election drew near I was doing worse and worse, I withdrew after the second Sunday to a country place called Burnopfield. Here our people are building a new chapel, and worship for a time in a large hall. We had better success here, and some good cases of conversion.

Every day I walked out to some neighbouring village and spoke in the streets. In one village a man was stricken with a sense of sin, and fell on his knees then and there, and gave his heart to God!

Each afternoon I held a service in a different cottage, both in the town and country, while in this circuit.

As has been my custom for years, I spent Easter with my father and brothers and sisters in Manchester.

FROM SATURDAY, *April 3, to Thursday, April 22,*

were spent in North Shields. Here for the first week or more I saw scarcely any conversions, but the church drew nearer to me, and the ministers, especially Bros. Raw and Butterworth, stuck to me like men. *It was uphill work.* The town itself seems to have decayed; the industry seems to be on the other

side of the Tyne. Then our people were afraid of anything that seemed extravagant. Yet I could feel that they, though dull, were loyal to Jesus. Eventually the Spirit was poured out, and we saw a great work. Few of the places I have yet worked have given me such satisfaction. We have had a number of young people brought in who will make fine workers. A Tract Society was formed at once.

We owe much of this good work to a sort of Mutual Improvement Society, begun and sustained by Mr. Butterworth. It is a curiosity, for one does not look for great spiritual results from the modern 'Improvement Societies,' but the one at North Shields is a spiritual force. Then, Mrs. Raw told me she had felt the state of the church and congregation so much that she could not sleep.

I spoke a great deal in the streets as well as held Bible-readings each day, and have reason to believe that both were blessed. North Shields will always be a bright spot to look back upon.

FROM SATURDAY, *April 24*, TO SUNDAY, *May 9*,

I worked at Sans Street, Sunderland. It was against my wishes that I went at this time to Sunderland. I had the feeling that it was useless to try to work there except I could have more time, and the District Meeting was soon to come on, when I must stop. The first night I spent in this wicked town I could not sleep for thinking of the state of the inhabitants. It is by far the worst town I have been in. There is so much of drunkenness and whoredom. The love of display has eaten into everything. Methodism has lost ground here, and must continue to do so, if something is not done. There has been scarcely anything done in chapel-building for years, while the population has been going into the suburbs to live, and there being no chapels—at least very poor chapel accommodation—we have lost hundreds of members. The love of show has affected Methodism, as well as other things in Sunderland, and I have the feeling that in no other town in the District is there so much that is unreal.

Sans Street is a large, unwieldy place, and difficult to work. I did not make much out, yet we had some interesting conversions. By the kind care of Mr. Scott we had a service in some ship-yard or foundry each day. We had numbers of these men at the service at Sans Street each night as the result, but they used to rise like a covey of birds each night, and take wing before anything could be done in the way of getting hold of them.

Miss Parsons came over a few nights and worked in the open air. She sings and speaks with very great effect. I did a good deal of street work in this town, sometimes alone. Also held a cottage service or a Bible-reading each afternoon. We had some interesting meetings at seven o'clock in the morning.

Sunderland needs another and prolonged visit, but I think it would be wiser to begin at some smaller chapel. At the same time I am not sanguine of very great success, owing to the character of the people. Still 'thirty-fold' is better than nothing.

DISTRICT MEETING, *May 11-13.*

Spoke at S.S. Convention and at Home Missionary Meeting.

15th.—Visited my old circuit, Louth; preached in the market-place as of yore; found them depressed, but hope by the blessing of God some good was done, especially in the way of bracing up some of my old and tried friends who have suffered much.

20th.—Visited North Shields, and gave the new converts a word of counsel. Saturday, May 22, came to Houghton-le-Spring.

Mr. Middleton, a shipowner at West Hartlepool, who had intended going on the Continent for his holiday, came and spent two weeks with me. He is a fine singer, and did 'Sankey' work in grand style. This made the services very attractive. We found the church in a state of anxiety for

good being done. And here as elsewhere, travail meant birth. We had good success.

A Mr. Owen, also of West Hartlepool, gave us effective assistance, especially in the open air. Mr. Middleton plays well on the cornet, so we marched through the streets and had grand crowds to listen in the open air. With the help of the cornet, we missioned many of the surrounding places. God worked with us in a remarkable way, and we had great power in the chapel. I tried early meetings, and averaged more than a hundred at a short service at seven each morning.

Left this place with regret on June 14. The Lord blessed the work of His servants in Houghton. A mission band has since been formed.

Spent a few days, from Monday to Thursday, at Perkinsville in the Bensham Road Circuit, but was not apparently successful. Preached in the streets of some of the pit villages.

Sunday, June 20, being what is called Race Sunday, I joined our people on the Town Moor, Newcastle. The Gallowgate Mission had a wagon and harmonium, with several lady singers, so we had solos and duets and very attractive music. Crowds to listen. I spoke four times—thrice with our folks and once with a temperance mission.

Monday, June 21, we were visited by Edward Smith. He had a congregation of young people, and a grand time we had. Mr. Middleton led the singing with his cornet. Brother Smith preached with great power, and there was not a little good done.

Mr. T. H. Bainbridge took E. Smith and self to the Cheviots for a few days' fresh air and sport, and glorious it was. A beautiful memory it must always be.¹

¹ Concerning this remarkable holiday Mr. T. H. Bainbridge writes: 'Mr. Champness, Edward Smith, and myself were a party. We had a beautiful week together fishing, just at the foot of the Cheviots, at and about the village of Harbottle. One day, in particular, was the day on which we reached the head of the Coquet, where the river is just a little stream issuing from the foot of the Cheviots. The sunshine was golden, and we three were lying down in the sun, when Mr. Champness turned to us and said, "When the first of us dies, one survivor will write to the other

On Saturday, June 26, I went over to Easington Lane, in the Houghton-le-Spring Circuit. I stayed till Wednesday night, but failed to attract the people, so came away, and am now working among the 'residuum' of Newcastle.

It is getting near to the time when I shall leave for the Conference, so I wind up the record of my year's work with thanks to God for health. Have never missed a service for want of health. Have had much divine support, especially in time of defeat and difficulty. Have had quite as much success as I could have hoped for ; more than I deserved. It is a matter for great thankfulness that we have had an increase of members in the District ; but it must not be forgotten that we had reported last year a large number on trial.

I wish to put on record my appreciation of the labours of my valuable colleagues, Messrs. Cawood and Batey. The former is a man of remarkable powers, and has been made wonderfully useful. He is a fine singer, as well as a specially good visitor, so that he does not fail to get crowded chapels. He has seen a great number of conversions, and is universally popular.

May God bless us all three, and, if spared to work another year, give us still greater success !

THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

48 LOVAINE PLACE, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,

July 6, 1880.

Meanwhile Thomas Champness was coming into Connexional notice and it was during the Newcastle years that he made the following entry in his diary :

and say, 'Do you remember that wonderful day at the head of the Coquet ?' And, sure enough, when the news came to me of Edward Smith's death, I wrote at once to Mr. Champness and reminded him of the day. We spent the time each according to his own sweet will : Edward Smith fishing as if his very life depended on it ; Mr. Champness loitered about, thinking, making notes, and occasionally chaffing the two fishers ; but our talks in the evenings were times to be remembered. I think all three of us felt that we had very seldom spent a happier week of recreation.'

July 24, 1880.—Had my first battle in Conference ; — tried to coerce us into voting for him willy-nilly, but he did not carry his point. Lord, keep me from presumption as well as from cowardice.

In other ways it was made manifest that his influence was growing. He was requested to compile a mission hymn-book, and with the help of his 'home-staff' and his friend Mr. Lancelot Middleton, who edited the tunes, he got this successfully through the press. It was, I think, the first of a series of hymnals required by the 'Forward Movement' in Methodism, and did good service in its day. The making of it was 'holiday work' at home.

Reviewing this period, I am more than ever impressed with the great work accomplished by Mr. Champness among the large and scattered populations of the North. It is safe to say that he explored and exploited for his Master nearly every part of the great Newcastle District, going even where no Methodism, and very little religion of any kind, existed. From Berwick-on-Tweed and the outlying villages of the Cheviot country, to the coal-fields of Tyneside and the Wear Valley, and out away to the Carlisle border and the Roman Wall, as well as amongst the cultured and educated Methodists of the cities and towns, he laboured with the enthusiasm of the true missionary, and the skill of the practised 'fisher of men.' Signs and wonders attended his preaching of the word. Conscience-stricken men openly confessed their sins, and made restitution of ill-gotten gains ; infidels burned their books, and gamblers forsook their evil ways. In dreams and visions of the night the Lord prepared his way before him, as, in one instance, when

he and the superintendent of a certain circuit were going round a pit-village one morning 'with the handbell, shouting to the people the message of salvation,' a woman came out and told them how she had dreamed that she and her child were rescued from one who was dragging them towards a deep pit by two men like them in appearance, recognizing in the missionary and his friend the 'deliverers' of her dream; and at another place, a man who had long been under conviction of sin was, in a vision, directed to go to a certain place, where he would see one who would tell him words whereby he might be saved. He went, found the man of his dream in the pulpit, heard, believed, and was made happy in God.

The marks of an apostle were given to Thomas Champness. He was opposed, threatened, and 'well abused,' and truly the Lord rewarded him, so that multitudes were brought to know the power of the Holy Spirit in turning them to a better life.

So the happy years at 'Canny Newcastle' came to an end, and the hand of the Lord was upon His servant, leading him at last into his own country, to work among the crowded populations of the Lancashire cotton-towns.

We spent our final three months in the lovely Tynedale, making our home, through the kindness of a dear friend, in a furnished cottage at Corbridge. Hither the father came to us from his missions, and the intervals of time 'between whiles' were very pleasantly spent by the side of the clear-flowing river, or rambling about the enchanting country-side. What days they were! How he revelled in the glorious sunshine of that summer! What friendships were

enjoyed, and what times he had with his children ! Never will they lose the memory of that holiday, almost the last they ever had, as children, in the company of their father ; for years of stress and strain were coming upon us, though we knew it not.

CHAPTER XVII

DISTRICT MISSIONARY, BOLTON—'JOYFUL NEWS,' 1882-4

IN September, 1882, we removed from Newcastle to Bolton.

Few people know how easily it might have been otherwise. In May of that year the Foreign Missionary Secretaries very much wished Mr. Champness to go out to West Africa as General Superintendent and Chairman of the Lagos and Gold Coast Districts. He was willing, and even eager to go; but, in obedience to some mysterious impression, his wife could not feel able to let him go alone. She knew, as no one else could know, how far that eager missionary's spirit soared above the body's powers, and though she struggled against it, in spite of herself she felt directed into declaring that, if he went, she must go too. This was said to be impossible, and, after a time of intense trial to both, he decided that it was the divine pleasure he should remain in English work.

If Thomas Champness had gone to West Africa at that time, the whole course of his life would have been altered; he could scarcely have survived the climatic influences which even in this country were continually making their effects felt on his health. There might have been no *Joyful News*, and who knows how much else might have been lost to world-wide Methodism?

God was working out His own programme, and, looking back on that terribly trying episode, I can see how it was that, even after wrestling prayer and tears, I could not assent to his going alone to the deadly West Coast.

So we came to Bolton, and there, in his own Lancashire, Thomas Champness began another chapter in his life-work. Even then he knew not by what mysterious ways God was leading him on to his true calling. We found a comfortable house, made beautiful for us by the painstaking care of our stewards; and it was one of the links in the chain of Providence that Mr. T. T. Pearson, who had been Sunday-school superintendent at 'dear old George Street,' in Thomas Champness's young days, and to whom he had been at times somewhat of 'a trial,' should be the one to welcome the family of his former scholar to his town.

The duties of the missionary began at once. September was spent principally in Bolton, reconnoitring, and in open-air work. On Saturday, September 9, the first out-door service in front of Wesley Chapel, Bradshawgate, was held, and was 'a delightful time.' As men like to do that in which they excel, so Mr. Champness was wont to revel in open-air preaching, for which he prepared with even greater care than for the pulpit. He would say, 'When in the chapel I am sure of my congregation; but outside I *must* be interesting, or they will walk away.' This space in front of the chapel was well adapted for his purpose, and he never willingly failed to occupy it. Right on to November, in fine weather, he and his band of helpers would be there every Saturday evening, and his journal only once records, 'Too wet to have open-air.' One night, 'The police interfered with us at Bradshawgate; they did not,

however, stop me, but waited till I had done.' The fact was, the people pressed forward to hear the word of God, and those behind filled up and obstructed the narrow pavement, not being able to get within the gates.

The need of deep personal piety wherewith to meet the spiritual deadness and active wickedness of this great town was very deeply felt, and he writes on October 27 :

Am convinced that I shall make nothing out without more spiritual power. Lord, help me ! Only show me what to do, and I will do it at once. Walked round neighbourhood of Victoria and Fletcher Street chapels. Alas, what practical infidelity ! After a day of anxiety, and at times I might say anguish, on account of the small prospects for good, considering how much good work has been done in this town without apparent results, at family worship I opened on and read, in Isa. xxxv. 3, 'Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees.' How precious verses 5 and 6 are !

In such manner came the blessing, and in such strength he went forward to the work. His first mission was at Edgworth ; and after attending a Foreign Missionary deputation in Scotland with the President and others, he had a remarkable mission at Bury, which was greatly blessed to some of the chief families, many young people of promise deciding for God.

So passed the first three months, and then came the great surprise. Letters from the President (Rev. Charles Garrett) broke in upon the busy life, and the diary has the following significant entries :

Nov. 10.—Letter from President respecting a new paper, and asking me to go over and see him. Find they want me to edit !!!

25th.—Heard again from President respecting paper, and determined that I go in for it.

Dec. 2.—Letter from G. Osborn. I have to do the work of editing the paper. May it be a converting agency!

The need for a new paper was manifest enough. Methodism had only one, and, in the nature of things, the cause of evangelism could only find infrequent place in its pages. A large section of the people was thus unrepresented and unprovided for in the Methodist Press. Charles Garrett was a man of the people and, more than most Presidents, he knew the longings of the warm-hearted and enterprising of all classes; he longed to reach hearts that the Lord had touched, and to give an outlet to Christian fervour, as well as to attract and arouse Methodists to the powers and opportunities of the Christian life. He took wise and prudent men into his counsel, and the result was the correspondence with Thomas Champness.

The journal of November 27 has this note:

Have letters from Woolmer, the President, and one signed by Dr. Osborn, though written by Woolmer. Shall have to take to the paper. God bless me in it, and *help me never to write one bitter word!*

The italics are mine. How that prayer was answered, and that resolve kept, is well known.

Much had yet to be done before this great enterprise could be launched. In conversation he would say, 'There is bound to be opposition. The devil will never let us do this great thing and not try to hinder us.' True it is that the way seemed hedged up, and time after time it looked as though the whole scheme must fail. But Thomas Champness never doubted that it

would be carried through, and after the correspondence had continued for some time, and he was assured of God's good pleasure, he declared his willingness to accept the editorship, on two conditions: (1) That he would receive no salary; and (2) that he should have a free hand and full editorial responsibility. The President and his committee were ready to grant the second condition, but the first staggered them! No salary? No, not a penny. Thomas Champness would not be their paid servant. Then they must look out for some one who would. Very well, that they could do. He had never sought the position! So for a week or two other negotiations were carried on, but the right editor was not to be found, and again the President and Dr. Osborn pressed the matter on Mr. Champness. He should be allowed to have his own way, and they would put him into communication with an experienced man who would be sub-editor, and would consent to be paid. But in the first week of 1883 this gentleman wrote to say that he had another situation, and again there was a deadlock. Meanwhile the President and Mr. Champness had spent much fruitless time interviewing publishers, none of whom would undertake a halfpenny paper on terms that would make it pay any one but themselves! And as a result of the final disappointment with the proposed sub-editor, Mr. Garrett wrote to say, 'It is of no use. Let me know how much you are out of pocket, and I will pay you, and we must give up the project.'

But by this time Thomas Champness found it was not so easy to give up. He had laid the matter before the Lord, and was convinced of God's approval of the idea; and the more he prayed the less able he was to bear the

thought of giving up. With good Josiah Mee to join us, we three waited on God for direction, which speedily came. How this matter was laid on the heart of Mr. Champness, how the one idea entered into his private conversation, how he ventilated it in his letters, and thus enlisted the prayers and sympathy of his friends, and how he never doubted that if it were indeed the Lord's will it would certainly come to pass—all this stands out very clearly in my memory. Conversing together very early one morning about this time, we found ourselves again at the usual theme, the newspaper that could not be produced, and my husband said: 'You see I am not rich; if I had even a little capital, it would be different. However, I'm not worrying; if the Lord wants us to do it, He will make it possible.' And as we prayed the way was suddenly made so plain to us that we neither of us ever doubted that it was from the Lord. A small legacy from my father, the interest of which had been a sort of 'reserve fund' in our limited resources, was placed at the disposal of the new venture, and together we praised God and resolved to go on in His strength. My husband accepted my co-operation with great joy, and it was characteristic of him that he lost no time. 'We will begin at once,' he said, 'and you shall be my sub-editor.'

Then began a new query, 'Where shall we find a printer?' And here our friend Josiah Mee came in with a suggestion that at Bacup there was a rising young man who might undertake the matter; so in a few days Bacup was visited, and Mr. Champness returned with the tidings that he had found his printer. A few visits were made to Bacup, and by the end of January the details of printing and publishing were agreed to. On January 22 the journal says: 'Settled

to go on with the paper. The Lord of hosts is with us, and in His name we will set up our banners !'

In another month came the first issue of *Joyful News* ; Thomas Champness might well write of this event in his diary : '*Feb. 22.—Paper comes out to-day. One of the most memorable days of my life. Praise the Lord !*'

This was on February 22, 1883. I have a framed copy of that first number, and often look upon it with devout thankfulness. What care and pains were ours in preparation for that day ! It so happened that the date was preceded by a notable event in Manchester Methodism, no less than the last services ever held in the Oldham Street Chapel. The President preached to a very crowded congregation, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was for the last time administered within that sacred building, which was pulled down to make room for the Central Hall, since become even more nobly historic as a centre of Christian enterprise. Mr. Champness determined to make use of this occasion, and our first number had a picture of the interior of the chapel during the last service, with Charles Garrett in the pulpit. The picture was crude and ill-executed ; it cost us a lot of money, and much trouble and anxiety, for we were totally ignorant as to the business of procuring illustrations ; but it was a triumph in its way, for it adorned (!) one of the first halfpenny religious papers in the world, and absolutely the first illustrated Methodist paper in this country. In point of contents this first *Joyful News* was as good as any of its successors, and that is saying a great deal. Several leading evangelists contributed, among them Hugh Price Hughes, Edward Smith, B. Cawood, and others. From Shetland and Sittingbourne, and from Durham and Bristol, came

paragraphs of the sort of news we most desired, while the editor himself had been busy between whiles, and had certain breezy and attractive paragraphs ready for his first issue.

The enterprise was bound to succeed ; it was steeped in prayer ; every day from its beginning it was borne to the throne of the heavenly grace, and faith in God made the editorial work a happy task. The paper soon became widely known, and was very popular. At the outset certain friends volunteered to become guarantors against pecuniary losses, but they were not called upon, *for there were no losses*, initiatory expenses being borne by members of our own family. *Joyful News* was a great success, and from then till now has been its own best advertisement. In less than a month after its first issue the editor wrote in his journal: 'We have sold 30,000. Te Deum laudamus !'

The same faith and courage which helped him to begin carried the editor through every week. He realized his own dependence on the Almighty, and never doubted that God would be on his side. So he went cheerily on, preaching the gospel every day, enjoying the favour of God, and seeking the good of the people, using his paper as a veritable 'trumpet voice,' to proclaim the 'Joyful News' of salvation. His philosophy was founded on faith, and experience proved that the man who can say 'The Lord is the strength of my life' can also say, 'Of whom shall I be afraid?' He never expected to please everybody; he realized that he would probably make some enemies; but this did not daunt him, and it is well known that he was fearless where he had to stand for God and righteousness, though he endeavoured always to speak the truth in love.

No pains were spared to make the paper effective ; we had no office, and no 'staff' except our two selves. Housework, study, and the District Mission went on just the same, but every spare moment was utilized for *Joyful News*, and it became an absorbing occupation to provide for its incessant claims. Hundreds of letters, with copies of the early issues, were sent out to enlist the help of those who could write or 'report,' and very soon the Methodist people responded joyfully to our appeal for 'news from all quarters.' It was delightful to receive the glad tidings from earnest if humble workers, who were now provided with opportunities of making known what God was doing amongst them. This was one aspect of it ; the circulation was another. *Joyful News* went into all parts of this and many other lands, and in due time it became remunerative. It was a proud day when Mr. Champness was able to write his first cheque for £100 for the Worn-out Ministers' Fund, and to realize that the paper had given him the power to help Methodism as he had often longed to do.

'In labours more abundant' the years passed, and were fruitful in blessing. Three of these years we lived in the small house in Bradford Street, but during 1884 a new phase of work presented itself, for as the profits of *Joyful News* came in regularly, Thomas Champness found that, like John Wesley, he was 'growing rich unawares.' In answer to prayer the way was made plain to him how best to spend his newly earned wealth. I remember how gradually this 'door' opened. With his usual thoughtful consideration, he hesitated to bring more work upon his wife. I have referred to our custom of beginning the day—sometimes very early in the morning—with a cup of tea together, and a brief season

of prayer. I can recall many occasions when this became a sacrament to us both, and when my husband would say, 'Whichever of us is taken first, the other will remember these morning hours.' How wonderfully God blessed us at these times, giving us insight into His own will, and sending us forth to our work for Him, in the fullness of strength divinely given, only ourselves can know. The influence of those hallowed seasons can never be forgotten, now that one of us is left to pray and the other is in the very presence of the Hearer of prayer.

It was at one of these seasons that my husband lovingly unfolded his wish to do something more, and we decided to make a beginning by receiving one or two young men into our home for study and practice in evangelistic work.

We were spending the summer of 1884 at Helmsshore with our family, and to this temporary abode came the young man whom Mr. Champness described as 'My first student apprentice.' When we returned to winter quarters at Bolton this young man came with us, and was speedily joined by another. Our Bolton house being small, lodgings had to be taken for the men, but they boarded with us. This rather uncomfortable but seemingly necessary arrangement went on for a year, and by the end of that time new developments arose.

Meanwhile we had begun our Foreign Mission work, for the Rev. Owen Watkins employed a young Kaffir in South Africa at the expense of Mr. Champness, and in this way, 'not with observation,' and not under any specific title, the *Mission of Joyful News* had quietly begun. This by the way.

CHAPTER XVIII

BOLTON—'JOYFUL NEWS' MISSION, 1884-6

GOD blessed the work of the two young men who lived with us. They studied under Mr. Champness's direction, and they visited in the slums of the town and in the adjacent villages, preaching wherever and whenever opportunity offered.

It was remarkable that their first success should be in a great town, and not in the villages. There was a back street in Bolton with a name very unlike itself, 'Spring Gardens.' All signs of spring had long ago left the place; but the seed-plot was there for a spiritual garden, for in the dingy street was a mission room, and here, during the winter of 1885, under the preaching of one of our young men, a revival broke out, and the dull street became lively with the shouts and songs of ransomed and pardoned sinners.

It so happened that one of the best of Bolton Methodists, the late Mr. James Barlow, was interested in Spring Gardens, and when the news came to him of the wondrous work of God there, he went down to see it, and his heart rejoiced. He glorified God, and set himself to extend this new agency by his help and influence. He paid us a 'surprise visit' at our home one morning. The family had just risen from the breakfast table, the children were busy washing up the

breakfast things, or 'helping mother' in some other ways, and 'mother' herself was at 'Father's desk' correcting proofs for *Joyful News*. Mr. Barlow did not stay long that morning ; it was almost like coming into a hive of bees ; but he promised to come to tea, and did so, and never can we forget the homely nobility of this good and great man, as he took his seat among us, and listened to the story of our beginnings. How kind and fatherly he was, and how anxious to help ! He was a member of the Bolton District Mission Committee, and, mindful of its interests, he advocated an extension of Mr. Champness's term to a fourth year. He was also an ardent friend of evangelism, and he could see that the kind of work that had converted Spring Gardens would bless other needy places. As he heard of the longing that Mr. Champness had to see evangelists more largely employed and properly trained by the Methodist Church, the heart of this good man glowed within him, and he became enthusiastic in declaring that we must remove to a larger house at once, and Mr. Champness must begin this work in Bolton, while continuing his labours as District Missionary. The one work, he said, would help the other.

In the meantime, Mr. Champness had used *Joyful News* as a means of ventilating his ideas, and early in 1885 he wrote an article making the hazardous suggestion that as the Theological Colleges were not by any means full, one of them should be utilized to give to local preachers and evangelists short terms of instruction and training. It says something for the influence of the paper that such a suggestion met with speedy notice, for the article in question was followed by one from no less a person than Mr. R. W. Perks,

who ably discussed the editor's proposal, the article winding up with this sentence :

The pulpit standard of local preachers, exhorters, and Lay evangelists is a subject Methodists cannot afford to ignore. Of the 20,000 sermons preached every Sunday in the chapels of Methodism, more than 15,000 are delivered by lay preachers. Any man who can help to make the preaching battalions of Methodism more accomplished and successful soldiers, deserves the thanks of his Church and his country.—ROBERT W. PERKS.

Later on Mr. Champness recurred to the subject ; in an article on 'Who is to train the Lay Evangelists of Methodism ?' he tells his readers that

At the last General Meeting of the Theological Institution Committee, a letter on this subject, written by the editor of *Joyful News*, was read, and after some conversation, the following resolution was adopted :

That while the Committee deeply sympathizes with the necessity of making our lay agents as efficient as possible, it be represented to Mr. Champness that the question properly belongs to the Home Mission Department.

Mr. Champness goes on to say :

Some of our readers may be tempted to think that this is a polite way of shelving the question, but we can assure them that it is not so. It is thought that the Home Missionary Department are the right people to undertake the duty. We are not sure about it, and are not very particular, if only the thing is done. Certainly the matter is not shelved ; it cannot be so treated. The question is too serious, and is sure to come on again, until something has been accomplished worthy of Methodism.

'We venture to suggest that so important a work as this should not be left to private enterprise. Doubtless, if the

Conference does not take the matter up, some one else will do so ; but no man of himself should be entrusted with the responsibility, or allowed the power which a successful overcoming of the difficulty would put into his hands.

At the end of May, 1885, the matter had so far impressed itself on Mr. Champness's mind as to cause him to write this paragraph in *Joyful News* :

TRAINING LAY EVANGELISTS

We are glad to know that this subject is likely to come up before the Conference, several of the District Meetings having sent up a suggestion something like the following :

'That, considering the pressing need of the villages, this District asks the Conference to look at the question of training Lay Evangelists, and to report to the next Conference.'

In the meantime, the Editor of this paper means to do something himself. During the past year, he has had some young men working under his eye, and the success he has met with has encouraged him to go on in the same direction till the Connexion takes the matter up. We believe so important a movement should not be left to private enterprise, but it will be well to do something in a small way until Methodism is ready to undertake something on a scale worthy of herself.

The way forward was thus made plain, and Mr. Barlow's offer of financial help was almost simultaneous with gifts from other sources, which came in unasked, and were duly acknowledged in *Joyful News*. I wish to say this, so as to make it clear that the new movement was neither hasty nor ill-considered, neither the result of impulse nor a struggle for the pre-eminence. Thomas Champness foresaw how great a power, as well as how large a responsibility, awaited the man

who would take up such a work, and his modest resolve 'to do something until Methodism was ready' commended itself to the Lord's stewards in a way that proved the great and urgent need of the undertaking.

It was in June, 1885, that we took a larger house, and through the hot days of that summer we worked hard in removing to 118 Manchester Road, Bolton; there the young men who came to us as Christian workers were first called '*Joyful News Evangelists*,' and there the *Joyful News Mission* was founded. How deeply the Founder felt the responsible nature of the enterprise may be judged from the entries in his journal at this time :

Aug. 13.—We must have a new crusade. 'The villages for Christ' must be our cry. We must have the local preachers fresh furnished for the work. Lord, let every man in every place be freshly anointed! *God bless these men who are coming to me!* The first of them begins his work in Manchester to-day. He wanted to come here, and I could not take him, because the house is not ready, and he will be a few weeks with Mr. Smart. *Lord, bless Reed, and give us a 'hansel.'* Lord, this is the first day of one of my village men being under my control: let it be a beginning, a day of hope for Methodism!

15th.—Am much impressed about the villages. If they are to be saved from the priest, we must combine as we never have done. Ministers alone cannot do it. They ought to be chief pastors, like the old 'Episcopi,' but the evangelist must be a young man, without a home, except among those who love him for his work's sake. Lord, am I to be honoured in working out the plan? If so, then raise me up men and money. I can see the plan of action, but have not the means. Honour Methodism as Thou didst honour John Wesley! And if I am not to be the agent, show me; and if Thou hast chosen me, make it plain, as Thou didst with Thy anointed ones beforetime!

About this date honour of another kind came to him ; for at the Conference of that year, when he was not present, he was elected a member of the Legal Hundred.

July 22.—On my way saw in the papers that I am elected to the Hundred. Lord, what am I, and what is my father's house ? Lord, help me to be helpful !

This honour he accepted as a call to further service, and considered it always as a responsibility ; he was not placed there to be a 'dummy' by any means ; and his after history proved that he made himself, or rather God made him, a power in the Parliament of Methodism. He at once went down to Newcastle-on-Tyne, and took his seat among the 'Fathers and Brethren,' ever afterwards taking the greatest possible interest in the doings of the Conference, and using his voice and vote right through the nineteen years following, as one valiant for the truth, who indeed 'never turned his back,' never swerved from his known duty, and was always loyal to the best interests of Methodism and the commands of God.

Returning from Conference in August, he plunged right into his work, and, accompanied by 'Owd Mo,' then newly become his helper, held open-air and other services right through the hottest month. With September came the evangelists, and the rest of the year was filled with work. It was a busy time ; there were many coming and going, and our house was very full. We soon found that it was too small for our needs, but for the one year we were content to 'make it do,' for it was ever Mr. Champness's wish to go slowly, rather than to decide in haste on a great advance. He was wont to

say, 'He that believeth shall not make haste'; God was sure to open the way when it was right for us to make a move. So all diligently the winter's work of the Bolton District was done, the evangelists helping in some of the places. Thus they proved their calling by sharing in the work. Some of the first comers among them were soon sent out to supply the urgent demands of the circuits.

In October Mr. Champness had four men at work, with eight or ten in training.

In *Joyful News* he wrote: 'It was not till we began to send out the men that we knew how much they were needed. I find we have not begun a moment too soon, for there is great and pressing need for immediate action.'

In a letter to a friend, he says: 'I feel that the most useful part of my life is just beginning.'

As his District work often called him away from home, it became needful to get some help in the oversight of the studies of the men, and the Rev. J. Finne-more and other ministers kindly helped to make the workers effective by means of correspondence classes.

All this time *Joyful News* was winning its way, and gradually increasing in power. The paper was read in many unexpected quarters, and the editor was fearless in his utterances, so that what he wrote echoed and re-echoed throughout Methodism. Among other things, Foreign Missions were referred to, and certain paragraphs written on the subject of missionary literature. The editor pleaded earnestly that—

The New Year may in some way bring an improvement, and that instead of the bilious-looking thing called *Missionary Notices*, we may see something with a title that

describes the work done. Why should we not have *News from Afar*, or *Tidings from the Mission Field*, instead of something that suggests dullness and dreariness of the most abject character?

He lived to see the great improvement, and to rejoice over the change in the literature, as well as some of the methods, of the Foreign Missionary Society; but before that happy time he had many a battle to fight and many a blow to give and take. In *Joyful News* he realized that he possessed a great power, and though he might use strong words, he never wrote bitterly or unkindly of any one. He might 'provoke,' but it was after apostolic fashion, to 'love and good works.'

At this time, 1885-6, there were signs of new life all over Methodism. The building and opening of the Manchester Central Hall, and the rapid success of the missions there and in London, marked the rise of the 'Forward Movement,' which has never ceased, while the cause of Home Missions may date its present exceptional popularity from this period in Methodist history. The great changes that have come to British Methodism during the last twenty years bear witness to the new régime which came in about the time when *Joyful News* and its Mission began to make themselves felt in town and country; and it is well to recollect that Thomas Champness, in beginning his work, did so in harmony with the wishes of the Home Missionary Committee, of which he was an influential member.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CALL TO ROCHDALE—‘NEW CRUSE,’ 1886

MEANWHILE, what was to be the future of this new Mission, and where was it to be housed when the extra year at Bolton came to an end? These questions were taken to the Lord in prayer, and never was the faith which said ‘We shall be guided,’ more conspicuously or mysteriously honoured than in the way we were directed at this time.

Early in November, 1885, there came two gentlemen from Rochdale to see Mr. Champness. They were in distress, for an unaccountable trouble had come upon their circuit. The brotherly discipline of Methodism being strict and effectual, it is, happily, only very rarely that a minister of our Church brings public disgrace on the Christian name. But in this case there had been deception and wickedness, that resulted in financial ruin to the confiding people who had entrusted their savings to their minister and had been defrauded by him. The unhappy man had absconded, and these gentlemen came in their distress and perplexity to seek the counsel of Mr. Champness, as one on whom they could rely. The result of this visit was that Mr. Champness himself volunteered to go to Rochdale Wesley Circuit at the following Conference, and do what he could to counteract the evil wrought by the

defaulting minister. The stewards eagerly accepted his offer, and thus our future was settled.

During the winter, missions held at Bacup, Littleborough, &c., took Mr. Champness near Rochdale, so that he could pay cheering visits to the circuit, and be on the look-out for a suitable house. It was realized that the usual 'preacher's house' would not do for our large family, and that the *Joyful News* Mission must provide for its own needs. This was arranged, and we were providentially guided to a house that appeared suitably large, was conveniently near the chapel, and of moderate rent. Much time and money were spent in renovating, and to Cambridge House we removed in August, 1886, and there we resided for three years.

The four years at Bolton had been very happily spent in the kind of work Thomas Champness loved. He would willingly have gone to a third District appointment, but for the urgent need of Rochdale at this time, and the new responsibilities of his work in training evangelists. The way opened out before him, and he made his plans according to what he believed to be the will of God.

But in May, 1886, before our actual migration to Rochdale, he was invited to speak at the Home Missionary Meeting in London, on the subject of 'Village Methodism.' With a view to publishing this speech, a shorthand writer had been engaged to report, but some days after the meeting he wrote to say that he had found himself quite unable to 'follow' the speaker. (This, by the way, was a common experience of reporters, who not seldom were so carried away with enthusiasm as they listened to his burning words that

they 'lost their heads' and the 'thread' of the speech at the same time.) A friend who was present, however, managed to reproduce the address from memory, and the little book entitled *Old Salt in a New Cruse* was printed and published. I have just been reading it again, and here give some paragraphs which helped much to make the Mission beloved and believed in. Many will recognize in parts of this speech the utterances of a prophet. The booklet epitomizes the history of his work up to that time.

Mr. Champness said :

My text is

' VILLAGE METHODISM '

When Mr. M'Aulay wrote and asked me to come and speak here, he said, ' You will have the ear of the Connexion, and will be able to make your scheme widely known.' I felt this was so, and I thank the Home Missionary Department. ' Village Methodism ! ' I am glad to think that this scheme of mine, about which I am to tell you, was first thought of in busy Lancashire. *That which is to bless the dwellers in quiet villages was born among the shuttles and spindles of our factory towns* in the Bolton District. All honour to our noble-hearted Lancashire laymen, who have, by their help and sympathy, made it possible for me to begin this work.

We cannot afford to lose the agricultural labourer from Methodism ; least of all in these days, when the villages are growing in importance. I am no politician, but I believe the man who wears the smock-frock is destined to determine the future of this country ; at all events, he will settle, in a great degree, who shall sit at the right hand of the Speaker. I have known these people, have lived among them ; and I say, people may sneer at the farm labourer, and call him ' Hodge,' and other hard names, but he is the *nicest man in the world !* He is a splendid fellow, and whether he holds a plough-handle

or a bayonet, he is bad to stop. It is these men that have made England famous, and the name of British soldier to be everywhere respected. I know what I am talking about. I have been in all sorts of circuits since I became a Methodist preacher—some of the worst, and some of the best, and I am not quite sure where I was the happiest ; for the people in the poor circuits knew when they heard a good sermon, and I am not sure the others always did.

I know something of what the village Methodist has to put up with, something of the tyranny he has to suffer. I have just been visiting a strong village circuit, where the Rev. Ecclesiastical Boycott has no chance ; Methodism is strong there, and that gentleman has to be quiet ; but in some places the poor man knows that if he sends his boy to the Methodist Sunday school, there is no place for him at the parish day school, and his little girl is told that she must not expect to have a prize or go to the gala if she dares to go to the Methodist chapel. I have been in places where I have been looked at by these gentlemen—I, an honest man, who owe no man anything—as if I were a poacher with a hare in my coat pocket ! I have not words to express my indignation at some things which I know. I should like to make all these gentlemen know that we will not submit to the tyranny of a clerical Trade Union. By the grace of God, I will never rest as long as I live, until I make the history of the English people better reading for future generations !

Some people say, 'Hadn't you better look after the old circuits ?' I reply, 'So we do,' but one way to brighten up a fire is to put on new fuel. *I believe not only in the poker that stirs everything up, but the shovel that puts on more coal.* That is the way to strengthen the cause of God in our circuits. I believe the task God has given me is to increase soon, and very largely, the number of hard-working agents on Methodist ground, and wherever it is possible to find a man fit for evangelistic work, to employ him, not as a minister, to administer Sacraments, not to meet classes, but to bring men to Christ. What is the reason why so many of our good men

have gone into the Salvation Army? Some of the best men General Booth has, we ought to have had.

It is very plain to be seen that, if the villages are to be evangelized by us, we must largely increase the number of evangelists. We cannot increase the number of ministers. If we do, we shall not be able to pay our way; but, if the work is to be done, we must have pioneers, who will labour in the outlying villages according to their talents, and according to the circumstances of the place they visit.

I would have you bear in mind that *these men will cost £200 a year each less than a minister.* I will tell you, now, that so much has this been on my mind that, some years ago, I had thought of leaving the ministry. I had no thought of leaving Methodism. No! 'If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning.' But it had been in my thoughts to leave the ministry, and devote myself to this work. I thought I had earned the right to ask my brethren to let me come into their circuits, and do what I could for the villages. But just about that time the Lord put it into our hearts to start our little paper, and it brought us in some money; so that it was given to me to be able to help Methodism. Nobody but the Lord knows the history of all that money, but there are a number of little children who would have been hungry but for it. . . .

Out of this grew my scheme for training men to work in villages and neglected places, and we began with two men; one big one, and one little one.

Then he told the story of Spring Gardens (see p. 219).

At Conference, 1885, the Bolton District Committee procured my staying a year longer, so that I might fairly begin. Good James Barlow said, 'I'll come and have tea with you, and we will talk it over.' He did so, and we went into committee on the subject (he, and I, and the Missis). We decided to take a larger house, and make a start. Before that time, my friend Thorp Taylor (God bless him!) sent me the first five-pound note (I mean to make that five-pound note

historic), and Copson Garratt (of London, here) another—we are all one, town and country. ‘Then,’ said Mr. Barlow, ‘I will guarantee help.’ And he did so, and got friends to give to the fund, so that £150 was placed in the bank to my credit.

Then we began, in August last, and I have now fifteen men, and some of them are very good men indeed. They are not parasites; they are men who can earn a living anywhere. If a man cannot get his living at his trade, whether he be a ploughman, a blacksmith, or a schoolmaster, it is no use his coming to me. I had a letter from one of that sort to-day, and if the gentleman is in this meeting, he may note what I say, and save me the expense of a postage-stamp. Do you think the Lord Jesus would have called Peter, James, and John to be fishers of men if they had not been good fishermen, and known how to catch fish? Not He! He knew better than that. And every one of my men is a real good man for the work. Of course they vary in many ways; they are not all alike. I have one man who is a very fine fellow; he has an impediment in his speech, but the Lord has wonderfully blessed him, and he is a fluent speaker, does not stammer in public, but preaches so that men and women are converted under the word. Then I have another who was a collier; was converted at Farnworth about five years ago. They call him ‘Owd Mo’—he has been called that ever since he was a little child, because he was so knowing. He was a well-known character in all those parts—a dog-runner, a fighting, swearing, drinking, gambling man; but good Mr. Crompton of Farnworth, and his helpers, led him to Jesus, persuaded him to go with them to chapel, and after a time of seeking, ‘Mo’ found the Saviour, and became a happy Christian. From his helping in evangelistic work now and then, I made his acquaintance, and we became interested in him. He used to work in the pit, and of course his life was in continual jeopardy; and though he was a very useful man in Christian work, he had to earn his living at winning coal. I had been wishing I could see my way, when one day my wife said to

me, 'I cannot get Moses out of my mind. Supposing he was to get killed in the pit, we should never forgive ourselves that we hadn't employed him!' So I said we would try it, and we took him; and I tell you, he can get hold of the rough Lancashire men as none of the rest can—you see he speaks their dialect, talks to them in their native Doric (oh, how I love it, and how I love to talk in it when I can find folk wise enough to understand it!). I tell Moses that when he can speak the English language I shall send him out of Lancashire. But he is doing good work, is a man of faith and prayer, and God is with him. . . .

Of course, we have difficulties, and I have known what it was to be in straits. The other day, for instance, I was in trouble. Some money of my own, which was due, had not been paid in, and I was every day expecting a heavy bill for printing and pictures, and I had been paying out largely. I went off to preach with a heavy heart. These men get no wages; they know when they come they will have to rough it—to clean their own boots, dig the garden, chop wood, carry coal, go errands, do what I tell them to do; and they are glad to do all this. I rig them in clothes, give them a sovereign in their pocket, and when it is gone they must account to me for it, and then they have another. Still they keep coming. Well, as I was saying, we were at the far end; and I went to my work with a heavy heart. On the Sunday morning I preached about the barrel of meal (eh, what a time I had!). The little children stood up in the gallery to see me scrape that barrel. When the service was over, one of our people came to me and said, 'Oh, what a glorious time!' 'Aye,' said I, 'I've been preaching to the man in the pulpit; I am six pounds wrong at the bank.' Then I told my wife. I said, 'My dear, the Lord knows just what we want; it is His work, and every halfpenny I have is His; and if He means to bless this work He will stand by us. Now,' said I, 'I am going to pray, and after that I shall expect the money; every letter I open I shall expect to find the money.' Well, I left home on the Tuesday night, and I said, 'You need not send

to-morrow's letters unless there is something important, then you can wire.' 'What do you call important?' says she. 'Oh, if anybody sends me any money.' 'But,' said the wife, 'People are always sending shillings, half-crowns, or a few stamps.' 'Oh,' I said, 'if £100 or £200 comes, then wire.' Well, I kept praying, and looking to God; bless you, I knew He would help; and, sure enough, on Thursday morning about ten o'clock, the boy with that yellow envelope came. My wife had wired: 'Thomas Cook says Dr. Wood promises you £100.' John Wesley would have put that in *The Arminian Magazine*! Well, after that, the tide turned, the money kept coming in, and we have never 'looked behind us' since. And now I mean to go on, and if you give me any money, remember I am a Home Missionary. These Home Missionary people, Mr. M'Aulay and his colleagues, have stood by me, and they wanted me to come and tell you my story, and now I have told it; and as long as the Lord gives me anything, time, money, or strength, it shall all be spent in winning the villages for Him. I rejoice greatly that so many of you are trying to save London, and I pray God to bless every one of you; but my work is Village Methodism, and it shall always be so. You must remember that there is a stream of human life always running out of the villages into London and our other great towns, and if you would make that stream pure, you must go right to the source of it. You remember how Elisha did. He took a *new cruse*, and put salt in it, and he took it to the spring of the waters, and cast it in, and the waters were healed. That is what I want to do. I want to take my new cruse, and in it to carry the gospel to the man who wears the smock-frock. Do not look doubtfully on it because it *is* new; the *old* salt will be there, and by God's grace, whether the cruse is little or big, I shall put all I have in it, in the hope that the blessing of God will be upon it to the healing of the villages.

CHAPTER XX

ROCHDALE (WESLEY), 1886-9

THE Conference of 1886 was remarkable for the increased interest in Home Mission work. Among the newly ordained ministers were two Connexional Evangelists—the Revs. Thomas Cook and Thomas Waugh, and the newest enterprise of the Connexion, the designation of the Revs. Hugh Price Hughes and Mark Guy Pearse to the proposed West London Mission, coincided with the election of James Ernest Clapham to the Home Mission Secretariat. With all this, Village Methodism was also considered, and the man who had already become known as ‘the lover of the villages’ was asked to tell his experiences to the Conference. He had a good time, and, referring to it in his diary, he says :

Aug. 2.—On this day I was asked to speak in Conference on my scheme. The Lord be praised that it has grown so that the brethren wished to hear what I have to say.

In a letter home, he writes :

We had a grand talk anent the villages. I would not take a thousand pounds for the results of that conversation !

It was seed-time, then ; the harvests are now being reaped—for the life-work of Hugh Price Hughes and Thomas Champness is being carried forward and on-

ward, and the cause of Home Missions is to-day stronger than it has ever been.

It was an historic and epoch-making Conference, and the Acts of the Apostles of modern Methodism, whenever written, must include it as an interesting chapter. The Holy Spirit still guides the counsels of His servants, and leads them on to fresh enterprises for the coming of the kingdom of God.

Mr. Champness returned from London with the prospect of more work for himself and more need for his workers. The new Home at Rochdale was the centre of increasing activities, and the number of the men soon rose to twenty-seven, many of whom were, however, working away in circuits far from Rochdale. In September we had a *Joyful News* Convention, the first and last of its kind, as such a gathering, though delightful enough, was too costly to be repeated. For once, however, it was well to have it, and it served the purpose of accentuating and strengthening the 'family feeling' which 'was characteristic of *Joyful News* Home. It was never a 'college' nor an 'institution,' but always a 'home'; or, as Thomas Champness described it, 'a home which is a school as well.'

With all this activity Thomas Champness remembered that he was Superintendent of a circuit specially needing pastoral care and sympathy. He put his vehement energy into the circuit work, preaching, pastorizing, reorganizing, and cheering the discouraged and distressed people, for by his own love for them he was able to do more than would have seemed possible.

He found the Wesley Circuit down-hearted and despondent; he brought to it a blithe and cheerful hopefulness, and a resolute faith in God; and, nobly

assisted by his colleague, the Rev. G. King Pryor, he lifted it from the Slough of Despond, so that the ministers had the joy of seeing the work of God prosper, and the circuit become once more honoured and respected. The evangelists were everywhere welcomed; they visited the people, and preached in all the villages, as well as in the streets of the towns, and in many ways the presence of the young men brought good cheer to the hearts of those who had been ashamed and afflicted. The Rochdale Wesley Circuit had its days of blessing at that time, and the three years of holy and happy service there were good to look back upon.

The reward of his courage and faith came to Thomas Champness in the love of the people, and their gratitude filled his heart with joy. How proud and pleased he was, when, one day, he brought home a sovereign, and laid it before me, saying, 'Here is what I have had given me for our work by —, who said, "That's for ye! Yo've made me believe i' praichers agean."' That golden coin was a token of appreciation worth many times its weight in gold!

Joyful News and its Mission went on, simultaneously not only with circuit work, but with much travelling and preaching up and down the country. It was and always will remain a marvel how Mr. Champness could get so much done. Of course he had no idle days, and few leisure hours. He was really doing the work of three or four men, and it is not surprising that at intervals his health gave way. For some months after going to Rochdale he conducted the whole of his correspondence himself, rising early and working late at his letters, away in missions and

circuits, with a pen in his hand at every available moment—in intervals of teaching, pastorizing, and preaching. This could not go on; in the spring he found it necessary to have a secretary so as to relieve the strain, for the manifold activities of Mr. Champness's life seemed to increase every day. Even holidays were full of work. I recollect one brief but happy holiday (so-called) in the autumn of 1886, lasting from Monday till Friday, and including two days' attendance, with addresses, at a Conference at Dundee, and a lecture at Blairgowrie, leaving one day for 'concentrated enjoyment' and 'active laziness' in Edinburgh on the way home. Always at work, always happy, and, even when pressed down with private and family responsibilities not to be spoken of here, ever cheerful and trustful, he lived a true hero's life, and set a glorious example of Christian faith and courage—for those years were times of stress and storm.

More than once Thomas Champness felt moved to expose, in the columns of his paper, abuses and wrongs which were threatening the Church he loved. *Joyful News* was a powerful weapon in his hands; that he should use it effectively was to be expected, but that he should use it so carefully as not to offend some could scarcely be avoided.

The late Sir Wemyss Reid, when he went to Leeds to be the editor of *The Leeds Mercury*, resolved that he would so conduct his paper as to make no enemies. This he found to be impossible; and, as the result of experience, he afterwards declared his conviction respecting this in very strong words:

Human nature being what it is, it seems impossible for a man to take a clear and independent line on great questions



**THOMAS CHAMPNESS: SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER OF WESLEY CIRCUIT,
ROCHDALE, AND HEAD OF 'JOYFUL NEWS' MISSION**

without at times giving offence to others, who may be just as honest and conscientious as himself. . . . I am convinced that a public man who has absolutely no enemies must be a person who has deliberately shirked his duties and stifled his conscience.¹

Thomas Champness was not likely to do either of these things; he knew that the editor who is worthy of his position must be prepared to give and take the blows that fall to the lot of a fighter. If he and Wemyss Reid, during the time when they both lived in Leeds, had ever become acquainted with each other, they would have found that they had much in common in their fearless stand against the evils of their day.

He was a fighting man; and when he saw wrongdoing, or what he deemed such, he struck, and struck hard. Yet he held himself in leash, and even when he said strong things he said them moderately and calmly; but having said, he adhered to his utterances, and was never known to 'eat his words.'

In this intrepid spirit he wrote, from time to time, articles in *Joyful News*, examples of plain, faithful, and forceful English, words which were as 'goads' indeed, but bore with them no bitterness; and though they might give pain, they were as spurs rather than spears. For example, at the Conference of 1888, exception was taken to an article he had written in *Joyful News* entitled 'Mistletoe Ministers,' in which, under the figure of that beautiful but useless parasitic plant, he described the minister who was said to be 'ornamental, but not useful, who, every one knows, will do no good, if he does no harm.' Then followed the suggestion that 'such a

¹ *Autobiography of Sir Wemyss Reid*, p. 162.

brother should retire into some more private position instead of continuing to be a parasite, who, however picturesque, is of no use to the body which supports him.' Of course there was a storm; the article in question was read from the platform at the Conference, evoking cries of 'Shame,' and much discussion. But Thomas Champness never flinched, and in his own irrepressible way replied through the columns of his paper the next week :

Many of our readers will not need telling that the article we wrote, entitled 'Mistletoe Ministers,' was fiercely criticized in the Conference. None of those who cried 'Shame' when the article was read in the Conference denied the truth of it. The existence of parasites was neither doubted nor denied; but we are told that we ought to have spoken to the Conference rather than to the people.

We are reminded of what was said to the saintly Richard Baxter when he printed his famous sermon to ministers. He was told that he ought not to have published the sermon in English, but Latin, so that the common people could not read it. He retaliated by saying, 'When you sin in Latin I will reprove you in Latin, but when you sin in English I will reprove you in English.' We say that when the men of whom we complained neglect their duty in Conference only, then we will speak of them in Conference only; but as their circuits show the manner of man who has dwelt there, and as their incompetence is open to the world, we shall have something to say by means of the newspaper.

We are glad at heart that we were led to write the article which has paved the way to one of the greatest reforms Methodism has attempted. In the Pastoral Address the ministers have bravely, and in outspoken manner, reproved the sins of those who, though endowed with worldly goods, need the gold tried in the fire, spoken of in Rev. iii. 18. But

we believe the action of the Conference in dealing with some of its incompetent men will in itself be a sermon the Methodist Societies will lay to heart.

We do not complain of the hard words which were spoken of us. Why should we? The brethren who said them were acting within their rights. No man should write and print an article like the one headed 'Mistletoe Ministers' who was unwilling to stand by what he said and take the consequences without a murmur. We shall have some other things to say some of these days, and we will not go behind a wall to say them, but then, as now, sign the name of

THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

That he loved the brotherhood is well known ; but he desired the purity and efficiency of the Christian ministry, and was prepared to advocate it at all costs. He realized his power, and was ready to use it in the cause of righteousness and truth. Yet he was very sensitive in respect of his work, and felt keenly the slights put upon him by some who failed to recognize the chivalry of his eager projects. To his pocket-book for 1888 he confided this paragraph, writing it on a separate page, and carefully pointing it out as 'something that must be printed by-and-by':

I wish to say, so that it may be read some day after I am gone, that I am feeling very much the conduct of the ministers. I have to smart for this effort we are making to train men to do the work which some ministers cannot do and will not do. But the work of God must be done, and if I can raise up men to do it, I shall, whatever it costs me. It would be the easiest for me to leave the ministry altogether, and become a layman again, but that looks like cowardice. But God knows I would do it if it would serve Him the best. However, the ecclesiastic never did like to see any one else do his work better than he did, and would rather it were left undone. What am I, that I should shun the cross? 'Who for the joy that was set before

Him.' I have a joy set before *me*, and I shall win it—the joy of seeing the work well done, and in the villages of England and Africa hundreds of men doing the work of God on *Joyful News* lines.

At the same time he was cheered by the support of the best men of Methodism, and the growing love of the people was to him a token of the still more precious favour and lovingkindness of God. Willing, nay, even eager to bear the cross, he was happy to his heart's core, and, like the bird that sings in the storm, he kept a blithe spirit amidst all the troubles of that time.

It was in these years that he began to suffer so terribly from suppressed gout, far worse to bear than even excruciating pain; the misery that enveloped his whole frame could scarcely be described, and the depression was hardly to be borne. Yet he was so cheerful that few even of his nearest friends guessed how much he had to bear.

In the autumn of 1887 the President, the Rev. John Walton, came to Rochdale, and, seeing how great was the pressure on Mr. Champness, offered him a young man from the 'list of reserve' as assistant. This was a great help, especially in view of the increased work of the Mission. For this was the time when a new enthusiasm filled our lives with fresh responsibilities.

Deeply anxious to make the best use of men and money, Thomas Champness had for a long time wished he could help the work of Foreign Missions, and had prayed that God would show him what to do. The thought of the perishing heathen, and the feeling that he ought to take some steps to meet the lack of workers on the mission field, pressed upon him day and night, and at length, in answer to his prayer for guidance, he

was led to make known his desires through the paper. One immediate result was the inflow of money for this special purpose ; and almost at the same time men from the ranks of *Joyful News* evangelists offered themselves for service abroad. The pioneers of this missionary corps were David Pilgrim and George E. Chisnall, whom we sent to Zululand in 1887. This is not the place to tell their most romantic and adventurous history, or to give in detail the story of the *Joyful News* missionaries who successively went forth to the work in India, Ceylon, China, Africa, and the South Sea Islands ; and I only mention it here to emphasize the fact that the *Joyful News* Mission was in its most formative stage just when the claims of Mr. Champness's circuit were pressing on his health and powers. It was more than once proposed that Mr. Champness should be set apart for the Mission, but he would not hear of it, and the 'Wesley' people being of the same mind, he remained at his post as Superintendent until 1889, when Conference, by a cordial vote, relieved him from the itinerancy, and separated him for the work to which his life had been steadily tending for many years.

From its small beginnings in Bolton the *Joyful News* Mission had spread into a great movement, and in 1889 we numbered 89 evangelists, 18 of whom were working as missionaries beyond the seas (besides three native agents, one in Spain, one in India, and one in China).

Twenty of the men were in residence at the Home, which was sadly overcrowded, so that we had to face the question once more, How was this Mission to be provided with a suitable home ?

Prayer was made for the divine guidance, and soon

the answer came which settled our future. Just outside the town stood (and still stands) Castleton Hall, an old-fashioned house, towards which, as he viewed it from passing trains, Mr. Champness had often cast a longing eye. Roomy and convenient, with garden and lawns around, a little retired from yet near to the high road, this house, which fell vacant just when we were on the look-out, proved to be exactly what we wanted; we secured it on lease, and it became our *Joyful News Home*.

Residence in Rochdale enabled Mr. Champness to continue the work of his Book Dépôt, already established in the town; for, though it might have been possible to begin again somewhere else, it was well that the cloud of God's providence 'rested' for a time. There is a very proper Methodist rule that the ministers shall not be dependent for their livelihood on business, but be free for the work of the pastorate and the pulpit. At the same time, John Wesley desired all his preachers to sell books, and himself carried books in his saddle-bags all over the land. His successors have had, until recent years, the monopoly, and even now have the privilege, of selling certain publications of the Society to their people; while the Conference Office, or Book-Room, as it was formerly called, has always been under the management of a minister, whose office of 'Book Steward' is one of the most honourable posts in the Connexion. So, when, on coming to Rochdale, Mr. Champness found the preacher's house empty and at his disposal, he was acting Methodistically in using that house as a dépôt for the sale and distribution of good literature. The then Book Steward, the Rev. Theophilus Woolmer, was of that opinion, for he sent down a wire-

blind for the front window, inscribed *Joyful News and Wesleyan Book Dépôt*. Thus, officially authorized, and also advertised throughout Methodism through *Joyful News*, the Book Dépôt became well known and prosperous. By the end of the three years' term of his ministry in the Wesley Circuit, Mr. Champness was able to free the Connexion from the cost of his maintenance by drawing his income from the profits of the Book Dépôt and *Joyful News*; and from this time forward he took no stipend, but depended for the support of himself and his family on the results of his own enterprise in the publication and sale of good literature. A fixed sum was paid yearly to the funds of the *Joyful News* Mission for board and lodging; and the balance of profits, after all personal and family expenses were met, went direct into the same funds. Thus he was for many years one of the largest and most regular subscribers to his own Mission.

There is a deep interest attaching to all the circumstances by which Mr. Champness was led to fix his home in the town to which he came in response to the cry of distress. I have heard him say that in the painful story of the dishonoured church and suffering people at Rochdale he heard the voice of the Lord, and obeying, he found a constant assurance that his way would be made plain before his face. The succeeding years justified his confidence, and caused him to magnify the name of his God. So we came to Castleton Hall in July, 1889. From the Sheffield Conference, where great and momentous debates were stirring men's minds, I had this letter to cheer the days of removal:

MY DEAR,—I am writing this before I go downstairs, just to say how delighted I was to get your wire, and to know that

you are in the Home where we shall most likely live and die. May God spare us to each other for some time yet! I am feeling it very much that you should have had all this to do, and me away. But I could be no help, but rather a hindrance; still, I nearly cried as I thought of you.

This is an example of the tenderness with which he appreciated the work that he could not share. One always felt this: he was not unmindful of the pains taken to keep the way clear for his proper work. He had never been able to undergo the fatigue of the household 'fitting,' which this time was so much greater than the ordinary changing of circuits that I was heartily glad for him not to have any of the inevitable excitement and worry of those days.

Work enough awaited his home-coming as it was, and no holiday, however much needed, was possible. There were services and classes, correspondence, teaching, preaching, and preparing for the winter 'stationing' of the men, and the work of those in the Home.

Very soon after Conference, invitations to preach poured in upon him, and he had to print a manifesto in *Joyful News* to this effect:

There is a widespread impression that Mr. Champness was set apart at the last Conference that he might travel everywhere preaching 'Trust' and Sunday-school sermons. We beg to say this is an error. He cannot leave home one-hundredth part as often as he is desired, and he begs his friends not to waste postage-stamps in the way they do.

In this quaint fashion he sought to stay the tide of correspondence, it must be said, with small success.

Then came the formal opening of the Home, which for convenience was fixed for September 17. This was made the occasion for a pleasant gathering of friends



CASTLETON HALL, ROCHDALE: 'JOYFUL NEWS' HOME FOR EVANGELISTS FROM 1889 TO 1903

of the Mission from all parts of the country. We invited many, and others saw the announcement in *Joyful News* and invited themselves. All were made welcome, and I suppose it will never be known how many hundreds of people took tea in the New Home on that sunny autumn day. It was a real 'house-warming,' homely and happy. The old walls rang to the sounds of praise and joyful song as the crowds of people passed through the rooms, examining with friendly criticism our family arrangements; and congratulations, as well as contributions in money and kind, poured in upon us. Many now living will remember that day, with its note of joyousness and hope. Our friend Charles Garrett hoisted and unfurled the flag; Hugh Price Hughes gave the speech of the day; others, now among the glorious company around the throne of God, were with us; and all felt it to be one of 'the days of God's right hand.' As at the beginning of *Joyful News*, so at the consecration of the new Home for its Mission workers, Mr. Champness said, 'IN THE NAME OF OUR GOD WE WILL SET UP OUR BANNERS.'

It was surely a happy inspiration which moved us to decorate the walls of the large room which was at once the Entrance and Dining-hall with the text which comforted and strengthened us in all the years of our residence there:

'The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and even for evermore.'

We felt that God had set a great work before us, and that He who had brought us to this house in so marvellous a way would surely help us to carry out His plans. We were emboldened to take a fresh hold of the Divine Hand, and to live in the conscious joy of God's presence.

CHAPTER XXI

ROCHDALE : NEW HEADQUARTERS AND WORK OF 'JOYFUL NEWS' MISSION, 1889-97

THE position Thomas Champness now held was unique. He was at the head of a movement founded by himself, and governed by rules resulting from his own experience. Round this movement the love and regard of Methodism were constantly gathering, so that it daily gained strength and favour among the people. The best and wisest of the princes of our Israel were in full sympathy with the Mission and its leader, rejoicing with him in the growing success which owed nothing to official prestige, and was never chargeable to Connexional finance. As no departmental grant was ever sought or received for the Mission, and no stipend attached to the position of its founder, he was a law unto himself; and no man was more loyal to his Church or more loving towards his brethren. In the years that followed the relief from circuit work he became more than ever an itinerant preacher, thus strengthening the cause of Evangelism in a manner which bore fruit in the ever-widening circle of those who became interested in the work of the *Joyful News* Home. He would be away three or four days a week, travelling thousands of miles in the year, entering into the home-life of Methodism as few even of her most illustrious preachers have done ;

and yet he was the mainspring of his own home at Rochdale, every interest of which he held most precious.

I do not think he could have been so successful if he had been always at home. He possessed the happy gift of throwing off small anxieties as he left them, and whatever might have seemed to weigh him down before he started, he brought back with him new hopes, new schemes, and a cheerful view of life in general, which made it easy for him to take up again his responsibilities, and to meet difficulties as they came. How many times I have waited and watched for his home-coming, almost dreading to tell him of troublesome matters needing his attention ; but tangles and troubles seemed to smooth out as he touched them, and his insight into the human mind was so penetrated with the light of God's own Spirit, that he knew exactly the thing that ought to be done. He brought into the house with him a cheery alertness and sympathy, and many a time his first words of greeting, and his winsome smile, caused my fear and dread to vanish 'as clouds before the noon-day sun.' Then, he was at once ready for duty : Secretary with letters ; with the men for a 'Grindstone' class at such an hour ; and a walk out or a talk with his wife, when all the incidents of his journeys, and the history of the Home in his absence, would be discussed and prayed over. Our 'committee of two,' as he called it, has met in varied places, and there are certain of the by-ways and field-roads and 'cinder-paths' around Rochdale which are connected in my memory with more than one crisis in the Home or the Mission. Life could never be tame or commonplace with Thomas Champness. 'The trivial round' did not exist for him, as he had a way of making his own and other people's work

vividly interesting. He was never one to trouble himself with details, but he could always take a large view of what had to be done.

Intensely spiritual himself, there was a great charm in his intercourse with the men, and many of those who came to the Home could tell of the strange hush that he brought into the class-room, and his sacred yet glad some manner of unfolding Bible truths to their mind.

The Rev. E. C. Cooper, one of those who went forth from the Home as a missionary evangelist, writes from China :

What a lot those early 'Grindstones' did for me, and how well do I remember the lessons we learned round the study table ! I can see it all now : the men with their books, all attention as the door opens ; the closed door ; the bared head ; the silence ; the breathing of a prayer, the sweetness the prayer brought ; the lesson ; the illustrations, the smiles, the tears, the catching of the breath, and the feeling of regret when the lesson was over. Ah ! the atmosphere of those days will abide as long as life does last. One of my greatest treasures is a volume of Mr. Champness's letters written to me in China as a *Joyful News* Evangelist. Those letters are a real blessing to me, though they were written, some of them, sixteen and seventeen years ago. They are full of good advice, touched here and there with pathos, and at times lit up with sparkling humour.

This testimony could be easily confirmed by scores of the young men who were privileged to share in the training and subsequent intercourse with their Chief.

Beset by claims from all parts as a preacher, he was certainly often away, but he made a rule that so many times in the week he would meet his students, his class

being held at all hours of the day, as suited his engagements. Sometimes it would be six in the morning, sometimes seven in the evening, but four or five times in the week he would conduct the class which came to be called 'the Grindstone.' And that man was indeed a poor tool whose wits were not 'sharpened' there.

He made himself personally acquainted with his men. On arrival at the Home, or as soon as possible afterwards, the newcomer had to go to the study and be interviewed. Questions asked with kindly interest, sympathy, and a loving desire to help, made the young man feel that he had a friend, and it was rarely indeed that the master and the 'apprentice' failed to appreciate each other. He loved young men, and quickly discovered their good points, was always hopeful and optimistic concerning them, and not easily disappointed if they did not do well at first. By his loving and winning manner he inspired them with faith in themselves. But he could read them well, and had no patience with idleness, conceit, or hypocrisy. The honest man, however ignorant and uncultured, had his entire sympathy; and he would say of some man whose apparent improvement was slow: 'I have great hopes of him; he is like what I used to be, only not so stupid. He'll come out all right!' His faith in the men was, in the main, justified by events; very few failed to work earnestly and well, and most of them have fulfilled his highest hopes of them.

With regard to his faith in the men, and insight into their character, it has been suggested by a member of his family that 'he saw a man's capabilities, rather than his actual nature; his possible rather than his probable

attainments,' and, it is asked, 'Does not this explain his occasional mistakes, as well as his correct estimates of men? He saw what a man might be, minus his weaknesses; assuming, sometimes wrongly, that he would overcome his weaknesses.'

I think this is a fair suggestion; he would see what a man ought to become, but sometimes the man would not become what he ought. Considering all this, it is remarkable that so many of the workers whom he trained did so well. The percentage of failures is very small, and some of the successes are of the kind which might make any teacher proud and happy.

It fell to the lot of Thomas Champness at this time to be prominently associated with an upheaval such as occasionally agitates the Christian Church. Some would-be reformers, meaning well, were before their time, and the years 1889-90 marked a threatened crisis in the history of foreign missions. Many Missionary Societies were involved; and, as regards our own Church, there was unfortunately imported into the debates on the matter much uncalled-for bitterness and strife of words, which tended to obscure the issues of the questions under review. Perhaps zeal for suggested reform was in excess of the tact necessary to bring about that reform. In any case, the discussions which occupied the time and attention of the Conference were not immediately productive of good, and it has taken years of mutual forbearance and loyal service to clear the vision of the Church for the path of progress.

It is not my intention here to fight the Missionary Controversy over again, but the life of Thomas Champness cannot be written without some reference to his part in that trying experience. He was not a lover of strife;

It was in no spirit of antagonism, but with a sincere desire for the prosperity of the cause of missions, that he entered the arena, and bore his share in the conflict. He stood for the principles in which he believed, and he never changed his mind as to what he thought was right. Many years later, after he had himself visited China, a part of the mission field where his own workers were always most truly appreciated, he wrote a letter to the Methodist people which has never yet been made public, but which he entrusted to me with his own hands, solemnly charging me to see that it was printed, after his decease, in any account of his life which might be written. After much thought and prayer, I have come to the conclusion that, having received such a charge, the memory of which must ever remain with me, I cannot withhold the letter from publication. At the same time I recognize that it is possible, as some of his friends think, that he over-estimated, in the sensitiveness of his nature, the extent of the prejudice that existed in any one's mind towards himself as regards his share in the lamentable controversy of 1889-90; and I also recognize that if he had lived to see and share in that day of marvellous confession and blessing at the Conference of 1906, he might himself have freed me from my promise. I do not, however, feel that these considerations release me from my promise as his biographer, and I therefore accept the full responsibility of including the document in this book. I have not to write his life as it might or would have been, but as it was, and I have not to apologize for doing so. Those who knew Thomas Champness will understand that he wrote this letter in no spirit of vindictiveness; that if he had lived till now he would

have told us of any change in his views ; and we may rest assured that in the clear light of the glory of God's own presence we shall all know as we are known.

ROCHDALE, Feb. 21, 1903.

TO THE PEOPLE CALLED METHODISTS

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—There is something I want to say to you, and I will say it now, rather than wait and dictate it when I am more feeble. This is it : foreign missions may be worked with effect without the workers becoming ministers. Mark you, I am not saying a word against ministers ; I have seen far too much of them in different parts of the world to do that. The Wesleyan missionaries are a noble class of men, taken as a whole.

But the minister is a costly tool, and one quite as effective can be produced at less cost. It is not learning, but character, that makes the missionary. That the *Joyful News* Mission has proved over and over again.

It may be asked, 'Why have you not extended your work abroad?' I will tell you. Another thing the *Joyful News* Mission has proved is, that if you would succeed with lay missionaries, so called, they must, if they are to be happy, work separate from the Wesleyan Missionary Society, whose regulations do not allow the layman to be represented in the Synod. Besides, the economy he practises is thought to be a reflection on the ministers. For these reasons I recommend that any one wishing to begin a more economical line of action make his experiments at some distance from the Wesleyan missionary. While I say this, I wish it to be understood that I believe in Methodism, and in its ministers ; but the world, if it is to be evangelized, needs men of the type of the *Joyful News* evangelist, as well as superior and educated men. There is work for both classes of workers.

'Why did you not carry out your ideas?' I will tell you. The Missionary Controversy is to blame. I agreed in part with Mr. Hugh Price Hughes, and said so. This led to great bitterness.

If I had chosen to withdraw my men, and set them to work outside Methodist stations, I should have had a great deal of financial support, but the Wesleyan Missionary Society would have suffered greatly, and I have worked and suffered as one of its agents. Thomas Champness was loyal to the old Society, but at a fearful cost. I preferred to be misunderstood and maligned, to be treated as a liar and a fool, rather than to be separated from my brethren. The laymen have trusted me, and if I had chosen to separate my men from the Wesleyan Missionary Society, would have stood by me. Rightly or wrongly, I have kept quiet; and have been misunderstood, except by my wife and children. When 'the books are opened,' ministers who have insulted me will beg my pardon. I can afford to wait. I commend my children to the Church I love, and hope they will be helped through the business I leave behind so as to earn an honest livelihood.

When I am buried, let Henry T. Smart be asked to conduct a service in the house, and sing the two first verses of the hymn

How happy every child of grace,

and let Josiah Mee pray, and sing some of the last verses of the hymn,

Happy if with my latest breath,

at the grave. Please use no flowers, and very little, if any, mourning. Don't let the 'missis'—bless her!—wear a widow's cap. People who love me should be glad the labourer is at rest!

On a plain stone put:

THOMAS CHAMPNESS

Son of CHARLES and MARY CHAMPNESS

Born July 19, 1832; died ———

It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, &c.

I have been a happy man, who was loved far beyond his merits.

(Signed) THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

Since this document was written many changes have occurred. The great revival of missionary zeal inaugurated at the Conference of 1906, and followed up throughout the Connexion, has swept away, as with a mighty tide, feelings which had for many years hindered the work of God. Even before this, there were not wanting signs that our foreign missions were being conducted on broader lines.

If it is permitted to the spirits of the redeemed to know of the progress of God's kingdom on earth, Thomas Champness and Hugh Price Hughes will have joined in a new song of praise as they have heard of the great missionary revival, and how love for the perishing souls of the heathen has kindled anew the flame of consecrated liberality towards the cause they loved.

The strain of this troublous time, combined with constant and excessive exertions in his ordinary work, caused a thorough breakdown in health, and during the early weeks of 1891 Mr. Champness was prostrated by illness. Neuralgia and suppressed gout, with their consequent symptoms of depression and sleeplessness, came upon him all at once. He struggled bravely for a while, but at length he had to cancel all preaching engagements, and to hand over for a time all the training work at Rochdale to his friend the Rev. Joseph Todhunter, the supernumerary minister who was for some years a tutor at *Joyful News Home*. His diary records :

March 19.—Am very ill ; cannot bear to hear prayer. But Jesus is precious to me. . . .

March 20.—Better to-day, thank God ; but need much grace. God is good in raising me up helpers.

From February to May he never preached, and was

very seldom able to attend to his men. Most of the time was spent at Buxton, under medical treatment. It was while here that, by his physician's advice, he began to take horse exercise, and he would ride over the Derbyshire hills and through the beautiful country, forgetting his troubles and renewing his strength. Later, a friend gave him a horse, and never was gift more useful, for the riding was good for him in more ways than one ; it gave him grand opportunities of inhaling pure air, as well as ample time for recruiting his wearied brain by fresh thoughts. In May he began to get better, but his diary shows how terrible had been the struggle.

May 10.—It is a long time since I wrote anything in this book. Many days and nights of doubts and fears have gone by. Last night felt sure that we should be short of money, and have to give up the work, but have tried to cheer myself with the promises. It is certain that 'all things work together for good to them who love God,' and I do that, though not as I should; and giving up the work might be among the 'all things.' I need much grace to help me in times of doubt.

On Sunday, May 17, he could write, 'Praise the Lord ! Preached once more at Wesley. Felt very weary, but glad to make a start.'

Very soon he was as hard at work as ever. But all through the year he had trials which made real recovery difficult. In June came tidings of the death of William Argent at the violent hands of Chinese rioters, followed by the news of another break in the ranks of his foreign mission workers. Alfred Tollerton, a good man and true, had died in China of small-pox. These things did not deter from further enterprise, for on November 26 there is a note in the diary : 'Mr. and Mrs. Simpson

and dear Swann sailed in s.s. *Sutlej* for India. God bless them !'

Valedictory services in various places were held to bid God-speed to four more young men who had volunteered for China ; but at the last moment the party was advised to wait until spring, on account of the disturbed state of that part of China to which they were bound. This was a disappointment to Mr. Champness, but he met it with, 'I believe it is of God.' So it was all right ; the men resumed work in this country, and were able to go out to China in due time.

The autumn brought ague, fever, and almost the first serious symptoms of heart trouble ; difficulty of breathing began to interfere with his preaching, and once more he had to seek relief in a visit to Buxton. He was, however, able to preach at Lane Head, in his own home circuit, on Christmas Day, and to keep the Christian festival with the family at *Joyful News* Home. Of this he writes, 'We had a glorious day.'

In 1891-5, the four following years, he had a marvellous record of preaching. He travelled in every county in England, besides going into North and South Wales and Scotland ; and all the time he superintended the affairs of the Mission, and kept up a personal correspondence with his large staff of men and women evangelists—for by this time the *Joyful News* workers included a number of earnest young women.

Going about the country, Mr. Champness was moved by the need for the special work which godly women could do in the villages and small towns. Their ministry was just the kind of thing needed in scattered hamlets, where lonely Methodists were seldom visited by the ministers. At the same time he found godly servant-

maids and factory-lasses, and others, who were longing for openings into Christian service, but who could never hope to find an outlet in the city Sisterhoods, where women of gentle birth and better education were preferred. So he decided to 'try women,' and began by sending out a Lancashire lass to the foreign work, then a Leicestershire girl into English villages. This work grew, and many applied for employment and training, so that we opened a Home for Women Evangelists, where they received training, and to which they could return for intervals of rest. In all about fifty-two young women came into the ranks, most of whom did splendid service. Mr. Champness controlled their appointments, corresponded with them, and occasionally gave an hour or two for a lecture as he was on his journeys, but their training and oversight he committed to a member of his family.

His own health was always an uncertain quantity, but except when absolutely unable to fulfil engagements, he would not rest. And here it was that the value of his Buxton physician's prescription came in. His good horse carried him out of the atmosphere of care and brain-weariness, and with the exercise there came the power to sleep, and be 'made over again.' There was a long period during which rheumatic gout nearly cost him the use of his right arm; he was unable to dress himself, and only the horse-riding and the electric battery gave relief from pain. Yet for all that he had in large measure what is called 'the joy of life,' and was a happy man.

When he could do nothing else, he could make sermons. At one time he was used to lie awake hours in the night, and would rise from bed, and, wrapping himself up, would

write 'till he felt sleepy.' 'I do not want Satan to "score" off my sleeplessness,' he said more than once, 'I can always keep him away by thinking about the love of the Divine Being, and trying to do a bit of work for Him.'

I used to think at such times of the words,

If in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply,

for that was how he improved what might have been hours of spiritual darkness. He often received gracious and special manifestations of God's presence, and had power to write of 'things divine' during these night-seasons of wakefulness.

There were many times when Thomas Champness needed, as he said, to 'preach to himself.' While encouraging others to put their trust in God, and claim the full privileges of His children, he did not fail to appropriate for his own needs the comfort of a strong, courageous faith in his Heavenly Captain; and in his own experience he realized the blessedness of 'the man whose hope the Lord is.' This did not always mean outward success and prosperity. So it was in 1895, when with his Homes full of men and women in training, the need for workers as pressing as ever, and many candidates anxious to join the Mission, he was face to face with a falling income, and a perilously small balance at the Bank. The outlook was gloomy: he could do no more; he would not incur debt, even for a good purpose. Prayerfully and resolutely he reviewed the situation, and came to a decision which most men in his position would have shrunk from. It was a crisis, and he met it in a characteristic way, by doing that which few would have

dared to do. He resolved to dismiss all the evangelists in training, together with those whose support depended on the free contributions of the people, retaining only those whose maintenance was guaranteed by the circuits or places where they were employed, and, of course, those on missionary service abroad. This meant that the needy places had to give up their evangelists, and that all training work had to come to a pause. The stoppage was only temporary, and in a few months after the disbandment he again had the Homes full, and the work went on, with modifications in policy and practice.

All this time—a time of trial—I never knew my husband to be other than cheerful. When he felt he was doing right, he could always afford to smile, and probably many of his friends would never know how difficult was the lesson he was learning. High courage and faith kept his soul at peace, and he went on with all other work as if he had no anxieties whatever for that which he had specially undertaken. The check could not be a defeat, the tide would turn, and meanwhile he formulated new methods, and prepared for the fresh beginning which he knew would come. The stoppage of the work proved salutary in many ways, giving time for rallying the effective forces, and opportunity for a process of selection which could only increase its useful character. The training of local preachers became more than ever an integral part of the work, and Mr. Champness welcomed the chance of receiving in his house, and sending back to their circuits, men who should be the better equipped for the pulpits of the villages as a result of a sojourn at *Joyful News Home*. In the meantime most of the disbanded evangelists were adopted by the Methodist Church, and in various capacities were

brought onward in the realm of Christian activity and usefulness.

Henceforth, Mr. Champness specialized on the training and equipment of the local preacher, mainly on evangelistic lines ; and thus the work at *Joyful News* Home became a prophecy of Cliff College, though nothing looked more unlikely at the time. Some such development, however, was always in mind with the Founder of the Mission ; expecting great things from God, he worked towards the fulfilment of his original ideal 'until Methodism should do something worthy of herself.' Thus he writes in the Report of the *Joyful News* Mission for 1897 :

Our work among local preachers has been a great and growing blessing. We have had more than sixty men here during the year, and the more we do in this way the more need we see for the extension of the work. The future of Methodism in the villages must depend more and more upon the character of the local preachers, and while we are obliged to support agents in some circuits, we must do more to elevate the nature and increase the effectiveness of the unpaid preachers of Methodism.

CHAPTER XXII

THE TEMPERANCE CAMPAIGN, 1897-1904

SOME of his contemporaries have referred to the last ten years of Thomas Champness's life as 'the great years.' Certain it is that at an age when many hard-working Methodist preachers begin to think of a quiet eventide, he threw himself into the greatest crusade of his adventurous and strenuous life.

It began, as such things will, in a gradual manner ; as he went about the country, he heard many comments on the inconsistent attitude of the Christian Churches in regard to intoxicating drink, one of the greatest hindrances to national righteousness. He received many letters placing before him proofs of the evil wrought in Christian homes by drunkenness, some public-houses being owned by gentlemen holding prominent positions as office-bearers amongst Methodists and other Christians. Facts such as constantly came before his notice stirred his heart within him, and when a much-tried Circuit Quarterly Meeting memorialized the Conference, asking that some legislation might ensue that would put a stop to this crying evil, Thomas Champness espoused their cause, and as their Memorial came before the Conference in 1897 he spoke in its favour, bringing forward a resolution to the effect that—

In view of the terrible havoc caused by the drink among our people, it is inexpedient that manufacturers of strong

drink shall be elected as office-bearers in the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

After some discussion the Conference declined to legislate, as was declared, 'in the absence of any expression of public opinion on the subject.' 'Then,' said the editor of *Joyful News*, 'who is to create public opinion on this subject, if not the Church herself?' and he declared his intention of arousing the Christian conscience by every means in his power. The one circuit memorial he regarded as 'the thin end of the wedge,' and he called on all who agreed with him, 'by their prayers, efforts, and personal example, to drive it home.'

Of course it was nothing new to him ; years of evangelism and effort to save the people had not failed to show him the need for Christians to be also abstainers from strong drink ; but it was the cry from Rochester Circuit that awoke the actual fighting instinct in Thomas Champness. He realized now, as never before, the God-given power of *Joyful News*. With no one to be compromised by his actions, and with full control of his paper, he had committed to him at once a grand field and a grave charge ; he could ventilate his and other people's ideas, and at the same time hold the reins, and encourage the fighting force.

Rapid response came to his appeals in *Joyful News*, and he carried out his resolve so well that in nearly every issue of the following year the evils of the drink traffic and the duty of the Christian Church in this matter were to the fore. Always the editor kept the reins, unmoved by the extremists of either side, and pressing home with unflinching courage the facts that were brought under his notice.

It was a time of great work, for his brain was always actively planning either pictures, paragraphs, or pointed appeals which stirred people's hearts, and aroused enthusiastic admiration, or intense dislike, as the case might be. Thomas Champness did not care very much either way. His object was to 'create public opinion,' and whatever may be thought of his methods, there can be no doubt that he succeeded in doing this. The next year (1898) a discussion on the subject arose in some of the District Synods, and in one at least a resolution was carried on the lines of the Rochester Circuit Memorial to the Conference of the previous year. So it went on. In the course of this Temperance campaign Thomas Champness showed much ingenuity as to printing and publishing. A special Temperance Fund sprang out of voluntary gifts, and thousands of tracts, booklets, cards, and placards were printed and sent all over the land. The subject was seldom absent from his conversation, and probably never from his thoughts and prayers. Concurrently with this, of course, the ordinary duties of his life went on, and ceaseless industry and enthusiasm were given to other imperative claims on his time and strength. No wonder that his health gave way, and that, as he expressed it in *Joyful News*, he found he must go clear away from it all for a time.

He had long desired to visit America and China ; and in the autumn of 1898, with one of his sons for escort, he set off on a tour of nine months' duration. He had exhausted himself in this Temperance crusade, and it became a necessity that he should get some change that would for a time remove him from the daily and hourly strain of the terrible work he felt called to do. We were glad when he decided to go away. True, the

burden of the Mission and the paper must needs rest for a time on other shoulders, but absence from the scene would, we hoped, renew our leader's strength, or at least it would give him temporary rest from the heavier burden he was bearing. (An account of this tour follows this chapter.)

As soon as he returned, in June, 1899, he wrote to the readers of *Joyful News* :

All being well, I intend to do some work that needs doing. My tongue and pen are consecrated to God and Methodism, and I intend, the Lord being my helper, to make Satan wish I had died at sea, or on some foreign shore ! Pray for me, dear friends, that my last years may be the most fruitful of my eventful life.

He attended the Conference of 1899, which was held in London, and again brought forward his Temperance Resolution, only to be, as before, rejected. But, nothing daunted, he at once resumed the campaign. In *Joyful News* of August 10 he wrote :

It has been an historic Conference, especially to the Temperance men, because they have been in different camps, and have, for conscience' sake, been obliged to be divided, yet without bitterness or enmity.

We are proud to belong to the minority, and we now address those who are in line with us, and say, *Do not lose heart*. . . .

Do not say one bitter word. Those who differ from us have consciences as well as we, and have the right of conscience also. We have no doubt as to their sincerity. Such men as Charles Garrett and Peter Thompson are truth-loving and honest men, whose word is better than some men's oath. If ever they feel they are in the wrong they will say so.

Conscientiously faithful and loyal, he strove to be temperate in language and purpose, and whilst inviting correspondence which would show the will of the people on this matter, he declared, the following week, that what he daily saw and heard only made him more in earnest; people in circuits where the power of this curse was most felt wrote to him as to one who would interpret their cry to the Conference, and an immense correspondence gathered round this one topic. He invented and designed means to ventilate the question throughout Methodism, and there never was a way more effectual, if irregular, than that by which he set forth his views, and claimed public attention to this grave subject.

He had by this time altered the wording of his Resolution, rendering it more comprehensive and convincing; and in this amended form he caused it to be printed on small cards, enclosing them in his letters and thus distributing them far and wide.

The text and form of the card was in itself a brave declaration of his position.

THE CHAMPNESS RESOLUTION

That in view of the sorrow and sin caused by the drinking habits of the people, the Conference thinks it in the highest degree undesirable that any person directly engaged in the Liquor Traffic should be nominated for office in the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Some of his brethren were very angry, but, though sorry for their disapproval, he held on his way, and kept the subject before the people and the Conference year after year.

His hatred of the Traffic was intensified by the enormous inroads that the drinking habit made on the manliness and courage of his countrymen ; and when he heard of ministers and office-bearers sharing in the profits of strong drink, his indignation knew no bounds. ' I cannot bear it,' he would say ; ' think of — and — ; remember the awful fate of — and the harm the drink has done to — and — ' (naming some near and dear friends whose career or whose sufferings had burnt themselves into his soul). Then he would pray ' for strength to do this one thing ' : to overthrow the power of the drink in the Church he loved. The strife was bitter, the battle was long, but Thomas Champness never wavered, though he had to lose valued friendships and to grieve beloved friends. He fought the fight, in his usual way, with a smile on his face. He agonized in prayer, but it was secret prayer ; and from the presence of God he would come forth strong and bright, ready for the renewed conflict in the strength of God.

By perseverance and faith at last he won his own way. Many who did not like his methods were forced to recognize his power, and yield to his persistent and repeated appeals. Of course it was not to be expected that he would gain all he asked, but the idea of the maker and seller and profit-sharer of strong drink being in office, or as he expressed it, ' on the quarter-deck of the Church,' he could not endure, and he frequently said, ' If I die, I will die fighting this accursed thing.'

Every year the conflict grew more intense ; the Camborne Conference of 1903 had to consider no fewer than seventy Circuit Memorials on the lines of ' The Champness Resolution.' To press home this advantage the author of the Resolution resolved to make a ' sortie,'

and boldly challenged the popular vote by an article in *Joyful News* of August 20, in which he said :

We shall feel obliged if all those persons who agree with us will send a postcard with their name and address. We have now a little more time to give to this matter, and we wish to come into touch with all those who are willing to give their assistance to this movement. We propose to print and circulate this article, in the hope that in other circuits besides those who have already memorialized the Conference, the matter will be prayerfully considered.

We venture respectfully to suggest that the Conference is ignorant as to the widespread feeling on this subject, and that it is only by the matter being ventilated that the representatives who shall meet next year at Sheffield can know that the majority of the members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church think the Conference should declare its opinion that those men who are guilty of what the Camborne representatives accused them of, should not be allowed to rule in Methodism.

No sooner was the significance of this invitation realized by the people than postcards by the score began to come in. The names of the signatories were published week by week in *Joyful News*, sometimes a whole column or more being taken up by the list. In all, by the time the Conference met at Sheffield in 1904, upwards of thirteen thousand names had been sent in, and memorials from nearly one hundred circuits emphasized the fact that if the action of the Conference was to be guided by public opinion, there was no lack of that commodity. Whether his resolution should pass or not, Thomas Champness had evoked the expression of the people's wish, and was secure in the goodwill of all who believed that the Church should be free from complicity with the drink traffic. 'It was a famous

victory!’ And none the less remarkable, because counsels of conciliation prevailed. Men of mark in Temperance matters approached Mr. Champness with all the respect which his years of strenuous perseverance had won for his cause, and, as a result, a resolution was proposed, and carried by a practically unanimous vote of Conference with a heartiness which made it plain that the agitation had ended peacefully, and with such honour as was due to a courageous and persevering policy.

To the readers of *Joyful News* he communicated the results of this historic Conference as follows:

Here is the text of the new Conference Resolution, which, in our opinion, will be more effective than if the ‘Champness Resolution’ had been passed:

‘The Conference was never more alive than at the present time to the dire effects of the Liquor Traffic. It rejoices in the progress of Temperance sentiment and practice in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and recommends our people to keep from complicity with a traffic, the results of which are so injurious to the interests of religion, morality, and social life. The Conference earnestly urges that this shall be borne in mind in the administration of our circuits, and especially in the appointment of office-bearers.’

The excitement of the occasion, following, as it did, on trying experiences, was almost too much for him. Those who were with him recollect how he very nearly fainted; but he wrote to me very joyfully, and with a glad heart I joined him in praise to God.

July 21, 1904.

MY DEAR WIFE,—You will have seen the resolution to which we have come. By putting in the words *Office-bearers*

it gives me all I asked, but of course in very different words. Suppose any of the ministers were, after this, to put a man into office who was connected with the Traffic, we can impeach him.

Rank, Holden, Chadwick, and Collier have agreed to it, and I did not see how I could stand out. It was adopted unanimously, and is a great relief. But I did not agree to it without being alone with God, and I feel that I dare face Him on it.

Oh, the relief! I had not to speak, except to say that I appreciated the action of the Committee, and that if the Resolution was not adopted I should then move my Resolution.

Those 12,000 names have done the job!

O my dear, let us praise the Lord! I have scored more than once at the Conference, and hope it will be as much to God's glory as it is to our comfort.

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July 22, 1904.

The more I think of what has happened, the more glad and grateful I am. It would have touched you to see the tearful eyes of strong men. I little knew how potent a man can be who means the right. I have a wondrous hold on Methodism.

I have sent off an article, short, but all that needs be said at present.

Thank God, the war is over, and it is 'Peace with honour.'
Help me to praise the Lord.

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July 23, 1904.

I was very glad to have your letter, and to see that you can realize how far-reaching the new Conference Resolution is. Shall we not signalize the event by making *Joyful News* all the more for the Temperance movement? Close the Public-house by closing the Public mouth. Shall we not make that our motto? . . .

It will be nice to be at home again. Perhaps this is my

last chance. I get so weary that without I had something to do, it is not worth my while to come. I *had* something to do, and, praise God, I have *done it*!

He signalized the victory by giving me the best copy of the new Methodist Hymn-book that he could procure, writing on the flyleaf my name, and the words 'In remembrance of July 21, 1904.'

CHAPTER XXIII

THE STORY OF THE TOUR—AMERICA, JAPAN, CHINA, AUSTRALIA, 1898-9

INSTEAD of compiling from letters and journals an account of Mr. Champness's very interesting tour, I have asked our son, the Rev. T. Kilby Champness, who was his travelling companion, to give me his impressions of that time, so far as concerns his father, and the work he did while abroad.

It was in October, 1898, that my father started from Liverpool on a trip round the world. He visited the United States, Canada, Japan, China, and Australia, and of course, during the journey, came into contact with many interesting people. On board ship he made his presence felt. On the *Germanic*, for instance, there were twelve Roman Catholic priests, whose devotion to duty was such that, despite the sea-sickness that was their lot, they went through the portion of their missal appointed for daily reading with clockwork regularity. In conversation with one of them, my father introduced the subject of heaven and purgatory. Said he, 'I am absolutely certain that if this ship went down now, I should be in heaven in a few moments.' The reply of one of the priests was, 'If I could say that, I should be glad if the vessel would go down now!'

Mr. Champness was struck with the large attendance

at the service in the saloon on Sunday morning. Most of the passengers were ill ; it was terribly rough ; but there was an excellent muster. He spoke of it as a triumph for the Church of England.

On one vessel, which shall be nameless here, the ship's doctor ventured to sneer at the rite of Communion as observed in the different Churches. His witticisms were being received with laughter by those who sat at table with him, when Mr. Champness leaned across the table, and said, 'Excuse me, sir, but I must protest against your making a jest of what, to me, is the most sacred thing in the world.' The doctor, who was a gentleman in more senses than one, said, 'I beg your pardon, sir ; you are right, and I was wrong.'

One story shows his gentle courtesy. While waiting in the alley-ways of a steamer plying between Vancouver and Vancouver Island, he was sitting in conversation with two or three old friends. All were wrapped up in talk, and did not notice a middle-aged woman staggering along, laden with bundles, searching for her cabin. But Mr. Champness saw her, and leapt to his feet, went to her, raising his hat, and begged to be allowed to carry her baggage, then led her to her cabin, and in a minute he returned, and, with a word of apology, resumed his share in the conversation. One who was there learned a lesson.

On every vessel he made himself respected, even by the most worldly people, and in one case, aboard a small vessel plying in the river Yangtse, the captain never began a meal without asking him to say grace.

As a preacher aboard ship he made his mark. On the *Arcadia*, homeward bound from Australia, he was asked to preach one Sunday evening on the after-deck. A large company gathered to listen, and a powerful

service it was. Several members of the crew were present, and were much impressed. It was, as Mr. Champness himself said, fitting that, in the Red Sea, within sight of the mountains of Sinai, where God said 'Thou shalt not covet,' he was privileged to preach on 'Naboth's vineyard.'

Many of Mr. Champness's friends received letters and postcards from him while he was abroad. He was always writing. At every port where the vessel called he would procure fifty postcards, and would write them all before the ship sailed away. There was always a big bundle of letters to be sent off into the bargain. Writing in this fashion was one of his greatest delights. He would say, 'There isn't any other way in which I could give so much pleasure at so little expense. I can fancy the postman coming across the field at — and saying, "There's one here as seems to be from furrin' parts." Let's see, who shall I write to next?' And he would put on the back of a card a message that is treasured up to-day in some out-of-the-way spot.

People sometimes ask if he was a good sailor. He was certainly sea-sick, but cheerful. He would compare himself to 'a chicken in a shower,' and it was a good description. Here he showed himself to resemble Dickens' 'Mark Tapley,' for he would reappear smiling on deck, after a 'bout' of sea-sickness. But he never missed a meal for this cause, though in the tropics he would abstain from lunch as a set-off to the lack of proper exercise which is one of the drawbacks of steamer-life. He was never unemployed, except when he took a brief 'snooze' on deck. He had his Bible with him, and was always making new sermons, or

devising fresh articles for *Joyful News*, or else planning a series of papers on the Epistles of St. Peter, which he read again and again during his voyages.

In America, it was interesting to see how his preaching impressed the people. They were at first absolutely nonplussed. Never had they heard a preacher like him. His style was emphatically his own, and wherever he went he was heard with great delight, which showed itself on the faces of his audience. The first Sunday in New York was given to Dr. Cadman, at the Temple, Seventh Avenue. In the evening Mr. Champness preached on 'Joseph is a fruitful bough,' and in the course of his sermon spoke at some length on Reuben, emphasizing his instability. 'Reuben,' he said, 'was a man who could not make up his mind; he was a trimmer; he was—he was—a Republican-Democrat!' In the midst of the laughter which this sally provoked, a voice cried from the back of the church, 'A Mugwump!'

The Rev. W. L. Watkinson had given Mr. Champness a letter of introduction to the ministers of other countries, a letter greatly prized by its recipient. At a meeting of Methodist ministers in New York, they listened with great interest to this characteristic letter, 'tasting' the humorous words of the author, who said, 'Mr. Champness has no axe to grind, except the one which he wields so vigorously and so skilfully on the Upas-trees of his day.'

It was not merely to the big cities that Mr. Champness journeyed. Those who know his love for the villages will remember with delight that he visited little places lying several miles from the railroad, and encouraged the saints of the hamlets, as well as those of the cities.

In one tiny spot he was taken to see the local sights, and visited the school-house, where the little children were, at the time, learning the geography of their own State, Maryland. On being introduced to the lady in charge, he said, speaking so that all could hear, 'Well, Miss, I suppose this is where you manufacture Presidents of the United States!' The effect is not easy to describe, but it will be imagined that the children listened eagerly to one who began in such unconventional fashion.

One curious effect that his visit to the United States had upon him was that he unconsciously picked up Americanisms of speech, and even of accent. Such a result will not surprise those who know how excellent a mimic he could be. He was a good friend to the many pressmen who were sent to interview him. These men would come up to him as he waited at some railway station, or in some vestry, and would make cautious inquiry, and then pull out their note-books and 'interview' him. He would say, 'I always talk to reporters; American reporters are very keen. If he is to do half a column on me, half a column will appear, and if I don't let him print half a column of what I *did* say, depend upon it he'll print half a column of what I *didn't* say.'

One story should be told. In Chicago Mr. Champness was advertised to preach in Mr. Moody's church. On Saturday a lady called, was shown up, and stated that she represented a certain paper, and was 'doing' a series of preachers; she would be much obliged for the loan of Mr. Champness's manuscript. How great was her consternation when she was smilingly told that he hadn't a manuscript! 'Well,' said she, 'I guess I'll

have to manage ; would you be so good, sir, as to give me the leading ideas of your sermon ?' ' I can't do that,' said Mr. Champness. ' I don't know what I shall preach about yet, may not know till I get into the pulpit' ' My !' said the lady, ' I guess I'll have to come and hear you !' And that was what she did.

Mr. Champness preached that morning his sermon on the law of the bird's nest (Deut. xxii. 6, 7). It was estimated that over 2,000 people were present ; the great place was crammed, stairs and aisles all occupied. The feeling was intense, especially when he pleaded with young people to make the old folks at home happy with a letter from them. At the close, Dr. R. A. Torrey, the pastor in charge, rose and said, ' If we'd a hymn in our book that would suit that sermon, we'd sing it, but we ain't ! So, let us rise and receive the Benediction !' So the service closed without a hymn.

Wherever he went it was the same ; people flocked to hear him, and scores of people crowded to the front after the services to shake hands with him, and tell, with tears running down their cheeks, of blessing brought to them through his work. Chicago impressed him greatly : its size, its wickedness, and the amount of Christian work done there. He said, ' I know of no place where heaven and hell are so mingled as in Chicago.'

But in that great place he did a thing that should be told. Some friends in England, whose son had gone to America to make money, had given his Chicago address to Mr. Champness, asking him to look him up. They had not heard from him for a long time, and were very anxious about him. On going to the address, Mr. Champness found the young man had gone, and nothing was known of him at all. He went to the

post office, but the officials, perhaps suspicious of some ulterior motive, refused to help him. Mr. Champness was greatly troubled and cast down. He returned to his room and spent some time in thought and prayer, again and again saying, 'I must find the lad. I can't go back to the old people without knowing something definite about him.' At last he persuaded one of the officials at the Bible Institute to go with him, and try to get an interview with the chief of the department at the post office. They went, and after great trouble they managed to see the chief, who, hearing all the story, became interested, and gave his help heartily. At last the young man was found. Mr. Champness went to see him, and was able to write to his friends by the next mail, and give them news of their dear one. No one could hear this story, and wonder that people loved Thomas Champness.

From Chicago his route led northward through Minnesota and North Dakota into Canada. The next point of call was to be Vancouver, whence sail the *White Empress* steamers of the Canadian Pacific Railway. . . . But, at a little wayside station, a minister boarded the train, and, getting into conversation with Mr. Champness, begged him to give a few days to Chilliwack, a place in his circuit where a new church had been built by the personal exertions of his people. This church he wished Mr. Champness to open; and the promise was given, for, as he said, 'When a man takes all that trouble to get me to go and preach for him, I should do wrong if I didn't go.' So after a few days spent in Victoria, Vancouver, with an old friend, Mr. Champness' returned over the route to Chilliwack, leaving the train at a wayside station where the railway crosses

the Fraser River. Here, in a blinding snowstorm, he embarked in a sort of rowing punt, and journeyed a mile or so up the river, where Mr. A. C. Wells, a good Methodist farmer, related to some Yorkshire friends, was waiting with a fine pair of horses ready for the eight-mile drive. It was an exciting drive; dark, wet, and cold, but a warm welcome and a change of clothes at Mr. Wells's beautiful home made up for the discomfort.

It was a lovely place, a fertile valley bounded on every side by snow-covered mountains, and Mr. Champness much enjoyed the few days there. Walking, talking, asking questions, he made the most of his time, and gained information afterwards to be handed on to appreciative audiences in England. The little church he had come to open was a handsome structure, all of wood, the material bought, but the labour given. Such effort called forth all Mr. Champness's sympathy, and he gave the people of his best. The chapel-yard was immense, fenced around, with one side covered. The need for this was apparent when the congregation began to arrive, for the people came in every variety of vehicle. Carriages, 'democrats,' buggies, sulkies, carts, wagons, &c., while some had walked, and some rode the 'cayeuse,' the Canadian brother of the American 'broncho,' and all left their horses and 'rigs' in the covered yard while the service proceeded. The place was crammed, a spirit of glad devotion was felt, and the service was a time of blessing. But the best of human joys come to an end, and all too soon Chilliwack was left behind, a joyous memory of kindly entertainment and much-appreciated effort.

In China Mr. Champness was cordially welcomed,

and during the three months of his stay preached many times, walked many miles, and visited many homes and spheres of work. His sermons were all translated by interpreters, sentence by sentence, but it was remarkable to see how, in some cases, the Chinese seemed to anticipate his words, reading his gestures before they heard the translation. Mr. Champness felt keenly the responsibility of these services; he would say, 'I must be effective; I shall never see these men again till I get to heaven.' And he preached with great power, howbeit the interpreters were frequently at a loss for an adequate rendering of his original expressions.

At Hankow, where he preached his first sermon in China, the lesson was read by a blind boy, from the Blind School founded by David Hill. The boy read rapidly, from the book printed for the use of the blind, the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke; those who knew Mr. Champness will not be surprised to hear that, as he stood by the boy's side, looking at him reading in another tongue the story so familiar, the tears streamed unchecked down his face. The service, strange and uncouth as it seemed to European ears, made him glad. He worshipped with the Chinese, although in another tongue, and when he came to preach, he spoke with great force on the words, 'The Lord shut him in.' Here, as elsewhere, the people heard him gladly.

Many a story could be told of the visits paid and the journeys taken. Among the missionaries of our own and other Churches Mr. Champness was at once at home, for he was a missionary himself. The English services he conducted gave him keen pleasure; he would say afterwards 'I am a privileged man; I may have been speaking to some of the noble army of

martyrs!' The opportunities for preaching to the heathen greatly impressed him, and the sight of two hundred heathen in one service gave him keen delight. Here, as at home, he found opportunity for talking to preachers—a work he loved. A 'Grindstone' Class was held in Hankow while he was there, and the preachers greatly enjoyed his talks, which of course had to be interpreted. But, on one occasion, when he was talking to seventeen Chinese preachers on the parable of the Ten Pounds, at the end of one of his sentences, a man said to the interpreter, 'That does not need interpreting!'

China is a land which abounds in tiny hamlets, and Mr. Champness wrote in his journal: 'I am deeply impressed with the number of small villages, or rather hamlets, which I see on every hand. About twenty or thirty families live together in mat huts. I do not see how these people are to be reached by any existing agency; it is no use for a man to try to do this work who has not a good grip of the language, is not fond of walking, and who is afraid of hardship. Here is a matter for intercession; a woman could do this better than a man, I think. We want Protestant nuns for the job.'

Everywhere it was the same; his eyes were always open to needs and opportunities of service, and all he saw moved him to fervent intercession before the Throne of Grace, on behalf of the spiritually destitute whom he saw on every side. It should be remembered that during this time Mr. Champness's health was not of the best; he was very vigorous and active, but some of the conditions of life in China tried him more than he would admit. Nights of pain and sleeplessness were

by no means uncommon, and although he made light of it all, it was a relief to his travelling companion to get him safely aboard ship, homeward bound, via Australia.

The voyage south from Hongkong is almost invariably rough for the first two days, and both the travellers suffered. Mr. Champness, who preferred the sofa in the cabin to the less airy lower berth, was once rolled right off among the boxes on the floor. But within a few days the vessel entered the calm and lovely seas of the Eastern Archipelago, calling, on Palm Sunday, at the Portuguese settlement on the island of Timor. Mr. Champness was greatly delighted with the tropical beauty of the place; the palm-fringed beach, with swamp and hills beyond, reminded him of Sierra Leone, left forty years before. It was a pure coincidence that he saw this place, for it is seldom visited by passing ships, and it is pleasant to think that he saw the land which Bligh, of the *Bounty*, reached when set adrift in an open boat by the mutineers. It was at the other end of the island that Bligh landed; but still, the interest was there, and thus his visit to the squalid Portuguese settlement on the lovely bay, with clear blue water revealing the branching white coral below, was a pleasing memory for many days. On arrival in Moreton Bay, where passengers disembark for Brisbane, Mr. Champness was met by the Rev. James Doran, an old *Joyful News* Evangelist; and the Rev. W. F. James, Australian Representative at the English Conference of 1906. What a hearty welcome they gave, and how much it was appreciated! In the steam-launch a preacher's chat occupied the journey up-river to Brisbane, where letters were waiting, bearing news that increased the

longing for home which similar news had produced in China.

The time spent in Brisbane was short, but crowded with meetings; Mr. Champness revelled in preaching without an interpreter, and some powerful services greatly cheered him. The warm climate he found enervating, and was not sorry when the time came to move on to Sydney, where he was received with great heartiness. Here the scene of his work was principally in the Centenary Hall, the centre of a thoroughly up-to-date City Mission. Every day there were meetings for Bible study, and large numbers attended. One day Mr. Champness was preaching on Acts xii. with great dramatic force, and when describing Herod's punishment by the stroke of the angel, he put his hand to his side, and sank back into the big pulpit-chair behind him! Several people turned pale with alarm, and some even rose to go to him, when he leaped to his feet and resumed his address. To those who were not used to his intensely dramatic style it was a terrifying experience, while even the writer, who knew what was coming, was not *quite* at ease. Mr. Champness's only comment on the service in his diary was, 'Had a nice time on Acts xii. !'

The Sunday spent in Sydney was a full day; too full, but he would not be persuaded to rest in the afternoon. A large Methodist demonstration had been arranged to take place in the Town Hall; Mr. Champness was to speak, and 5,000 people came to the meeting. It was not an easy place to speak in, but he made himself heard, an effort which greatly tried him. The morning and evening services were in the Centenary Hall; both services were effective, though Mr. Champ-

ness was only poorly in the morning, having had a bad night. However, that service was made a blessing, and a relative by marriage, a man who had come out to Australia years before, had special reason to thank God for having been there, as he received good which wrought a change in his life.

Melbourne and Adelaide were visited, services being held in each place. In Australia, as will be expected, Mr. Champness met many old friends, and enjoyed the communion he held with them. It would be invidious to name any one of the many people who entertained him; every one gave him their best, and he appreciated their attentions very greatly. Everywhere he was made happy by the kindness of his hosts and hostesses, and would say he felt ashamed of himself when they treated him so well.

At last the day came for sailing; Australia was left behind; the long weeks at sea dragged slowly by, though he rejoiced to think that every turn of the screw brought him nearer home. Finally the long-looked-for day came when he met the 'Missis' in Paris, and spent a few happy days with her there before returning to England, to take up again the work he had left so long.

This record of his tour shows to some extent the many-sided charm of Mr. Champness's personality. Some of the incidents are told for the first time, in the hope of giving further light on a well-loved man to those who loved him well.

CHAPTER XXIV

LAST YEARS AT ROCHDALE, 1899-1903— RETIREMENT TO LUTTERWORTH

ON returning from the foreign tour, Thomas Champness at once resumed his work. He was apparently full of vigour, and, as far as his public life was concerned, he was as much in evidence as ever. But the tour, though of great use to him, was not permanently successful as regards health. Not very long after his return he had a slight seizure, the nature of which alarmed his family, but which he refused to consider serious enough to put a stop to his work for more than a week-end.

We were staying a few days at Pipewell with our kind friends Mr. and Mrs. Riggall. Our visit was ending, and we were preparing to leave for the train, when my husband suddenly staggered and fell. Though only for a few moments unconscious, he was for some time unable to move, and it became certain that he could not go to his Sunday appointment. He recovered, however, during the hours of Sunday, and could not be persuaded that there was anything in this seizure to interfere with the fulfilment of his engagement to go down to Chipping Campden for a week of open-air services. A few weeks previously one of our men, Mr. Roderick Kedward, had been arrested for preaching in the open air in that old-world town, and had been sent to jail, as he refused to pay the fine imposed by the

magistrates. The matter had come before Conference, and would have been taken up by the Committee of Privileges, but for the fact of Mr. Kedward's mother being very ill, and greatly troubled at the occurrence, so that we had been obliged to pay the fine and assent to his release. Mr. Champness at once said in the Conference that he proposed to go down to Campden and spend a few days there in open-air preaching, risking all consequences, and the Ex-President (Hugh Price Hughes) said that 'if Champness was put in prison, he would follow on.' When the time came, Mr. Champness was really too ill to go, but he went; and, to our surprise, strength was given to him, and he went through with his programme with much success and blessing. He took the precaution first to interview the chief constable, got a sight of the latest revision of the by-laws, and discovered how he could preach outside and yet be safe from the dangers of the law-breaker. In his own words, as written for *Joyful News*, he tells the story:

Studying this by-law, I found that preaching could not be objected to, so long as the preacher did not 'shout continuously.' We could not 'sing within a hundred yards of any dwelling-house, if the occupant objected,' so we determined we would have a service without singing. There were a few boys under the tree which has been for generations the rallying-ground for open-air preachers. We three [himself and two of his men] took our stand there. I began to talk to the boys, and managed to make them so interested that the men who were standing at the other side of the road came over to see what was the matter, and when we had a number of adults I preached on the story of Naboth's Vineyard, which has always been a favourite of mine in the open air; it is as picturesque as it is powerful. There were no complaints, and the service passed off without any trouble. The next evening my son

Charles was with us, and we four sang along the streets. The by-law does not prevent this ; you can sing and talk as loud as you like, so long as you keep moving. I want preachers who are in danger of being fined or imprisoned to remember this. . . . It seems to me that the right thing is to speak in one's natural voice, without bawling, and to do the singing while on the march.

So he went through that wonderful week, holding services each evening ; and, as he said, the grace of God so over-ruled even his bodily infirmities that Satan must have been as disappointed as he was when he was permitted to afflict poor Job !

It had been arranged between ourselves that if Mr. Champness should be arrested and taken to prison the fine was not to be paid ; that would have been contrary to his principles, and I would not like to have been the person to go against his wishes in such a matter as that ! No one could live with Thomas Champness and not know that he would welcome persecution for righteousness' sake. At the same time, knowing the state of his health, I was very thankful to find that we were spared that trial.

He went on through the winter, teaching, preaching, and travelling. Only those in the inner circle of his friends knew that every now and then there were symptoms which pointed to danger, and he was, as usual, beset with applications for services which he found it very difficult to evade or decline. Writing to his father at this time he says :

Many thanks for your beautiful letter. I was glad to receive it, for I feared that you thought my zeal was declining. I am simply weary, and feel unequal to the task which comes upon me. And the people are greedy, and would never let me take

rest if I listened to them. The worst of it is, I have promised more than I know how to perform. I cannot do work with the ease I once did, and I feel I do not perform it with the same power. This week I have been in the Altrincham, Gravel Lane, Bristol, and Hereford Circuits. . . .

But, on the other hand, God wonderfully comforts me. I am cast down sometimes with the lack of financial support such as used to come ; but God comes in and cheers me by His loving smile. You see, some who used to help grandly do so no more, and I fear will never do it again. Men like myself, who are independent, are in danger of being left like Uriah. On the other hand, there are those who love us with a great love. The great masses of the Methodist people are with us.

He was fighting without the old reserves of strength, though the spirit was as eager as ever, and, even now, when once he was in the pulpit or seated in his chair at 'the Grindstone,' 'he forgot everything in the joy of the work.' At the same time, all work became more of an effort to him ; he was so weary when he came home that it was necessary to guard his privacy and keep the house quiet for his sake ; and this was, so far as I recall it, the practice of the Home for the remainder of the years we spent at Rochdale. His meals had to be taken in private, and we were obliged to recognize that, however much he might share in the home-life of the Methodist people, it was only occasionally that he could bear even the quietest family intercourse in his own home. He would sleep away his exhaustion in his arm-chair, and none but ourselves know how conversation, laughter, and music, in which he had been wont to delight, had to be hushed, so that he could rest, and thus get ready for 'the men,' or 'for the journey to-morrow.'

In April, 1900, I was away for a few days, and he wrote :

I am very weary. I am not going to the men this afternoon. I am not feeling very well, and must tell you how yesterday I had great difficulty. I did not say anything, but my left leg was queer ; you know—numb and heavy.

The next day, when riding out, he fell off his horse, not knowing how it happened. A friend saw the occurrence, and took him home. He wrote :

I shall not dare to ride again. I am very sorry, for I don't see how I can keep well without exercise. M—— says, a tricycle. But I am not sure I shall have the courage to try that even, for I might fall off that just as easily.

So the rides which had been so helpful to him had to be given up, and he owned that never again could he experience such delight in this world ! More than five years later, on the last walk we ever took together, we met a groom riding a beautiful cob, and I shall never forget how my husband stopped and looked the horse over, asking friendly questions of the man, who was pleased to be spoken to. As we moved on, he said, ' If I could afford it, I should like to buy a horse like that—I could ride all over this lovely country.' Then, as I ventured to remind him how long it was since he had attempted to ride, he turned to me with a smile, and said, ' Yes, and then, if I had a horse, you and I would lose our nice walks together, and that would never do !' Ah me ! that was our last, though we did not know, or at least, I did not !

Before this, however, many changes had taken place. In March, 1900, the venerable father of Thomas

Champness passed into the skies, having been for many years not only father, but friend and comrade to his son. He missed his father very much. Every Saturday he had been used to write to him, keeping him posted up in the various doings of the week. From some of these letters I quote at this point, evidently written in reply to some letter of fatherly exhortation.

Oct. 10, 1899.

Just a line, dear father, to say that I am greatly obliged for your kind and faithful letter. Mind you, I don't think I am backsliding. It is one of the marks of old age that 'desire shall fail.' Things which used to be a pleasure now are a pain, or something like it. I do not care as I once did for crowds and cheers. Well, I really hate to hear people clap their hands as they did at Leeds the other day. How I despise the applause! Let me have the smile of God; I fear the cheers of men are not always well-pleasing to Him.

I suppose they would say that the meeting last night was a good one, but how I stammered and paused! It is hateful to hear my poor talk, compared with the stream of words such a work demands. How feeble is my poor attempt to make the people pity the heathen! I am ashamed to think of it. It is perhaps as I get nearer the other world I feel the solemnity of these great topics, and learn how unfit I am to deal with them; but don't you worry. I am not the worse a Christian because I do not admire myself as much as I once did.

Jan. 13, 1900.

MY DEAR FATHER,—What a beautiful letter you sent me this week! It was delightful; thank you very much. It was very pleasant to go over the past once more. I daresay, as you sit over the fire you think a great deal about what has happened both at home and abroad. How history repeats itself! I thought of Leaf Street this morning, as we sat waiting for the cab to come to take Charlie away. Will, Margaret,

and Mary have gone to Liverpool to see him start. The boat does not leave before 4 p.m., I think, and I have to go all the way to Spalding for to-morrow, so must say good-bye here. I was glad in one sense, as it enabled me to be at home with his mother a little bit ; she feels it greatly, though she is very brave, and would not have it different.

To-morrow is the day to talk about the Twentieth Century Fund, so I shall preach from Caleb (Joshua xiv.). Methodism, like Caleb, has a record she is not ashamed of. Methodism, like Caleb, is not content with past achievements. Methodism, like Caleb, is aware of the difficulties. Methodism, like Caleb, relies on Jehovah's help. . . . I think I can make some interesting talk on these four points. On Wednesday I am at Pocklington, where I preach and speak on 'How to meet the New Century.' My health has greatly improved ; that spell of rest did me good, and I could do with some more, but cannot have it till after the Conference. I hope you keep pretty well. Much love to dear Mary and all, and to you, dear father, from your own son,

TOM.

In July, 1902, Thomas Champness attained his seventieth year. From the distant town where he spent part of that birthday he wired, 'Seventy salutes thee!' He was in full swing of work ; attended Conference in Manchester, joined his family at Bude for a short holiday, and then came back to Rochdale for another term with the men.

In the autumn of that year there came to us an unwonted trial. A young local preacher, in his desire to come to the Home, overlooked certain necessary precautions, and was the means of bringing with him the infection of small-pox. He was not well on arrival, and in my husband's absence I sent him back to his home, never guessing the cause of his illness. But

another man sickened, and then we knew. Prompt medical advice was sought, the patient removed to hospital, and every one in the house vaccinated. Mr. Champness was away, but, disregarding our suggestion that he should stay away, returned to share our quarantine and seclusion, which, by the blessing of God, happily closed with no further case of the disease.

Nov. 8, 1902.

Thanks for your letter. It is just like you, but I know what you think I shall do; come to you! That you have never doubted.

I wanted to wire, but I did not get the letters in time.

You will get this, and know I shall be home to dinner and to sleep for longer than I have been for some time. It will be all right, old girl. Fancy me preaching, with you inside a small-pox hotel! Not likely; that is more than my usual idea of propriety!

After it was all over, the house disinfected and purified, and the men had re-assembled for the work of the new year, 1903, there came to Mr. Champness the conviction that he must seriously consider the future. It had always been his opinion that men should not hold on to either work or office until old age should hamper them. For seventeen years he had wrought to prepare the way for the great enterprise which he felt Methodism ought to take up, and now the time seemed to be at hand when he could, by God's help, see the training of local preachers and evangelists develop into its proper and perfected form. The burden we had both borne seemed all the heavier for the strain we had so recently gone through, and as we communed with each other we felt that if the *Joyful News* Mission was to survive us, we

must yield its oversight into other hands. It was a critical time. We prayed, I think, literally, 'without ceasing,' keeping the subject constantly in mind, and seeking very earnestly the definite 'word of the Lord' which should guide us.

In this, as in other things, Mr. Champness sought the advice of men of prayer and faith, asking them to join with us in prayer for the divine leading. One day a letter came from one of these friends which crystallized our own thought, and coincided with the direct 'word of the Lord' which had come to us while at prayer. This friend wrote, 'Why should not Thomas Cook take hold of your work?' We looked at each other as we read this sentence. 'I shall write and ask Thomas Cook to come over,' said my husband; and the result was that, after sundry interviews and negotiations and plans, we decided to hand over the control of our work to the Home Missionary Department, which appointed Thomas Cook as its Superintendent.

The decision once made, it was characteristic of Thomas Champness that he should wish it to take effect at once. The first idea was that the Mission should change hands in 1904, when the lease of Castleton Hall would expire, but that meant that we must keep on for another year, and for such an arrangement Mr. Champness had no mind; so events moved rapidly.

There were several things to be considered. The transfer must involve a complete change. Accordingly Dr. Pope and Mr. Cook began to look out for the Mission's new home. After some weeks, they heard that Cliff College, in Derbyshire, for many years used as a Missionary Training college, was to let, and after many preliminaries it was decided that the house should be

taken. Eventually it was purchased, and has proved to be the ideal place for the purpose.

Then also, we had to look out for a new home for ourselves, as retirement from the *Joyful News* Mission carried with it the necessity for a removal, as we hoped, into the quiet country. After the strenuous years we longed for rest, and to have a little house, with the minimum of household cares. My husband would not choose; there were many pleasant spots in the rural parts of the land which he liked, but there were certain conditions which limited his preferences. He stipulated that our home should be in the country, but on a trunk line of railway, not too far from a station, a post office, and a Wesleyan chapel, and he would like us to live in a place where we could help a struggling cause, rather than enjoy an easy, 'ready-made,' and already prosperous Methodism.

When asked, 'What made you go to Lutterworth?' the answer which comes most readily to one's lips is, 'It was of the Lord. He sent us, marked out the way, and literally guided our steps.' This was Mr. Champness's belief, and, from experience which I can only remember with wonder, it is mine. It was not so much our selection as God's direction, and as His appointment it was accepted with gladness of heart.

Thomas Champness knew something of Lutterworth from occasional visits to preach in the old chapel, and from his own efforts to help the faithful few in their brave attempt to uphold the little Methodist cause. Some of our men knew the place, and the people's eyes brightened as they spoke of the *Joyful News* evangelists whom they had loved in years gone by. It was at Lutterworth that our friend Moses Welsby once made

his appearance before a crowded congregation who were expecting to see Thomas Champness. It so happened that Mr. Champness had been taken ill and could not keep his engagement, so friend Moses went to supply. As he rose in the pulpit he saw the blank looks of the expectant people, and at once exclaimed, 'Yes, you may look. It's not *him*, it's *me*!' This was irresistible; the people smiled, laughed, and listened sympathetically to 'Owd Mo's' loving explanation of his leader's absence, as well as to the sermon he preached. This by the way.

When it came to giving up the Mission, Thomas Champness felt it much, as was to be expected, and many of his letters tell of the fact that he did not like the idea of being considered as an 'out-of-work.' Writing to one of his daughters, he gives expression to something of this feeling:

July 1, 1903.—The men will soon be out of my grasp. There is something pathetic about it. Cook will do great things for us as a Connexion, but I shall feel rather like a bulk! However, I shall have my pulpit. None but God can take that away; and the burden of the work as a whole was pressing us down. . . . Pray that I may be still useful to preachers.

Conference was at Camborne that year, and he became a supernumerary, with many kind words said of him and his work by his brethren. He had a happy time, enjoying the Cornish gatherings, and putting in some time in open-air services in the summer evenings after Conference had closed for the day. This work was one in which he always had delighted, and it was very like him to rejoice that he was able to bear a hand. He wrote of these services:

July (CAMBORNE).—We had an open-air service last night ; Josiah and I. Wiseman came up after we had been at it a bit, and he gave us a fine talk.

We had a great crowd last night at the open-air service ; we shall keep up the meetings all next week.

We had a wonderful open-air last night. We caught the chapel people. As a rule we have a number of non-chapel-goers, for they cannot sing. Perhaps they mixed with the crowd.

Last night we had a wonderful gathering at the open-air service. Cuthbertson told us a story of Peter Mackenzie.

In a letter dated July 29 he wrote :

Your husband has a greater hold on the Conference than he ever had, which will be pleasant to remember.

After another Sunday he joined some of his family at Bude for a quiet and restful week, preaching in the little chapel, and enjoying the air of the beautiful downs, conversing about the Conference, and planning how he would employ his time when he had no 'work,' as if such a time would ever come to him !

So we came to Lutterworth, and very happy, and full of the work he loved best of all, were the two years of his life in this little place.

When he came into the house for the first time he said, 'This is the place where I shall live and die.' He had made a like remark in writing when he went to Castleton Hall, fourteen years before ; but at seventy-one years of age, and with the record of such a wonderful life behind him, the spoken word carried with it the con-

viction of its truth. We knelt down together in our own room, and consecrated ourselves afresh to God.

Many will agree with the sentiments of a letter which came about this time from a ministerial friend, and greatly pleased Mr. Champness. Forwarding it to a dear invalid relative, he writes: 'Perhaps this letter may interest you. It was kind of my friend Stanley Hunt to take the trouble to copy out the extract, was it not?'

DEAR MR. CHAMPNESS,—I have lately been reading, with profit and interest, a course of Ecclesiastical History, and examining for myself the foundations of the Church of Rome. Reading to-day of the Wycliffe period, I came across these words, and thought of Thomas Champness. . . . 'He retires to Lutterworth, with a heart as strong as his body is weak: formerly often in disgrace, but now full of inward joy, and essentially triumphant. He goes on writing and preaching against the abuses of the time. . . . It is a fine sight to see a man worn down by a life of constant toil, smitten with a malady which might seem to command a cessation of toil, yet learning no lesson of indolence or cowardice. Never was his voice more loudly, clearly raised in the cause of Scriptural truth than at Lutterworth, as he waited the approach of that hour which was to silence it for ever.' John Wycliffe died there December 31, 1384. . . ., but the gospel he lived and died to preach is still heard there. May Thomas Champness preach the same gospel for many days, is the sincere prayer of

W. STANLEY HUNT.

Those who imagined that Mr. Champness was going to spend quiet and leisurely years of retirement at Lutterworth were mistaken, for almost at once he resumed his usual habits, travelling from place to place, preaching and addressing meetings, with only an

occasional interval of a few days at Lutterworth. When at home he made the most of the time, taking long walks, getting acquainted with the people, ministering to the sick and needy, and preaching in the villages around, as well as in the town itself. Very soon the necessity for a new chapel manifested itself, and he began to see why we had been directed to this place. For many years Lutterworth had been a problem as regards its Methodism. Geographically inconvenient, and financially undesirable, none of the surrounding centres of Methodism coveted, or cared for it; and yet here was a very old cause, with a history heroic enough to make its people cling to the ancient and uncomfortable chapel with a loving devotion. Here were a few praying men and women holding together a little society, and hoping almost against hope that some day there would come a change for the better. One man among them had faith enough to acquire a 'corner lot' in a beautiful situation, and this he had refused to sell, because, as he said, it would be 'just the place for our new chapel.' Often he had been twitted by his unbelieving townsmen as to his 'new chapel,' but at last the time was coming; God had heard prayer, and the answer was on its way when Thomas Champness came, by the will of God, to reside in the town.

On August 30 he preached here for the first time, the chapel being crowded at night, and on the following Tuesday gave a memorable Bible-reading on the 1st Psalm. 'Vestry crowded. Two people had come four miles.' The said 'vestry' would seat about fifteen persons, but quite double that number were present; and from that meeting may be dated the beginning of the scheme for a new chapel. He addressed himself to

the task with characteristic energy. 'I am here now,' he said, 'I do not know how long I may be'; and in that spirit he exerted himself to encourage the Lutterworth people to arise and build, with such good effect that seemingly unsurmountable difficulties vanished, the land was secured, plans were drawn, foundations were dug, and on September 28, 1904, the memorial-stones of a new and beautiful chapel were laid. The people were poor; and if any place might be warranted in being hopeless and despairing as to its power to obtain a new Wesleyan Methodist chapel surely it was Lutterworth. The Lord knew this, and so He came to the help of His poor, forlorn, but faithful people, and sent amongst them the man who, more than all others, had the special gift that was needed to meet the case. It was not that Thomas Champness was what is known as a 'good beggar,' but he had 'a way with him,' and howe'er it might be, he could always get money for any part of God's work he had in hand. One lady in a distant town is reported to have said to her husband, on hearing that Mr. Champness had gone to live at Lutterworth, 'We shall have to find some money for him, for he is sure to have *some* new scheme on hand either of building or evangelizing, or *both*.'

It was both, for Mr. Champness realized that a new chapel would be of no use if the people themselves were indifferent; he gave himself to special prayer on their behalf, and wrought among them to arouse their Christian love and zeal, always believing that God would honour the faith and answer the prayers of His servants. The leisure hours, when he came in from distant preaching-places, were diligently used

in letting his friends know by letter and circular what were the needs of Lutterworth, and what was its claim on the sympathy and help of John Wesley's children ; at the same time he was instant in prayer, expectation, and faith in God. The Scripture was fulfilled: 'And God granted him that which he requested.' To Thomas Champness it was a simple matter ; he knew the source of help, and when his petitions had been presented he said, as was his custom, 'I shall *expect* money to come now, by every post !' 'Any letters ?' was always his first question on entering his home after an absence ; *now* it was, 'Any letters with money for the chapel ?' And the money began to come, long before the memorial stones were laid, so that the whole neighbourhood knew that a great change had come to the Methodists in Lutterworth, and that the days of prosperity had begun. Such an object-lesson was needed, in view of the struggling position of Nonconformity in this part of rural England.

The new Wesleyan church at Lutterworth is known as the 'Wycliffe Memorial' ; it is a standing witness to scriptural and evangelical truth, as well as an evidence of the power of prayer and faith in the God who gives to His Church in all ages those who stand for the defence of His gospel.

CHAPTER XXV
FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE : THE PASSIVE
RESISTER, 1903-4

TWENTY-FIVE years before he died, Thomas Champness put in writing his wishes with regard to his family in case he should be called away. One sentence in this document is :

I hope none of my children will hesitate about following their conscience in matters of religion, but that they may all hate the word *priest* as much as I do. There is but one Jesus, and He saves from sin.

His hatred of priestcraft and priestly domination was inherited ; and experience only made the hatred more vehement, as he witnessed its effects in the villages of this country. For the sake of those who had to suffer for their religious convictions in many a country parish, he longed for the time when the yoke of the priest should be taken away. In view of this, it is not surprising that he should be a keen and observant watcher of current events, especially as to the education of the nation. In 1896 he wrote on the fly-leaf of his pocket Bible his deliberate view of the latest action of the clerical party in this direction.

April 29, 1896.

It is my wish to say, at this time, when the Government are bringing in their Bill for Education, that I think it a great effort on the part of the powers of evil to bring England under the foot of the priest ; but I believe that God will over-rule it

for the good of the land, and that the people will get the education of their children into their hands by the very means by which the enemies of the Bible hope to enthrall England. Haman is preparing a gallows for himself once more.

THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

The time, however, had not yet come. The Bill to which he refers was thrown out; but further legislation tended towards the triumph of the clerics, which came, or seemed to come, to a climax in 1902, when the notorious Education Act made the ratepayer responsible for the maintenance of religious teaching in all day-schools throughout the land. By this time Thomas Champness was growing old. At seventy years of age it might be thought that he was justified in quietly ignoring national disputes and difficulties, and keeping himself free from either contending party. Not so, however, did he interpret his duty. He was to the last an enemy of the priest, and soon showed that he was ready to rise to the conflict with injustice and clerical intolerance.

In the Wesleyan Conference, no less than in the columns of his own paper, he made his views known, and nothing pleased him more than the position taken up by the main body of Methodists on this great question of National Education. Not only so, but he felt bound to enter his personal protest. That clerical control should be supreme in the village schools, and that Nonconformists should have to pay for their children being taught that Dissent was a sin was repugnant to him; he could not endure it, and determined that he would not pay the rate. The Act came into force about the time when he became a supernumerary, living in his own rented house, and thus he was a ratepayer in Lutterworth as well as at Rochdale.

The first time he was summoned for the non-payment of the school-rate he suffered distraint, both at Rochdale and Lutterworth, some of his furniture being taken away and sold. This occasioned a feeling of disgust, and the fact that the goods were bought in for him by kind and generous friends did not sweeten the transaction to his taste. He declared that he would never again submit to it, and expressed his firm determination to go to jail, if that were the alternative. Of course I was unwilling that he should do that which might have very serious consequences to his health. But he consulted his lawyer, and decided to execute a deed conferring his effects upon his wife. The subjoined extract from a letter which he wrote to me at this time reveals his feelings and views better than would any words of mine :

AMPTHILL, *Jan.* 12, 1904.

You ought to have in writing a few words about this going to jail. I cannot endure the furniture being taken and then bought in, and all that sort of thing. It is not real. We ought to suffer, and do it cheerfully.

So you shall take all I have, and the Tories may have my body. Let me have a chance of suffering, and then I shall not be ashamed to meet the men of my name who lived before me. And the woman who sang psalms when she was burning ; I must not be ashamed to meet her in heaven !

If I should be sick, they would take me to hospital ; and if I could only die in jail, it would help the cause more than my life can, because of my age. So don't hinder me. You took me for better or worse. Write out the inventory, and let Mr.— have it, please. This is your authority. Obey me as you have loved me, and God will bless you in the act.

Much love,
TOM.

29 April 1896

It is my wish to say at this time when the Government are bringing their bill for Education that I think it a great effort on the part of the power of evil to bring England under the foot of the priest but I believe that God will overrule it for the good of the Land and that the people will get the education of their children with their hands by the very means by which the enemies of the Bible hope to overthrow England. Satan is preparing a fallow for himself once more!

Thomas Champness

FACSIMILE OF WRITING ON THE FLY-LEAF OF HIS BIBLE, IN VIEW OF
PROPOSED EDUCATION BILL, 1896

The next time the rate-collector came he was told what had been done, and the result was a committal to prison for three days ; so to Leicester jail accordingly went Thomas Champness, for conscience' sake.

We were at the Southport Convention together when the warrant was issued for his arrest. By mutual agreement it was decided that I should remain there, and he should return to Lutterworth, placing himself at the disposal of the police. When it got known in the Convention that Mr. Champness was committed to prison, there was great indignation and sorrow. I shall not soon forget a prominent minister coming to me in the Tent, and, with tears in his voice, saying, 'When I heard of it, I wanted to go too!'

The day following he wrote to me from Lutterworth :

Just a line to say that Stanley Hunt and young Groves (a Leicester friend) have come in. I am glad, because that will prevent any scene, and yet the matter will make a stir all over Leicester.

The Rev. Stanley Hunt was at that time Wesleyan chaplain to the Leicester county jail, and this fact explains the allusion in the next letter :

July 2, 1904.

MY DEAR WIFE,—As you have heard, Stanley Hunt came with Arthur Groves. We arranged matters so that there will be no demonstration. I shall leave the jail at seven o'clock on Monday, and go to breakfast with him ; afterwards come on here, proceeding in the evening to Desborough en route for Pipewell. You would get the letter from Mrs. Riggall ; it would be easy for you to come on Tuesday. Stanley Hunt tells me that he told the chief warden that I was coming, but he wouldn't believe it. He said, 'He won't come, his people won't let him. No one comes here that can

stop out,' &c. . . . Miss E—— understands things. She said, in her way—you know how—'I don't sympathize with you, for you will enjoy it.' She thinks I shall make no wry faces at the food, &c., &c.

Taking his friends all over the world into his confidence, he published the following letter in his paper :

FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE : IN LEICESTER JAIL

LUTTERWORTH, *July 2, 1904.*

TO THE READERS OF 'JOYFUL NEWS'

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—On Thursday last, word came to me in Southport that the Bench of Magistrates had sentenced me, in default of not paying the Education rate, to three days' imprisonment. I have, therefore, returned here to surrender myself to the authorities.

Twice over my goods have been seized. That is a matter I do not care to have repeated, and therefore have made it impossible, preferring a term of imprisonment. At the same time, I feel that my duty is to submit with cheerfulness, and accept my sentence with meekness, though I hate and abhor the iniquitous Education Act.

As a man cannot tell what may happen to him in new and exciting circumstances, I feel it right, before I go to jail, to say what has been written. Before this comes into your hands I hope to have been released, and allowed to begin again the work I love, rejoicing to be, like the apostles, 'counted worthy to suffer shame.'

I remain, with kind wishes,

Yours truly,

THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

It was like him to refuse all popular demonstrations in his favour. To suffer was a stern and simple duty to God and his country ; but he could not exhibit himself as a sufferer, and from the prison he went quietly back

to his work of preaching the gospel of the crucified and risen Saviour.

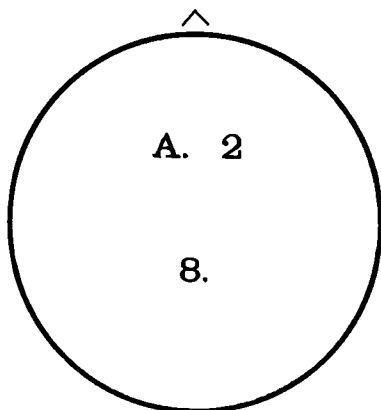
On a postcard he wrote :

LUTTERWORTH, *July 4.*

I am out again, you see, none the worse ; but prison is not paradise. The warders were kind ; they had to do their duty. No watch ; could not know the time ; no pens, paper, pencil, or anything. It might have been worse, though ; I might have been there like the other poor chaps. I heard a remarkable sermon in the chapel. How they did sing ! It's the only time they can use their voices.

LUTTERWORTH, *July 4, 1904.*

MY DEAR WIFE,—You will have heard all about that unhappy husband of yours who has been in durance vile. I am glad that you had a line from one who had seen him. It was worth something to have had the new experience. In future it will be one day, or, rather, one night and a bit of two days ! I told the chief warder that I should be coming again. He said, 'We had better keep a room for you.' 'Oh,' said I, 'No. 8 will do very well.' That was my number. I had it hung on my button,



on a yellow ground.

I went to meet him at Pipewell, for the great missionary gathering on Tuesday, July 5. On his return home, letters of sympathy came crowding in ; popular indignation at the imprisonment being mingled with praise and thanksgiving to God for the grace which had sustained His servant in this ordeal.

As winter came on some of his friends begged him to consider himself, and to be contented with having once entered his practical protest against the Education rate ; but this would not have been like him, so in December again he had the same experience, this time for four days. In a postcard to his friend, the Rev. H. T. Smart, he says :

Dec. 17, 1904.

I go to Leicester by the 2.30 train, and shall be out again on Tuesday. It will be a time for meditation and prayer such as I do not often have. Doubtless some new spring will be tapped which will refresh thirsty souls all over the land.

Kind love to all,

THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

While he was in prison for the second time, a little grandson was born in London, and the governor kindly conveyed the news to him ; he was visibly affected, the excitement of the news under the circumstances being almost too much for him. When he came home, he made request that the boy should have the word 'Leicester' included in his name ; and so it was, the child being baptized by his grandfather as Henry Thomas Leicester Champness, to keep in mind the suffering for conscience' sake. To his beloved invalid niece, whose gift of fruit was waiting for him when he returned home from Leicester jail, he wrote :

LUTTERWORTH, Dec. 21, 1904.

MY DEAR MARY,—Thanks, my dear, for the nicest grapes I ever tasted. I was pleased that you should think of your poor old uncle Tom. And a prisoner, just come out of jail, too!

What letters and telegrams have come, and keep coming! And for a grandson to come and all, just when I was feeling very poorly. I had had a bad night; cramp kept me awake, and when I did get to sleep I was awake by the clanging bell. There is very little time to fold up the mattress and blankets; and the hurry of dressing and lifting the heavy planks on end upset me, so that I was very ill. However, I kept quiet, and was better, when in came the Governor to read the wire. Your aunt wired him, you see, and he was good enough to come up and read the message.

The warders were very kind; the last morning the good man (a Methodist) told me to leave the blankets, and he sent a man to do the cell up after I left. (I have written a bit for *Joyful News* telling of these things.)

But, Mary dear, prisons are a blunder altogether. My eyes are open now to see that something else will have to be done, or we shall ruin all who go in. It is a great machine that makes no difference, weak or wicked. The officers are overworked, and that makes them apt to be cruel. They are part of the machine. . . . Somehow, I get on with people, and am a bit of a favourite. The Governor was kind, in his way. The doctor allowed me a light in my cell. But it was very cold. How do the poor things do who have no warm clothes? Alas for them!

Love to you all. Ever the same,

THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

In *Joyful News* he said:

Let me say that while I feel the indignity of prison, I am proud to have the privilege of suffering for the liberty of

conscience, and glad to have the opportunity of testifying against the iniquitous Education Act.

‘It will be seven days’ next time,’ said he, when he got home again. But there was no ‘next time,’ thank God!

When the rate was next collected, the small sum in dispute was deducted, but the expected summons to pay never came, and before another winter he was beyond all prisons.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LAST YEAR: 'EVENTIDE,' 1905

NOW we come to Thomas Champness's last year on earth, and a very happy year it was, though marked by great bodily suffering. So far as I remember, it brought with it few personal anxieties, the chief one being the future of *Joyful News*. The Mission itself provided for, there remained our beloved paper, and that he desired to place in other hands before age or failing health should incapacitate either himself or me for our editorial work. This burden, however, was one he carried very easily; his confidence in God enabled him to believe that a way would open, and that, as often before, the Lord would provide.

The transfer of *Joyful News* to the proprietorship of three of Thomas Champness's trusted friends—Revs. H. T. Smart, Samuel Chadwick, and Thomas Cook—took place, after some months of negotiation, in August, 1905, the first issue under the new management being that of the 7th of September. From the first hour he thought of disposing of the paper to the time the transaction was completed, he seemed to be delivered from all anxiety as to the future. In our almost daily correspondence of the intervening months, he would refer to the matter in his cheery fashion: 'Do not worry about this; I see that God has the whole thing in hand; you need not fear.

God has helped, and will do so again. . . .’ ‘God has us in tow.’

And so the honourable task passed from us just in time ; the deed of transfer was signed less than a month before his death, and he said : ‘It is over now ; we have done our share, and God has blessed us : He will bless the others ; and we have only to rest and be thankful.’

Looking back, we are inclined to think that there were premonitions, and that the messenger of the King had already told him that he would soon be expected in His presence. There was never any sadness to him in the thought of approaching death ; and if he knew, as he must have done, how much he would be missed, he only lived the more lovingly amongst those who were to be left behind. I believe that this explains much of the eagerness with which he entered on the year 1905.

More than ever in love with the work of preaching the gospel, he sought for every new opportunity, and began by a return to direct evangelistic work, such as he had not engaged in since he left Bolton District twenty years before. The first week in the year he spent at Granby, in the Bingham Circuit, conducting a series of special services, which were exceedingly happy and successful. His letters home, however, revealed the risk to his health, and he was urged to take care of himself. He writes on January 2 :

We had a grand day ; no converts, but they are coming. We had some pledges on Saturday night. Drunken men swept into the chapel by the outside singing at ten. It was a bit of a trial to me, as I have not the force, but God helped. We had a time of delight with the Covenant and Communion. I had a very brief service.

Again, on the 3rd of January :

My heart is feeble, but I have every comfort. Don't be afraid of me. You know that I am never calmer or more myself than when I am 'queer.' It is possible that the Holy One may take these services into His hands. I feel He is nigh at hand. You are knowing the worst, because I want your prayers.

From other letters I quote :

There are some hard cases here, but my heart has been much cheered with the saying: 'It is expedient that I go away.' He went, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. *I claim that promise!*

Saturday.—We had a bit of a break last night. Two or three of the young chaps yielded, and I hear half a dozen of them remained near the chapel after I was gone. If their leader yielded, they would. He does not sit near them, but he comes every night and remains in his place. These fellows don't want to leave, somehow. We are not going out at ten, like last Saturday. The men we are after have signed! It looks like a good story for Home Mission meeting. *Prayer began it.*

9th.—We had a royal day! It will be pleasant to look back upon. There is quite a little revolution in the place. I let the people go after a few prayers last night; most of the young fellows went out. Two or three stayed, and went into the inquiry-room. After a while some of the others came in again. I had been out to speak to them, found about a score of them standing in front of the chapel. I hear that one of the publicans is in despair; the other came to the service last night.

The mission proved very successful; several notable conversions followed on the services, and the good work went on in a glorious fashion.

He returned home from Granby full of joy and thank-

fulness, promising himself more pleasant work of the same sort, 'say next year.' In the meantime, he had no leisure, for his pocket-book was filled with engagements, and he was very happy to have it so. I know he lived by stratagem, regulating his diet as well as he could wherever he might be. This was not always easy, and some of his kind friends felt that he ought to take more nourishment than they could persuade him to attempt. There were wakeful nights, again, when the cough was bad, and he had to tide himself over the trying hours as best he could. Home was a very sweet, but infrequent luxury, for he was seldom there. From one end of England to the other, in village and city and town, he preached, with his old fire, though, alas ! without his old strength.

On the 9th of March he wrote, after a somewhat longer absence than usual :

Oh, how I am looking forward to four whole days at home ! It seems too good to be true.

Between March 16 and 22 he visited Stratford-on-Avon, Langford (Beds.), Beaufort (Mon.), Ludlow, Ledbury, Broadway (Worcs.), and was home for one day ; then away again to Bilston, East Kirkby, Birmingham, and home for one or two days, and away. So it went on. His letters give glimpses of his experiences at this time :

The feature of yesterday was the large proportion of men-folk. I fear the women don't have the chance they ought to have (this was at Beaufort, Mon.). And the singing ! I did not know that such music could be heard in this world. For the first time in my life I understood the term 'the sound of many waters.' Next week I must tell 'Ch.' and the other

foreign men about that singing. We had 'Ebenezer,' 'Diadem,' 'Aberystwith,' &c. I can understand now what 'emotion' means ; I could not bear many such days.

He slackened none of his labours for age or weakness ; indeed, it seems to us now as though the very thought that it could not be for long may have urged him to attempt all that was possible. Even his visits home were filled with activities, and the exhausted frame seemed scarcely rested before he was again on the rails. To all friendly and loving remonstrances he would reply that he knew it all, but he could not pull up 'just then' ; it was always to be 'next year,' or 'after such and such a time,' as for instance in a letter to his friend Mr. Dillon :

I shall have to rest more. There are many engagements, and I don't know how to act. You cannot well preach at one place and disappoint another. In future I will arrange not to have more than six services per week, but how I am to get through what has been arranged will have to be found out.

The great event of the year, and the crown of all Thomas Champness's public life, was the opening of the new chapel at Lutterworth on Easter Tuesday. He felt very nervous about it ; he was not well, and the excitement, even in prospect, tried his heart. More than once he expressed his fears to me, and as the day approached a great solemnity rested upon him. Yet he was preaching up to the very time, feeling, as he often did, that work was his best help. A fortnight before the event, he wrote to one of his daughters :

Easter Tuesday is the next big thing for me, and I cannot think of the right word and thoughts for the first service. I feel the solemnity much more than of any other place I have opened. It is the child of my old age.

And on the morning of the day, again :

April 25.—The great day has come, and we are to open the new chapel. I am feeling very weak ; the fact is, I cannot bear these big things. I am unworthy of the task. Somehow the sacredness of the task appeals to me as never before. I have preached the first sermon in chapels many times, but to-day I am thinking of what occurred at the opening of the Temple. ‘The priests could not minister,’ we are told. I feel that beforehand, and my heart is feeble at the prospect. Then the place will be crowded. What would I not give to escape ! but that would be cowardly. Very few, if any, people can understand my feelings, but how much nicer to-morrow it will be to preach in a country village ! Sometimes I feel that I shall be called away suddenly, without any time to say anything, and it may be in this service. Should such a thing occur, as I suppose, before we meet, you must remember that, so far as folk in heaven care for folk on earth, your father will always be interested in you and your work. Well, good-bye, dear girl, with much love on this eventful day,

FATHER.

Referring to this day in a later letter, he says :

You will be glad to know I am better. A few days’ rest did wonders for me, though I look back on the day I last wrote you with a kind of shudder. I was ill, and walked on the edge of the grave all the time. Exertion enfeebles me greatly, but it is better to keep on working than to be an invalid.

Well, Easter Tuesday came, and there were crowds indeed ! The Lutterworth people would have no other preacher for their opening day ; and so Mr. Champness took the first service, and preached from Psalm lxxxiv. 4. It must have been difficult to report what he said, for he was very ill, and labouring under strong excitement and emotion. I trembled for him, and he afterwards

told me that he thought more than once he was going straight from thence to heaven. Every one felt the power and presence of the Holy One in our midst; and a wonderful awe rested on the people even amidst their gladness. Mr. Champness read the 126th Psalm, and almost broke down over the words, so aptly true to the occasion, 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion we were like them that dream.' And who that heard it can forget the tremulous *shout* with which he read, '*The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad!*'

From his own notes I am able to give some idea of the sermon as he *intended* to preach it; but, as he said afterwards, the excitement of the occasion somewhat interfered with the 'proper order' of the divisions.

Text: '*Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee.*'

This is what a man said who had a very little Bible; no New Testament; no Jesus on the cross; but it is not what we have but what we use. My wealth does not consist in what I possess. (Mustard seed planted.)

We have offered this house to God; He will not refuse it. Has shown us great favour already. Who would have believed this place possible a little time ago?

This is a Methodist house of prayer. 'Friends of all, enemies of none,' said John Wesley.

Some of us who are here have come from far; I want us to see that this building is associated with human happiness. How much suffering will be prevented here! how much peace and joy produced!

(Easter.)

The preachers ought to be happy. None can come who has not been redeemed. None too wicked (banker). N.B.—Story here of workman on the dyke-banks in Lincolnshire

who prayed, 'Lord, I've been a bad 'un ; make me a good 'un,' &c.

Laymen will preach here ; there will be liberty to pray ; if cannot pray, can say AMEN.

Children will be happy here, I hope ; instructed ; new school.

Happy pulpit ; happy preacher ; happy people.

Will you accept Christ ?

Will you accept more of the Holy Ghost the Comforter ?
You ; you ; prove it true. 'Blessed.'

Occasionally during the summer he was taken ill while away from home, and though he made light of it, the symptoms were serious. When away from home he found it needful to provide against the exhaustion which came on during the night.

March 21.—For the last few nights I have taken some bread-and-butter upstairs so as to eat about four o'clock. This, I find, greatly helps me. It will have to become a habit.
Another milestone to show how far I have gone !

May 16.—You would hear that I have had a bad turn. Indeed, I had to leave the pulpit before I had quite finished my sermon. Ignominious ! . . . Is it not a blessed thing that I have not to go to D—to-day ? Instead of that I remained in bed till noon, then had some tea and toast for dinner. I need not tell you every one is kind. . . . (Next day).—No wonder you sent a wire ! J. H. forgot to post my letter, but remembered in the night, and went out at 4.30 a.m. to do so ! I am all right ; a little shaky, some would think. I am going for a ride (in motor-car), and will finish when I come back. . . . We have been out for our ride ; very nice ; it is wonderful what ground we have got over ; we passed W——'s house on our way. It is lovely weather here ; but I would like to see how it is at Lutterworth. Fancy that man wanting me to stay at Southampton ! I told him that I take my holidays at home.



WESLEYAN CHURCH, LUTTERWORTH, WITH GRAVE OF THOMAS CHAMPNESS (WYCLIFFE MEMORIAL IN FOREGROUND)

Last night the place was crowded, and I was poisoned with bad air, so this morning my heart avenged itself. I shall take some food upstairs to-night, so that I can eat as soon as I wake. It is easy to see that if I am not careful there is trouble ahead; but care will do wonders.

Again, on June 28 :

My breathing is queer. Sometimes I fear that my condition is serious, but we will not fear, dear. . . . I have not been used to dread preaching as I seem to do to-day. I am writing before afternoon service, and will add a line after. . . . Well, I have got through, but am not surprised at a man saying, 'You cannot do it as you used to do.' He was right. However, I have no heavy work before September, if then. I shall have a nice rest in August. What I have to do is to resist the depression which threatens men when they are feeble.

June 29.—I had a sore fit of coughing this morning, and alarmed my kind hostess as I fell back on the sofa. I fear she thought I was going to faint, or *something else*. But breakfast did wonders for me. Still, I am feeble. The friends here are grieved that they must look out for some one else to help them next year. Gradually we must persuade these who have had the best of me to let me alone. . . . I am pleased to think that our last days will be our best days. No one can say we grew dull as we became old.

The visit to Pipewell Missionary Meeting in July of this year was only one among many other occasions when we realized how truly he had described his condition. He preached in the afternoon with sweetness and deep feeling; but was quite unable to take any part in the crowded missionary meeting held as usual under the wagon-shed in the evening. He sat apart outside the throng, where he could breathe the

fresh air ; and as the congregation dispersed, and we walked together to the garden to watch the parties going away to their distant homes, he leaned wearily on my shoulder and said, 'Well, lass, it's over, once more, and once less!' Then he added, 'I have told Mr. Riggall he must look out for somebody else another year.' Yet he set off the next day for a Lincolnshire village, whence he wrote :

July 5.—I felt parting with William Riggall. It seemed as though we were never to be just the same again. I am a broken man, and shall refuse engagements.

July 6.—I want to preach to-night on 'Then cometh the end.' It came to me in a somewhat remarkable manner, and I dare not but preach it. Mr. Welch was with us yesterday. We had a prayer-meeting in the evening, and how he did pray ! There is something pathetic in these services ; most likely the last I shall hold in these villages. I must make next year less busy. Perhaps if I preach half as much I shall last longer. But in these things we shall be guided.

This year, in virtue of his supernumeraryship, he ceased to be a member of the Legal Conference, after having enjoyed the position for twenty years. To him it had been no empty honour, but rather an honourable and onerous duty, demanding the exercise of all his powers. He had nothing to regret in the record of his services to the Connexion ; he went to the Bristol Conference as a happy visitor, and was as kindly welcomed as ever. He was much interested in the proceedings of the Conference, and took some little part in the conversations ; he also met many friends, old and young, and was especially glad to meet Dr. Fitchett, of Australia, whose remarkable personality attracted him. His Conference home was at Midsomer

Norton, some distance from Bristol, and in just so lovely a place as suited him well. Every detail of this visit to Conference seems to have been delightful, and all who saw him were struck by his cheery brightness. But I think he felt himself rather 'out of it' all; and besides, he was not very well, and the heat of the weather made him languid. On July 24 he wrote:

All being well, I shall come home on Wednesday I had thought of Friday; but as Wednesday will be blank, I do not care to stay merely for one day of the Pastoral Conference. I am tired, and want to come home. Yesterday morning I was bad, and don't want any more of that alone.

And later:

I am pleased to think that to-morrow, all being well, I shall be home. My hearing is not what it used to be, and it tires me to listen. *The pins are being taken out of the old tabernacle very gently, but not to be put back again.*

So home he came, and had his holiday at intervals, luxuriating in his quiet garden, happy with a book or in the company of his own people. Here he wrote a magazine article for Dr. Fitchett on 'Why I am an Optimist'; and a characteristic utterance it was, too, as I saw it in manuscript before sending it to Australia.

These were days full of peaceful pleasures; he did not care for any seaside resort; all he wanted he had under the shade of his own orchard-trees, and rambling around the fields and lanes within easy distance of his home.

Very few engagements took him away during August, but September was a full month, and it was only by snatches that he could be at Lutterworth. His soul

had been deeply moved by the Welsh Revival, and the methods of Evan Roberts and his co-workers had impressed themselves on his mind. We had our beautiful new chapel at Lutterworth, and most fervently did Mr. Champness long to see it consecrated by the conversion of souls to God. How he prayed and planned, thought and worked to this end! In great humility of mind he asked God to make use of any means He pleased; and, as he believed, in answer to prayer, two of Evan Roberts's followers wrote to him and came for special services, which were held in our new chapel. Our own evangelist, Miss Johns, worked with them, and the spirit of prayer was poured upon the people. No one rejoiced more heartily in the spontaneous character of these meetings than did Mr. Champness. It was to him as a fulfilment of the words, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' It was very different from his own method of conducting services, but he felt that much blessing would result, and was ready to co-operate with the missionaries when he was at home. Some of his expositions of Scripture given in the course of these services will long be remembered, and his prayers and pleadings led seeking souls to the Saviour.

CHAPTER XXVII

LAST DAYS—‘THE CLOSE OF DAY’— ‘UNTIL THE DAY BREAK’

SEVERAL times in the course of this record I have alluded to the walks we took together. Never were they so full of enjoyment as during the Lutterworth life. The strenuous work of so many years had slipped away from us ; when once my husband got home, he could be free to spend the hours as he pleased, and nothing suited him so well as to carry me off with him for a stroll over the fields or along some of the tree-shaded roads that lead out into ‘the country.’ The magnificent trees, the grass-bordered highway, the secluded lane, and the meadow-path, all possessed charms of their own, and would call forth expressions of delight, as well as of thankfulness to God. There was an exuberance in his appreciation of these times, when we two walked together and conversed of things often interesting to ourselves alone, but oftenest leading up to some great thought of God and His loving dealings with us. He would often say that we two were getting more enjoyment out of the green fields and park lands than the owners, and without their cares.

This last year it was as though he led me with him through the land of Beulah ; he heard heaven’s music in the song of birds and the whispering of the wind in the trees ; the shade of the beeches under which we

rested was to him like 'His shadow,' under which we could sit 'with great delight,' and he spoke of the greater glories of the 'better country' as one who had gazed on it by faith. 'Can there be anything more beautiful on this earth?' he would say, looking over the green meadows and the sloping uplands. And I knew he was thinking the while of the fields 'drest in living green,' where he soon would be. Yet I dared not say much to him about it; something seemed to hold me back, and all I could do was to keep his sayings and ponder them in my heart.

Perhaps some may say that if we knew how slight was his hold on life, we should have restrained him from going about as he did. They little know how vain all efforts were, and how it was borne in upon those of us who were most intimate with his ways that such restraint was impossible. He knew the risks he ran, and had faced death too often to 'give in.' He was *happier* so—and that was all we thought of—that he should be as *happy as possible*, all the way along.

With a smile, he said to me, early one morning in September, after a terribly exhausting fit of coughing, 'I often wonder from which of my many homes I shall go to heaven!' And we had agreed that nothing was to cause us surprise! I would fain have gone with him from place to place after this, but duties and circumstances forbade it, and he tried to make it all easy for me and for those he loved, that we should not be taken unawares. 'If it were the Lord's will,' he said, 'I should like to be at home, and to be buried under the shadow of the new chapel.' But if it had pleased God that from some other place he should have gone to heaven, he had left instructions how we were to act; nothing was to be

a surprise; he had arranged it all. He was very glad, even gay about it at times, and always cheerful. . . . And so the days went by, and autumn came on. There was a bazaar at Lutterworth that made me busy, and one morning, while I was superintending certain preparations, he walked into the schoolroom, having just returned from his Sunday appointment. 'Leave that, and come for a walk with me!' he cried, and I had to go, busy as I was. He said that morning, 'We shall not see many such lovely autumn days as this; and how many dreary winter months must pass before we see signs of spring!'

He was full of projects to the last, even though it was as I have said. His latest ambition was to have the new chapel paid for, and he planned it all out, intending to write letters on specially illustrated notepaper, that would plead with 'the Lord's stewards' for this beloved 'Wycliffe Memorial.' He meant to raise the thousand pounds by his own efforts, but such was not God's plan for him. His Heavenly Father knew how willing was the spirit and how weak was the body of His servant, and He had better things in store for him.

Towards the end of October, engagements made a year before took Mr. Champness to Kington, the scene of his earliest labours as a minister in the home work.

It was rather strange that the last time he left his home to preach he should pass quite near to the place consecrated by memories of the wife of his youth. From the railway carriage he could almost see the home of her young days. Here also were the lanes and roads he had traversed in his first English circuit more than forty years before; yonder were the farmhouses, once tenanted

by friends long since passed away. In the letter written to me that day, he says :

It was a pleasant journey all the way. . . . Between Fenny Compton and Kington I pondered the past. How well I remember Anne and Elizabeth Archer meeting me at Fenny Compton when I first went to see their father about Mary! One wonders if she knew how my heart went out to her memory, sleeping yonder in the town where another Thomas Champness works! Verily the pages of novels have not the best of the stories. . . .

The kindly hospitality of Mr. Geden, his host at Kington, carried his thoughts back to that which always pleased him, for he loved to trace the history of Methodism, as he did here, writing of the usefulness of these country circuits :

The Geden who was one of those who ordained me at Plymouth, came from Tysoe, in this circuit. His son, John Dury Geden, was Tutor at Didsbury, and his grandson is the same at Richmond.

There was a story of one of the Geden family which he heard that day, of which he wrote in the next day's letter : ' It will make me a good illustration, you shall hear it. Telling you will help me to remember it.' But I never heard the story! That was the last of the loving letters that had kept me in touch with his work for so many years. Even as I read the words he was on his way home to me for the last time.

From Kington he travelled to Buckingham, where he preached on Thursday, October 26, and spoke at a Guild meeting in the evening. It was remarked that the afternoon service was solemnly tender ; he took two

texts, a plan he had of late adopted, one being ‘This night thy soul shall be required of thee,’ the other, ‘To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,’ and some members of the congregation took note of specially pathetic hymns and prayers and last words.

After supper and family prayer, at which he read Psalm cxii., with his host and hostesses, he retired, and during the night one of his bad attacks came on. He was very ill, and when morning came he left for home, which providentially was not so very far away. Of the next few days I cannot write. All I can say is that they were full of sacred sorrow, and yet were full of peace. He desired me to cancel all his engagements for a month, and laid himself down to ‘have a long rest,’ as he said. And in the early hours of Monday, October 30, God cancelled all his engagements in the earthly service, and called him away to the more glorious ministries of heaven.

It was all as he would have had it. Great happiness to be at home, to have us go with him as far as we could, and then to pass over before us into the presence of his King.

I cannot say more of this time, but our dear son William, who wrote some account of the closing scene for the *Methodist Recorder*, has therein told the story of the last hours :

On Saturday afternoon he seemed a little better, though still very weak ; but in the evening it was thought better to send for the doctor again. We were then told to prepare for the worst, though the case was not quite hopeless.

Once he said to me : ‘This may be the beginning of the end for me ; if it is, then I can only say I’ve had a grand time. Nobody has ever had a happier life than mine has been.’

Once, during the night, when I was watching him, he woke with a start after a brief doze, and, looking straight upwards, said brightly, 'My King ; my King.' That he knew the end was coming I am convinced. On Sunday morning he seemed a little better, and had a bright smile for his little grandson, who was brought into the room. But as the day went on he gradually became feebler and less able to take any nourishment. A Lutterworth friend came in to take watch with me for the first part of the night, and when my mother went to take rest he was able to understand and to wish her 'good night.' Then he dozed fitfully, and by-and-by he called us and asked, 'What hymn was that they were singing ?'

'We mentioned the hymn with which we had closed the evening service at the chapel, and he said, 'Yes. Now some one offer a prayer, and pronounce the Benediction.'

Some little time after this we saw his lips move, and he offered a very brief prayer for Lutterworth and its people. This prayer he closed, and he slept again. Again he prayed, this time for 'Thomas Cook and his work at Cliff College'; then for his family, mentioning names. He finished this petition also with 'For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.'

About half an hour after this we saw the end approaching, and my mother was called. Father never regained consciousness, and quietly passed into the higher service at 12.45 a.m.

And so he went from us, and so we speak of loss, and we know our great loss. But it was his joy to look forward to service in heaven. He said to me on Saturday night, 'I like to think that the Lord has some work for me to do still, if I've finished here.'

The memory of his death-bed must ever be a blessing and an inspiration. He has spent his strength in the service of the Master and of the Church he loved. We cannot grudge his time and strength so given, for we know how it was his wish that, when his time came, it might be when he was busily engaged in his work. His end was what he would have wished it to be.

Father has gone from us, but when I remember what he said about having had such a grand time, and a happy life, I think of the words, 'To dwell with Christ is better life.'

Father is now enjoying the 'better life.'

Perhaps there was nothing more remarkable in Thomas Champness's career than the close of it. When he retired from the *Joyful News* Mission, he by no means considered he had finished his work. He not only continued to preach, but he set his mind on the betterment of the little town to which the providence of God had directed him as a place of abode. He found there a great need ; he prayed that he might be able to help in some way the cause of God and Methodism. The story of his helping can never be fully told, but the chapel and school standing at the head of the town of Lutterworth will ever be a reminder of his loving care for the honour of the Church he loved. It was his joy to see it built, and opened for the worship of God ; it was his great longing to see it paid for, and handed over free of encumbrance to the body of trustees who would be responsible for it to the Connexion. He worked hard to bring this about ; money came to him in answer to his prayers and efforts, and when he lay dying he expressed his wish that he had been permitted to complete his task. But his Lord and Master knew what was best, and so he was called away, and the duty was left to others. This was nobly and generously done ; in six months after his death, when the first anniversary of the opening of the chapel came round, we were able to announce that all claims had been met by the loving offerings of the Methodist people ; the Memorial Fund had enabled the trustees to pay the entire cost of the

great undertaking, and, as a special mark of their appreciation, to put up a mural tablet in the chapel itself. This beautiful tablet was unveiled on Easter Monday, 1906, by Mrs. Charles Heap, of Rochdale, in the presence of a large congregation, and remains a visible record of a holy and useful life spent in the service of God.

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When the chapel was built, Thomas Champness made request of the trustees that in case he died at Lutterworth he should be buried in the garden which surrounds the building. In a sunny corner, close to the wall of the transept, we laid his body to rest. Some legal formalities had to be observed, but there was little difficulty, and in this also he had his desire, to the great comfort and joy of his bereaved people. An account of the funeral will be found as an 'afterword' to this volume.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THOMAS CHAMPNESS: THE PREACHER

IN writing of Thomas Champness as a preacher, one treads on holy ground. I know well how he regarded himself as God's ambassador, and with what humility and dignity he fulfilled the duties of his calling. And while I yield to no one in appreciation of him as a preacher, while I could not help seeing how exceptional were his powers of mind and soul, and while it was my privilege for many years to have the first glimpse of the noble thoughts which sprang into being as he studied the Word of God, I have deemed it wise, for the purposes of this book, to quote from a few letters written by friends representative of the varied field of his labours, and upon whose judgement on this point he would have wished me to rely. He did not like me to praise his preaching; and sometimes, if I said how good it had been, or how graphic, or made a remark on the beauty or forcefulness of a sermon, he would gravely remind me that 'preachers' wives are not good judges of their husbands' sermons!'

MR. T. H. BAINBRIDGE, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, writes :

I can never forget the first sermon I heard Mr. Champness preach. The text was, 'When He saw their faith, He said to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven.' His first words were : 'When there is any faith to *see*, Jesus sees it and *appreciates* it. I will tell you what faith is. It is not the

illuminating power of the gas, it is not the *pipe* which conveys the gas, but it is the *tap* which turns it on! Faith is not hope, or love, or courage, but it bears the same relation to the other graces of the Spirit *that ready money does to everything else.*'

And when he came to the removal of the roof to let the palsied man down into the presence of the Saviour, he said, 'Now this was quite a new method of getting a man to Christ. It had never been tried before. "Ah," you say, "we want no new methods—those methods our fathers used are good enough for us."' 'But,' said Mr. Champness, 'I have found that those people who are such sticklers for old methods in *religion* are often the first to take up new methods for pushing their own business! *Then they are all alertness and enterprise; in fact, on week-days they are as blithe as a bee in June, and on Sundays they are like an old fly in November!*'

Then he told how he had been fishing recently in Rutlandshire, and how, at the week's end, he had asked the wife of the farmer with whom he was staying, if she had a *Bradshaw*. This the farmer's wife produced from the bottom of some drawer. 'Now,' said Mr. Champness, 'it was a perfect *Bradshaw*, but it was eight or ten years out of date! And so old methods won't do for to-day.'

Some of these illustrations elicited a smile, but I remember how the tears started to our eyes as he said, pointing to the free seats, 'That is where I sat in our chapel at home. We occupied the free seats: we were poor folk. I sat *there*, and my mother nearer to the aisle; and when the preacher said anything that she thought suited me, she did not turn round and look at me, *but I could feel her eyes come round!*'

MR. WILLIAM WELCH, of Rauceby, Lincolnshire:

Any description I can give of Mr. Champness's preaching cannot possibly reach my estimate of him; it baffles my power of expression. Enthroned in the pulpit he was a *mighty* man, wielding a sceptre of love over his crowded congregations.

One outstanding characteristic was, he came with a heaven-sent message, which he delivered in terse, forceful, picturesque language, in a fearless and incisive manner. He had a wonderful faculty for using his vivid imagination in making others see what he saw himself. This gift, accompanied by the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit, made his hearers feel as those of old, who said, 'We have seen strange things to-day.' This, I take it, is the reason he was listened to so attentively, and his utterances indelibly fixed upon the hearts and minds of the people; they quickly perceived him to be a man of God. To young preachers his ministry was specially helpful, instructive, and inspiring; his spirit still abides upon them, and will live on, through them; 'he, being dead, yet speaketh.' Like his Lord and Master, 'the common people heard him gladly.'

MR. CHARLES HEAP, of Rochdale:

I always considered Mr. Champness was a perfect genius as a preacher. He saw things in texts that never seemed to occur to any one else, and his power to vividly portray incidents so as to make them living realities to his hearers was unique. His acquaintance with the home life of the people, and with the various characteristics of human nature, enabled him to bring home to his congregation, with tremendous power, the importance of spiritual things. His ability to express himself in simple yet forceful language made it impossible for his audiences to misunderstand his applications. He loved the people; his deep sympathies were with the suffering, the sad, and the sorrowful. He had a sympathetic ear for the tale of misfortune, and the sympathies of his loving heart poured forth unconsciously in his prayers, preparing the people for the message of comfort, encouragement, or warning that was to follow. The people felt that he was sincere, that his earnest words were the deepest convictions of his own soul, and that all he said was under this deep conviction: 'I have a message from God unto thee.'

His Bible stories were told in an inimitable manner, and made the subjects live before you in a way that you could not forget. I feel it almost impossible to do justice to the wonderful and beautiful characteristics of his preaching, but am glad to give you a little idea of my great opinion of it.

MR. CHARLES W. EARLY, of Witney :

Mr. Champness's preaching was always too *short* for me and most of our folks. I never heard Mr. Champness till he came to our Men's Bible-class in 1890, but impressions made then only deepened during the fifteen annual visits which followed. I don't know which struck me most, his preaching or his praying—certainly the occasions when he led us at family prayer are among my most cherished memories.

One feature of his preaching which impressed me from first to last was his tenderness—it was *strong*, but it was always tender. The very tones of his voice were full of pathos and sympathy. 'The *common people* heard him gladly,' for he spoke a language they could understand. The *more cultured* heard him with delight, because they recognized in his speech 'a well of English undefiled'—English as pure as that of the great Book he loved so well.

All classes alike were arrested, because his word was with power ; and he preached, with a freshness seldom heard, the *great saving truths* which are 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' He had some of the quaintness of 'the old divines' ; but if he sometimes provoked a smile, it was only that it might be a vehicle to carry the truth home to heart and conscience.

REV. JOHN SMITH (B) :

Thomas Champness was undoubtedly 'called' by God to preach the gospel, and he gave indubitable proof of his divine commission. He revelled in the multitude of opportunities that fell to him in West Africa and all parts of his native land.

Preaching was not a more or less dreaded task to him, but a pleasure, a choice delight.

I first met him when I lived in a Lincolnshire village, on the occasion of our Foreign Missions Day. He preached in the afternoon, and spoke at a meeting in the evening. He had royally 'good times,' as had the large numbers of friends from different parts of the circuit who heard him. Between the services we went out into the fields, and talked for a while on matters relating to the condition and prospects of Methodism; and then, introducing the subject of preaching, he held forth upon its importance and possibilities in his own eager and illuminating way. That first talk was supplemented by many others when, some fifteen years later, we were somewhat closely associated in Rochdale, where, as his successor, I had charge of the 'Wesley Circuit.'

Like all strong men, he followed the bent of his own physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual gifts, the consequence being that he became, and remained to the end of his career, a widely popular and singularly effective preacher. I once attended a large Conference for the promotion of the Christian life in one of our northern cities. The chairman and two other speakers gave us very informing and interesting addresses, but somehow the service lacked 'go.' Thomas Champness was called upon, and I think I can see and hear him now. He began by expressing his thankfulness for being asked to speak at such a gathering. Then, passing to the subject in hand, he gradually unfolded his views upon it, becoming more and more impressive and stimulating as he proceeded. In a series of wonderfully striking sentences, he set forth the matchless joys of full consecration to Jesu's service. And then, with a great and gladsome shout, he cried to the large congregation before him, 'All these joys may be yours *now*!' He sat down. For a brief space a deep hush held the people, then a good brother, moved by the feelings stirring within him, called out, 'Glory, hallelujah!' and in a moment the place resounded with like exultant exclamations.

Mr. Champness was not an eloquent preacher in the ordinary

sense of the word ; but his speech was always conspicuously clear, robust, incisive, and convincing. He made himself understood by his hearers. He excelled greatly as a word-painter. Old Testament subjects fascinated him powerfully, and in handling them this gift was of immense use to him. As he preached, his audiences, captured by his pictorial genius, saw with ever-growing clearness and interest the scenes and circumstances. When discussing New Testament subjects, too, and also when proclaiming the doctrines of the Christian Faith, the same gift came into frequent and oftentimes exciting play. It was impossible for him to be commonplace or dull in the pulpit. And on occasion how humorous he was ! and anon how tender ! He seemed to be able to make those listening to him laugh or cry at will.

He had a profound regard for the dignity of the 'sacred desk.' Hence all mere clap-trap and vulgarities of all descriptions were distinctly absent when he occupied it. Believing that God, in calling him to the office and work of the Christian ministry, had called him to the highest and most honourable of all vocations, he fulfilled its duties and responsibilities with rare care and becomingness.

Whenever necessary he denounced sin with dauntless courage. At such times he took no account of the question as to whether or not he should give offence to any of his hearers. His concern was to do his duty, leaving the result with God. His righteous soul abhorred all evil things in men and women, and with gleaming eyes, emphatic gestures, and scathing tongue he held them up for reprobation. And yet no preacher could deal more aptly and graciously with penitent souls. He declared God's 'whole counsel,' both as to sin and salvation, without reserve.

Reference should be made to these four things : (1) Mr. Champness gave out our hymns with remarkable appropriateness and force ; (2) he read God's Word as one set apart by God ; (3) he was an adept at the difficult task of conducting Bible-reading services ; and (4) he addressed children and young people with exceptional insight and success.

He was a mighty soul-winner, an eminently reliable and much beloved guide in things spiritual of his Master's servants as to their duties and privileges; a Methodist preacher who did great exploits for his Church and the world as the Founder of the *Joyful News* movement, and in many other ways; a saint of high degree; and a friend whose true and affectionate friendship I shall always value as one of the outstanding joys of my life.

In conversation one day, Mr. William Riggall, of Pipewell, to whose now famous missionary meeting Mr. Champness went for many years, described to me the first of these gatherings, held, I think, in 1876:

'I shall never forget Mr. Champness that day,' he said. It was a wonderfully fine day—glorious sunshine, everything beautiful; and Mr. Champness was to preach under the trees in the garden at the Lower Lodge, where we then lived. He began his prayer by thanking God for the day—so beautiful, so bright, just what we wanted. 'We couldn't have made such a day, we couldn't have bought it; but God was good, His love had sent it.' Said Mr. Riggall, 'Our Super at that time was a stiff, proper sort of man, and he told me afterwards that though he always did shut his eyes during prayer, he just *had* to open them to make sure that it really *was* such a day.' Then, he added, 'Mr. Champness preached about the prophet that was put in a damp dungeon, down in the mire and mud, and about the black man that helped him out; Jeremiah, wasn't it? It was beautiful how he told us not to hurt people when we tried to help them; ah, there never was any one like Mr. Champness!'

Though Thomas Champness could not help knowing how greatly he was beloved, and how eagerly the crowds waited for and listened to his preaching, there were times when he could scarcely understand, or even bear,

his own popularity. The thought of it made him very humble before God. I have often had to comfort and encourage him as he would tell me of the wonderful reception that had almost bowed him to the dust. On one of the last walks we had together, only a few days preceding his Home Call, I remember how he stopped suddenly at the corner of one of our beautiful lanes, and said, 'What ought I to do? I am overawed and ashamed at the way the people crowd around and speak to me. How can I keep them from this adulation, which I hate? They act as if it were a privilege only to look at me; I don't know how to help crying out on them sometimes!'

As he spoke I felt an awe stealing over my own soul, and it was some seconds before I could reply that I had no doubt it was all perfectly sincere, and, like the ointment of spikenard, the offering of true affection, and as precious in the sight of his Master as was the loving act of Mary at Bethany. I tried to say how I sympathized with the people, and yet how the open expression of so much love might become embarrassing. He then said, 'But for such a poor old chap as I am, so little able to make it worth their while! I declare it almost unmans me; it isn't good for one to have so much praise.' His voice was tremulous with emotion, and heaven was very near.

When he was gone, I remembered his words, though I have forgotten most of my own. But I know that I felt myself in sympathy with the people who loved and almost worshipped the man with whom I walked and talked that day.

CHAPTER XXIX

THOMAS CHAMPNESS AT CONFERENCE

TO many of his earlier friends it was a surprise that Thomas Champness should ever become so enthusiastic and regular an attendant at the annual Conference. At first it was not so; as a young man he took up a detached attitude, going only as a kind of recreative amusement, much as others would go to a concert or entertainment. But as time went on, the instincts of a true leader of men drew him into the fascination of the great assembly of his Church, and always after this he seemed as if to Conference he must go. It was, however, on his election to the Legal Conference that he realized how much he belonged to it, and how duty, no less than pleasure, would call him to the yearly sessions of the Methodist Parliament. It is fitting that his friend, the Rev. H. T. Smart, should give us his impressions of

THOMAS CHAMPNESS AT CONFERENCE

For many years I have been accustomed to meet Mr. Champness at Conference, several times staying with him at the same lodgings, or receiving him as guest in my own house, and always enjoying very intimate intercourse with him during the sittings of that assembly, of the legal portion of which he was a member for twenty years. He was not a frequent speaker, and

never spoke at any length, probably seldom, if ever, exceeding ten, and often only occupying two or three minutes. For this reason, as well as for other reasons, he attracted attention. In the Conference more importance is attached to the weight of speeches than to their measure ; indeed, the shorter the utterance the more effective it often seems to be. Thomas Champness had the ear of his brethren in a remarkable degree ; when he chose to speak every one listened, from the President to the youngest member of the body, especially the latter, who was the more interested because it was the first time he had heard Mr. Champness address the Conference, and yet not less the former, because it was impossible to anticipate the course the speaker would take. Sometimes Mr. Champness would audibly interpose in a debate by a sudden exclamation which would excite no little attention. Thus I once heard him interrupt the late Dr. George Osborn, when that great debater was carefully threading his way along an intricate path. 'Let sleeping dogs lie,' shouted Mr. Champness. Dr. Osborn did not catch the remark, and, begging pardon from the interrupter, asked for it to be repeated. This was done, and thereupon Dr. Osborn replied, 'I prefer to conduct the argument without the use of the analogy.'

Sometimes Mr. Champness found himself opposed to the prevailing sentiments of the Conference, particularly the Pastoral Session. A more fearless man never spoke. He loved his brethren with a pure heart fervently, he valued their affection, and he was often deeply humbled by the generous tribute many of them used to pay to his gifts and graces. But with him it was a small thing to be judged, even by his brethren. He realized at all

times that he was, first of all, a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that therefore He that judged him was the Lord : he was consequently prepared to stand alone whenever he deemed it to be his duty to advocate a course which his brethren for the greater part did not choose to follow. He expressed his own views without any reserve on highly controversial subjects, e.g. the Foreign Missionary problem, the Liquor Traffic, the attitude of Evangelical Churches to the Education Act of 1902, and was quite indifferent whether the Conference approved or disapproved of them. He was a voice, not an echo.

At the same time, it must be admitted that he was not a skilful and effective debater. For one thing, he was never initiated into the art of the trained dialectician. He knew nothing of oratorical feints, and strategics, and ambushes ; he was no diplomatist, no juggler with words, only a plain blunt man who spoke 'right on.' In his later years he was too emotional ever to become very successful as a leader in Conference ; when he was speaking on such questions as the evils of idolatry, suppression of the liquor traffic, or the recrudescence of priestcraft, he felt so deeply that his emotions overcame him, and he was unable to speak with self-control. Besides, for several years Mr. Champness's imperfect health was a serious hindrance to his success as a debater in Conference, when he had to measure swords, as was not seldom the case, with the most powerful speakers in that assembly. His difficulty in breathing, his troublesome cough, and other 'often infirmities' made it impossible for him to meet on equal terms brethren who were free from all such limitations. For this reason, I was devoutly thankful when, at the

Sheffield Conference in 1904, he was satisfied with the Resolution passed on the subject of the Liquor Traffic and Circuit administration, and felt it consistent with his duty to God to abandon the prolonged and somewhat painful controversy he had carried on in Methodism for several years.

Thomas Champness never spoke in Conference with such effect as when he took part in the 'conversation on the state of the work of God.' Then he made his brethren laugh and cry as no one else ever did.

But, above everything else, we who have sat side by side with Thomas Champness in the Conference for thirty years, remember him most of all for his prayers. Oh, with what power, with what pathos, with what naturalness did he plead with God when he led the devotions of the Conference! Dr. George Adam Smith, in a striking sermon on 'Our Lord's Example in Prayer,' contends that our Praying Pattern made prayer the real battle-field of life, and there won His greatest victories. With Thomas Champness, prayer was indeed the real battle-field of life, and therefore, while it lasted, it involved him in effort, and struggle, and even agony. He would sometimes express to me his amazement that some of his fellow Christians should spend the whole night in prayer. 'All-nights of prayer' were to him impossible, almost unthinkable; he used to say they would kill him if he attended them, prayer being with him the most exhaustive exercise in which he ever engaged. On the other hand, 'one-minute prayers,' and prayer-meetings where the chief object was to secure the largest number of prayers in the shortest time, were not to his taste. In the Conference, he often used to wrestle with God as Jacob must have

done with the Angel; at other times, his prayers would be beautiful poems, reminding one of the prayers of David the son of Jesse, when the sweet singer of Israel was lying down in green pastures, and had been led beside 'the waters of rest' (as the marginal reading has it). Some men's prayers can be printed, evidently, for we have books on our shelves which prove it; but Thomas Champness's prayers, especially those offered in Conference, could never be put in cold type. When he prayed, it was more fitting that the door should be shut than that the stenographer should be invited to be present. And yet, notwithstanding his remarkable power in prayer, I recall many occasions when our beloved brother spoke to me in private of his own deep sense of the imperfections which in his judgement marked his public prayers. He was often more than dissatisfied with his sermons, but his prayers came so short of what he considered they ought to be, that he often spoke to me of them in terms of deep humiliation. We remember him, however, for nothing so much as for this—that his name might have been called 'Israel'; that is, 'He who striveth with God,' for he 'had power with God and prevailed against men.'

CHAPTER XXX

HOW HE WAS KNOWN: AS WRITER, READER, AUTHOR, AND TRAVELLER

THOMAS CHAMPNESS was a born letter-writer ; or the gift, if not born in him, came to him as he wanted it. During the last twenty years of his life he had an immense range of correspondence, and it was his rule to answer all letters day by day. This could only be done by great economy of time, because letter-writing was not all that he had to do. He had a fertile, as well as a facile pen ; but to answer the letters of one day before another day began cost him much before it became a fixed habit. He was rather a great letter-writer than a writer of great letters, for none of the epistles which so comforted and interested his correspondents were written for the public eye. It is true, however, that counsel was conveyed in them in so tender and loving a manner, and in words so well chosen and appreciative, that the letters became very precious to the recipients, especially to that large circle of young men and maidens to whom he wrote week by week for years. Many of his workers still treasure these letters ; some have been sent to me for perusal, and for use in this book if desired. They are full of bright, homely, faithful advice, contain helps to Bible study, sermon outlines, and thoughts which live and

bear fruit in the lives of those who remember them. As almost any quotations from those I have would seem invidious, perhaps it will be better to quote what is said of them by some of their owners.

One who is now a Connexional Evangelist, and who has a record of many years' service, says :

I have pleasure in sending you the 102 letters I received from Mr. Champness during the three years I was a *Joyful News* Evangelist. Even at this distance of time I am struck by the homely wisdom they contain. What must they have been to me eighteen years ago, at the commencement of my career? . . . These letters really constitute my training. They were a constant source of inspiration and encouragement in my toil for the salvation of men. Toiling as I did then, in the midst of very depressing circumstances, the postman was often a disguised angel! A letter always brought good cheer, and no one ever put 'iron' into me like Thomas Champness. I have read them all through again, and they . . . make me feel like hitting the devil harder than ever!

Another, working in one of the 'dark places of the earth' for nearly twenty years as a *Joyful News* missionary, says :

I have not felt equal to reading any of my old letters from our loved friend and leader until just lately ; the act of reading them has brought him much nearer to me. . . . I have never known any man or woman who could get so much into so small a space as Mr. Champness ; and what a variety ! I've got hundreds of them, and I value them as I do very few other things I possess.

His correspondence, of necessity, touched many lives and interests ; almost all classes seemed to turn to him for advice, sympathy, or prayer ; he knew much about the

secret troubles of our people, and confidences were sacred to him, just as though he had been a 'father confessor,' though he never sought the honour. I think people felt that he loved to pray, and that he had the ear of the Almighty. As a rule, he 'pigeon-holed' all letters; but there were some which no eye but his own ever saw, and of which he would say, even to me, 'It is better to burn this, than if you are asked you can say you do not know'; or, if he admitted me to a share in the burden it was that we might *unite* in prayer, and thus claim the promise given in Matt. xviii. 19. There were also benevolent Methodists who would entrust him with money to give away, and this brought him letters which gave him much work, but still more pleasure. For some years he kept a special banking account for this money, endorsing cheques 'C' account. Needy chapel cases, as well as private distresses, were aided from this fund; and great was his delight when fresh supplies came in, or when he had a little of his own to add to it. He accepted the trust of his rich friends as a mark of God's special favour, and the disbursement of this 'charity account' made his eyes to sparkle with happy tears.

I never knew him to be sorry to see a heavy delivery of letters; in fact, he felt rather at a loss if, by some strange chance, there were none for him. He loved writing, whether letters, or sermons, or articles for *Joyful News*—indeed, for this he worked with enthusiasm from its very beginning. It is safe to say that he had it always in mind, and that it was the point from which he viewed most of the events of his life. He was constantly producing something which could appear first in the paper, and was keen on illustrations which

might suit his purpose for its pages. And all his writing was, as he sometimes said, intended to 'make the devil wish Champness never used such things as paper and ink.'

To the absent members of his family he wrote every week ; and when we two were separated, if only for a day, I had a letter or postcard. Our son Charles writes his personal appreciation of the letters he received in China, which were sent from all sorts of places, the greatest care being taken *never to miss the foreign mail*.

I have my father's letters for several years back, and they are a precious heritage. They were always most interesting, often with the outline of a new sermon just preached, or to be preached. These outlines have been of great use to me, especially in giving suggestions of sermons to Chinese pastors.

The letters of the last year were full of references to the new chapel at Lutterworth, and hopes concerning it.

'*April 30.*—It is not easy to realize what the new chapel is like. The photos don't tell you all the truth. What we want now is the Spirit of God poured out on the wicked town. Nothing less is of any use. Men are useless, God is needed. Prayer will be heard, and we shall have notable conversions. I am in hopes that Mrs. Hardwick Smith's prayer when she used the key at the opening will be heard. . . . I thought of you when I offered the first prayer. God bless you, and make you great in His sight.'

'*May 14.*—We had a very good company last night, twice as large as in the old place. I counted ninety-one in the after-meeting.'

'*June 20.*—We had a public lovefeast. This was instead of preaching. It was a great success. I believe that it made a much greater impression than a sermon would have done.'

A striking feature of my father's letters was the mention that he made of books that he had read. He was a great

reader when on his railway journeys. As he subscribed to a travelling library, he always was able to get hold of good books to read, and he took a special delight in biographies. I remember especially one letter, in which he told me how he had been reading the life of Professor Cowell, the great Sanscrit scholar. In a very few words he gave me an insight into the life of this remarkable man, and especially showed how much he was indebted to his wife for his success.

My father's last words, in the last letter he wrote to me, are indescribably precious. With such words in my heart, how can I be anything else but a missionary?

'God will take care that in the long run you are provided for. He loves us, and will not cease to do so. Don't be cast down so long as you have a chance of preaching the gospel. Is there, can there be, anything so honourable? What are rank and gold compared to it?

With love to both,

FATHER.'

One part of his correspondence was, I think, peculiar to himself; for I never heard of any other minister marking the 'stations' of the Wesleyan Conference, and penning letters or postcards to those friends who were entering new circuits. This Mr. Champness did for many years; it was, as he said, one way of giving pleasure; to receive a letter, or ensure that the postman knew the way to his house, was a joy to himself, and he divined that it would be so to his brethren. The result was a pile of postcards to be posted on the day before the annual migration of ministers. That this little attention was appreciated is evident from the answers sent by the ministers. A few of these may be given from the great number before me.

'Many thanks for your kind thoughtfulness in sending me such a loving word of welcome to meet me.'

'I value more than I can say such a greeting as you have penned.'

'Your beautiful note has cheered me so much in my change to this sphere that I must at once write my grateful thanks. This is not the first time you have helped me.'

'Your P.C. awaiting me on arrival here was very welcome. I note your advice and value it, and shall, I trust, more and more try to carry it out in my work.'

'It was very good of you to think of us in our disturbing circumstances. Your wishes and prayers I value very much, and do most heartily appreciate your thoughtfulness.'

'Just in the hush before the coming struggle I want to say, from whatever depth my heart has, *Thank you* for your cheering postcard, which brought tears into my eyes and a lump into my throat as I read it.'

'Heartiest thanks for your wise and helpful words, which awaited me when we arrived last night.'

From the cards he wrote I select two as specimens :

May I wish you both great and growing joy in your new sphere? You have learned long ere this that some of our most enduring delights are found amid our difficulties. Is not that one of the meanings of Heb. xii. 2? Is not the crown of thorns the forerunner of all Christ's honours? But I must not preach to you. We have great, if latent opposition here. Drink has sapped the virtue of the population. But I am glad to have to fight the battles of the Lord, and that He has not doomed me yet to barrack-life alone. We are preparing for a campaign this winter. I hope to be cheered by the news of your success. When I have time I shall hope to write again. Let me hear one of these days what your analysis of the Revival is? Soil has more to do with stacks than some people think.

May yours be large and thresh out well! God bless you both.

T. C.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

One of my little vagaries is the habit of writing to some of the brethren who are on the move just to wish them God-speed. You will have new anxieties in the new sphere, but our Master is equal to the strain, if we are not. The manna falls wherever the pillar guides. Do not try to bear His burden, and bear in mind that He has iron shoes if the road needs it.

Remember me, please, to the good wife and all.

T. C.

What a lover of music he was! The rhythm of the hymns affected him with sublime thoughts, and he would 'give them out' in his services so that no one could sing thoughtlessly the sacred words. The tune that did not 'fit' the hymn was an abomination to him, and a colourless tune hurt his feelings. It was wonderful to get him to a concert; it had to be of the best; and even then he could only bear it occasionally, and for part of the time. He loved oratorio; but the sublime music of Handel and the sweet majesty of Mendelssohn thrilled his sensitive soul, so that he could seldom sit through a performance. His body was not able to bear that which enraptured the soul, and I have been with him more than once when he has had to leave as the climax of the *Elijah*, or the strains of the 'Hallelujah Chorus' rang through the hall. He was so highly strung that he could not bear the excitement, and had to seek relief in happy tears, or fervent exclamations of praise to God. He loved to think how *strong* he would be in heaven; freed from 'this heavy clay,' how he would *revel* in 'the music of the skies'!

He was a great reader, mastering what he read with almost incredible swiftness. 'Ask me any question you

like on it!' he would say when he had apparently merely skimmed his morning paper. The same may be said of the way he would see pictures; his quickness of perception, a kind of mental rapidity, for which he could not himself account, and which must have been a special gift, would enable him to go through any art exhibition, and describe the 'points' of all the great pictures before those who were with him had time to look round. This quality of mental quickness, combined with his powers of memory, helped him to assimilate the thought underlying what he read or looked at, and to make use of it when needed. Like all else, his reading was harnessed to his work, and was laid under tribute for sermons, or for the columns of *Joyful News*. In this way he kept in touch with the living interests of his readers, and carried them with him as they read. It might not always be over his own signature, but the mark of his own hand was visible to all who knew his racy and trenchant style.

This is a hitherto unpublished specimen of the kind of thing he wrote for *Joyful News*:

BENJAMIN BOBBIN IN A FISHING-VILLAGE

We have been holiday-making, me and Martha, and a rare nice time we have had of it. Was there ever nicer weather at this time of year? They tell me it was so twenty years since, but I don't remember it.

Sunday came while we were away. We were not in one of those crowded places where you have not room to move, with a pier and a band and Sunday concert of sacred music, and the like; but a real quiet place, where there was a chance of feeling as if it were the Lord's day and no one else's.

It was Harvest Festival at the Primitives, so we thought we

would go and have a turn with them ; and rare and nice it was. There were decorations like what you see at other places, and some not at all like any other I have ever seen—not a bit ; for there, in festoons all round the gallery, were the fishing-nets. Didn't they look nice ! It seemed as if these men who plough and reap the sea were fain to tell their thanks that way, and a rare nice way I call it, too.

What pleased me more than anything was to see a lot of these men of the sea in their blue jerseys. I could nearly have cried as I looked at their brown, weather-beaten faces. There was one chap in the choir who has been in many a gale. I could see that, for the wind had left furrows like a field on his face ; and as I think of him I can hear him shout, 'Keep her away, there !' Eh, but if there had been nothing but the blue jerseys I shouldn't have lost my Sunday. It did seem so nice and homely.

I don't know what they call the minister ; but he was a clever sort of man, one of those who read and can tell you something. It's one thing to master a book and another thing to let other folks be the better off for what you read. The hymns were nice, and the singing was hearty, if they didn't keep as good time as they do at Westminster Abbey. The one thing I missed was the prayer, for while the minister was fluent and reverent, yet he didn't pray for any one outside the chapel. He didn't seem to think the Queen or the future Queen with a dead mother worth a thought. And there might not be any difficult things for the Government to manage. China might be the safest place in the world for missionaries. Then he never thought of the lads in red jackets, and, with all those blue jerseys before him he never mentioned the men at sea ! He was of a different mind to the man called Paul, who exhorted us to pray for all men. But, never mind ; after all, it was a service I like to remember, and I got good to my soul.

In the afternoon I went to church. There were not many folks there ; but among them there was a judge. I noticed that he didn't stand up any more than I did when the procession came in. I fancy he is one of the old sort. Then very likely

he is used to having folk stand up before him most days, and didn't see why he should change things.

We had that part of the Prayer Book they call the Litany, where every sort of man and woman almost is prayed for. It did seem sweet. I can understand folks getting fond of that sort of thing. It must be nice to feel that you are not dependent on the minister, and that if he forgets the poor things the book doesn't. I was glad the folks had their Prayer Books, for the minister turned his back on us all the time he prayed and I could not make out all he said. He didn't read any lesson; but, mind you, the prayers were full of gospel truth.

This was all the better because we had no sermon. It seems the minister is a man from Australia, and a collection was made for what he called the S.P.G. He didn't take a text, but told us all about the country he had lived in, the farmers, the land, the big trees, and the kangaroos, but not a word of gospel. If any poor soul had been there thirsting for the truth there was nought for them but what was in the prayers. I was never so glad before for the Prayer Book.

At night we went to our own chapel. It's a nice place; church-like, and yet a place where I could feel at home very soon if there were other things as good as the chapel. Martha was put about that we hadn't better hymns. We had four, and not a real Wesleyan in the lot! Mind you, I liked the preacher. He prayed and he talked to us like a man of God, and he thought of other folks as well as us when he prayed; but I fancy he didn't choose the hymns. Perhaps, like me, he wasn't sure what he would preach about, and if the choir-master sent for the hymns let him pick what he liked.

He gave us a good sermon on the Judgement. I liked it very much, I did that. Maybe he would have done well to have given over when he had finished his sermon. We had ten minutes of commonplace that would have fitted ought. That isn't the best way to wind up, to my thinking.

There was one thing that troubled me, now, and what do you think it was? I didn't see one of the blue jerseys! That rather spoiled it for me. I like to see the natives of any

country where I am at a service. Maybe there was a lot of 'em, only they were dressed up. If so, all right. Still, I did like to see what I looked on in the morning, and it's no use saying anything else. I don't want Methodism that doesn't win working men. However, I have only been one Sunday; and maybe if I only knew the folk better I should talk different; so if I am in the wrong I hope they will look over it. But it struck me the congregation were like the hymns we sung—half-bred.

However, the prayer-meeting was good—it was that. No waiting, and holy women leading in prayer. It left a nice taste in the mouth, did that prayer-meeting. I am sure the blue jerseys would have been suited if they had been there. Let's hope they will come in some day—I mean some of them that go nowhere; there's room and work for 'em to do, even in that nice chapel.

BENJAMIN BOBBIN.

By frequent changing of books from a travelling library, he was able to relieve the tedium of slow journeys and long waits on the way by reading of a varied and interesting kind. Biographies, books of travel, history, and fiction in turn were read and enjoyed as he went from place to place.

Thus, from Shrewsbury station, he wrote:

I am obliged to remain here for more than an hour; and I was an hour at Rugby. Fortunately, I had obtained the first volume of Herbert Spencer's Autobiography, and a volume of stories by E. A. Poe. I have already read half of Spencer. It is somewhat prolix, yet there is a great naturalness. It is interesting to note how he does not appear to have had any religious instincts at all; yet his forebears were Wesleyans.

I have finished Spencer. It is a sad book; if that is all the agnostics can do for a man, it is worthless! Fanatical faith is better.

Liddon's *Life and Letters* is a book that you may not care to read, but I shall bring it home for you to look at. I have come to the conclusion that these Catholics, such as Pusey and this man, begin life by accepting some dogma, such as Baptismal Regeneration, therefore are *wrong* all the time, yet do not see it. Their logic is correct, but their premisses are wrong at the start; like saying two and two are five, and then working correctly ever after. Still, their saintliness is very beautiful, but their superiority must seem like priggishness to the angels; God can look over it, perhaps. But what a shock to them to find that Nonconformists can be saints in the eyes of God! Heaven will be a great surprise to most of us, I expect. After all, humility is a great saver.

I found a grand story in Gregory (*Consecrated Culture: Life of Alfred Gregory, M.A.*), and shall read it through, as there may be others. At Peterborough I found near a thousand volumes, and took Roosevelt's *Strenuous Life*. That suggested something that will make a talk.

Did I tell you that I got Creighton, vol. i.? It is beautiful, but it has made me hate the Church. The mechanical sacraments, and the want of real faith in Jesus as you and I believe in Him, and then the grand character in spite of all that, with some moral limitations.

In Derby I picked up a small book of Froude's on Carlyle. I want you to read it. What a revelation of moral ugliness, pride, ambition, selfishness, and the want of love to others! If that is what agnosticism does for men and women, give me the old Book!

Yes, after all and above all, Thomas Champness loved the 'Old Book'! He was a Bible-lover all his life, and the more he read it, the greater his love for its hallowed pages. How he studied, searched, dug, and tracked its treasures out, for his own and for everybody else's comfort and instruction! Conscious of his own limitations, he eagerly sought for the help of his more learned

brethren in tracing the meaning of obscure or difficult passages, often writing to some whose knowledge of Hebrew was at his service ; and when he got new light on a text, how he rejoiced ! It was impossible to be long in his company without hearing of some new 'find' in the Scriptures, some text which he 'had never seen before, just like this' ; or some fresh revelation of the glorious meaning of the Holy Spirit's teaching. His own Bibles became his *very* own by his use of them ; hundreds of his hearers will remember the Bibles that went with him into the pulpit, and were literally tools in his hands. Reverent love marked his study ; fervent and whole-hearted faith in the Divine Spirit inspiring the word led him 'into the holiest' as he opened the Book and expounded it to the people. There was no book like the Bible for him ; and only so far as other books he read helped him to a better understanding of the God revealed in the Scriptures, had they a lasting hold on his heart.

He was not only a reader, but a writer of books ; the long list of those he published forms a permanent record of his work in this direction. At the time he brought out his first volume of sermons at the request of a London publisher, he was among the pioneers of the simpler style of preaching which gradually superseded the ornate and florid diction of what is known as the early Victorian period. He lived to see his own style become the fashion among preachers, and to go beyond even that development in his own line. Any one who compares his latest volume with the first will see this ; and yet how beautiful are some of those earlier productions ! He liked to think that God would set His seal on the work of his pen, and that his writings would

First home for children of God II 8

Climate II 5. No house.

Mr Treehird

How long more?

2 Cor x 3. Rev 9 Serpent ? Rev 7+2 Pork now
Did we see eat and speak. 6 Not touch
Why we? I am II 14 I had not heard II 16

Infidelity If we had not heard both sides
God jealous

Why appetite if not to be indulged? Selfish
Saw York Gal - Gave Jezebel

Beware of what affection offers you look twice

Amusements Bill
Was not lost till Adam ate 6 James 1/4

Better we died
Small thing hole in flag. "Rebels" Disrupt

Only one law one sin!

opened! Saw cause of sin now dress

- de - God cannot see us! 8 Psalm 50 21

How did? Must answer they ever picture

Curse on you

Woman greatest honour by pain 16

Man, thy mother shall fight thee 18

Let sin should be eternal Go out 22

Romans 8 12

A When Satan speaks show him used Paul
coffin - hell

B You may lose children's portion } James 2 2

C Second Adam opened Paradise

Rev x 11. 1-3 Contrast with 2 24
No sorrow under

help to extend his Saviour's kingdom in the hearts of men. Some books he published anonymously, or under various pen-names, such as 'Benjamin Bobbin' and 'Richard Rustic'; but all bore his sign-manual, and constitute a record of continuous literary work from the 'seventies to the last year of his life. Of all his books, great or small, he liked best the one called *New Every Morning*, and perhaps his *Young Preacher's Guide* has had the largest circulation.

He was not one to make much money by authorship; what he made was soon spent in the work he loved. He was like John Wesley in this, that 'money never stayed long with him'; and though he might have acquired a fortune by his writings, assuredly he would never have left one behind; he knew too well the joy of giving. It was his delight to give the profits of his literary work to the *Joyful News* Mission, or some other good cause. Tracts, leaflets, booklets, pamphlets—what a host of them came from his pen! Perhaps the one most fruitful of good was *Just Converted*, a booklet written in the District Mission days for his own use, and afterwards running through many editions. Thousands of young converts have read this little book to their soul's comfort and benefit.

The quality of 'mental quickness,' as I have called it, gave Thomas Champness a remarkable power in reading character; he might make an occasional mistake, but for the most part his insight into men's minds was surprising. Mr. T. H. Bainbridge says:

I remember him saying of Dinsdale Young, then a local preacher of eighteen years, 'Keep your eye on that young man; you'll hear of him again.' On another occasion he said, 'I have just come from —; there is a tailor there called

—; he will have to leave his work and take up preaching.' And, sure enough, in a few weeks this man came to our D.M. Committee, and after two or three years of remarkably fruitful work as a lay evangelist, he was accepted into our ministry.

One who knew Mr. Champness for many years says :

His marvellous gift of sympathy, his keen sense of humour and knowledge of human nature, and his wonderful intuition as to the right solution of a problem in morals or religion, made him indeed a leader of men. Yet one loves to think of him most as the true and tender friend he always was. He has helped me over and over again by his wise advice and gracious sympathy. I am only one of a great crowd to whom he has been a Mr. Greatheart, leading them out of sin and selfishness into nobler life. I have never heard such vivid and picturesque sermons as Mr. Champness used to preach. Many of those I heard as a child are still fresh in my mind, and often I find myself going over them with my own children as we read the Old Testament together.

I know that where he went to preach, sick people used to send requests for him to visit them. Of one such visit, made during his last year, he wrote to me : 'An old lady here has been longing to see your husband. She had read his writings, but had never seen him ; so I went to see her before I had my dinner, and found her dying ! She did not live more than an hour, though she was so sensible, and had such a voice. I thought she would have lived till morning.'

In all his journeys and travels, it is remarkable that Thomas Champness never met with any serious accident, and very seldom missed a train. Adventures he had, of a sort, some of which amused, and all interested him. From a 'Sleepy-hollow' kind of spot he wrote :

I do not know the right date, dear wife ; we are out of the world here. It is very beautiful, but very remote. It will be a long time before I get over this feeling of abstractedness from the whirl of life. Yesterday I was in an old-world place, far away, among such hills as I have not often seen ; I was sorry for the poor horses which took us. It was wet yesterday morning. I was to have been driven to a Roman Camp, but instead I wrote the enclosed [an article for *Joyful News*], which, dull as it is, may fill up *Joyful News* some time when you are very short of copy. I felt the influences of the place, and could not be pungent.

Another time :

Do you know, I arrived by the wrong train ; no one to meet me ! I thought, 'Well, I have blundered,' so set off to walk. Heavy coat and bag, &c., &c. Well, on I went, and met a carriage and pair. After walking about a mile and a half the bag got heavier and heavier, and the coat made me sweat. Here is a cottage ; the woman was washing in a place behind. 'May I leave these things, please ?' Took out a tie and collar, and promised to send for the bag, coat, and rug ; gave her a shilling, and went on. Again the carriage and pair passed me. I crept on, was weary ; for there were hills. However, it would have been worse but for leaving the things behind. When about another mile, on the carriage and pair came towards me and stopped. The minister had been inside with a book and had not seen your husband ! He was very sorry, and so was I, for we had to go back to the cottage for the impedimenta. Funny, wasn't it ? I was here, they say, about fourteen years ago, and preached from the 'Bundle of Life.' They remember ; I don't. There is a beautiful new house, and a lot of children ; the eldest boy a fine chap, but has not been to school ; a tutor, eh ? I had a plain word with him when he took me to his room ; he is most attractive, and will be in danger soon. Oh, I do hope to say something that will be of use to these rich people ! One ought to be careful, for they remember what I said in the house all those years ago.

A different scene :

Mr. J. Dale Robinson is talking to me ; and, says he, 'I will leave you ; you want to get the Missis written to, don't you ?' So I begin : My dear Wife,—The grey horse and the smart gig were at the station ready, and we were soon driving along the old Roman Road, now grown over with grass, and exceedingly rough, but giving a fine view of the valley and the wolds beyond. . . . I am just going to look up my outline on Jonah. It is the sort of talk that will suit these Wold men ; they love that which is striking and out of the common way.

At the other end of Northern Yorkshire, on a stormy Good Friday, I think :

It is an awful day here, wind and snow, and all things else. Perhaps it may mend before time to start. Mr. Iveson is trying to get a covered carriage. It was very touching to see the love of the people. When I was talking of seeing John Wesley in heaven, &c., one man in the gallery cried out, '*And ye winna be far frae him !*' . . . We had far better congregations than we had any right to expect. Riding in a closed carriage with a pair of horses, I was well looked after. But it was a cold day. The people are warm-hearted ; *Joyful News* is greatly loved ; yes, *loved*. It would do you good to hear what folk say about it.

En route to — :

When I was in the train at — I asked a swell of an inspector, in a new uniform, whether I changed. 'Yes, at Peterboro.' 'Where?' said I. 'At Peterboro,' with an air hat said—Dare to ask me another question and I will have you turned out ! So, very meekly, I sat down ; but not feeling easy, I asked the guard, who said, 'I am not sure, but when we start I will look at the book.' About three stations further on he got into the carriage, saying, 'Saxby ; we shall be there just in time' : so I gave him threepence, feeling I had my

money's worth. Sure enough, at Saxby the train was waiting on the other platform, and I came on to Spalding, where I changed.

In East Anglia :

I had not perceived that the train was a Saturday one. And my host didn't find it out until too late. However, the people had a prayer-meeting for the gathering to-night. When I reached the platform my host was there. I had forgotten his name and address, so when I found there was no train, I wired to the station-master, saying, if any one was waiting for Champness of Lutterworth, he must tell them Champness could not reach — till four o'clock. We got into a hansom, and I was soon before the meeting. I gave out my text at once, and had a grand time.

Writing to the *Methodist Recorder* for November 10, 1905, his son William Weldon tells how he stopped the express :

He was due to preach at B——, the nearest station to which is E——, on a line of railway owned by the —— Railway Company. His train from L—— stopped at every station before reaching E——. But in L—— station was a train which he knew ran over the line through E——. Why not travel by it? So it *did* go through E——, but with running powers only, not stopping powers. This was ten minutes before the right train, but thinking it was the right one, in he got. To his horror, on nearing E——, the train did not appear to be 'slowing down.' 'Then,' to use his own words, 'I wondered what had better be done; a man was coming to E—— with a trap to drive me to B——. I looked at the communication-chain inside the carriage. I had often wondered whether they worked, so I pulled it.' The train drew up with a jerk in E—— station, and he got out. The station-master and the guard came running along the train to find out what was the matter, and why the train had been stopped. They

came to the carriage where the indicator showed that the chain had been pulled, and inquired who had stopped the train. 'There was only a small boy in the carriage, and as I feared they would drop on him, I said 'It's me.' The station-master was very angry, and wanted to know why it had been done. My father pointed out to the man his very good reason, which did not seem to be quite sufficient for the station-master. 'Don't you know you might be fined £5?' said he; to which the reply came, 'If you'll tell me how much there is to pay I'll pay it. It's worth more than five pounds to me to keep my appointment with the people!' However, in spite of the station-master's wrath, nothing came of it. But I don't think father would have tried that experiment again, as he had not understood that the railway companies could not have this sort of thing. This was in his last few months, and is a good illustration of his simple-mindedness.

His last adventure at a railway station might have ended disastrously. It was during the closing month of his life. He wrote:

Getting out of the train, I somehow got my leg down between the carriages. How it is I am not hurt I cannot tell! Perhaps I shall have to be more careful, as I stagger sometimes. It will be a warning to me, rest assured. I forget that I am old, and people think me young because there are so few grey hairs. My brother William's servant was in the carriage, so I was afraid you might hear something. I am not a bit the worse, thank God!

Yes, it is very beautiful to think how the angels watched over him as he went about his Master's business, so that neither on land nor sea did he ever meet with serious injury from accident. 'In perils oft,' he was mercifully kept till his life's work was well and faithfully done.

AFTERWORD

HOW WE LAID HIM TO REST¹

‘THOMAS CHAMPNESS is no more dead than Jesus Christ is dead!’ exclaimed a minister as we turned away from his open grave on Friday afternoon. ‘He is alive and working still!’

‘Yes,’ responded his friend, ‘and without doubt he will help us more than he has ever been able to do while with us, in the great fight against evil for the kingdom of God!’

This was the spirit in which we left his grave. But I was to tell the story of the funeral. I wish I could. I was never at one like it before. It was all so easy and natural, and pleasant and homely. It seemed just as though we had come to see him on board some big liner leaving the docks for an ocean trip. There was indeed sorrow—yes, there was sorrow—but it was so tempered, so mixed with hope and gratitude, and satisfaction with the nobly finished work, the well-fought fight, that really the pain was lost in the love and peace that reigned.

The sight of the procession in the streets of Lutterworth will be a life-long memory. I question whether such a sight has been witnessed there since John Wycliffe was buried—perhaps not then. Over a hundred ministers, I should think, walked on ahead of the coffin, which was borne by loving hands from the home to the grave. Then followed the family, walking in the sweet old-fashioned way. Some one said we might well have sung as we marched, in the Welsh style. After the family came a great crowd of loving friends from Rugby and from scores of other places, far and near—leading

¹ From *Joyful News*, November 10, 1905.

manufacturers and tradesmen, city and country gentlemen, farmers, and many genuine country folks, all brought together by mere love and regard for the friend they had lost.

The townspeople expressed genuine respect—shops were closed and blinds drawn throughout the route. All along the way the people stood. At the gate of a school a crowd of boys waited with their masters bare-headed to watch the wonderful procession, while as we drew near the chapel we saw a very large crowd waiting our approach, in perfect order and stillness.

It must be known, as the Rev. H. T. Smart clearly stated at the commencement of the service, that Mr. Champness had left most explicit requests as to the style of his funeral service, and also as to the persons he wished to take part. He, of course, had never anticipated anything approaching a public funeral, and his wish was that all should be simple and cheerful and homely. Knowing exactly his wish, Mrs. Champness herself set down the order to be followed, which was as below :

1. AT HOME

The hymn, 'How happy every child of grace,' was announced by Mr. Smart. The beautiful old tune, 'St. Matthew,' was raised by Miss Champness, and Mr. Moses Welsby prayed. None present will forget the scene. The gathering was in the study, where the coffin stood, with just a wreath of laurel at the head, sent from York, and a few sweet blooms upon the table. Only the family and about half a dozen ministers were present, including the President and Ex-President of the Conference.

2. IN THE CHAPEL

Here, when at length as many as could possibly find standing room had reverently entered, Mr. Smart announced Hymn 830 :

Glory be to God on high.

It was sung with intense feeling, and afterwards Psalm xxiii. was read, and the President at once rose and delivered an

address to such an audience as one seldom looks upon. Mr. Kelly spoke with a tenderness, a courage, a breadth of brotherly sympathy, and an authority nobly becoming the President of our great Church. The address must be read, but the sound of one or two sentences will never die away : ' Here was a man who never sought high position, but he might have had it had he so desired.' ' This preacher not only taught other men how they ought to preach, but he was a soul-saving preacher himself, and that to the end.' ' As sure as God's Throne is set up on high, and He sitteth upon it, so sure is Thomas Champness in front of that Throne to-day.'

The Rev. Samuel Chadwick prayed then, and many hearts trembled, and many eyes overflowed as he gave thanks to God, and pleaded for all whom the dear departed had loved, especially for ' Charlie ' in China, and for ' Tom ' in Western Africa, trying to win the heathen for Christ.

3. AT THE GRAVE

The grave, just outside the wall, and between the grand Wycliffe memorial obelisk and the church, was most carefully built. The casket having been lovingly lowered into it, the whole concourse of people was asked to sing the two verses below :

His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim,
'Tis all my business here below
To cry, ' Behold the Lamb ! '

Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His name ;
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,
' Behold, behold the Lamb ! '

Oh, what a burst of song ! Oh, how the great company of preachers all round took up the strain ! Then Mr. Smart read a short Collect, and the Rev. Josiah Mee led in prayer, and with the Benediction the great service closed—that is, so far as human ministry could close it.

But God gave Thomas Champness a grander illumination,

as he lay in his new resting-place, than any king could command. The whole heaven was illumined with the gorgeous glory of such a sunset as is seldom witnessed. As the train moved out from the station, and friends gazed wistfully back upon the place of the tomb, they cried instinctively, 'There is the picture of Thomas Champness's end!'

THE BURIAL OF A PROPHET¹

Thomas Champness was buried with the burial of a prophet. It was more like a revival service than a funeral. There was no note of sadness, no burial service, no appearance of gloom. In a sealed packet he had left instructions concerning his burial, and these were in harmony with the sentiments he had often expressed. 'When I am gone,' he used to say, 'let there be no lamentation; I want to be laid to rest with a song of praise.' He chose the hymns to be sung. The persons to take part in the service were chosen, and the place of honour was given to his friends. Those who spoke and prayed were asked to strike the note of gladness and thanksgiving. Everything was done as he wished. He was buried in the spot he had chosen, close by the Wycliffe Memorial, and in the grounds of the church which he said would be his monument. His friends travelled long distances, and were representative of his work and influence. There was a long procession of young ministers and evangelists, many of whom owed to him their own souls. He loved young men, and often said nothing paid like helping young preachers, and their presence at his funeral was a striking testimony to his labours on their behalf. Many representatives came from remote villages, mourning the loss of a friend. To some of them he had gone annually for twenty years or more, and it was pathetic to listen to their appeals for a successor. The Foreign Field was represented by one of the Foreign Mission Secretaries, and it was not forgotten that two of his sons are missionaries—Charlie in China, and Tom at his father's station in Africa. Publicans drew down their

¹ From *Joyful News*, November 10, 1905.

blinds and closed their doors, and the rector of the parish came to do honour to a man of God. It was a unique gathering, and a noble tribute to a great and holy man who with great fidelity had served his Lord.

It was a prophetic note that distinguished him. He had the prophet's vision. In the secret place of the Most High his eyes were opened, and to him was revealed the mind of God. His plans were conceived in prayer and matured in secret. He talked with God, and took instructions at first hand from his Lord. Elijah was his ideal servant. The man who stood before the face of Jehovah did not know what it was to fear the face of man, and Thomas Champness stood in the Holy Presence, ready to do His will. His outlook upon the world was always from the standpoint of God. He saw the invisible, and exulted in the Lord God of Hosts. It was this vivid sense of the Divine that made him brave and great. He knew no fear. Nothing could daunt or discourage him. It was sometimes his lot to stand alone. Friends stood aloof, comrades turned critics, and opponents assailed him with relentless malice; but nothing moved him. Sustained in the assurance of God's approval, he went straight on, and God never failed him. He made no fuss, and refused to be treated either as a martyr or a hero. Through all the long, bitter years in which he moved his famous Conference Resolution on the complicity of the Church with the liquor traffic, he refused to speak on the subject from Temperance platforms; and though he went twice to prison as a Passive Resister, he never became an agitator. He was content to do his duty and await the issue, which was not with men but God.

He had the buoyant hopefulness of the prophet. There never was a happier saint. He was irrepressible in his gladness. Sometimes it burst forth into rollicking exultation, but his heart sang and his face shone continually. When he said good-bye to Dr. Fitchett at the Bristol Conference, the distinguished visitor asked him if he felt hopeful for the work of the future, and he replied characteristically, 'Hopeful! Yes; you will want a cart-wheel for the capital O of my optimism.' Nothing could

depress him, for he had an invincible assurance of the ultimate triumph of Jesus Christ.

Thomas Champness had the prophet's heart of compassion. He was as tender as he was brave. Sympathy and strength were beautifully blended in him. He could weep as well as scorch. Little children clung to him, and the poor and afflicted loved him. They found in him the strength of a lion and the gentleness of a lamb, and they trusted him as a man of God. His ministry was one of consolation, and people flocked to hear him because he helped and cheered them.

He had the prophet's patriotism. The King has lost a friend and England a devoted citizen. He never forgot to pray for the King, and sometimes felt it his duty to write him a loyal letter of exhortation. The world was his parish, but he loved his native land. It was his love that compelled him to speak of the nation's sins and peril, and kindled his hatred of things that demoralize and destroy. He believed in the future, and looked for the New Heaven and the New Earth. His body lies near the spot where Wycliffe was buried ; at the door of his house there is an open Bible ; at his grave there gathered preachers whom he had sent forth to preach the Word of Life ; and the Great Day alone will declare the harvest of a life cheerfully spent to the glory of God in the service of men.

S. CHADWICK.

POINTS IN THE ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE AT THE FUNERAL

We surround a grave this day at which myriads of Methodists would like to stand with us in appreciation of the life, the work, and the worth of Thomas Champness. We celebrate his coronation rather than attend his burial.

Methodism looks on in mourning, but in rejoicing too. We weep as our Master wept with those who sorrowed at Bethany : but we rejoice ; for although our brother has died, he is not dead ; although we commit his body to the grave, he shall rise again. On the resurrection morning glorious lives will be in

the triumphal march from Lutterworth, when Wycliffe and Champness shall be in the great procession. Both blessed men, even if so different; men whose wonderful history will keep this little town a shrine to which pilgrims will come for years hence; and if Wycliffe's grave-disturbed resting-place does not contain his ashes, his church is here, and in more peaceful and blessed times Thomas Champness has been laid to rest in the quiet grave to which many will come, and on which the loving tear of many a convert, many a comrade, many a friend will fall. Yes; we mourn; but we are glad. We shall miss him; our Church will miss him; many a good cause, and many a poor saint and anxious sinner will miss him; and for all that we mourn. But he is safe. The storms all over, the port is gained; the journey is ended, he is at home. He enjoys the blessedness of a perfected salvation. He had clean hands, an unblemished character, a saintly life, a successful ministry; a sudden call, for which he was prepared; and now he is with the Lord. Thomas Champness is not in this closed casket which lies before me. He dwells in bliss. He is clothed in the white robes; he is far beyond the reach of pain, or sickness, or sorrow, or prison, or death. He walks in glory and is glad. He sees his Saviour; he talks with prophets and apostles whose writings he so much loved; he is in the company of his converts. He is among a far greater crowd of Methodist friends to-day than the host of them he left on earth. He is in a land of familiar faces, and probably is joining in familiar hymns and songs. Why should we mourn for him?

Mr. Champness lived long, that was well; he lived to Christ, that was better; he lives in bliss eternal there where we may all live with him, and that is best of all. . . .

My friends! many of you have taken long journeys to this grave to testify your love, your esteem, your gratitude. His ministerial brethren are well represented—they are here because the departed was so true, so loyal, so kindly to the brotherhood; his converts are well represented too; his *Joyful News* work and readers are also represented; the whole town joins in sympathy, the blinds are drawn in every house on the route,

even of every public-house, but one ; and almost every business place has its door closed. What a testimony of appreciation of a fine character !

If Mr. Champness's death had been announced during the session of the Conference, there would have been a solemn hush ; and then, without one voice of dissent, a messenger would have been sent to testify to the fact that he was a brother beloved, a distinguished son of our Church, a noble preacher, an indefatigable worker, a brave soldier, a man with a conscience, one made of the stuff of which martyrs are made. But if Conference is not in session, we know its mind ; and it is to me a great privilege, as its President, to represent it, and say some words, all too poor, in appreciation of one of the best and most useful Methodist preachers that ever lived. He would have preferred a quiet burial without the utterance of our feelings ; but as some men who hoped for sepulture in the God's acre of their villages are buried in Westminster Abbey at the bidding of the nation, so in deference to a universal wish, even the wish of our brother had to be set aside, and the voices of many have been heard.

We honour the memory of the good, strong-hearted man who has left us. We thank God that He gave him to us. We shall not forget the tender, loving, sympathetic Christian ; the earnest, persuasive, impassioned evangelist ; the man who wrote and spoke so well in 'language understood of the common people.' We will pray the great Head of the Church to enrich His Church with more like him. We will not think of him as dead and away from the people, but as living among many who through his ministry have changed the smock-frock of village life for the bright raiment of the upper world, and as among many others who have welcomed him to the skies.

May 'God that comforteth them that are cast down' richly console his widow, and cheer the children to whom he has left the heritage of a good name, and be especially gracious to his missionary sons in China and Africa !