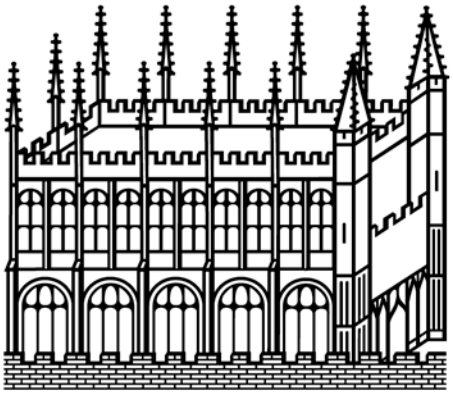

WEST INDIES

HENRY ADAMS

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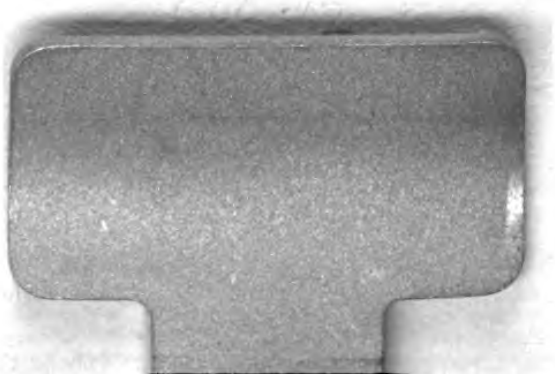

The Methodist Missionary Library

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METHODISM IN THE WEST INDIES

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BY THE

REV. HENRY ADAMS

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METHODISM IN THE WEST INDIES

CHAPTER I

METHODISM AND THE NEGRO SLAVE

IT is an interesting fact that, while our vast Colonial Empire had its genesis in the West Indies and our countrymen learned the art of governing in the Caribbean Archipelago, the same romantic sphere of labour takes the first place in the history of the Wesleyan Methodist missionary enterprise.

Methodism has had rapid and wonderful development in the West Indies. Of its beginning the story has often been told. In 1758 Nathaniel Gilbert, Speaker in the House of Assembly in Antigua,

became converted, under John Wesley's preaching, with two of his negro servants, Mary Alley and Sophia Campbell, who were forthwith baptized. Returning to Antigua, Mr. Gilbert commenced holding religious services, and succeeded in forming classes and inaugurating a regular system of evangelistic work. On his death there was no one to fill his place, but the little 'Society' continued steadfast till, in the providence of God, Mr. John Baxter, a Wesleyan local preacher, was sent, in 1778, from Chatham dockyard to the ship-yards in English Harbour, and found, to his intense joy and surprise, a Methodist society which had been long and earnestly praying for a helper. Application was sent to Wesley for missionaries, but they could not be spared; and the society of 1,589 members—all black but ten—continued to struggle on till another providential intervention showed both the Methodists of England and the little society in Antigua that God had great designs in these lands.

On Christmas morning, 1786, John

Baxter was going to conduct the service in the rude chapel of the Methodists at five o'clock, when he was met by a party of weather-beaten strangers who had landed from a half-wrecked vessel which had just reached the harbour. One of the strangers inquired for Mr. John Baxter, and his eyes sparkled with joy when he found he was speaking to the very man. His companions were Messrs. Hammett, Warrener, and Clarke, and he himself was Dr. Coke, the 'Father of Wesleyan Missions.' They had embarked three months before at Gravesend, for Nova Scotia, to reinforce the Wesleyan Mission there ; but, driven by tempestuous winds, they had drifted from their course and had made for the West Indies, seeking Antigua for the repairs of their ship.

If this event was one of the crises of early Methodism, it was certainly nothing less in the history of the West Indies. Dr. Coke preached on the morning of his arrival from the words, 'Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God.' For a fortnight he continued preaching twice

a day, and then, with Messrs. Baxter, Hammett, and Clarke, made a tour of inspection among the neighbouring islands. The Nova Scotia plans were for the time being abandoned, and he remained long enough to establish several stations.

Dr. Coke paid subsequent visits to the West Indies, and the missions continued to grow with marvellous rapidity and success. In Dominica, St. Vincent, St. Kitts, St. Eustatius, Barbados, Jamaica, Grenada, and other places, flourishing societies were soon reported. Sometimes a stray Methodist in the army, or a colonist of other occupation, began the work ; but usually it was the West Indian Methodists themselves who carried the flame from place to place, till the whole British and many other portions of the archipelago became ablaze with beacon-lights of the new evangel, and even fringes of the adjacent continent were touched by the glow.

After his second voyage, Coke's reports in England created so much interest and enthusiasm that he was authorized to

collect funds for the West Indian Mission. Thus, informally and unwittingly, Methodism inaugurated an institution which culminated in the formation of the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1813, and it will be seen how large a part the West Indies played in the foundation of one of the first, greatest, and most successful of the modern missionary organizations of the world.

By the time of Wesley's death, five years after Coke landed in Antigua, the islands furnished the scene of some of the greatest Methodist triumphs. It was a sublime spectacle which the dying man was permitted to contemplate—a dozen devoted missionaries, with a noble band of heroic helpers, proclaiming the liberty of the gospel to the sable bondmen of those far-off lands, and already 5,645 members gathered into society. The last letter but one which he ever wrote was to Wilberforce, describing slavery as the 'sum of all human villanies,' and urging the great philanthropist to persevere in his efforts for its abolition.

'Abolition' was not yet to come for wellnigh half a century, and for Methodism the intervening years were a period of arduous toil amid many difficulties, but with ever-increasing success.

Space will not permit us to tell of brave young preachers, or their wives, or their fair children, whose sacred dust lies at the 'gateways of the West,' waiting for the dawn of the eternal Easter morning. These early heroes counted not their lives dear unto them if only they might faithfully deliver the message of Him who was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Methodism must not forget these men, nor ever loosely cast aside the bonds with which many a quiet chapel graveyard in the West binds her to her first great missionary love.

The chief troubles of our early missionaries arose from the wrath of man,

though even this was made to praise God. Jamaica was early the sphere of bitter and malignant persecution. Laws were enacted prohibiting the missionary from preaching without a licence, which the magistrate might give or refuse according to his pleasure. For alleged infringement of this law the missionary was frequently thrown into prison, suffering indescribable miseries. Mobs led by so-called 'gentlemen' assaulted the preachers. Chapels were demolished or closed for years. But the church, baptized with such tribulation, has become one of the fairest of the whole archipelago.

In Nevis the missionary was waylaid and wellnigh killed by a blow from a white man's bludgeon, while the services were often disturbed by shouts of insult and brandished swords and clubs. The Charlestown chapel was set on fire, and only saved from total destruction by the prompt courage of its congregation.

In Barbados, where at first the work met with marvellous toleration and success, a storm of persecution broke out in 1822,

which the governor declared himself unable to quell or to redress. The chapel was demolished, the mission house with all its furniture was destroyed without the least restraint, and the missionary and his family had to flee from the island by stealth in a boat that took them to St. Vincent. A hundred pounds was offered as a reward for the conviction of the offenders, but a counter-proclamation declared that the destruction had been wrought not by a rabble, but by 'gentlemen of first respectability.'

After a fair beginning, great afflictions overtook the work in St. Vincent. The planters suddenly realized that the logical issue of a missionary evangelization would be the abolition of slavery. A malicious law, which required no ingenuity on the part of the itinerant Methodist preacher to interpret, was passed by the Legislature, which cunningly made it a crime for any one to hold a licence to preach who had not been twelve months resident in the colony. For a first offence against the enactment a fine of £18 was to be im-

posed, or imprisonment for not more than ninety days and not less than thirty; for a second offence corporal punishment was to be inflicted according as the magistrate might prescribe, and the offender was to be banished from the colony. If, after this the offender ventured to return, the penalty was to be death. One of the early missionaries fell a victim to this malicious law, and was thrown into prison at Kingstown; soldiers guarded his door, but before he was deported from the island, he was permitted to preach once more to his flock, who listened, with the tears streaming down their faces, to his exhortations from the grated window of his cell. It required some courage to be a West Indian missionary in those days, but Methodism spared not her most stalwart sons for the field which has sometimes since been lightly regarded.

God greatly blessed the devotion and heroism of His servants. His word grew mightily and prevailed, till, in 1838, when the final stage of emancipation was reached, 83 missionaries occupied the West Indian

Methodist mission field, and 42,928 members were enrolled upon its registers. These were all won for Christ during the days of slavery, and by far the greater number had been slaves.

It is significant that whatever the direct or indirect influence of Missions may have been on the anti-slavery movement, in all the years that Methodist missionaries had been working in the West Indies, not one Methodist slave had ever been proved guilty of incendiarism or rebellion. This was no doubt due in a large measure to the wise counsels of those who sent forth the missionaries, and enjoined upon them 'to promote the moral and religious improvement of the slaves, without in the least degree, in public or in private, interfering with their civil condition.'

The consistent following of these counsels was sometimes criticized by certain of their comrades who adopted a more active attitude regarding the great public question of the times. But Methodism is primarily an evangelistic agency.

Wesley, in the famous No. 11 of his 'Rules of a Helper,' says: 'You have nothing to do but to save souls'; and without doubt this simple policy has in the long run secured a greater and surer advance in moral and civil reformation than a direct interference with existing conditions or political questions as such.

There is no doubt that the efforts to 'promote the moral and religious improvement of the slaves, without interfering with their civil condition,' did more for the West Indian negroes than any attempt on the part of the missionaries at 'interfering with their civil condition.' Nothing could more effectually help the philanthropy of those whose proper sphere was in the political arena of the State; awkward, protracted, and injurious complications were avoided; a large measure of tranquillity was ensured during the terrible strain of the great agitation; and the dawn of freedom was ushered in with a new-born nation on its knees in reverent thanksgiving, and in an earnest endeavour to understand, and to consecrate itself to,

the highest responsibilities of the liberties of civil life.

The great day, the day of EMANCIPATION, came at last. Many contemplated its approach with apprehension, for who could tell what might happen? Colonial governors knew by this time where to look for order and quiet on such an occasion, but it needed not their wisdom to instruct the missionaries and their flocks to prepare for it in a way that should ensure its arrival as one of the most gracious, beautiful, and triumphant days that the Christian world has ever known.

Emancipation Eve, July 31, 1834, cannot be recalled without stirring deep feelings of admiration and gratitude. The negroes retired from the fields at the usual hour, and the sun went down. With throbbing expectation they waited until ten o'clock. The chapels were then opened, and they were permitted to assemble. All the slaves were not church members; but the members brought their comrades, and the Christian portion of the community guided the movements of

the whole. Two hours were spent among the crowded congregations in singing, prayer, and suitable exhortation, and then a few minutes before midnight the vast assemblies knelt in silent worship to receive from Him who alone is judge among the nations, their freedom. At last the clock struck twelve, and over the bowed hosts there passed a thrill which the world has never known before or since. Eight hundred thousand slaves were FREE! The fountains of a great deep were broken up, and amid shouts and tears, embracings and exultation, there rolled from all the British Antilles a song of richer music than the breaking surf upon their myriad lovely shores, the grand doxology, 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.'

CHAPTER II

FIFTY YEARS OF FREEDOM

THE eventful years of Methodist history which preceded emancipation were full of romance, enterprise, and success, and we have not been left altogether without record of those thrilling scenes. Peter Samuel, Henry Bleby, W. Moister, James Bickford, and others have given us beautiful descriptions of West Indian scenery, wonderful stories of danger and deliverance, pioneering and progress, travel and triumph.

Among the makers of Methodism in the West Indies there are many honoured names, and those long-service men have left their mark upon the people among whom they laboured.

The writer's interest in West Indian missions was first aroused when, in his

youth, he heard the Rev. Henry Bleby give an account of his early missionary experiences during the 'death-struggles of slavery' in Jamaica. He told how on one occasion he had to suffer the indignity of being tarred and feathered and almost burned by the 'superior class' for his sympathetic attitude towards the black population. Henry Bleby was a grand old warrior when the writer knew him, and it was a great privilege to live in his house, to have him for his first superintendent, and to hear him fight his battles over again. He was not always wise, perhaps, as an administrator; but who is? In his defence of the black man he sometimes offended those who were at least as just and humanitarian as himself; but his very blunders were on the side of chivalry and righteousness.

On his way to the last circuit in which he travelled he had to pass a very dangerous reef that was locally called 'the devil's backbone.' When he was told of this, he said, 'Well, I think I can have some respect for the devil if he has a backbone.'

That remark was characteristic. He had plenty of backbone. It needed much for a Wesleyan missionary's work in those days. It was not by choice they were fighting men. They had to fight in order to live, to fight for the most elementary rights of their congregations, which were composed chiefly of black and coloured people, when the English church was defended by the sexton who, whip in hand, stood outside the church doors to keep away 'dogs and niggers.'

One wonders sometimes whether it would not be worth while to tell the whole story of the romance of the early days of Methodism among the negroes of the West Indies over again—those thrilling incidents, with their quickly changing scenes of pathos and humour, of tragedy and comedy, such as Henry Bleby's facile pen described and George Sargeant's ready tongue related. It is true that the old type of negro, the Uncle Tom and Dinah type, is not as much in evidence as it was a generation ago; but it still survives, and is as responsive as ever to the offer

of kindness, and as grateful as ever for benefits conferred by God or man.

There is almost, if not quite, as much difference, however, between the negro type in the towns and in the villages as there is between similar classes in England; and it is largely in the villages that the old type lingers, while in the towns there has grown up a generation which reveals more fully the effects of elementary education and of the social influence of a more advanced civilization, both in improving the strong and in spoiling the weak.

But there are not a few negroes in the West Indies who came there under very different circumstances from those who were slaves and descendants of slaves in the colony. After setting her slaves free, Great Britain generally had a gunboat watching in British waters for any slave trader that might come within the three miles' limit on its way from Africa to Cuba. As sure as it did, a shot was sent right across its bows; and if that did not bring it to, a chase was immediately made, the vessel captured, brought into

the British harbour, and the slaves set free. Some of them were apprenticed, others sent into domestic service, others had land given them to cultivate, being supplied with the necessities of life until they could help themselves. There are little communities still in the West Indies which were formed in that way. It is a bit of our island story that we are not ashamed of, and which the black man remembers with gratitude.

When holding a missionary meeting in the middle of the day at a small settlement where some of these rescued slaves were present, a very interesting incident occurred—in fact, more than one. It was the young missionary's first visit there, and he was quite fresh from home. As he landed, the beach was crowded with people, who made various remarks upon his personal appearance, generally flattering, it is true, but none the less embarrassing, especially when one dear old mother in Israel stepped out from the rest, and, patting him caressingly on the shoulder, said, 'Poor little fellow; I wonder how

his mudder could hab let him leave her.' The mother at home would doubtless have thanked her for this, and perhaps if the old negro woman had seen the mother when he did leave her, her wonder would have increased. But, considering that he was the great man of the occasion, and the deputation to the island, the incident rather brought him back from the romance of missionary life with which he was excited to a sense of insignificance that was out of harmony with the environment.

We went into the chapel, a little place with mud walls and palm-thatched roof, rough cedar joists, and posts out of plumb, and sills that were out of level, and all out of debt. But it was *their own*. They had cut down those young cedars in the bush, collected the wood and stone, burnt the lime, and built the house of prayer. We went in, and made the collection at once, for some of them had their arms full, and wanted to get rid of it, so that they could enjoy the meeting free from encumbrances. There were fruit and vegetables of all kinds, eggs, chickens, a

kid, and I am not sure that there was not a sucking-pig.

When the deputation had finished speaking, an opportunity was given for local talent, and, among others, an old black man rose. He was a pure African, barefooted, with but scanty clothes on, and knew only how to use the hoe, and plant his little plot. He said : 'Minister, me tank God dis mornin. Me bin slave, and stole away from me own country by Spaniard ; but, tank God, de English boat brought me into dis harbour, where I set free, and where I learn to speak English. Me hear de gospel ob Jesus Christ, and me convart. Me tank God me eber made slave, for if me not stole away and made slave, me no get to dis English land, and me no hear de gospel, and me still be in sin. Me tank God me made slave.'

When the missionary heard this, he felt that he was getting at the back of the black man's mind, and began to realize that there was 'some salt of heaven in their human corruption.'

With the pathetic incidents related at the end of the last chapter, there closed one of the most disgraceful phases in the history of a freedom-loving and freedom-boasting people, and one of the most trying and painful eras in the unfortunate career of an oppressed and longsuffering race.

It is true that 'all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten' the hand that bound those shackles on the feet of the negro, and lashed his bleeding flesh for failing to complete his task of unremunerated toil, and maybe the bill is yet to pay. The shackles were now broken, and the victim freed. The compensation, as we know, went to the criminal, and not to the victim. But he was now free; body and soul were his to work out his own destiny.

Fifty years later, on August 1, 1888, a year after Queen Victoria's Jubilee, a grand celebration of the jubilee of emancipation was held throughout the West Indies. The day was proclaimed as a public holiday, thanksgiving services were

held in all the chapels, long processions of school children marched through the streets, had dinner in the market or some other public place, near to the site where some of their grandparents had been sold, and were then taken to fields for sports. In the evening they were entertained with illuminations and fireworks; concerts were organized in public halls, when songs of freedom and of hope, composed in many instances by the black people themselves, were sung by enthusiastic choirs. Banquets were given at the Government houses, and speeches were made by black and white men, glorying in the deed that had done simple justice to a people who had been greatly wronged. The writer has before him the *menu* of one of these banquets, presided over by the Governor of the colony, which contains among the *rôts* the items, 'selle de mouton à l'émancipation,' and 'dinde et jambon à la Wilberforce.' The British and Foreign Bible Society sent out a special deputation on the occasion, and distributed many copies of the Scriptures.

The rejoicings were general and hearty, both among the white and black people. It is true that the celebrations revealed the existence of another generation which looked somewhat askance upon the attempt to revive the memories of the misfortunes of their race; and, as if anxious to blot them out, some impatiently ejaculated, 'dat old-time tory; dat tory done.' But the great majority of them took the matter in a very different light. It had been the custom in many places to hold a service at five o'clock on the morning of the first of August; but in 1888 the time of that service was changed in some instances, and it was held from eleven to twelve on the preceding night. A crowded congregation assembled in the chapel, and in the hush of subdued emotion the service was conducted. Several black men of excellent character gave addresses that were full of reminiscences of slavery times, and grateful contrasts were drawn between those times and these. At twelve o'clock, midnight, the chapel bell was rung—in some

cases the same bell in the same chapel as on July 31, 1834—and the vast congregation, with their black shining faces, rose, and those who could best keep back the tears, sang, as they only could sing it, 'The year of Jubilee is come.'

In one circuit there was a memorable and unique gathering under 'de ole sand-box tree.' This tree was a kind of local 'Plymouth Rock.' It had been the trysting-place where the Christian negroes had met each other and God for fellowship, 'when days were dark, and friends were few.' It was far enough away from the plantation to relieve them of any great fear of detection in their forbidden worship. The slaves used to hide their best clothes, and, dressed in their ordinary working garments, 'steal away to Jesus' one by one, and in devious paths come to this 'Bethel' to worship God. Here God met them, and it was holy ground. Now, fifty years after, when they are celebrating the jubilee of freedom, some of the old people who had been slaves must have a thanksgiving meeting under

'de ole sandbox tree,' and there they thought of these far-away troubled times, now gone for ever ; there they gave thanks, offered prayer, and made speeches, which, though expressed in broken English, found their home in the ear and heart of God. One old negress, of capacious girth and equally big heart, named Judith Quashie, said : 'You young people, you no like to hear ob slavery time, but if you lib in dose time you keep cibil tongue in your head an no talk like you do now.' The refrain of all the speeches was thanks to God and to 'good Queen Victoria,' whom they believed to have been the human means through whom this great boon had come to them. What moral wonders had been wrought, and what miracles of grace had been witnessed between the day of emancipation and the jubilee celebration ! Out of the helpless hordes that had been brought from their native country as savages, and who had witnessed generations of cruel slavery, there had been born during those fifty years of freedom a Christian nation.

Considering the enormous difficulties and discouragements which our work and our people have encountered during the last twenty years, it is in the nature of things that the membership should have been somewhat fluctuating; and bearing in mind the phenomenal rapidity with which during the first years of the history of our mission the people flocked to our churches, and were received into membership for training in the things of the kingdom, it would not have been surprising if, in the course of years, the continued progress became slow, or if during unprecedented distress they had shown a decrease. But such has not been the case; for although many have had to emigrate from some of the islands to others or to the continent in search of work, and it has not always happened that they have been able to identify themselves with our Church in the locality to which they have removed, yet our latest reports show that to-day we have 53,000 members, 115 ministers—of whom many are natives—nearly 500 chapels and other

preaching-places, and about 900 local preachers, with 34,000 Sunday scholars.

By 1885, when two West Indian Conferences were formed, the whole condition of things had been changed. The system of day schools, mainly supported by Government, but assisted by denominational funds, had made a great difference in the intellectual and social condition of many of the black and coloured people. In some of our most important colonies, natives, many of whom had passed through training colleges, formed the teaching staff from head master and head mistress downwards. In some circuits our laymen were capable of managing the circuit finances; and, in our town congregations at least, we had a sprinkling of European members, which, together with many intelligent coloured people of mixed European and African parentage, changed the character of the congregation, and enabled the missionary to delegate to other capable hands some of the duties that hitherto he had to perform himself. The ministry, too, became reinforced by a goodly number of

natives, or West Indian born men, of every shade of colour, from the pure Creole European to the pure Negro. Some of them could stand shoulder to shoulder with their English brethren, and were doing valiant service for the Church.

Indeed, there were so many elements of progress and so much promise of stability in West Indian Methodism, that a few of the older missionaries on the ground, and many less-informed ministers and laymen at home, thought that the time had come for self-government and self-support. This idea was very flattering to both native ministers and laymen, and was by many strongly advocated. After some preliminary negotiations, therefore, the British Conference established two annual conferences with administrative powers, and one triennial general conference with legislative powers. Grants were made by the British Conference, some of which were declared to be final; others were to diminish year by year. In the judgement of some of us, the financial conditions were impossible from the be-

ginning. It was thought that the money of the British Connexion and the time and attention of the committee should be devoted to other countries that were opening up with large populations of heathen people. And on the part of the West Indians themselves, both ministers and laymen, it was a very legitimate ambition to start the experiment of Home Rule, for which they considered themselves in every way capable, and to which they deemed themselves entitled.

The Conference undoubtedly did good, and for a few years it seemed as though its progress would falsify the prophecies of disaster made by some who knew the circumstances of the people and the work. The scheme was given a fair trial, and it failed; the financial collapse was not the only phase of the failure.

The Conference succeeded in solving some of the problems the importance of which the former régime had either not realized or with which it feared to grapple. It brought to an end the autocratic one-man rule that in some places had not

worked successfully, and it set its face against the long continuance of ministers in one locality, which had also been an unwise policy. It consolidated the work, and brought its different phases under the purview of men who knew and were not afraid to speak out or to act upon conviction. It is true that there were signs in its later proceedings that some of these matters were being loosely dealt with. But on taking a calm view of things, those who know most of the subject will probably conclude that on the whole the experiment was worth making.

But it may be said, 'What about the £60,000 debt?' There is much to be said, if necessary, concerning that debt. It may suffice to refer to one or two things only here. The impoverished West Indian churches have themselves agreed to raise half of the amount. We hope they can do it, but very much question if it can be done within the next thirty years, unless the commercial prospects considerably alter for the better in the meanwhile.

As far as the Eastern Conference was concerned, it was not sufficiently considered that the expense of getting to the Conference was so great that it made it practically impossible for laymen to attend, and the expenses of the ministers became a burden on the funds out of all proportion to the advantages gained. This is not true of the Western Conference, and we confess that we do not know why the Conference failed on that side, unless the other reasons for the general failure predominate.

The small District Synods which were part of the scheme in starting the Conferences were a failure. They were too small to command the respect of the Connexion, or to guarantee that some of the functions imposed upon them should be fulfilled with dignity and fairness.

The return to England of senior ministers, the failure to secure a trained native ministry, and the supply of trained men from England being no longer available, together with the calamities which visited the different stations from

the heavens above and the earth beneath, all helped to make the surrender of the Conferences a necessity.

The conditions and circumstances of our work in the West Indies afford very little in the way of change for either preacher or people, and 'distinguished strangers' are very rare. The only change the missionary has is during the meeting of the Synod, once a year, when he will go to his brethren on some other island in the district, or they will come to him. There are no regular holidays for our brethren in missionary work. It would be well if there were. Many a man would have been saved from a serious breakdown, that has occasioned a visit to England, if he could have got a 'preacher's fortnight' every year.

Circumstances such as these made it a special pleasure to welcome the Rev. A. M'Aulay and Mr. William Sampson, when, in 1887, they came on their evangelistic tour. Many of the thrilling incidents connected with their work Mr. Sampson has told us in the little book he published

after returning to England. There was a grand revival in the hearts and lives of both preachers and their members, and many others were converted and joined the church. Much of the good that was done then remains to this day, and the visit of those two evangelists forms an interesting and important feature in the story of modern Methodism in the West Indies.

Nor is the visit of the Rev. Edward Davidson to be forgotten. It was too hurried and short, but Mr. Davidson reaped where many of us had sown, and we rejoiced in it. One story connected with his mission is of exceptional interest. Not long ago our Church, and especially those interested in foreign missions, mourned over the early close of the promising career of the Rev. J. H. Darrell, M.A., of Richmond College, Galle, Ceylon. This cultured and earnest missionary was a gift from the West to the East, and the hour of his consecration was when Mr. Davidson was preaching in Bethel, Barbados. Young Darrell was the organist,

and when, during the service, the preacher gave out a hymn there was no response, for during the sermon he had quietly stolen away to the inquiry-room, where he was found seeking pardon. That was the commencement of the brilliant but all too brief career that ended in Ceylon in 1906.

CHAPTER III

THE CONDITION AND CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE

IN speaking of the religion, religious life, and character of the negro, the writer does not feel any necessity to apologize for him, or enter on a defence of him from a religious standpoint. But there are certain features in his intellectual and moral make-up, and certain circumstances in his history and condition as we see him in the West Indies, that add interest to his personality and romance to his religious progress.

Great progress has been made, and this people, who were brought from their native Africa in a condition of savagery and plunged into slavery—to which they were doomed for many years, and from which they were emancipated little more

than two generations ago—are now members of Christian churches by the hundred thousand. That the religion of these people means something, and that they have advanced towards the Christian ideal in a measure that has belied the dark prophecies of their detractors, and justified the confident hopes that Christian missionaries had of them, is patent to all who are willing to see.

When we think of the conditions under which Christianity was introduced to them, the fact that their teachers were of the same colour and from the same country as their oppressors, that they often had the worst exhibitions of savagery and immorality from their 'superiors,' and that all through their history those who have been supposed to represent a more advanced condition of religious life have scorned and persecuted them because the same Maker whom they profess to worship has made their skin of a different colour—when we think of these things, and then of the religious condition and development of the negroes in the West Indies, we have

significant and self-evident proof both of the divinity of the Christian religion and of the religious sincerity and capacity of the negro.

True, the white population in the West Indies has in many instances been of great service to the missionary, and helped nobly in the work of evangelizing the negro ; but in other instances, and we fear the majority of cases, its influence has been baneful in the extreme ; and the black people have retained their religion in spite of the influence and example of the white man, and not by his help. It is well also to remember that our chief work as a missionary society in the West Indies has been among the negroes.

It used to be somewhat amusing to notice that the black man looks with the same scornful pity and from the same lofty superiority upon the coolie as the white man does on the negro. In one place a number of white children were growing up ignorant of the elements of an education, because their parents would not allow them to go to the same school as

the black children, and there was no other school to which they could afford to go in the place. They would rather that their children should grow up ignorant than that they should share the school, the class, and the lesson with black children. In another town, however, there was a similar feeling among the blacks in relation to the coolie. A black lad was at work cleaning out the trench by the side of the road. This is generally considered to be the work for coolies. A black girl, about his own age, was passing, and stood for a moment looking with indescribable disgust upon the lad. Sucking her teeth as a sign of contempt, and tip-tilting her nose to give emphasis to her words, she called out, 'Eh, what you tink ob dat? he disgrace he colour; he might hab lef it to de coolie.' We have not discouraged the white people from joining us, or profiting by our services, or helping in our work; and we should be ungrateful indeed did we not acknowledge the good they have received and the help they have frequently and loyally given us.

Neither must we overlook another part of the community, which represents an important factor in the political, social, and religious life of the West Indies to-day, and inspires a good deal of hope for the future. We refer to the coloured as distinct from the black people. The Anglo-Saxon element in their blood is at least as evident as the African element, and they have to be reckoned with in any plans for the future government of the West Indies, and listened to before any judgement can be passed upon its people. It is somewhat surprising that the late J. A. Froude, who saw so much in the West Indies that no one else saw, should have overlooked the coloured man altogether, both in his descriptions of persons and in his forecast of the future. Perhaps, considering this oversight, it is not so surprising that from beginning to end of *The English in the West Indies*, there is no reference whatever to the Wesleyan Methodist Church nor to our many and sometimes conspicuous buildings.

But the negroes are the picturesque

figure in the landscape. It was amongst the negroes that the work first began in the West Indies. It was to them that God sent Dr. Coke. It was the negro that touched the imagination, appealed to the heart, and troubled the conscience of the English people in the fresh fervour of their newly-born enthusiasm for Foreign Missions, and we do not think he will be forgotten in the revival of that enthusiasm at the present day.

With the traditions of African Obeahism clinging to him, and stories of witchcraft and kindred superstitions handed down through generations; with coolies from the East Indies and from China with their idolatries, and the Roman Catholics and their superstitions all around him, it is not to be wondered that the negro should get rather mixed sometimes both in belief and in practice, or that if he is in search of a religion he should get perplexed in going the round to see which may be most suitable to him.

We would not be misunderstood about the character of the negroes. They are not

all saints, nor are they all equally intelligent or industrious. They do not always, perhaps, exhibit the same strength of character as those who have behind them long centuries of civilization and Christianity. But their patience, their simplicity, their fidelity, and loving, devoted, and grateful natures are plain to all that are willing to see those virtues in a black man.

Not only is the ordinary negro with whom we come in contact in our work a sane and sensible person, but the careers of many of our young men have shown that there exists in the race a capacity for intellectual work and accomplishment of which no European need be ashamed. He has not only worthily occupied positions of trust in the Colonial Government, but he is a respectable citizen and tradesman, and is well represented in all the professions.

The sense of humour in the composition of the negro is not only incontestable, but it is doubtless also providential, and is an element to be reckoned with by all

who wish to make the best of the race. It is as much a part of 'nature's capital' for the black man as impassiveness is in the Buck Indian. No one will fully understand the negro or appreciate him who lacks a sense of humour, and no one will so readily influence him without it. It is those who lack this 'saving' sense that think the black man a buffoon, and call him a nigger. A missionary successfully working amongst them and in full sympathy with them would no more think of calling them 'niggers,' than he would think of calling the members of an English congregation by any opprobrious epithet.

When God made the negro He put a big laugh in the centre of his heart; and if sometimes when he is greatly amused it wants to come out all at once, and thereby stretches his features and contorts his anatomy generally, he is not to be condemned for those antics as though they represented his normal conduct and deportment.

The beneficence of this provision of nature was exhibited in the days of slavery,

when the misery and agony of the lacerated body and the terror and anguish of the outraged senses could be forgotten, as he witnessed the exaggerated imitation of his groans and gestures by one of his friends at the evening gathering. As roars of laughter pealed forth, they made him feel more like a hero than a victim. And amid all the negro's sufferings as he has been exploited and oppressed by his fellow men, his humour has saved him, and sometimes saved his oppressor too. He ripples over with laughter, and it seems impossible for him to be sad for any length of time.

It has often been the writer's good fortune to turn what threatened to be a serious quarrel into a harmless and bloodless battle of language, by hinting at the ludicrous interpretation of the affair, and thus giving an opportunity for the play of the black man's humour; though sometimes it must be confessed he has been hoist with his own petard.

A useful as well as interesting book could be written on this subject, but we

refer to it here only incidentally as part of the romance of our work amongst them, and not one of the least pleasant experiences incident to West Indian life.

The negro's proverbs are crammed with humour as they are with pathos.

'When trouble catch bulldog, puppy breeches fit him.' 'Patient man ride jackass.' 'Shoes alone know when stocking hab hole.'

Dining at the house of a friend one day, there was waiting at table a big, brawny young fellow, over six feet high and big in proportion, so that even his own people would say that he had 'overripe' hands and feet. He began to hand round the soup, and as the missionary was the guest he went to serve him first. The visitor looked down upon perhaps the biggest hand he had ever seen, decorated with parts of a white kid glove split down the middle and in other places in the effort to get it on. He looked up into the face of the wearer, and, seeing the struggle between dignity and humour in his eye, it was altogether too much for the guest's

sense of the ludicrous. The waiter could not help joining the guest's laugh, and was ordered out to learn to behave himself. No one could imitate the movement of that hand or the look in that black man's eye. He had come across this glove 'somehow,' and could not resist the temptation to wear it in serving at the table.

Volumes could be filled with pathetic instances of the generosity and self-sacrifice of our West Indian people, many of whom never rise and have no hope of rising above the narrowest margin of absolute necessity in their means of living. We had in one of our town societies a devout widow, who kept a cow, and gained part of her living by selling milk. But she had strict, old-fashioned views about keeping the Sabbath ; and while not punishing the cow by neglecting to milk her, and not throwing away the milk that would not keep until the next morning, she took the milk round to her customers, but never charged them for it, and would never allow them to pay for

it. She made the sacrifice without thinking that she was doing anything singular. *It was part* of the price that she gladly paid for her relationship to her Master. When that woman stepped out into the aisle to pray, there was a hush of awe and expectation. Everybody felt her power, and drew their breath when she had finished, as though they were coming out of some cloud of glory. This poor woman used to give one shilling a week for her class-money, and in addition paid for some of her members that could not do it for themselves. Such was her influence in the community, that when another church wanted to employ a Bible-woman they selected her for the work. When she was paid the first two five-dollar notes for her services, she brought them straight to the minister as a contribution to her own chapel. She was thought to be peculiar by some people. So she was; and these were some of her peculiarities. If ever the minister of that church gets near enough to the place of honour in the day of the grand review he will look for that

black woman, and be thankful if he is within view of the same things. It was not the mere gift, in many instances, that gave the touch of romance to such acts of generosity, but the way in which it was done and the existence of the spirit which the action indicated.

Take, for instance, the following incident as an indication of the *esprit de corps* of a Methodist class-meeting composed entirely of black women. The Rev. John Grimshaw was on one occasion lingering among the classes that were meeting in the chapel, at the close of the morning service. He noticed some of the members in one of the classes in very earnest talk, as though there was a matter of special importance under discussion. He went to see, and was met by the leader, who said, 'Dis what de matter, Minister; dis member say she no longer able for pay a bit (fourpence) for she class, and asks if she can pay half bit (twopence), and de oder members say No; dis a bit class, and we no want half-bit member. If she a half-bit member, let she go to a half-bit

class.' The minister explained that she had paid her bit a week as long as she could, but now she could not afford to pay more than a half-bit, and they must not therefore turn her out of the class. They of course consented to her remaining.

Would it do to apply that mode of looking at things to British Methodism to-day? Just now we are looking at the negro side, and see only the romance of their generosity, and we are not applying it to British Methodism; we wish we could. The reason they could give their fourpence a week where the English member gives a penny is not because they earn more, but because they spend less on themselves, and giving to the Lord's work occupies a different, and, possibly, a truer and higher place in their economy of life.

The Rev. J. P. Taylor had this experience in a little chapel in Demerara. The Nismes chapel on the West Bank of Demerara was fast falling into ruin, and the need for a new building was urgent. Meanwhile, in the general revival of the West Bank work,

it had been found possible to employ a catechist ; and good Brother Duke, a man of sterling character and wonderful preaching power, had given up his position as 'cooper boss' on a large East Coast plantation, and was rendering splendid service all along the Bank. Chief among the loyal workers was 'Father Young' and his little African wife, who one day were ushered into Mr. Taylor's study. Fixing his dark eyes on the missionary, he began his business. 'Me hear you is gwine to build de new Nim-mes chapel at de last.' 'Yes, Father Young, we are going to build at last. Nearly time, is it not?' 'Yes, Minista ; but de minista dem so often say 'e gwin build an' 'e no build, me begin tink 'e no gwin build at all, 't all.' 'But we are going to build this time, Father Young, and everybody must "try best," and do all they can to help.' 'Fo' true, Minista?' 'Yes, for true this time, and as soon as Sisters is quite finished the carpenters are coming to Nismes ; in fact, we want some of the benches from Nismes to put into Sisters,

because we are going to make new ones for the new Nismes chapel.' 'Den, Minista 'e as you say.' Hereupon he laid hold of his belt, upon which was fastened a little bag made of monkey skin, and bringing the flap to the front, he plunged in his hand, and lifted out a roll of crisp bank-notes, and put them on the table. 'Count 'em,' he said. 'Six hundred dollars, Father Young,' said the missionary.' 'Right,' said the African. 'Dis,' holding one of the hundred dollar notes, 'me give for me and de missie, deh,' pointing to his wife. Mrs. Young nodded. 'An' dese—five hund'rd dolla—you keep as long as you want, an' no interest till 'e buildin' done.'

Then the question arose as to where the congregation was to meet during the demolition of the old chapel and the building of the new. A meeting was called to consider the situation. After some discussion, an old African seemed to see a way out. He rose, and said: 'Minista, you leave all to we, an' we settle it for good.' The minister had sufficient

confidence in his people to know that they had some satisfactory way in their minds out of the difficulty, and left it to them.

In a few days a letter was delivered at the mission house at Kingston, in a formidable official envelope, addressed 'Rev. Tailor, Kingston Charple.' On opening it the minister was confronted with a terrible foolscap document, which for the moment took his breath away. It ran thus :—

7th November, 1890. Bagotville Village,
Canal No. 1,
West Bank, Demerara.

Account of Build and Break
Nismes Westeyan Carple.

288 bundles of truly at six per bundle ...	$17.28
One man labour seven days at 56c. per day...	3.92
Carpinta charge...	4.56
One man labour 14 days at forty-eight cent per day	6.72
One man labour one day, 48c.	48
Hinghs	1.44
Board	84
Spares	1.56
One man labour one day 44c.	44
Give bread and drink to mens	1.44
Tying of truely	5.24
Total amount ...	$47.93

'Heigh-ho,' said the minister, when he had glanced through the document, 'this is what comes of leaving it all to them. Forty-seven dollars and ninety-three cents to be added to the building account.' Then a note at the bottom of the page caught his eyes: 'A preasant given by F. Dean, Nismes Wesleyan Charple.' Then it dawned upon him what it all meant; and a few days afterwards his surmises proved to be correct when he went over to a temporary chapel opening. Brother Dean and others met him, and explained what had been done. Some of the posts and boards from the old building had been neatly put together into a shapely little structure, with doors and shutters, and thatched with troolie leaves, making a rustic Robinson Crusoe sort of a chapel, which would be quite equal to the accommodation of our work until the new chapel should be finished.

Brother Dean's chapel was duly consecrated, amid much thanksgiving, and many seasons of blessing were witnessed within its rustic walls while the new building

grew into substantial and graceful proportions.

The West Bank fever had shattered Mr. Taylor's health, and he was ordered home to England. Brother Duke, the catechist, came to see him as soon as the news reached the West Bank societies. 'Parson,' said he, 'you will have to come over to the West Bank to preach a farewell sermon before you leave.' 'No, Brother Duke, it cannot be, much as I should like to.' 'Then you will have to come over and bid us good-bye without preaching.' This was arranged by doctor's permission, and the good people gave up a day's work that they might see their minister as he drove along the Bank to look at the chapels at Sisters and Nismes, and the only possible service was prayer and thanksgiving.

'Now, parson,' said Brother Duke, 'you cannot preach a farewell sermon yourself. I want to ask you if I may do it for you.'

'It is a comical idea, Brother Duke,' said Mr. Taylor, 'but if it will do you any

good or be of any good to the people, preach it by all means.'

'Thank you, parson; I meant to do it, but thought I would ask your permission first; and if you don't mind, this shall be the text: "He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue."'

CHAPTER IV

THE TRAVELLING PREACHER ON LAND AND WATER.

THE missionary has the advantage of making himself acquainted with the somewhat intricate geography of the West Indian archipelago in a far more delightful way than that in which he can present it to the reader. The picturesque crescent of sunny isles in the centre of the Western Hemisphere must be visited if their beauty and significance are to be appreciated. It is really difficult to say how many islands are clustered here on the bosom of the ocean. Nearly a hundred of them are named by geographers, and if they were joined land to land they would cover about ninety-five thousand square miles, with nearly four and a half millions of inhabitants. If we include British Guiana

and British Honduras, on the continent, in our survey—and they are generally included in 'The West Indies'—then we may add an area of 85,000 square miles with 300,000 souls for the former, and 47,000 square miles and 350,000 souls for the latter.

Barbados is the first port of call for the Royal Mail steamships. It is one of the smaller islands, but more thickly populated than any other, its 166 square miles sustaining 162,000 persons. Jamaica, the largest island belonging to Britain, has a population of over half a million within an area of 4,190 square miles. Its old Indian name signifies 'The land of stream and mountains,' which well describes its physical features. Trinidad, 'the gem of the Caribbean Sea,' to which the Indians gave the name of 'Iere,' or 'The land of the humming-bird,' has an area of 1,754 square miles, with a population of over 200,000. The powers of the English language have been exhausted by Charles Kingsley and Lady Brassey in their descriptions of this magnificent island. As

the vessel enters the famous Bocas, it floats through a watery pathway where an orange may be tossed ashore amid gigantic tree ferns, foliage and flowers of unrivalled beauty and infinite variety ; and looking up from the very edge of the waters to the crest of towering cliffs, you see the gorgeous vegetation hanging in rich festoons as if about to break away and smother the ship with garlands.

The wonderful Pitch Lake, the strange black spot of 150 acres amid surrounding verdure, it is difficult to describe. At the edges, where the pitch is brittle and can be dug out with pick and spade, workmen are ever busy, and carts are being filled to carry the black treasure to ships which, in their turn, convey it to England or America to be melted into asphalt paving for the roads of London and New York. But as you walk from the edge of the lake towards the middle, jumping over or going round the deep fissures filled with water, the pitch becomes softer and softer, and you are gently reminded of the possibility of staying too long in one place.

Among the many smaller islands none is more lovely than Grenada, the Italy, or St. Vincent, the Switzerland, of the West.

Further north lies Montserrat, with its lime-groves; and Nevis, where tourists flock to read in the register of the Parish Church how 'Horatio Nelson, Esquire, of His Majesty's ship *Boreas*,' married Widow Nesbit on March 11, 1785. St. Kitts, too, recalls the Christian name of its great discoverer; and Antigua reminds us of the birthplace of West Indian Methodism. The Bahama Islands, far away north, are of entirely coral formation, and are not so luxuriant in tropical vegetation or gorgeous scenery.

Modes of travel in the West Indies are almost as varied as the scenery of the islands and circuits through which the missionary passes in the 'daily round' and 'common task' of his life. In Jamaica, British Guiana, Trinidad, and Barbados, there are railways by which many of the stations may be reached. The trains and time-tables are more or less reliable,

though it is not unknown for the latter to be frankly published as 'approximate.' In some districts the light American buggy is largely used, and with its airy canopy to protect against the sun and curtains to let down when the rain falls, it is very comfortable. Ample scope exists for equestrian exploits in districts where the journeys have to be taken on horseback, and the mule is sometimes brought into requisition. But mule-riding requires practice and experience before it can be appreciated. One journey, for which this patient nondescript beast is kindly loaned by a neighbouring planter, lies among canefields, along a path bordered on one side by a canal, and on the other by an estate trench, and the path is in places overhung with bamboos and prickly bushes that droop their branches rather low. Between the danger of being left like Absalom among the branches, or of being pitched into the water among the alligators, the preacher is happy if he succeeds in steering his steed to the distant station, where his perils are soon

forgotten among the shining faces and hearty welcomes of his waiting congregation.

In the Bahamas the chief mode of travel is by boat, and pity the missionary whose tender conscience predisposes him to sea-sickness ! In some circuits every place is reached in this way, and many of the passages are rough and dangerous. Yet the courage and kindness of the boatmen become a precious memory, and are an education in regard to the worthiness of people among whom our work is carried on. They despise the compass, and steer by the stars ; they sing or whistle for the wind, or they bravely struggle against it ; they trim the boat to give the minimum of discomfort to their passenger.

Some of these journeys are very perilous, and many missionaries could tell of 'moving accidents by flood and field,' and of 'hairbreadth escapes' as they have been 'in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from their countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in

the wilderness, in perils in the sea.' As an illustration of the last-mentioned apostolic experience in modern times the following adventure of the Rev. R. Whittleton, while superintendent of the Harbour Island circuit in the Bahamas in the year 1888, brought him as near to the borderland as one could well be without passing over ; and very nearly lost to the Foreign work one of the most capable and faithful of the long-service missionaries that our Society has had the good fortune to employ in its world-wide and wonderful operations. The Harbour Island circuit consists of nine stations, all of which but one must of necessity be reached by water. The island of Eleuthera, on which five of these stations are located, is about one hundred miles long and an average of four or five miles wide. About fifteen miles from its north-western extremity the island is so narrow that a stone could be easily thrown from the deck of a craft on the southern side into the Atlantic Ocean on the north. The island in this part is of solid sandstone, and rises

to an elevation of about 200 feet. Here at the time of this occurrence was the phenomenon known as 'The Glass Windows,' a large perforation of the rocky cliff, caused by the long-continued action of the sea, which has washed its way completely through the rock, leaving a natural bridge rising about 100 feet above the sea-level and with a span of about 60 feet. This bridge has since been broken down by the hurricane of 1893. To lie down upon the top of this arch, which was only about three feet wide in the centre, and look over its outer edge down upon the seething, foaming cauldron below, afforded a picture of wild beauty and rugged grandeur not easily matched and never to be forgotten. During a gale from the north or east the sea broke completely through the 'window' and sometimes mounted above the loftiest elevations in clouds of milky foam. So powerful was the force of the water that during one of these 'blows' a block of stone of several tons' weight was lifted up a vertical ledge over seven feet in height,

and carried down to the sea on the other side of the island.

About 100 yards further south from this place, where the cliffs are more than 100 feet high, the stone has been torn away by some violent convulsion and left a deep jagged fissure, about thirty paces wide, reaching almost down to the sea level. This is known as 'Narrow Passage.' In stormy weather this passage is impassable, the breakers roll completely over it, and to attempt to walk across would be to court destruction.

It was at this 'Narrow Passage' that Mr. Whittleton very nearly found an untimely end to his journeyings. He was on his way to a station on his circuit plan called The Cove, situated about seven miles beyond 'Narrow Passage.' It is usual to cross by boat from Harbour Island, where the missionary lives, to Bottom Harbour, three or four miles away, and then walk across the island of Eleuthera to 'Narrow Passage,' where the friends from Cove meet him with a boat. The Harbour Island boatman

invariably goes across the island with him so that he can retrace his steps and return home with him in case there should be no boat from The Cove and the 'Narrow Passage' is dangerous. On this occasion Mr. Whittleton was accompanied not only by Hardy, the boatman from Harbour Island, but also by a resident of The Cove. On reaching the southern side, the expected boat was seen in the distance coming towards the usual meeting-place, and as Hardy had a head wind back and the way seemed clear to complete his journey, Mr. Whittleton considerately but injudiciously allowed him to return. For a considerable time the travellers watched the craft beating up against the wind. When making what seemed to be the last tack, she was struck by a squall, which was so severe that the captain, not seeing his friends on the shore, judged it best to scud home. The unfortunate result was that the missionary and his companion were left upon an unfriendly and deserted shore without food or shelter, with their retreat cut off from home, and with the

'Narrow Passage' and a seven-mile walk between them and The Cove. There seemed no option, so they set off to attempt the 'Narrow Passage.' Just as they arrived a sea passed over from one side to the other. Mr. Whittleton measured the interval between this and the next, and judged that there was time enough to pass. Immediately after the next wave had rolled over, therefore, he stepped down into the cut; but before taking two paces he saw another mighty billow moving mercilessly on to him. He had just time to step down into a circular basin, about two feet in diameter and nine inches in depth, and bend low. In a moment, with a roar that recalled Niagara, the breaker was upon him. He grasped the rock as the eddying waters lifted and beat him upon the stone, leaving him cut and bruised. Before he could extricate himself another billow, with deafening thunder, rolled over him; and then, assisted by his companion, who rushed to his rescue as soon as he saw his minister's predicament, he crawled out and bade his

companion sit down and let him rest his swimming head upon his knees. Fortunately his portmanteau contained a change of clothes, and he hobbled back over three miles of rugged footpath to Bottom Harbour, where by a kind providence, which some would call accident, they found a boat which conveyed them to Harbour Island. It was late at night when he returned to his anxious family. Some of his friends blamed him for venturing from home on such a stormy day ; but with so many societies claiming attention, and only thirteen weeks in each quarter, some risk is unavoidable.

Occasionally journeys have to be made on foot, among islands where no animal bigger than a goat can live. There are no roads that for more than a few hundred yards could accommodate a buggy, and no landing-places where a boat can be moored. The only means of getting ashore is on a black man's back—safer, indeed, than a mule's, but less exhilarating to the liver, which has to be considered in a tropical country.

Whatever the missionary's mode of locomotion, wherever he may go, or wherever he may stay, the friendly negro is ever ready to accompany him and to help him through any difficulties and dangers he may encounter. Whether crossing turbulent rivers or shark-infested bays, passing down the island coasts or sailing through narrow and tortuous channels, tramping along lonely bridle-paths through groves of palm and cocoa-nut, traversing rocky eminences, or plunging into swamps and leafy grots of fern and flowers or tangle-wood, tossing in raging fever or winning back his shattered health in languid days of convalescence, the black man is always his faithful succourer, his guide, philosopher, and friend.

Taking a path along a dark avenue to reach his home by a short cut after evening service, the preacher one night heard behind him the patter of naked feet. He looked round, but could see no one. 'Who is there?' he shouted. 'Me, sah.' 'Who is me?' 'Charles, sah.' 'What d'you want?' 'Gwine to see you home,

sah.' 'But I don't need you to see me home.' 'Papa say I must see you home, sah.' 'But why, Charles?' 'Well, sah,' ole man . . . say he gwine to horsewhip you, and papa say I must see you home.' And he did. Charles, who was so determined to obey his 'papa,' was about forty years of age, and the 'ole man' referred to was a wicked old white man whom the preacher had recently had occasion severely to reprove for blasphemy.

Off the coast of Eleuthera, the Rev. E. H. Sumner was journeying in a small boat with a man and a boy. A gust of wind caught the sails, turned the boat round, and capsized her, pitching them all into the water. Immediately the man and the boy were at the preacher's side to hold him up, till they found he could swim as well as themselves. Presently another boat came along and rescued them all. Had this not been their good fortune they would have been in a sad plight, for even if they had escaped the sharks in swimming to the distant shore, the rocks would have made a landing almost impossible.

On land, as well as on sea, the missionary becomes acquainted with many forms of life, and the acquaintance is not always pleasant. Probably his first and constant annoyances will be from the myriad insects that abound in countless kinds. The microscopic *bête rouge* in certain places will insinuate itself into his flesh and produce great pain. The centipede will nestle in his boots or socks while he sleeps, and will bite him in the morning, producing severe fever. He may find a scorpion on the mosquito netting of his bed, and the beautiful but highly poisonous tarantula spider may leap upon him from the floor.

Ants are everywhere. Some of them will eat the heart out of every post and beam of chapel or mission house if a constant watch is not kept against their depredations. Others will devour everything edible within their reach, and the legs of the provision safe must be placed in tins of kerosene oil to prevent their access. The most interesting umbrella-ant reveals its presence by the noise, like

falling raindrops, which it makes when nipping off the bits of foliage, which it hoists above its head like a parasol, and marches in weird and winding procession to its wonderful nest. Another kind ranges the forest lands in countless myriads, devouring all vegetation, clearing out all vermin, and ravaging all dwelling-houses that may lie along the line of march. While eating up every scrap of food which they may find, they are perfect scavengers of all pestilential rubbish, and they leave the place garnished as by a great spring cleaning.

The most interesting and instructive things have been written about these ubiquitous and wonderful little creatures, and their remarkable exploits. They seem to eat everything, and they try sometimes to eat the missionary himself. Woe be to him if they have gained access to his mattress! Let there be but one or two, and his dreams will be of purgatory. He may flick all night with his towel, or go carefully again and again over the bedsheets with his clothes brush; the only

real exterminator of his enemies will be the sunshine, into which if he be wise he will carry his bedding in the morning, that in its hot beams his little foes may die.

A funeral service was one day proceeding with all due decorum, when the solemnities were suddenly disturbed by the barefooted gravedigger leaping a yard into the air, uttering loud, profane, and alarming ejaculations. He had unwittingly taken his stand upon an ants' nest, and the little beasties were having their revenge upon his feet and legs.

Wayside wonders will delight the observant traveller on every hand. Trees, shrubs, plants, flowers, grasses, will afford him endless delight and objects of study, no less than the many and beautiful creatures that dwell among them. Some of the trees will regale him with their luscious fruit, as the orange, the lime, the mango, soursop, and melon, and the cocoanut, sapodilla, guava, and star-apple, among other favourites. In the provision-grounds of the people he will welcome

the banana, the pineapple, and plantains, yams, eddoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and other things in their season. The sugar industry will be in evidence almost everywhere, and he will get acquainted with rice and cotton, coffee and cocoa, arrowroot and spice, and many other products of a tropical clime.

He hears a gentle whirr among the oleander or other blossoms, and there beholds the humming-bird, that shimmering piece of illusiveness, fluttering in the sunshine, flashing on its iridescent plumage every colour of the rainbow; it thrusts its long, slender bill into the deep bosom of a flower, and it is gone! Huge butterflies, bespangled with every variety of gorgeous pattern, float lazily about the path. At night, in some regions, the bushes are radiant with flashing needles of silvery light, and the fireflies flitting from twig to twig.

Birds are numerous, and though their notes are not always pleasant, their plumage is a joy to behold. Pelicans, flamingoes, ibis in scarlet robes, spurwings,

spoonbills, and other interesting creatures inhabit the swampy lands near the coasts. The homely kis-ke-dee, in bright yellow plumage, is in many places as familiar as the sparrow at home. John Crow looks after carrion. Parrots, parokeets, macaws, toucans, and other birds in stately garb may be seen sometimes, even near the beaten tracks of some regions ; and many others, especially in Guiana, which is exceptionally rich in bird life.

Lizards are everywhere, and in Guiana the iguana and the chameleon are often met with. Alligators are numerous also in this colony as well as in Jamaica. It is no uncommon thing in Demerara to come across a school of these creatures sunning themselves on the banks of the trenches or disporting themselves in the water. One of our missionaries who was travelling one day overland between Demerara and Berbice witnessed from the mail coach the slaughter of nearly a dozen by one of the famous shots of the colony.

There are few districts in which snakes are not plentiful. Many of them are most

deadly. The land-and-water camoudi are met with in Guiana, and the latter is known sometimes to attain to a length of thirty feet, with a girth of upwards of three feet; but for these larger specimens of fauna excursions must be taken into the remoter parts of the colonies.

It is possible to get in some places a good joint of venison from the high woods. In Jamaica it is said that no fourfooted animal larger than a rat is now indigenous; but on the mainlands the ant-bear, the sloth, the tapir, the jaguar, the baboon, and innumerable monkeys of great variety are met with.

Beetles, many, various, and sometimes beautiful, are met with even in populous places. The cicada, or six o'clock beetle, may be heard in some places at sundown, and a swarm of little black beetles, known as 'hard-backs,' which are about the size and hardness of a hazel-nut, may always be looked for as the rainy season approaches. In country chapels they have been known to fill the shades, in which the oil-lamps are placed for protection

against the wind from ever-open windows, till the lights have been extinguished; and it is not unknown for the preacher, with close-shut eyes but open mouth, to have his prayer cut short by an intruder who has chosen the psychological moment of special fervency to enter the cavity. He has also known a locust, measuring five or six inches from wing to wing, light on the open Bible as he has been preaching.

In damp weather the noise of innumerable frogs, whose croakings and whistlings are distinctly heard through the open windows of the country chapels, rivals the lusty efforts of the preacher, and proves a source of great distraction until the experience becomes familiar.

With the ubiquitous mosquito every traveller in the West Indies becomes familiar, though of course they are more numerous in some places than in others. They appreciate fresh blood immensely, and the best mosquito fly-catcher which can be placed in a room is a full-blooded young Englishman newly arrived. Set him in the middle of the company, and the

mosquito flirts all fly off at once to him, and in spite of his most vigorous protestations and constant fencing with fan and pocket-handkerchief, the mosquito family are so persistent in their attentions that when the interview is over, hands and face are a mass of blotches most painful, while eyes may be so swollen as to make their use also a weariness until the inflammation has subsided. On some journeys the pests will follow the buggy in clouds, and thick veils and gloves have to be brought into requisition by way of protection.

CHAPTER V

THE METHODS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE MISSIONARY

THE main principles which guide our West Indian missions are much the same as those for which Methodism is distinguished everywhere. A great part of the work in the West Indies, especially in the larger towns, bears a close resemblance to that in England, but the conditions are different.

Preaching of course occupies the foremost position, and it is not necessary either to be brief or funny to get a hearing. We require neither a brass band nor a sensational poster to secure a congregation. The people flock to the church. They are neither half-timers nor week-enders; and in the West Indies, at least, all great hearers are not dead. They bring their own hymn-books, and, generally, their

Bibles. They would consider it a degradation to depend upon hymn-books provided by some one else; beside, they use them at home.

The missionary has not to wait until he has mastered a foreign language before he can make his first impressions or get his first inspiration. There is the congregation at hand as soon as he lands, and if he will speak his mother-tongue in its simplicity—presuming he is an Englishman—he will be understood. It is an inspiration to stand before a vast congregation of black people, to see them lift up their eager faces, hear their lusty voices in song, and to notice that as you preach the gospel to them they literally drink it in.

It is a mistake, however, to suppose that they readily manifest great emotion. Perhaps their feelings are more under control than they were a generation or two ago, and there would be but little difference to be observed to-day between a real hearty English congregation and a West Indian one at a similar service.

Then we have the regular week-night preaching and the prayer-meeting, and both are popular and well attended. There may be an exception, however, in certain parts of Jamaica, where there is a geographical difficulty in the way of the people coming together. The change from these hearty and well-attended week-night services in the West Indies to their meagre substitutes in England is sometimes very dispiriting to the returned missionary. In England the custom is to stay away from the week-night service, and the exception is to go. In the West Indies the rule is to go, and the exception is to stay away.

The leaders' meeting is held every week in the larger societies as regularly as the preaching-service, and generally on the same night. At these meetings the class and ticket moneys are received from the leaders, and entered in a special book kept for the purpose. The minister usually receives the moneys, for even in circuits where circuit stewards are real and do most of the duties of their office, there are not always efficient society stewards. Then

the poor and the sick are inquired for and looked after, and reports are received as to the conduct of the members. Sometimes a case of quarrelling is reported, and husband and wife will appear to tell their own tale, which they do *con amore*. Or perhaps one of the young people has been tempted to dance at a wedding party or a dignity ball, and this has to be investigated; the accused person has to be seen and brought to contrition, or take the risk of having to appear before the meeting and be suspended, or have the quarterly ticket withheld, which means that the person is not allowed to communicate at the Lord's table for a time.

This disciplinary function of the leaders' meeting means a very great deal to our societies, and while most cases dealt with are of a comparatively trivial nature, it helps to keep the membership pure and genuine. Membership in our Church in the West Indies counts for far more than it does in England, and the statistics are more reliable as representing the true spiritual condition and strength of the Church.

Then there is the class-meeting. The question of the test of membership has not arisen in the West Indies, and it is not likely that it will arise in the present generation, unless the example of our people in England should lead our black brethren astray. They go to class and they speak in class, and there is no indication at present of the necessity of legislating for 'devout persons who object to meet in class.' Meeting the classes for tickets is one of the minister's most laborious but most enjoyable and instructive duties. The tickets are not handed to the leader to be distributed to those who are not present at the time of the quarterly visitation, but an extra night is planned for meeting the absentees. The ticket, moreover, counts for something. It is the open sesame to the society meeting and the lovefeast, and it must be shown at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

And what of the experiences of our members ?—for they have an experience. They quote largely from the Scriptures and from the hymn-book, and in the

simplest language, barring a big word now and then, which has a very definite meaning to them, though you may not at once see the force of its application.

'Me do lub my Jesus; He so sweet; He sweeter than any sugar-cane,' says one. 'O minista,' says another, 'de debil bin trouble me too bad dis week; he bin tempt me jus like jigger in me toe.' The jigger, or chigoe, is a very small insect, hardly to be seen by the naked eye, which burrows beneath the skin, and between the nail and the toe by preference, and in so doing causes a not unpleasant itching sensation; but having thus disarmed suspicion, and succeeded in establishing itself in its new abode, it lays its eggs there, and if not dislodged, will cause a very painful and troublesome ulcer.

A great many of the classes meet after the morning service on the Sunday, and the preacher usually stays to open them with singing and prayer, in which all join. The various groups are then gathered into the corners and other allotted places on the floor of the chapel, and have their

separate meetings in a quiet, devout, and orderly manner, without confusion or interfering with one another.

In many chapels a similar gathering will take place on an evening in the week for members that cannot attend on the Sunday. In some places the day school is utilized for the same purpose. As a rule, our premises are destitute of classrooms and vestries. This has had a good effect in one direction; it has prevented the week-night service from being tucked away in some inaccessible hole in the corner in order to be 'homely' for a few special saints, and it has caused the chapel to be opened generally three times in the week, at least, instead of on the Sundays only.

One of the most uncomfortable experiences that a missionary from the West Indies has to undergo on revisiting his native land is to get accustomed to the stuffiness and prison-like feeling of English houses and chapels. In his West Indian life he has become used to abundance of light and air, to large open windows and doors. To have the doors and

windows of the chapel closed would be intolerable in the tropics. It is true that the noises from the street find easy access to the house of God, but so does the 'man in the street.' There may not be the same sense of seclusion to those who are inside, but neither is there the same sense of exclusion to those who are outside.

This openness, however, lends itself sometimes to accidents that could hardly happen in this country. An elderly man, on one occasion walking up to the chapel with his umbrella over his head, and not having to shut it in order to enter the spacious doorway, kept it open above his head in a moment of absent-mindedness, and marched the whole way to his pew in the front of the chapel under its shadow, to the astonishment of the congregation and to his own great confusion when he realized his unfortunate position.

The work that the missionary does in connexion with his day school is one of the most important items in the list of his constant duties. There is a day school

connected with nearly every chapel or station. He is the responsible manager. He has to receive and disburse the monthly grant from the Government, be responsible for the accuracy of the register and for the general conduct of the teachers. On the whole, the teachers are a fine lot of men and women, who faithfully support the missionary in all his efforts for the good of the scholars and the people. We have to-day over 600 day-school teachers, 226 day schools, and 31,439 day scholars. Several serious attempts have been made to establish High Schools both in Jamaica and British Guiana, and good work has been done; but the financial burden proved to be too heavy, and the debts on these institutions form one of the serious items in the liabilities.

The Sunday schools, Bands of Hope, Guilds, and Boys' Brigades are well conducted, well attended, popular, and effective. A very large percentage of our church membership is gathered from among our young people. Grey-headed old black sinners are as hard to move and

to get converted as are white ones, and the occurrence is as rare. But if the children and young people only have their chance, they respond readily to the efforts that are made to help them.

Among other institutions that are useful to our people, and in which the missionary finds it profitable to take the lead, are the friendly, burial, and other thrift societies. These have not only been of service in helping the people to form habits of forethought and self-reliance, but they have also contributed to the development of business faculties and self-governing qualities. The minister is generally responsible for the financial management, but other offices are filled by the ordinary members ; and in those cases where the finances have been in local hands, missing treasurers are by no means more numerous than in Europe, and the default has far more often been owing to lack of ability than to lack of honesty.

In the working of these institutions the characteristics of the people are often

delightfully manifested. Some business was being transacted in a committee meeting, when one of the speakers referred to a brother member as a 'fellow.' It was probably not used in an offensive sense, but the brother referred to felt that his dignity was hurt, and that such familiarities ought to be resented. He therefore got up, and protested that he was not a 'fellow' any more than brother A—— was, and he would not be called a 'fellow' by him. Matters began to look serious, when another brother took upon himself the office of peacemaker. 'Bredren,' he said, 'I do not see why any brodder should vex because he had been called a "fellow"; if he only read his hymn-book he see dat John Wesley was "sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford," and if "fellow" good enough for John Wesley it good enough for we.' This settled the case at once.

Penny banks also sometimes form a part of our plan of work, and these have been found both useful and popular, not only for the general good of the people

in the ways intimated, but helpful to the church ; for it is not an uncommon thing for the members thus to save up for anniversaries and missionary meetings, and to draw out when these occasions come round.

Beside preaching, visiting, marrying, baptising, burying, managing day and Sunday schools, keeping the accounts of circuit, chapel, and friendly societies, conducting penny banks, leading Bands of Hope, and being often private banker to members of his flock, the minister is sometimes doctor, arbitrator, judge, and legal adviser. When the people resolve to arise and build, the missionary has often to act as architect, clerk of the works, and paymaster. He may be requested to mend a clock, re-bind an old and treasured hymn-book, or use his sacred office in other ways that never occur in the home work.

'Good morning, minister,' says a fine stalwart black man, without head gear or foot gear, and with very scanty other gear, and with sleeves and trousers tucked

up in workmanlike fashion, as he peeps into the open door of the study. 'Good morning, John; well, what is it you want now?' 'Want you to come and bless de boat, minister.' 'What! have you finished the boat and got it ready to start?' 'Yes, minister; de boat finish, an' we all ready to start him on he first voyage, and now we want you to come and bless him.' The minister goes down to the yard where the boat lies near the beach all ready launched. There are several partners in the concern, and, with their friends, they are admiring the proportions of the newly-made craft, and are prophesying good things concerning it. A hymn is sung, prayer is offered for God's blessing on the venture, and a brief address is given. Then the sails are spread, and the boat moves off and enters upon its career of trading up and down the coast.

Another member calls at the study and says, 'Minister, we want you to come and bless we house.' A new house has been built, and the family are ready to

move into it, but they want to honour God in so doing, and the minister gladly goes round to meet the family and their friends. In the middle of the best room, which is called the 'hall,' there is a table, and on it is spread a spotlessly white cloth, where rests a hymn-book and a Bible. After singing and prayer, a chapter is read, and an address given on home life and the importance of family worship, and the friends are left to settle down in the new abode, not sighing amid the embarrassments of plenty for the 'simple life,' but living it out forthwith.

'Minister,' said a faithful female leader, whose age must have turned the half century, at the close of a week-night village service, 'we want you to pray over de new ring.' 'Why! what is the matter? You haven't been quarrelling, surely, after these many years of married life.' 'No, minister; we love each other as much as ever, only we lose de old ring and we want you fo bless de new one.' So a few members of the congregation remained behind after the public service with the

dusky Darby and Joan and such members of their family as could conveniently come together, and a simple service was improvised, at which Darby again took Joan to be his lawful wedded wife and Joan repledged her fealty to her husband, and amid prayers and thanksgiving and congratulations, the new ring took the place of the lost one, and our happy friends went on their way rejoicing.

In order to obtain even a bird's-eye view of the conditions of our work and people, it is necessary to give more than a passing notice to the catastrophes that have overtaken them. It is not intended to make any comparison between the calamities arising from the violent operation of the forces of nature in the West Indies and similar visitations or worse that may have befallen other parts of our mission field. But the frequent, sudden, concentrated, and often overwhelming character of these occurrences imparts a tragic peculiarity to our West Indian experiences.

The conditions under which the bulk

of our people or their parents were first introduced into these lands, and their subsequent social and industrial fortunes, give to their sufferings from these visitations a unique pathos. The fact that other people were responsible for their presence and, in a large measure, for their conditions in a locality swept by hurricane or shattered by earthquake, would be a not unnatural reflection, nor would it make it easier for them to bear their losses or quiet their fears.

Every island has its story of hurricane, plague, or fire, and some of them tell of that which is perhaps worse than all—earthquakes or volcanic eruptions. Some places are subject to one kind of disaster, some to the other ; many have been subject to both. In the Bahamas, for instance, while hurricanes are not uncommon, earthquakes never occur. In Trinidad, on the other hand, earthquake shocks are frequent, but the island is outside the ordinary sphere of the hurricane.

In September, 1898, a terrific storm raged around an unusually wide area.

Considerable damage was done in St. Lucia, St. Martin's, and the quiet little isle of Saba, but the greatest havoc was wrought in Barbados and St. Vincent. Here the force of the hurricane exceeded all that had been experienced for seventy years. In Barbados 100 people were killed and 4,000 houses were blown down. Our mission lost two substantial chapels, while school-houses, mission-houses, and other buildings received such injuries as greatly interfered with our work and entailed the expenditure of many hundreds of pounds in repairs.

St. Vincent, however, suffered the fullest fury of the storm. The greater portion of the religious population of this island belong to Methodism, and nowhere have we people more worthy, devoted, and loyal. In this visitation they lost all their seventeen chapels but two, and these two were badly damaged. Five mission-houses succumbed, with six school-houses and seven teachers' houses. The beautiful and spacious chapel in Kingstown, which would seat 1,500 people, and which had

stood the stress of many a previous storm, was unroofed, the windows were all blown in, and the large organ was ruined. Of the 42,000 inhabitants, 300 were lost; hospitals and all available shelters were crowded, and 32,000 people were in sorest need of food and dwelling-place.

It should also be remembered that this calamity occurred when the recent commercial depression of the West Indies had reached its most acute stage. What our missionaries, with their families and their people, were suffering in many places, is only partially revealed in the heartrending letters which they wrote to their intimate friends; and the general distress was nowhere more keenly felt than in St. Vincent. Destitute, dazed, and dependent for the time being on rations for food, they never lost their faith in God nor fidelity to their church, but pluckily applied themselves to the recovery of their fields and the restoration, as means allowed, of their beloved sanctuaries.

Storms of less violence than those that have been referred to occur with great

frequency, and seldom without more or less destruction to shipping, houses, and plantations. The months of July, August, and September are regarded as the hurricane months, and most of the disasters occur during this period, when northern latitudes reach their maximum temperature, the influence of the trade winds is checked, and the rapid rarefication of the air causes the terrible movement that produces these disastrous results.

Yet even a hurricane is not without either its lessons or its benefits. It not only clears the atmosphere of poisonous malaria, but also destroys many destructive and annoying insects. More than once the beautiful but ill-fated island of Martinique has been devastated by a plague of ants, and other islands have suffered, though perhaps not so badly, from a similar cause.

About the time of the establishment of our mission in Grenada, a large tract of flourishing plantations covering a radius of some twenty miles was laid waste by these small but destructive pests, and a reward of twenty thousand pounds was

offered to any one who should discover a way whereby the island might be relieved of them. Only one truly effective method of getting rid of a plague of sugar-ants has, however, been discovered, and that method is a hurricane. Twice it swept them out of Martinique, and it did the same for Grenada.

Passing from hurricanes to earthquakes, one can hardly decide which is the more to be dreaded. The earthquake may be the more terrifying for the moment, but the hurricane is more prolonged, and while it lasts the imagination can hardly conceive of anything that seems more powerfully destructive or more mercilessly beyond control. At the same time, while it is bad enough to be pelted with bolts from the blue, and feel as though all the furies existing in the wildest imagination are let loose upon the locality where all you hold dear on earth is to be found, yet to feel the very earth shake and give way under you, and the foundations of the everlasting hills crumbling to pieces, requires some nerve if one is to avoid hysterics.

Slight shocks of earthquake are not infrequent in British Guiana and some of the islands. While sitting at breakfast in Trinidad, in 1887, we felt the house rocking, then heard the kitchen chimney fall. My colleague, the Rev. C. Rickard, myself, and wife picked up a child each and rushed out of doors. But no great damage was done, beyond some ugly fissures in the walls of two chapels, which reminded us of what might have been.

The writer's first experience of an earthquake, however, was in Demerara in the year 1881. It is seldom that any very serious damage is done in this colony by these visitations, for the earth's surface here is different from that on the western side of the South American continent, and the undulations which the earthquake produces are probably only the far-off effects of greater disturbances elsewhere. Moreover, the chief settlements are near the coast on a thick cushion of alluvial soil, being the lands rescued from what were originally vast swamps, produced by the silt deposited

through unknown ages by the mighty rivers of the region.

On the occasion referred to I was in my study talking with our native missionary to the East Indian coolie immigrants when the shock came. I experienced all the sensations described by others. Jumping out of his chair as though a charge of dynamite had exploded, the native preacher exclaimed, 'My father! my poor wife and children!' He shot to the door, fled down the piazza steps, the tails of his coat flapping behind him as he raced down the street. But the poor man had good cause for alarm, for our houses in Demerara are built on pillars and posts, which in his case were by no means safe under normal conditions, and it seemed a miracle that on this occasion the entire building was not demolished.

In 1812 the Souffriere volcano in St. Vincent broke forth in a fury which altered the entire configuration of a large part of the island, killed hundreds of people, and enveloped sea and land for many miles in Egyptian dark-

ness and dense clouds of lava and dust.

This volcano remained quiescent for ninety years, and people began to think that it was totally extinct. It seemed quite harmless to the writer a few years ago when he was one of a party that picnicked on the edge of the huge crater. It is true there was then a strong smell of sulphur, and all the vegetation in the neighbourhood was seared and black, but there was nothing to indicate that where we stood was so soon to be the scene of such a terrible outburst as that which occurred on May 5, 1902. On that date Mont Pelee, in Martinique, burst suddenly into eruption, swept the town of St. Pierre and 40,000 human beings out of existence in a few minutes, and stirred the slumbering fires of the Souffriere into dreadful and destructive activity.

We cannot attempt to describe the awful sights and sounds, the thunders, lightnings, fire, smoke, lava, convulsions, rending and general upheavals of a volcano in full blast, nor the deadly suffocating fumes, nor the penetrating, blinding dust which

again spread over land and sea, and enshrouded Barbados once more in dense gloom, stopped the tram-cars, put out the street lamps, and settled everywhere till the whole island became grey and silent under its weird mantle. What the angry volcano discharged in the way of molten terrors and far-travelling débris no one can tell, but it was computed that 2,352,120 tons of dust were deposited in Barbados alone in the short space of twelve hours.

The true tragedy and romance of it all lay, however, in what the late Rev. J. H. Darrell describes. He was chairman of the St. Vincent District at the time, and accompanied a small party of gentlemen who attempted to approach the inferno for purposes of investigation, and narrowly escaped paying for their intrepidity with their lives. He wrote: 'I could face a hundred volcanoes without fear, awful as such manifestations of nature's forces are; but the gruesome spectacle of hundreds of our fellow creatures with hands and feet burnt off, eyes burnt out of their sockets, features destroyed, and

the body crippled for life and writhing in agony—this spectacle of suffering has quite unnerved me. I have to meet thousands who have lost all. Mothers childless, children fatherless, homes gone, in a few hours reduced from comparative comfort to abject poverty and want; these things have produced such a tension in my nervous system as to almost wreck it. The Georgetown and Chateau Belair circuits are practically ruined, and indeed all our circuits have been touched by this sad catastrophe. The brethren are without support. Their people are penniless and scattered. . . . The ruin wrought by the eruption is far greater than that wrought by the hurricane of '98. We have had over 2,000 deaths; the total number will never be known. Hundreds are missing, and of the wounded most will die. . . .'

We must add to this long but by no means complete list of West Indian catastrophes, the earthquake which, on January 14, 1907, brought terror and destruction to Jamaica. It was not the first time that the island had experienced such a visita-

tion; for in 1692 the gay city of Port Royal was swallowed up, and in two minutes sank five fathoms beneath the Caribbean waters; 3,000 people perished, and the contours of the whole of the southern portion of the island were changed.

Just as sudden was the last calamity, which killed 1,000 people, rendered 90,000 homeless, and, with the raging fires which ensued, involved the city of Kingston alone in a loss of upwards of £2,000,000. Our mission shared in the general wreckage to the extent of thirty-eight chapels and sixteen mission houses, besides other Connexional buildings. Some of these were splendid monuments of Methodist enterprise, and all were valuable centres of earnest work. Our people buried their precious dead, tended their wounded, wept over the desolations of their chapels and their homes, gathered in scattered remnants where they could for worship; but there was no wail of despair. The first message that came from the stricken land to the Mission House in London as

soon as the extent of the calamity could be realized was this: 'The Methodist church in Jamaica is not overwhelmed. The spirit of the people is undaunted, and with the help from home that such a calamity may reasonably be expected to call forth, we can and will re-establish our position, and in the strength of the Lord go forth to further spiritual conquests. This calamity will draw closer the bonds of sympathy between the Mother Church and her loyal, suffering sons and daughters in the West Indies.'

Surely every Methodist heart in the dear homeland will whisper back its message across the waters that divide us from our children in those lovely yet oft desolated isles: We loved you once; we love you still. We love you all the more for the dangers you have passed.

While dealing with the unavoidable calamities that have from time to time checked our work, sent us to our knees, and filled our hearts with sadness and our homes with mourning in the West Indies, we should make some reference to

the visits of that terrible scourge to the white man—the yellow fever.

Those visitations are both less frequent and less severe than in former days. The sanitary condition of the towns has greatly improved. Demerara, which used to have an evil name as a health resort, is now as healthy as any place in the islands ; and you would have to go a long way to find a town where the sanitation is better looked after than Georgetown, Demerara. It seems to have been proved, moreover, that mosquitoes have had much to do with the spread of yellow fever, and watchfulness against the bites of these pests may have lessened the victims of this dire disease. Yet within the last twenty years there have been some sad losses among missionaries and their wives through this cause. It has a peculiar way of picking out the new-comer as its victim. In its ravages it will miss one house where the inmates are acclimatized, and visit the next to find its victim in one recently arrived from Europe. It will miss whole streets in its course, after selecting nearly

all the Europeans, and fix on some one miles away, and thus commence operations in quite a new direction. It has been known to begin in the Bahamas, and, taking the islands one by one, travel down to British Guiana, where it apparently exhausts itself. Yet many Europeans seem altogether immune from its ravages, and even before they have become acclimatized, have passed unscathed through more than one epidemic. Strange to say, it never attacks the black people, although cholera seems to spare the white and slay the black. While, however, there have been sporadic cases which have been returned as yellow fever, there has not been an epidemic for nearly twenty years. The best defence against fever, to which one is peculiarly liable in the tropics, is to avoid exposure to the sun, live plainly on fruit and vegetables rather than meat, use no alcohol, cultivate the fear of God, and put a cheerful courage on.

CHAPTER VI

PRESENT PROBLEMS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

THE action of the British Conference in taking over the control of the West Indian districts again was, no doubt, a disappointment to some good men and true, who still thought that they ought to be supported from England in their Home Rule policy, but it has put new hope into the hearts of the ministers and people. It has removed a heavy load from the shoulders of those responsible for the administration of Methodism in the West Indies, and saved our Connexion from threatened discredit.

The need for strenuous effort is as great as ever, and it is as freely and conscientiously made. There are, however, serious problems that must be faced. The present

pressing financial difficulties, and the conditions created by the terrible calamity in Jamaica, overshadow for the time being everything else connected with the permanent interests of the work, and the energy and sympathy of all are needed to deal with the crisis.

Until the Conference of 1907, the Relief Fund and the Jamaica Disaster Fund made such slow progress in England as seemed to indicate a very inadequate appreciation of the financial position of our Church in the West Indies and of the gravity of the situation from other points of view. It may be that part of the debt for which the special fund is being raised was due to unwise expenditure and unsafe financing; but do we never hear of the zeal of good men at home outrunning their prudence, with all the checks that our immaculate courts can bring to bear on them? And as far as our workers in the West Indies are concerned, it is difficult to see how any financing can be safe when there is nothing with which to finance; and this is hardly an exaggeration

of the case with respect to our oldest mission during the last ten years. Were they possessed of the most superb prudence and all the wisdom of experienced economists, could even these qualities have provided for the condition of things enforced by those terrible natural calamities which during the last few years have proved so destructive and disheartening? Nor could they have provided against the unprecedented industrial and commercial failures.

Those ministers, many of them young men, who have had to see their church and their members through these disasters, are heroes. They were harried by financial difficulties, sometimes sacrificing their own stipends and getting into personal debt to hold faith with the creditors of the church, or to keep the roof on chapel or mission house, and occasionally hardly knowing where to-morrow's meal was to come from.

In the midst of these accumulated embarrassments of several years, a hurricane sweeps down upon the station, an earth-

quake shakes their buildings to the foundations, or a volcano bursts forth with destructive violence, and they are obliged to turn at once to the work of rebuilding; not with the aid of the insurance company, which alleviates much of our grief at home, but with the help of their poverty-stricken members, many of whom have lost their little all in the storm, the flood, or the fire.

They must either borrow for the time on the credit of their church, or abandon their people and their work. They did the former; and even if we have to help to pay the bill we honour them for their work's sake. Without whining or repining, they stood to their posts, encouraged by the example of patient suffering on the part of their people, who say, 'Trouble neber blow shell.'

The circuits in the West Indies to-day stand in a very similar relation to the Foreign Missionary Society that dependent circuits at home stand to the Home Mission Committee—that is, they receive grants to help them to carry on their

work. When distress, caused by strikes or some other industrial or social disturbance has overtaken a circuit in England, the Home Mission Committee has invariably come to the relief of such circuit and saved it from utter collapse. This is all that is asked for the ordinary work in the West Indies. There is not one of these circuits that is not helping itself to the utmost, or that would not gladly be delivered from the necessity of outside aid. But as there are many circuits in England whose congregations are composed of regular wage-earning people who have been subsidized by the Home Mission Committee for years, it surely is not unreasonable that some congregations of negroes should require help under circumstances such as have been described, especially when we remember their restricted and uncertain means of obtaining a living wage.

What is wanted in the West Indies to-day is capital. With all the enterprise that is manifested in other parts of the globe, it is difficult to understand why

more has not been done to develop the industries and cultivate the rich soil of these islands. Why should an earthly paradise like Jamaica, 'the Queen of the Antilles, the fairest jewel in the golden Caribbean, created by Providence to show mankind something of the meaning of beauty'—why should this fair and fruitful island be neglected by business men, while other unlovely and less fertile lands are sought and opened up as outlets for superfluous populations or investments for spare capital?

A most entertaining and instructive book on the West Indies, by A. E. Forrest and John Henderson, was published in 1905, and what this sagacious writer says may be some answer to the above question :—

'In Britain we have lost the art of correct perspective. We see distant things through jaundiced eyes; as a nation, we are too prone to regard over-sea lands and peoples with compassion tempered with contempt, or with envy and timidity. To ensure our respect and sympathy a

country must be successful ; we have no room in our empire for failures. . . . At home we are apt to think of the West Indies as a scattered group of poverty-stricken islands, barren of riches, planted somewhere in some tropical sea, and periodically reduced to absolute desolation by hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanoes. . . . In our dreams of empire we prefer to think of Canada, Africa, and strenuous Australia. Commercially and politically our West Indies are, according to the general idea, more than half derelict, and wholly without the attractions of wealth and promise. We forget that these Western islands were at one time the richest of England's possessions ; we do not realize how rich they some day will again become. If Britain only understood aright, she would know that it is only through her own neglect, through her half-hearted, penurious West Indian policy that our Caribbean empire is not in the front rank of her richest possessions to-day.'

When the slaves were set free, many of

the planters, anticipating trouble, pocketed their compensation, and cleared out. The islands have never really had a fair chance since.

In some of these splendid islands, with a climate the best in the world, there is plenty of room and soil and riches for the enterprising and industrious, and plenty of labour available. The negro labourer has never been difficult to get on with when he has been properly treated. The sugar industry has by no means ceased to be a factor in the fortunes of the islands, and a more sensible policy than that which has hitherto put all the eggs in one basket, is developing the fruit, coffee, cocoa, cocoanut, and sisal plantations, and there may yet be a bright commercial future for these sun-enriched and beautiful islands ; while British Guiana, with the exhaustless possibilities of its rivers, forests, and regions of gold, will yield up its treasures as soon as capitalists have enterprise to tap its resources.

We do not wish to be so utopian as to advocate carrying on the business of the

world on philanthropic principles, nor do we intend entering upon the thorny questions of 'tariff reform' or 'bounties'; but if English people could be persuaded generally to use West Indian cane sugar instead of beet sugar for domestic purposes only, even though they continued to use beet sugar for preserves, confectionery, &c., the industrial situation among the negroes in the West Indies would be saved, and our English households would be supplied with an article of food far superior to, and in the end we believe cheaper than, the beet sugar that is so largely used solely on account of its apparent cheapness.

We cannot think that the commercial failure of the West Indies has had anything to do with the waning of the interest of Methodists in the spiritual condition of the people; for our Church was certainly not attracted to the negro in the first instance by his prosperity, nor to the land for its wealth. But the present poverty of the people must be taken into account when their ability or inability to

support their own Church is being considered.

While the West Indies remain in their present uncertain commercial condition, the English Conference must continue to send financial help to our Church in those islands; and while they are visited by such calamities as those that have befallen them during the last twenty years we must not grow weary of responding to the call of their dumb misery. As long also as there is an insufficient supply of candidates for the ministry forthcoming from the congregations under our influence, and no means of training those that may offer, Methodism in England must continue to lend her trained men for this purpose.

It may be a matter for consideration as to whether some economies may not be effected by careful oversight; but it would be a false economy to attempt to establish a cheap ministry. At the same time, there may, nevertheless, be room for the employment of the catechist and the assistant missionary.

At this juncture in the history of our West Indian work, when special circumstances are necessitating unusual calls upon the generosity of English Methodists, it should be borne in mind that during the last decade the poverty has been so great among our people there that much of our property has got sadly out of repair, and, as money can be obtained, it must be spent on the buildings. There will be no margin to supplement the amount required for circuit income.

How would the English Methodists like to see the roof of City Road Chapel *patched with corrugated iron*? Yet such a sight may be seen on the roof of the magnificent chapel at St. John's, Antigua. They could not afford to buy shingles. There is nothing more certain to those who know the people than that as soon as a brighter day dawns on the industrial horizon and the people can get work and earn money, the church will share in the good fortune. Surely it should be our first duty to endeavour to conserve and sustain the work that has been accomplished at

so much cost of life and money, even if it means denying our Church the glory for the time being of extending her operations in countries more distinctly heathen. 'This oughtest thou to have done and not to have left the other undone.'

So much for the financial position. Apart from that, everything seems hopeful ; and, far from any suspicion of failure, the success of the efforts of our missionaries is evidenced in the changed lives, the improved manners, and the consistent conduct of our members, the devoutness of our large congregations, the popularity of our Sunday and day schools, the teachers in which are nearly all native men and women. It may be that they require a more careful pastoral oversight and more definite moral and religious instruction than their European fellow Christians ; but it may be said of them also that they are more willing to receive such oversight and attend to such instruction. One of their own proverbs may apply with equal truth to work among them and work at home : 'Ebery

day da fishing-day, but ebery day no catch fish.' Yet fish are caught and landed still, and in many respects the work continues to be the most wonderful and hopeful the world has ever seen.

Granted that the moral and social condition even of the converted negro leaves much to be desired, there is still nothing in his moral condition that his religion has not been able to control; and there are thousands of clean-living, honest, and high-principled members in our churches whom we would trust under any conceivable circumstances, and who are a constant source of help, hope, and encouragement to the missionary.

One is accustomed to hear the Negro maligned by the globe-trotter. It adds spice to his dish of travel fare. He gets his notions of the Negro from the labourer or lounger at the wharf. But it is surprising to find so fair and generous a writer as Mr. F. Bullen, in his latest book of travels, speaking slightingly at the 'elevation of the negro.' If he had inquired into the daily life and occupation of the thousands

that form the Christian congregations in Jamaica or in any other island he would have seen cause to alter his opinion.

But however hopeful the prospect may be for our Church in the West Indies, as seen through the fidelity, devotion, and unselfishness of our people, there would have been some shade of colour wanting in the landscape, and some tone or note wanting in the symphony, had it not been for that red-letter day in the modern history of the West Indian Mission, when, on Friday, July 19, 1907, the London Conference made the relation between British Methodism and our first and most successful mission a sacrament.

It is true that it took a terrible calamity to bring this about; but God's purposes were being accomplished, and the prayers of His people were being answered, when a devoted and generous-hearted lay member of the Conference started the financial lovefeast to relieve the distress caused by the earthquake in Jamaica. From laymen and ministers, from the richest and the poorest, gifts were offered

to the Lord to be used for those who were so sorely stricken. It was simply incredible to find so many with some personal or family connexion with the Isles of the West. In a very short time £5,500 was subscribed. It was decided to send a message of sympathy and hope from the Conference to the suffering people.

The mere raising of the money, however, was not the most important factor in that day's proceedings. It was the sympathy, the interest, the tears, the mention of that mission in the very presence of God that filled our hearts with grateful emotion. We had thought that the Conference did not care much for the Mission; that it had got tired of the plea of poverty and the story of trouble, and the cry for help. This day's triumph was therefore a revelation.

The revival of interest in the cause of foreign missions has given hope and courage to many workers. It has cleared the atmosphere at home, and rejoiced the hearts of all to whom that cause is dear.

But no one can estimate the effect of it on the missionary. He has had his trials, and has had to fight his battles alone among strange faces, in strange lands and amid strange and unhelpful circumstances. If he has had reason to suspect that those who have sent him out to do their work, or the work of the Lord in their name, have forgotten him, or only thought of him when compelled to do so in the routine performance of the Church's business, and have lost the passion for the cause to which he has been induced to give his life, then his case is hard indeed. He is naturally very sensitive with regard to the attitude of the Church at home to the work in which he is engaged. When therefore the news reached him in his distant field of labour that a new spirit of missionary zeal had passed over the Methodist Conference, his eyes filled with tears of gratitude, and after one or two notes of rejoicing with his own family, he stole away to be alone with the Master who had shared his anxieties and now shared

his triumph. It was not only at the Albert Hall that the Hallelujah Chorus was sung, nor was it the Conference only that joined in 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow'; the strain was taken up in the vast distances of Asia, on the plains and hills of Africa, and among the sunny islands of the West.

Let the Methodist Church but make this gracious visitation permanent by fidelity to the loud and unmistakable call to service and sacrifice, and 'the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.'

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