Sketches of the Wesleyan Mission in Br. Honduras
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The Wesleyan Mission
In British Honduras,
To commemorate the
JUBILEE
of Wesley Church, Belize.

BY
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Wesley Church, Belize, B. H.,
Chapter 1.

THE BEGINNING OF THE MISSION.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" Mark XVI. Verse 15.

The work of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in British Honduras began in the year 1825 when the Rev. Thomas Wilkinson arrived in Belize. At that time there was only one place of worship in the town, viz., St. John's, which dates back to the year 1812. Mr. Wilkinson fell a victim to the climate within a few months of his reaching Belize. His successor, the Rev. R. T. Johnston, also died with less than a year's service. In 1828 the Rev. William Wedlock took up the work and from that time until the present it has been carried on by a succession of ministers and laymen.

It does seem strange that prior to the year 1812 there was no place of worship in the Settlement, though it had been frequented for over two hundred years and inhabited for over a century. It is but right to state that a Baptist missionary, the Rev. Mr. Bourne, was at work in Belize when Mr. Wilkinson arrived. He had begun to work three years previously.

Is it any wonder that a place so utterly neglected should have a reputation in those days for licentiousness and every kind of excess? One writer of the period
saying: "The Sabbath day could not be distinguished from the other days of the week by any outward tokens of respect, though, perhaps, it might be by visibly increased dissipation. The market was in full swing, the stores were unclosed, the wharfs and barcadees were covered with labourers beating off and squaring mahogany, or chipping logwood; the shipping in the harbour were loading and discharging their cargoes. The grog-shops were filled with sailors and negroes; and the government chaplain, after reading the Liturgy to a few more or less sedate hearers, might be seen deliberately superintending his own slaves at work by the waterside. In short, ignorance, intoxication, profanity, and the lust of gain openly triumphed over decorum as well as religion. Marriage was the exception, and concubinage the rule in all ranks of the community. One of the Creole rhymes ran, "Few married men, yet each a wife."

It is a dark picture, but one must not forget that slavery then existed and the nature of their occupation deprived the majority of the inhabitants of the more refining influences falling to the lot of early settlers in others colonies. There were no schools; books of any kind were for the privileged few whose time and attention were not wholly absorbed in the management of their estates. It is often asserted that slavery in British Honduras never reduced its victims to that state of cringing servility so common in other places where it existed. There is without doubt some truth in this assertion. The masters were obliged to treat their slaves
with leniency and consideration. A leading merchant in Belize, himself a slave owner, George Hyde, Esq., in a letter on slave labour dated March 4th, 1825, says:

"As for punishment or ill-usage, you are aware, we dare not inflict it, so easy is their retreat to the Spaniards; in fact, we have just to put up with what work they choose to do." The neighbouring republics had just thrown off the yoke of Spain, and, in their new-found liberty, were always ready to shelter the runaway slave. Mr. Hyde tells us that there were between three and four thousand slaves in the Colony at that time. It was not all loss to the slave owners, however. They turned their attention to commerce. The trade of the Colony advanced by leaps and bounds. The inhabitants of Belize grew rich as traders in general merchandise with the new republics. The exclusive commerce of Spain with her Colonies was transferred elsewhere and the nearness of Belize brought purchasers which made the merchants princes in a few years. We sigh as we think of the present high freight rates prevailing on account of this great war—they are trivial compared with freight rates in 1825. In the memoir of James Wilson it is stated that, "The carriage of goods from Belize to Guatemala costs about £30 sterling a ton, this is rather under than over stated."

The imports in the year 1830 amounted to nearly half-a-million sterling of British manufactures, and British Honduras was then "second only to Jamaica in the
importance of its commerce among the Western Colonies."

One can rest assured that whilst Belize was spoken of disparagingly in many quarters—the wealth so easily acquired insured a constant supply of settlers.

It was amid such surroundings and conditions that the first Wesleyan Missionaries laboured. There was no hope of worldly gain for them. The moral and spiritual welfare of the people was what they aimed to improve. Travelling in the primitive fashion of those days, they visited Stann Creek, Mullins River and the various settlements along the banks of Belize and Sibun rivers.

Active measures of opposition were resorted to both by officials and slave owners. State and Established Church looked askance at dissenters, it took years of faithful work to break down the prejudice.

In the year 1832 the Rev. James Edney joined Mr. Wedlock and together they laid the foundations of Methodism in the Colony, broad and strong.

The story of the extension of the Mission can never be told in detail. There never were religious and social problems of the first order to be faced. No idols were worshipped, no heathen fetishes crushed the people to the earth. The people spoke a language, at least understood. Yet discouragements and appalling difficulties hindered the work at its outset, and very many remain. In the early days there was an atmosphere of religious indifference as enervating to the spirit, as the tropical heat is to the body. There was the gross animalism
gendered by years of bondage, added to the relics of African superstition that distorted the religious notions of the people. Slavery is essentially debasing. In every country which it has cursed it has left behind a heritage of enfeebled intellect and a laxity in moral conduct. These things had to be faced and fought against.

In the great agitation which resulted in the emancipation of the slaves in British Colonies the Wesleyan missionaries took a prominent part throughout the West Indies. Those who laboured in Belize at that time took the side of justice and humanity. To the credit of the Colony be it said that they were not called upon to suffer for their pains, a lot which befell many of their brethren in the West Indies. They took their part in helping to adjust matters under the new conditions, education, social status, providing employment and settling on the land engaged their attention.

A piece of land was purchased in 1829 and the following year a place of worship was erected.

As opportunity offered the work spread and grew. In the year 1844 Mr. Edney visited the island of Ruatan at the request of a number of the inhabitants. It was not, however, until 1852 that Ruatan became a Circuit, and had the benefit of a resident minister. During the first twenty years of the Mission ten ministers laboured in this field. A third missionary was added to the staff in 1849, when the Rev. Herbert Wesley Haime joined Mr. Webster and Mr. Collier. Mr. Haime proved to be a most valuable acquisition. His labours to enlighten and
awaken sinners and to lead them to Christ were eminently successful. A few old people still survive who
shared the benefit of his pulpit and pastoral min-
istrations; his character, example, and services
are held to this day in affectionate remembrance.
It was during his term of service in Belize, that a
fire partially destroyed the town. In a letter
home dated August 18th, 1854, Mr. Haime gave a vivid
description of the fire. He says, “It was on the Sabbath
morning, at twenty minutes to two, that I was awoke
by the sound of the fire bell. I hastened at once to where
I saw the light of the fire, and found a store on fire. The
engines were already engaged in trying to extinguish
the fire; but in spite of all, the Scotch Kirk took fire,
then an opposite store, this being very high, served as a
torch to ignite the rest. On the fire ran, despite the
hundreds that were striving to subdue the flames. The
town of Belize lies North and South. Now at the time
the large store took fire the wind was direct from the
North; and if it had continued I cannot see how the en-
tire part, this side the bridge, could have escaped being
entirely destroyed. Had the north wind continued, in-
stead of eighty houses being destroyed there must have
been hundreds. But at the moment, almost, that the
danger became imminent, He that holdeth the winds in
His fist caused the wind to blow from the East. This
changed the direction of the flames. The Hand of God
we are happy to say, is recognised by the Council in
ordering a special Thanksgiving to be offered to Al-
mighty God on Sunday next, during Divine service in all the churches.

In the year 1851 the Rev. Harmon Mason arrived to take the place of one of the men who had been transferred to another field. He was a most devoted servant of Christ. To him belongs the honour of being the first resident minister in Ruatan. He was also instrumental in forming a Society in Útilla. His sun went down while it was yet day, though the result of his toil remains. He passed away in Belize in 1853.
Chapter 2.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

"These things did the three mighty men" I Chron XI. ver. 10

The following year, 1854, two men were appointed to the District whose influence and power are felt to this day. The Rev. Richard Fletcher was one, the Rev. Edward Daniel Webb the other. Two years later they were joined by a remarkable man, the Rev. Geo. Sykes. His saintly character, together with his cheerful disposition, is a precious memory to many people. Richard Fletcher had already seen active service on the West Coast of Africa, the other two were new recruits. No words of mine can bear ample testimony to the worth of these three men. In labours more abundant they extended and consolidated the work.

Richard Fletcher spent twenty six years in the District. For over twenty years he laboured at Corozal; this was the great work of his life. He diligently studied the languages of the people among whom he toiled and translated the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, a catechism, and a book of prayers into Maya for the use of his flock. It is thirty five years since he left Corozal but the fruit of his work is still evident.
out to one or another of the estates and preach in Maya or Spanish. On Sundays he would often ride thirty or forty miles and preach four times. At the call of the sick or needy he would travel into the country regardless of his own personal convenience or safety. One feels sorry that we have only a few fragmentary notes of the stirring times in which he lived; but his record is on High; and the value of those labours will doubtless be fully recognised in the era when they that "turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." In the meantime his remembrance lives deepest in the hearts of those he taught and inspired with his own loving zeal. The mention of his name to many a man—Creole, Spanish or Maya—in the North will kindle a warmth in the heart and inspire a flow of words which indicates the place this Wesleyan Missionary holds in their affections.

In the year 1860 Mr. Fletcher was appointed the first Chairman and General Superintendent of the District. Until that time the Mission formed part of the Jamaica District. A second disastrous fire took place on the North side of the town on July 17th, 1856. Writing to England the day after the fire Mr. Sykes says: "The fire broke out on the North side of the river about 11:30 p.m., and by 4 a.m., nearly the whole of that part of the town was in flames. I find it impossible to describe the scene which I saw on going to the spot a few minutes only after the alarm was given. The buildings here being almost entirely all constructed of wood,
dried, and greatly heated by the rays of a tropical sun, you may suppose the fiery element would make swift destruction. It seemed literally to roll along like a mighty deluge, engulfing house after house in an ocean of fire. The loss of property is enormous; but, of course, I cannot give the amount. I have heard of three stores which have lost unitedly upwards of £20,000 sterling, and I believe I shall be within compass when I say, that hundreds of buildings have been destroyed. I have only to add, that, by God’s mercy, for the second time within two years, our Mission premises have been preserved from destruction by fire."

Mr. Webb and Mr. Sykes appear to have spent alternate years at Belize and Ruatan. A gracious revival of God’s work took place in the year 1861. God magnified His word. The direct preaching of the gospel under Mr. Sykes was the instrument used for awakening and regenerating the souls of many. It began in Ruatan where a course of special services was held. One of the services, we are told, lasted six hours, even then the people reluctantly left the place which had been to them as ‘the very gate of heaven.’

It has been the writer’s privilege to talk with a number of people who were present at the meetings, among them, ‘Father Brooks,’ who took an active part in the work. Fifty years after the exciting times Father Brooks would talk of the scenes he then beheld and count the experiences among the most blessed in his life.
The revival spread and reached Belize. There is no denying the beneficial results of this season of refreshing. The Church grew, more than a hundred were added to the membership that year, willingly uniting themselves to the people of God. As to the lasting good I may mention that among those who joined the Church that year was the Rev. H. McField, one of our ministers.

It was during the time Mr. Sykes resided at Ruatan that the Bay Islands were transferred to the Republic of Honduras. The Treaty was signed in 1858, but the actual transfer was indefinitely postponed at the request of the President of the Republic, on account of the disturbances created by General Walker and his filibustering party. The hindrance being removed, the cession took place on the first of June 1861.

Mr. Webb travelled from Belize to Ruatan and joined Mr. Sykes to be present on the occasion. The ceremony was a very interesting, though somewhat melancholy one. His Excellency Thomas Price Esq., the Lieut. Governor of the Bay Islands, was present as representative of the British Crown, and His Excellency Don R. Padilla Duran, as commissioner, from the Honduranian Government. There was the formal exchange of flags and addresses. It was quite natural that a people who had so long enjoyed the sovereignty of the British Crown should regret the transfer of that sovereignty to a government like that of the Republic of Honduras. Very liberal proposals were made, voluntarily, by the President, securing to the inhabitants of the islands their
former rights and customs, with full religious liberty, public and private. Looking back over the past one hardly can say that these promises have been kept to the letter; more than once the work of the Mission has come into collision with republican officialdom. It is only fair to state, however, that very often some petty official, armed with a brief authority, has been the cause of the friction. No more loyal subjects to the British Empire could be found than the residents of the Bay Islands in the year 1861. It is a matter of profound regret that a people who found the islands a wild waste, and suffered great privations by living on wild fruits and fish until they could obtain the results of their labours, were abandoned to the tender mercies of the new Republic.

Mr. Sykes spent over twenty years in the District. Few men have left such a deep impression for good in the Colony. There is a pleasure in recalling his name to many of a generation that is rapidly disappearing. His natural disposition was mild and kind. His piety was genuine, rational and deep. The love of Christ to fallen man was the constant theme of his ministrations. As a faithful minister of Christ he declared the whole counsel of God, warning sinners to 'flee from the wrath to come' encouraging seekers of salvation, and edifying believers from his own rich store of spiritual life. Nor did his labours end with his retirement from this District; he spent his whole active ministerial life in this Western World and at one time was elected President of one of the West Indian Conferences.
Edward Daniel Webb was no less remarkable than Richard Fletcher, and George Sykes, though his term of service here was shorter. His unswerved zeal and activity deserve to be held in remembrance. He was emphatically a practical man. This is seen in his bringing to a successful issue the building of Wesley Church. The 'love of Christ constrained him.' He was faithful to his ministry, having tasted of the love of Christ himself, he was anxious that others should share in the joy which filled his own soul. This is in no sense a biography of Mr. Webb or of any other minister who has laboured here. The materials to hand are limited. To recall these names to many who knew the men personally, is the object, with the hope of arousing a more loyal devotion to the Master and Church they served so faithfully, and, perhaps, awakening a spirit of emulation in others of their splendid example in following Christ.

In 1856 a small house at Freetown was given to the Mission by one Mrs. Parker, widow of the late Richard Parker, who was a native of Africa, of the Mandingo nation. This was opened by Mr. Webb for preaching and prayer-meetings. Situated in a part of the town where there was no place of worship a number of people were attracted, and soon a vigorous Society was founded which eventually grew into the present Ebenezer Church.

In the year 1863 a great fire swept a large portion of the Southern part of the town away. In the Wesley-
an Methodist Magazine for the month of May 1863 I find the following account of the disaster:—

"DESTRUCTION OF THE MISSION CHAPEL, SCHOOL, AND TEACHER’S HOUSE AT BELIZE BY FIRE.

"The last month’s mail brings tidings of a most serious calamity which has fallen on the town of Belize in Honduras Bay. A portion of the town has been destroyed by fire. More than four hundred houses were destroyed in the course of a few hours, during the morning of the 10th of March, the wind unhappily fanning the flames of the burning mass, and driving them on the timber-built town. So far as had been ascertained no lives were lost.*

"We are thankful to announce that the Missionaries and Teachers are safe, and that the Mission House escaped destruction. But the chapel, with all its furniture, and the school underneath the chapel, for which a Teacher had been sent out by the Ladies’ Committee, with its valuable outfit of maps, books, and school materials, and the residence of Mr. Clarke, the Teacher, have been entirely destroyed. A great number of the inhabitants of the town are thus cast out of house and home; and, while they are deprived of shelter, are also, for the time, without means of subsistence Among them are more than one hundred members of our

* A single life was lost, one William Godfrey.
Society, and others, members of the congregation, and many of the School children. It is hardly to be expected, under the circumstances, that means will be found in Belize for the immediate restoration of the Mission buildings. The Committee have therefore promptly sent a grant of money to commence the restoration of the Mission buildings, with instructions to employ more durable materials for the purpose, if they can be obtained."
Wesleyan Chapel, Belize, B. H. Erected 1839. Destroyed by fire March 10th, 1863.
(Reproduced from an old woodcut.)
Chapter 3.

THE BUILDING OF WESLEY CHURCH,

"The people had a mind to work." Nehemiah IV, ver. 6.

Many families were plunged into the deepest poverty by this great fire and not a few of them were obliged to leave the town for the various settlements on the banks of the rivers in order to obtain a means of livelihood.

Wesley congregation was to a great extent scattered, and for a time the whole work, as it were, thrown into a state of disorder and confusion. Fortunately for the Mission there were men and women among them whose faith never wavered and who could write in a hopeful strain. We read in one report: 'The calamity has seriously affected the interests of our Mission here. But while for the present the effect is injurious, we do not doubt that it will ultimately be over-ruled for the furtherance of the Gospel and the success of our work."

It is but natural that many should yield to the depression and discouragement occasioned by their loss. Many lost their clothing with their houses and this prevented their appearance at public worship. From comfortable circumstances to poverty is a crushing blow—
it fell on many families that memorable Tenth of March 1863.

It demanded great faith to begin such a work as the erection of Wesley Church amid the ruins and poverty caused by the fire. Before the close of the same year, plans, specifications and forms of contract were in Belize for the new building.

For the first six months after the fire, by the kindness and courtesy of the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. David Arthur, it was arranged for Wesley congregation to unite with his in their new Church on Sunday evenings, the ministers of each alternately occupying the pulpit. The Synod Minutes of 1864 referring to this says, "During this period we realised how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." I may be pardoned for digressing here to remark on the friendly relations which have existed between the Wesleyan missionaries and the ministers of other Churches. That saying of John Wesley "The friends of all and the enemies of none" has been the general attitude; exemplifying the catholic spirit of Methodism. As a further illustration of this I may cite a handbill in my possession advertising the annual Anniversary of 1845. This states: "The sermon will be preached by the Rev. John Kingdon" (A Baptist minister) "the Meeting will be addressed by the Revs. Henderson, Kingdon, Edney, Green and others. Chair to be taken by the Honourable W. H. Coffin Esq."
To return to the sorely stricken Church and community. A room was hired in Regent Street for School purposes. At the end of the six months mentioned above, this was fitted up for the public services. The congregations were small on account of the lack of accommodation, but the ministers were greatly cheered by the steadfastness of many people who, in the midst of their severe trials, manifested their fervent love to God and attachment to Methodism, by their self-denying and liberal contributions to the new Church. It was an undertaking in which they had a deep interest and for its prosperity they frequently and fervently prayed.

It was found necessary to obtain the architect's plan to England and several months passed away before the new and improved plans reached Belize. A beginning was made, however, in 1864. On the 3rd of Nov. 1864 the Memorial Stone was laid by His Excellency J. Gardiner Austin Esq., Lieut. Governor. Hopes were then expressed that the new building would be ready for opening by the end of the year 1865. One can understand the anxiety which rested upon the officials of the Mission. The temporary rooms used for School and Church were small and inconvenient, and, more important still, they were costing the Society over £80 a year in rent. In addition to this the Rev. E. D. Webb was anxious to return to England as his furlough was long overdue and the state of his health uncertain. He felt that he could not leave until the Church was complete as the contracts were all made in his name and his experience as a builder was neces.
sary. It ought not to be forgotten that Mr. Webb stayed on two years beyond the usual term of service solely in the interest of Wesley Church.

Many unavoidable circumstances delayed the work. The workmen had to wait from time to time for bricks, from England, failure of contractors for some portion of the work not only hindered the building going forward but involved the promoters in greater expenditure than they anticipated; and the impoverished condition of the people restricted their giving to the extent of their desires.

In "The Building News" of March 1866 there is a picture of Wesley taken from the architect's plans and a short description of the building. Perhaps a portion of this article will not be out of place here, as it gives some interesting details. "In March 1863 the town of Belize was partially destroyed by fire. Among the buildings destroyed was the Wesleyan Chapel. The authorities of Honduras very judiciously decided that Belize should not be rebuilt in materials liable to a similar calamity to the one from which it has suffered, and all the buildings therefore, are to be of brick or stone, with tiles or slated roofs. As no building materials of this kind are to be found in the Colony it was necessary to export everything, except timber, for the new chapel from this country.

The principal part of the building faces the east, and the congregation look in the same direction. And this not from regard to the old custom of orientation, but
because during the most sultry season the sea breeze from the east is indispensable for comfort if not for existence. Accordingly it was necessary to have as many windows as possible in the eastern front, and these, as well as all the other windows in the building, had to be made to open. During another part of the year, storms of wind and rain are prevalent, and this circumstance necessitated the covering of the flights of steps, four in number, which lead to the chapel, occupying the first floor of the building. The chapel is 80 feet by 50 feet; and with the western gallery will seat 700 persons. It is roofed in one span by four wrought iron principals, carrying purlins of the same metal, which are boarded, felted, and slated with blue and green Countess slates. Internally the principals are intersected by arched timber ribs, supporting a boarded ceiling, and thus leaving an air space between this and the slate boarding to moderate the heat. A portion of the iron-work of the principals is visible from the interior of the chapel, and is painted in appropriate colours and partly gilded. The roof was manufactured by the Tweedale Co. from designs by the architect.

The building is of pavier bricks, which were supplied, together with the lime and cement, by Messrs. White. The door and window dressings are of white brick, moulded for the purpose by Messrs. Eastwood. The Portland stone copings and York steps were supplied by Messrs. Freeman, and the gable crosses were carved by T. Sharp, Esq.
The lower storey contains Boys and Girls Schools, entered by two doors from the front. All the windows are fitted with cast iron sashes, made from designs by the architect by Messrs. Grissell & Co. As before stated every window will open. The cost of the buildings and fittings will be £6000. A foundation stone sent out for the purpose was laid about a year ago by the Governor of the Colony, and the building is now approaching completion. Mr. Hoole, of Craven Street, "is the architect."

The architect was the son of one of the General Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, Dr. Elijah Hoole, an old Indian missionary. His residence in India gave him some idea of the kind of building suitable for the tropics, and he succeeded in designing a Church that has not been eclipsed in Belize by any modern architect for beauty, convenience or ventilation.

The building exceeded the architect's estimate of cost by nearly a Thousand Pounds. The funds of the Parent Society were generously given towards the cost and a debt of gratitude is due to them first of all. The Legislative Assembly contributed £300, and His Excellency the Governor, besides giving £20 himself, made a grant £50 from the Crown Funds. Three legacies produced £295 and the proceeds of three Lectures by S. Cockburn Esq. brought in a sum of £19.

Nearly two thousand pounds was raised by donations subscriptions, bazaar, and the opening services. If one person ought to be singled out by name among the many generous givers, it is the late Mr. John Jex. He gave
freely and willingly and was deeply interested in seeing the building finished. The chandeliers, the organ, and all the Communion silver were presented by him.

In the reports of the circuit work it is stated that our Members, with few exceptions, have taken great interest in the work. The ministers were greatly cheered by witnessing the love to Christ and goodwill to the Mission manifested by the members and the general public in the large and liberal amounts contributed in the support of the work of God and the building of the new Church.

The correspondence with the architect, and Mission House in London, together with the plans, specifications and forms of contract, have been carefully preserved; and from these much of the information here given is obtained. Three thousand, one hundred and fifty two pounds was spent on labour locally, the balance on materials, freight and duties. The Government was petitioned to remit the duties on the building materials. This they were not able to do owing to commercial depression: Mr. Blakely, the Colonial Engineer, very ably superintended the work and the building is a witness to the thoroughness with which he performed his task.

Few of the men who actually worked on the building are now alive. Mr. Richard Thomas, “in age and feebleness extreme,” and Mr. Matthew Stephens are still with us. It is safe to say that the workmen took a pride in their task and many who were boys at the time
are delighted to recall their youthful experiences during the erection of Wesley.

On the first Sunday in July 1866, the Schoolrooms being finished, the congregation removed into one of them, and services were continued in it until the end of the year.

On Sunday, December 23rd, 1866, Wesley Church was opened for Public Worship. The Rev. E. D. Webb was the first preacher. The sermons in connection with the opening services were all excellent and appropriate, we are told. The sum of £67 was collected at these services. It was a time of thanksgiving and rejoicing. But it was not all joy and gladness. In the report of the opening we read:—“The war in which we are at present unhappily engaged with the Indians, greatly interfered with our opening services, so that the congregations and collections were such smaller than they otherwise would have been.” The entire garrison of Belize, consisting of over one hundred and forty men, besides officers, and a number of Volunteers, were away on this expedition. One cannot help thinking of those from Wesley who are at present away on active service in this greater conflict. Some of the number would certainly be assisting us to worthily celebrate this jubilee but for the call of duty. They are not forgotten, however, and as mention was made fifty years ago of those who protected our colony from Indian raids, so we would pay tribute to the men from British Honduras, who, at call of King and Empire have responded in a manner worthy of the best traditions of the Colony. May such a victory be theirs as nothing in the past can rival.
Chapter 4.

LAY-WORKERS.

"These have borne the burden and heat of the day."

Matthew XX. verse 12.

Thus far very little has been said of the valuable assistance given to the Mission by other persons than ministers. One has to admit a difficulty in making a selection of names where so many can be found who laboured faithfully as Local Preachers, Class-Leaders, Day and Sunday School teachers, etc., to maintain and advance the work of the Wesleyan Mission. It would be ungenerous to omit reference to them entirely. If names that are familiar to the older generation now living are not mentioned, it is because there is little or no data concerning them available. It is obviously impossible to do justice to all. Many, indeed most of the members worked silently, but not less effectively, by their christian characters and conduct. I am anxious to avoid making comparisons which are invidious and mischievous. Each Christian has something to do in the Lord’s vineyard, for this the Master has qualified him. The best can lay no claim to merit; they did that which was their duty to do.
Among the Officers of the Wesleyan Mission none have rendered more signal service than the Class-Leaders. It is an office of responsibility with great opportunities for good if the work is faithfully done. Class Leaders are co-pastors of the flock and many can bear witness to the good done by their worthy leaders in days past and gone. Just as soon as it was practicable after the Mission began, Class Leaders were appointed. The honour of being the first Leaders in Wesley is shared by two women,—Ann Hendy and Catherine White. The former passed away in 1874. The comment in the Register of Burials is,—"one of the first female Leaders in Honduras, an exemplary Christian woman." Catherine White lived four years longer, and is described as—"One of the first, most laborious and successful Leaders in the Belize Circuit. As a visitor of the sick, and of her members in particular, perhaps unequalled. Good Sister White will not soon be forgotten." This good lady is well remembered in Belize. On one occasion whilst speaking at a Meeting in the Church she convulsed her hearers by referring to an incident as taking place on 'De fust time White did come to court me'.

Among the old Africans whose names are worthy of perpetuation in connection with Wesley one must mention Ann Clare. She died two days before Wesley Church was opened in 1866. Formerly a slave, soon after her liberation by a British Man of War, in which she was being carried from her native land, she joined the
Methodist Society, receiving her first Ticket in the year 1827. At the time of her death she had a class of forty members, over whom she watched with remarkable fidelity and to whom she was made a great blessing.

Richard Hare was one of the oldest male Leaders, and wielded a great influence for good in his day and generation. Maria Armstrong, an old member and Leader, lived to the great age of 90 years, and, when able for the work, was regarded as the best missionary collector. Another name familiar to many is Eliza Coffin, a much respected and valued Leader. "A great friend to the ministers and to the poor."

And so one might multiply the number of names of those godly men and woman who rendered cheerful and efficient service to the Mission as Leaders. It is enough, to say that the godly succession has been kept up. We have a priceless heritage in the example of those who have taken their part in helping to make the world better, purer and more wholesome, by their love to Christ and helpfulness to their fellow-creatures.

The first Missionaries soon realised the need for Schools. As teachers were not available they took charge themselves, and were often assisted by their wives and members of their families. The Rev. Herbert Wesley Haime was a most successful teacher. On his removal representation was made to the Missionary Committee in London of the need for properly qualified teachers. In response to this appeal Mr. John Sanders was sent out from England in 1856 to take charge of
Wesley Boys School. The School prospered under his care and in 1859 the Ladies' Committee sent out Miss Susannah Beal as Head Teacher for the Girls School.

It looked as though a long period of prosperity for the Schools lay ahead with two such workers in them. Alas! if any such hopes existed they were doomed to disappointment. After only eight months in the Colony Miss Beal passed away on July 12th 1860, and two days later Mr. Sanders died. It was a severe blow to lose both Teachers at the same time. Under Mr. Sanders the School made great progress; whilst the children in the Girls School had become greatly attached to Miss Beal. Mrs. Lewis, who had previously had charge of the School, kept open the Girls School, but the Boys School was closed for a short time.

Mr. Clarke was the next Teacher sent out for Wesley School. He arrived in Belize in February 1861 and for five years was in charge of Wesley Boys School. At the same time the Ladies' Committee sent out Miss Smith to succeed Miss Beal. Her career as a Teacher in Belize was a short one. Within a few months of her arrival she married one of the ministers, the Rev. E. D. Webb, but continued to carry on the School until Miss Ward arrived to take her place.

So far as one can gather from the records the above mentioned are the only Teachers sent out from England for Wesley Schools. In addition to their work in the School they laboured with the ministers as helpers in Mission Work. Mr. Sanders was a very acceptable
preacher, the lady Teachers proved their worth as Visitors, Class Leaders and workers in the Sunday School.

The next Head-Master of Wesley Boys School was Mr. George Alexander Frazer; a native of Nassau. His appointment was not an experiment. For several years prior to coming to Wesley he had been employed as School Master at Ruatan and Stann Creek, and proved himself a very efficient and successful teacher. He was a strict disciplinarian; his upright character, added to his ability as a teacher, brought Wesley Boys School to a standard of proficiency never excelled.

The Girls School made equal progress during the same period under the care of Miss M. F. Hewlett, who was given charge after Miss Ward returned to England on account of ill-health. Year after year the report of the two Schools is an unbroken record of success. Happily Miss Hewlett is still with us; and, though no longer able to take an active part in the work of the Mission, she is deeply interested in its welfare.

Mr. Frazer threw himself into all the activities of the Mission. He often took the services during the absence of the ministers. His taste and talent for music found an outlet as Choir master at Wesley. In the various departments to which he gave his time, he failed not to give entire satisfaction. In the year 1881 he was accepted into the ranks of the ministry and sent to take charge of the Mission work at Ruatan. Into the new work he was then called upon to engage in, he turned all his energies. His labours were warmly appreciated
wherever he went and by all parties. His career as a minister was cut short in 1883 by death, to the great regret of every member of the staff and lover of the Mission. A posthumous article from his pen on the work in Ruatan can be found in the Wesleyan Missionary Notices for the month of January 1884.

Stann Creek and Mullins River were at one time part of the Belize Circuit, and were visited periodically from Belize. A school was begun at Stann Creek, at that time inhabited almost entirely by Caribs. Two names among the Teachers who have laboured there stand out prominently above all others, Mr. Hunt and Mr. J E. Brooks. Amidst many discouragements and much opposition these two men laboured in School and Church. Nor did they labour in vain, they were instrumental in building up a thriving Society and a good school.

Boom, on the Old River, is the oldest station outside Belize. It is over ninety years since the first Wesleyan Missionary visited the settlement and very soon after this regular services and a school were established. The sparsely populated character of the country has prevented a large increase in numbers; suffice it that a place of Worship, a School and a Teacher have borne witness for nearly a century to the interest the Wesleyan Mission has in small communities, who need the Christian religion and education no less than the larger centres of population in the Colony. This chapter would reach an inordinate length if
one touched, even lightly, on each Teacher who has laboured in the interests of the Mission. Their names have not been inscribed on the "Roll of Fame." Some of them possessed gifts and graces, which, had they been exercised in other lands, would probably have achieved greater notoriety and praise. A few have launched out into the wider world and reached positions of honour and trust which revealed their talents. The late Mr. J. E. Tucker, at one time a Teacher and Local Preacher at Boom and Northern River, became a clergyman in the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, and, not content with that honour, qualified as a doctor. The present pastor of the John Wesley Memorial Church in Baltimore, U. S. A., is Dr. Ernest Lyon, an old scholar and Teacher of Wesley. For several years Dr. Lyon was the chief representative of the United States of America to the Republic of Liberia. It may be of interest to some to say in passing, that this versatile old scholar of Wesley has recently written a book on the "Negro's View of Organic Union."

Two sons of the late Mr. C. B. Ottley, Alfred and Charles, after serving as Teachers and Preachers in the Colony, entered the ministry in the United States.

The Rev. Hezekiah McField, one of the present staff of ministers, is an old and successful teacher. Perhaps no man in the Colony is better known in the mahogany and logwood camps of the North than Mr. McField. His labours for the welfare of the spiritually neglected in remote places are highly appreciated by both employe,
and employee, and best of all, are owned of God and blessed with fruit.

It is necessary to go back to earlier days in order to mention a few of the great number of laymen who "have borne the burden and heat of the day as Sunday School workers, Trustees and Stewards.

In the year 1863 the Rev. E. D. Webb published a little book containing a biographical sketch of the life of Samuel Erskine Forbes, and a sermon preached at a Memorial service. Mr. Forbes appears to have lived for several years with Mr. Haime and Mr. Webb in Belize and at Ruatan. Thanks to his training, he became a most useful member of Wesley Church. The little book bears eloquent testimony to the deep and genuine piety of Mr. Forbes. He died on board the Schooner "Louisa" whilst on a voyage from Yucatan to Belize and his remains were buried in the new Cemetery on the Island of Cozumel.

Mr. Stewart Carter, who died as recently as 1880, was the first Society Steward at Wesley.

In due course after the completion of Wesley Church, Deeds were prepared and a Trust formed. The first Trustees were Peter L. Audinett, George Dennis, Isaac Smith, Benjamin Reneau, Israel Meighan, Charles B. Ottley, Robert T. Eagan, Charles H. Locke, George Richmond, John LaCass, Simon Lamb, George F. Arthurs, Thomas Belisle and James Meighan.

In addition to their responsibilities as Trustees many of these men rendered conspicuous services to Wesley
Lay-Workers.

Church in other ways. Charles Benjamin Ottley, whose Memorial Tablet is on the walls of the Church, was a member for fifty three years and held every office a layman can hold in the Church. A carpenter and builder by trade, his experience was invaluable and freely given from time to time. His ability and character won for him a wide circle of friends, and these qualities were recognised by the authorities in making him a Justice of the Peace.

John La Cass, Simon Lamb, Israel Meighan and Edward Courtney all served as officers in the Sunday School. There is a pathetic note in one of the Registers about Edward Courtney—"He died on the day he had appointed as his wedding day." Jan. 30th 1873.

Robert T. Eagan was one of the youngest of the original Trustees and only passed away this last September. His zeal for the House of God and interest in the work of the Mission remained unabated to the end.

Israel Meighan was another of the hard workers at Wesley. He was instrumental in starting the work at Manatee. His business as a shipwright took him thither. The neglected condition of the people at Gales Point moved him to hold services for them and to represent in Belize the opportunity for doing good at Manatee. Mr. Small, afterwards Bishop Small, well known in Belize, was sent to Manatee as first teacher and catechist.

If one writes in more general terms of the fellow-workers of those whose names are mentioned above—it
does not mean that the writer thinks they were one whit behind in their loyalty and devotion to the work of God. One is tempted to inquire more intimately into the secret of their strength and power. From hints gathered while reading the old reports it seems certain that these workers had the root of the matter in themselves. Their conviction of sin was deep; and from the moment the curse was felt, they rested not till the assurance of salvation, so freely offered by the Gospel, was obtained. Sin was abandoned; ungodly companions were given up, they made diligent use of the means of grace and took an active part in the efforts to awaken others to a sense of their need of Christ and to aid them on their journey to heaven.

Not all the called were chosen, neither remained faithful unto death. Some hardened their hearts against the grace of God and forsook the ‘fountain of living waters,’ for the muddy stream of worldly pleasure. Yet, to God be the Glory, good has been done and when the sealed book shall be opened, many names will doubtless be found there, who owe their allegiance to the Saviour to the lay workers of the Wesleyan Mission.
Chapter 5.

LATER WORKERS AND GROWTH.

"Fellow-workers whose names are in the Book of Life"
*Philippians IV. ver 3.*

It is but right that something should be said of the later development of the work, and due acknowledgement made to those who have handed it on to the present generation. Some seventy ministers in all have laboured in the District. A few of them have had but remote connection with Wesley Church. Nearly all have preached in it, and some of them have wielded great influence as it pastors. The Rev. Edward Spratt was a most devoted worker with Mr. Sykes and Mr. Fletcher. During his term of service in Belize the present Mission House was built. Under his ministry many were added unto the Church. His stay in the District was comparatively short, but his ministry was rewarded with much fruit. His widow is still actively engaged in the work at Wesley as a Leader of one of the largest classes.

Angold and Paul Ellis, stand out as ‘men of mark.’ They contributed much, under the Divine blessing, to strengthen and sustain the work of the Mission. Owen Jones spent eight years in the District. As Head Master of the Boys’ High School and pioneer of the Mission at San Pedro Sula in Honduras, he won most justly the admiration, esteem, and love of numerous friends.

The Revs. F. H. H. Labbett and Henry Walmsley, successors to Mr. Jones at the High School maintained the good work begun.

Mr. Nowell’s name will ever be associated with our Mission at Stann Creek. The faithful work as pastor and his diligence in securing suitable premises are held in grateful memory by those who knew him and came under his influence. The news of his death a short time ago was the occasion of great sorrow to a large number of people.

Three ministers from the Jamaica District rendered very effective service for a number of years, viz, the Revs. Nathan A. Baquie, Terence M. Sherlock and J. Kissock Braham, B.D.

Thomas B. Angold spent seven fruitful years as Chairman and General Superintendent, his wife most ably assisting him in every good work. He was in Belize during those stirring times known as “when the money was changed.” Right nobly did he strive as a minister of the Gospel to be a peace-maker.

Henry Tregoning spent almost the whole of his term
of service in the Bay Islands, but as one famous author says, 'that is another story.'

One name worthy of remembering among the more recent ministers who have laboured here is that of T. Herbert Kidd. Imbued with strong Protestant principles, he championed its truths as editor of the localised Church Record. His thoroughly evangelical sermons were much appreciated and are often spoken of to day by those who were then his hearers. His ministry was not in vain.

The man to whom the Mission owes most of all in modern times is the Rev. James W. Lord. Quiet, unassuming in manner, with a business capacity that would probably have made him a rich man if the Christian ministry had not claimed him, he served the Mission faithfully for nearly twenty years. In the year 1900, after a period of service in Spain and England, he was appointed Chairman of the District. He found the work at a low ebb; finances straitened, the work disorganised and the people discouraged. The best testimony to his ability is to be found in the fact that he left it ten years later in splendid order.

In the early part of the year 1900 the District was honoured by a visit from one of the General Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, the Rev. William Perkins. Though his stay was a brief one, and of necessity confined to Belize, he was favourably impressed with the work. He rendered the Church a great service
and his visit is looked back upon as a time of refreshing. The ties which bind the Mission to the home-land were strengthened. One is frequently asked. When shall we be favoured with another visit?

In still more recent times the Rev. Thomas H. Caddy, Henry Scott, F. J. Bomford, W. H. Harvey, Walter J. Gadsby, R. Coburn Kellie, R. T. Morrison, B. A., Benjamin Chicken and H. Donald Spencer have all served the Mission faithfully in Belize. The Rev. Thomas Peers laboured in the Southern part of the Colony, whilst the Revs. T. N. Phillipson and William Rider devoted their time mostly to Corozal in the North. The mere mention of these names will bring back pleasant memories to many of the worshippers at Wesley. F. J. Bomford was a great favourite with the whole community. The death of Mr. Spencer in 1912, followed a month later by that of Mr. Chicken, was a severe blow to the Mission. Nor must we forget Herbert W. Bunting and his sister who gave their lives for the work at San Pedro Sula in 1892. Arthur Hall and W. Spencer Hodgson both died after only one year of service here. It is a notable fact that the men who have died in the work in the District, all did so within two years of their arrival, and most of them during the first year.

It would be presumptuous for me to speak of the work of the men who have only returned home during the last few years. It is well-known to most people who will read this. Side by side with the ministers, lay helpers have taken their place. One can see at once
how impossible it is for the small staff of ministers to carry on all the work. The self-denying toil of Class-Leaders, Trustees, Day and Sunday School Teachers and Stewards has been repeated through the years. The Church has been blessed with men and women of sound religious principle and goodly zeal. Advancement has not been by leaps and bounds. The population of the Colony has barely been maintained. No great opportunity for aggressive evangelistic effort has presented itself, such as exists in the larger colonies like Canada and Australia with their endless stream of immigrants. Still the work has been maintained and some progress made. The credit for this is due no less to the lay-helpers than the ministers.

Again one faces the difficulty of selecting names and the danger of leaving out such as many deem worthy of a place here. It is impossible to make a complete list. The original Trustees of Wesley have all passed the 'bourne of time and place' and of their immediate successors no less than five have died. John A. McDonald, J. A. Hylton, T. Robert Leslie, Samuel Leslie and Louis Raboteau. Mr. McDonald, in his younger days was a great worker at Wesley. He filled nearly all the offices in the Church open to him as a layman. Though he served as Local Preacher, Leader, Steward and Trustee, perhaps the great work of his life was done in the Sunday School. Mr. T. R. Leslie will be best remembered by the poor. His delight was to help people less fortunate than himself; he proved his real interest in their welfare.
by making a small provision for such as are in real need in his will. Louis Raboteau in his quiet way found a sphere of usefulness in the Sunday School. It was not my good fortune to know personally either Samuel Leslie or J. A. Hyitou; the latter served the Church as a Class Leader.

Nor must one forget the labours of Mr. Henry S. Schnarr as Steward and Superintendent of the Sunday School. In these offices he served faithfully and with marked ability. He was a living illustration of that injunction of King Solomon. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

One of the oldest members of Wesley Church now living is Mr. R. C. Gardiner, of East Canal Street. He served as sexton of the old Church burnt down in 1860—and, so far as I know, is the only living official of those times.

Miss Sarah Kennedy, Mrs. Mary Card, Mrs. Arnold, Mrs. Parkes and Mrs. Thompson all worked successfully as Leaders. J. A. Grant, George I. Pitts and J. C. Murray held similar responsible positions.

Last January the Wesleyan Mission lost a staunch supporter and friend by the tragic death of Lt.-Colonel W. J. Slack. His allegiance to the Church, of which his father is an honoured minister, never wavered. His work for the Mission was unobtrusive, but none the less valuable on that account. He gave freely towards its support and was ever ready when called upon with his presence and advice to further any of its activities. The
value of his assistance is best known to those who have been responsible for carrying on the work during the past twenty years.

To the present staff of ministers and workers one must not refer, except in general terms.

Many of the lay-workers have grown up from childhood under the influence of Wesley Schools and Church. Names which figured in the records fifty years ago re-appear in our Registers to-day: those who bear them are guarding the priceless inheritance handed down to them by their forefathers.

It is to be regretted, however, that a readiness to participate in the distinctly spiritual activities of the Church is not a more conspicuous feature. There can be no doubt that a large number are possessed of gifts for this kind of service—a service which invariably brings its own reward.

From the year 1829 to the present day Registers have been kept in accordance with the usage of our Church. In addition to the bald statement of fact, comments are often appended to events that appeared worthy of note at the time. An instance of this is found in the Register of Burials. "Joseph Cain, buried on April 6th 1870, by the Rev. Edward Spratt. Mr. Spratt adds, "Age uncertain, but as near as can be ascertained, not less than 125 years old." This remarkable man was a slave in Hayti and fought under Toussaint in the stirring times when the slaves won their freedom by conflict. Reaching a British possession he joined a West Indian
Regiment and came to this Colony as a soldier. Descendants of the fourth generation of this patriarch are found to-day taking an active part in the work at Wesley.

Other Entries read:—"William Jessembe, murdered by a runaway prisoner, April 25th 1863."

"Lucretia Flowers, aged 81, received her first Ticket from the Rev. John Greenwood, 1836."

"Libby Neal and Joseph Everett, died on their passage from New River."

"Robert Niles, aged 52, a very consistent and highly esteemed member of Society for many years, and an exemplary Sunday School Teacher."

One has often heard discussions as to whether a shark will attack a living person in the water or not. The Revs. George Sykes and Oswald Welch give the following testimony. "Patrick Russell a member of Society, who whilst diving logwood in the harbour his leg taken off by a shark, causing almost instantaneous death.

Tribute is paid to those in humble walks of life such as the following: "Jane Burns, for many years Mr. Sykes' servant. A much esteemed and valued one."

The foregoing will sufficiently indicate the interest taken to keep a record of the more notable events. It is not my intention to deal with the work of the Mission beyond the limits of the Colony; nor can one claim to have dealt with this in anything but a cursory manner. Reference must be made, however, to the Wesleyan Mission in the Bay Islands and North Coast of Honduras, as this has proven in many respects the most fruitful field. Here,
more than anywhere else in the District, the lay-workers have been ready to do their part. William Benjamin Brooks, who died but a couple of years ago, was a Local Preacher for over sixty years. I am told that he frequently preached in Belize with great power and acceptance. His life and work is a story in itself. J. D. McField, after a strenuous life of devotion to God's work, but recently entered into rest. What Methodism in Utilla owes to Mr. James Cooper of Utilla Cay can never be told. For more than half a century this veteran has been preaching the gospel and many tributes to his diligence and faithfulness can be found in the Annual Reports of the Ruatan Circuit. To-day on the Ruatan Circuit Plan there are names which are worthy of perpetuation. Men who count it a joy to work for the Master and whose fidelity and self-denial is shown in maintaining the numerous places of worship dotted all over the Bay Islands. This is but a passing testimony of one who counts himself honoured in being associated with their work.

Vigorous attempts have been made from time to time to alienate the affections of our people from the Wesleyan Mission. They have been met for the most part with the indifference which such unprincipled conduct deserves. Under conditions of provocation and sometimes of great hardship and loss, the people called Methodists in the Bay Islands have sought to uphold the Church of their choice.
WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

Fifty years ago our forefathers rejoiced in the accommodation provided by the erection of Wesley; after their cramped quarters it was looked upon as ample. The Schoolrooms were regarded as well adapted for the purpose for which they were built. To-day we find ourselves severely handicapped and our development crippled by lack of room. In the pre-war days some of us hoped to celebrate the Jubilee by opening the contemplated new School-hall. Land has been secured, a certain amount of money has been collected and we feel that the time has come when a vigorous effort must be made to build. As yet we are not committed to any definite plan. One would like to see a building worthy of comparison with Wesley. There is a growing need for Social work in Belize; who should be better fitted to direct this than the Christian Church?

The present is evidently a momentous era in the history of man. The world is at present harassed both in its religious and political interests by the great war, which, unhappily, is brought home to us in so many ways. What the issue will be we can have no doubt; we feel secure as to the final result being in the interests of righteousness and liberty. The Church must prepare itself for new work as the result of widened interests. Methodism has exerted a powerful and salutary influence on the social life of England and the Colonies. We do not presume to say that this Colony is dependent upon us for religious instruction and stimulus. Other
Churches are at work, and none but a churl would fail to recognise their influence for good. Nevertheless; it is of vast importance to us that we steadfastly adhere to the principles of our revered predecessors. In the arrangements of Providence we are called to a work peculiarly our own. A celebrated divine a hundred years ago described Methodism as "Christianity in earnest." Our aim should be to justly claim such a description. Stimulated by the example of those in the past, we must seek to deserve the distinction, whether it be awarded in the spirit of eulogy or scorn.

The battle is joined to-day as never before; to our own Master we stand or fall. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold. The habits of the present generation manifestly veer to the side of softness and self-indulgence. This is not calculated to renovate society and is contrary to the religion of the Cross. The men and women who bore our banners and guided the counsels of Methodism in the past were trained to self-denial, and to habits of holy hardness. To this circumstance, under the blessing of God, much of that decision of character, Christian fortitude, deep piety and usefulness for which they were famous is to be traced. It is for us to be prompt in imbibing their spirit and resolute in copying their example, if we are "to serve the present age."

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand in the way and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls."
A List of Wesleyan Missionaries who have laboured in the Honduras district, with the date of their appointments.

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