

# I

## THE EARLY YEARS AND THE CALL

THE little quiet town of Barnard Castle, in the county of Durham, in which I was born, had been the scene of many stirring events in border history. Many a fierce fight was fought under the walls of the old castle, which still rears its ruined walls far above the rushing Tees at the foot of the cliff on which the castle was built.

As it is the usual thing to say something of a man's ancestry in writing his life, I may state that the oldest member of our family on my father's side that I ever knew was his grandmother, an old lady at Staindrop, a few miles from Barnard Castle. She always declared that she could trace her ancestry in a direct line to Bishop Ridley; and I may say, in passing, that when I was home in 1886 and visited Staindrop, I inquired of the old parish clerk, and he assured me that the lady was quite correct in her statement. My own grandfathers and grandmothers I never knew.

My father, George Brown, was left an orphan at thirteen, and had ever afterwards to depend entirely on his own exertions. He came to Barnard Castle as an office-boy for a solicitor, and step by step won for himself a very important position in the town and county in which his life was passed. I may be pardoned, perhaps, for giving here a quotation from a memoir published by the Rev. Brooke Herford. He says: "The name of George Brown was not only familiar through all that country side, but was known and regarded with a rare respect throughout Durham and the whole North Riding,

and tenderly beloved by many a little flock of Christian people in those parts. Though he was a Dissenter, and not only a Unitarian but a Unitarian who preached in the little chapel Sunday by Sunday, his townsmen felt that in him they had lost their ablest man; his funeral became spontaneously a public one, and the parish church bells rang muffled peals during the service."

Of his career his biographer says: "He gradually won that singular confidence alike of rich and poor, which was perhaps the most noteworthy thing in his life. And it was not mere respect for his justice and kindness. He became known as a man of wide information and great aptitude in varied kinds of business. His shrewdness and ability in public affairs, his spirit of high, scrupulous, Christian honour, his enthusiasm for every good cause, and his tenacious perseverance in every work he took up, gradually became conspicuous to all; and, though a man of singularly modest and retiring character, he insensibly came, by the simple gravitation of natural ability, to occupy a leading place in every movement affecting the industrial, intellectual, or moral well-being of his town. He originated the *Darlington and Stockton Times*, and was its first editor. He was one of the founders of the Mechanics' Institute, and for some years he was its secretary. He was secretary of the South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway and the Eden Valley Railway, clerk to the Board of Health, and in his later years was 'called' to the Bar in the Middle Temple. His services in that capacity were in constant requisition, and he soon won the reputation of an able and thoroughly upright lawyer, whilst a small handbook which he published on a subject which his railway experience had rendered of special interest to him, *The Law of Common Carriers*, is referred to as an authority. He was a very early riser. In the winter mornings books were his companions. He was, as a friend of his has described him to me, 'a devouring reader'; and he appeared never to forget what he read. In the summer he loved to spend his mornings in the open air,

reading in the woods, cultivating his love of nature and of science. He gained an intimate knowledge of every nook and cranny for many a mile, and became thoroughly skilled in the botany and geology of the whole district. He once gave a course of lectures on the 'Wild Flora' of the district, when he had the flowers collected and arranged on a long table across the room, and beginning at one end, taking up the flowers one by one as he came to them, without a note of writing, and with the whole air of one talking out of the fullness of a mind that knew and loved them thoroughly, he described their structure, the functions of their different parts, and their medicinal or other properties; and then wandered off now and then into beautiful digressions about their associations with poetry and mythology. His solicitude for the poor was evident, and his efforts to ameliorate their condition only ceased with his life. No man in the neighbourhood was so universally consulted; men of every class looked to his calm, thoughtful judgment with singular confidence; and no man was more ready to afford counsel, even, as was often the case, at great personal inconvenience.

"To those who knew him in his beautiful and simple private life he was still more endearing—a man of deep religious and happy piety. It was this religious life, indeed, which was the most interesting feature in his character; but I have dwelt so long upon his career as a worker and citizen, because religion shows the noblest when it appears as the crowning grace and strength of a life manly, capable, and active all round. From youth it was conspicuous in him. He began life as a Methodist, and learned among the associations of Methodism that outspoken piety and love of the Scriptures and prayer which characterised him to the end. He never seemed so happy as when he was conversing on the great themes of God and Providence, of Christ and His holy work, and of the hopes and foreshadowings of the heavenly world. 'At such time,' says one who had spent many an hour with him thus, 'his whole countenance beamed with light



his conversation grew unusually animated, and the utterances of sages, prophets, and poets flowed rapidly from his lips and mingled with his own earnest and impressive words.' His reverence for 'The Book' grew upon him year by year, and he often expressed his indebtedness to it for many of his happiest hours, as well as for support in his sorest trials. But what he loved most of all to dwell upon of late years was the character of Jesus. In his preaching, as well as in private conversation, he seemed never tired of dwelling on the beauty and strengthening power of that marvellous Life; and his services in the little chapel were characterised by an intensely devout and reverential spirit, which those who met with him there will never forget."

I have given these extracts from a memoir prefixed to a volume of sermons entitled *Words from a Layman's Ministry*, the second edition of which is now out of print. The Rev. J. J. Taylor, B.A., wrote the preface to the first edition, the Rev. Brooke Herford, now of Boston, wrote the memoir, and James Heywood, Esq., M.A., F.R.S., the preface to the second edition.

My father, so far as I remember, like the late Rev. Dr. Martineau, never considered himself a Unitarian in the generally accepted meaning of the term. His opinions were those which find their noblest expression in the works of Channing and Martineau; but there is little of them to be seen in the sermons which are published, most, if not all, of which might be preached in any Methodist pulpit to-day. When I was home I found that a church called the "Brown Memorial Church" had been erected by the people to whom he gratuitously gave the best years of his life. I preached in our own Methodist church in the morning, and many of those who were present attended the service which I conducted in the memorial church at night.

Of my mother I have no recollections. She died when I was five years of age. Her father, Mr. William Dixon, was one of the first and best known members of our Church

in Barnard Castle. For many years he was class leader and local preacher, and his grandchildren still occupy prominent positions in the ranks of our Church workers. He gave one daughter, Mrs. Buddle, wife of the late Rev. Thomas Buddle of New Zealand, to the Mission work, which he dearly loved.

I was born on December 7, 1835. I have been told that I was a very quiet boy; but amongst my earliest recollections is one of fiercely attacking a boy who had jeered at my elder brother on account of a slight deformity, and so excited my anger. I may have been good when I was little, and of course I believe the good people who have testified to the fact; but I have no recollections myself of being what may be called a moral boy as I grew up. I had what used to be reckoned in that little town a good education, in a small private school, but I am sure it would be considered wretchedly bad in these days. The old master had a fad about some new method of parsing, and we boys were quick enough to see that so long as we were up in this we could pretty well do what we liked as regards other branches of education. I left school knowing very little indeed except about parsing, all of which I have long since forgotten.

My first entrance into business life was as an assistant in Dr. C.'s surgery; but after nearly blowing up the establishment in trying to make hydrogen gas, and afterwards in preparing some phosphorus fire-bottles, which created a sensation in the streets, it was considered that I had no special gifts for the medical profession. Just about that time the Asiatic cholera was raging in Barnard Castle. I was attacked by the disease, and had a very narrow escape from death.

On leaving home I was employed in a large chemist's and bonded store at Sunderland, but failed again to manifest any special aptitude for the business. I was then apprenticed to a draper in Hartlepool. In this situation I was often employed in matters which were not at all connected with the drapery business proper. We did a great deal of business with the captains of foreign ships which came to Hartlepool for coals.



These men often brought over cigars, tobacco, and other dutiable goods, which were landed as the opportunity offered without the knowledge of the Customs authorities, and without paying the proper dues to Her Majesty's Government. These men then purchased from us large quantities of mole-skin and print goods, which they managed to smuggle into their own country on their return. They often needed help in landing the goods they brought to England, and the packages which they bought from us had to be conveyed on board at night, after the crew had gone to sleep. My employer seems to have found out that this occupation was far more congenial to me than standing behind a counter, and I was generally selected when any assistance was necessary. I do not think it would be at all profitable for me to give in detail the transactions in which I took part in those days.

It may be that this kind of life had some effect in confirming my desire to go to sea; at any rate I felt very strongly the desire to go, and at last determined to do so. It was somewhat difficult, as I was properly indentured, and so must be prepared to take the consequences of being caught and brought back again. Unfortunately, also, I had little or no spare cash. At Christmas time, however, in 1851, I determined to make a start, and left Hartlepool in company with my employer, who was under the delusion that I was about to visit my people at home. He, I imagine, was very much surprised when I did not return, and I know that he was specially annoyed with me because I had borrowed ten shillings from him, to pay my passage to London, and had got him to call me early in the morning when we both left. I went to Newcastle, and took a steerage passage in the *City of Hamburg* to London. On our way we encountered one of the fiercest gales that had been known for many years; we were in imminent danger of foundering, and at least six vessels were known to have gone down with all hands in near proximity to us. We managed, however, to get back to Lowestoft Roads, when the weather moderated. We continued our way to

London, passing large quantities of wreckage on our way. I landed in London with no money, and only the clothes that I had on me when I left Hartlepool. I stayed for two or three days on board a ship with some lads who had come from Newcastle to join her, and whose acquaintance I had made on the voyage. Day after day I tried to find employment; but I suppose my clothes showed that I had never been to sea, and men were not anxious for the job of breaking in a new hand.

One day, however, I met a captain who asked me for my qualifications; but he did not seem to be very much impressed by my account of them. At last he asked me if I could cook, and in desperation I answered, "Yes." "All right," he said, "turn to"; and so I went on board a smart schooner called the *Savage*, belonging to Penzance. She was one of the clipper schooners that were engaged in those days in bringing fruit from the Azores. I remember well the dinner that I had to cook that day—roast beef, cabbage, and potatoes. I put the lot on together, but soon found that the cabbage was cooked long before the beef. So I took it off, and stood it aside until the beef was done, and then warmed it up again. It did not improve the cabbage, and the captain and crew vented their wrath upon the greengrocer who had supplied it. Next day I knew better, and the greengrocer was re-established in the captain's good graces. On Saturday evening the captain gave his orders for Sunday's dinner, and said: "Boy, you make us a good 'plum-duff' for to-morrow's dinner." "All right, sir," I replied; but I could not then face the job of making plum duff, and so on Saturday night I cleared. What they had for dinner on Sunday I do not know.

I next shipped on board a nice barque called the *Alice*, bound for Algoa Bay, but not this time as cook. I left that to another and more qualified individual. Just before we signed articles I had come back from the City, when the other boy handed me a card, saying: "There is a longshore cove looking for you, and he says if you do not go up to his house to-morrow



morning he will send the police down after you." I took the card, and found it was from Messrs. E— & K—, solicitors, Bloomsbury Square; and I knew at once that my father's London agents had found where I was. Next day I went up, and was shown into the office; but Mr. E— was engaged, and I had to wait. One of the clerks leant over his desk, and asked if I was Mr. Brown's son, of Barnard Castle; and when he found that this was the case, he and his fellow-clerks began to indulge in what is generally known as chaffing. I was confidently assured that I should be sent to prison, and would have to endure some other preliminary punishments. They succeeded in making me pretty angry, which was just what they intended to do. They were safe behind the partition which separated them from the general office, and I was in the full swing of giving them my opinion of their conduct, and inviting them to come out of the office one by one that I might impress it more strongly upon them, when the door opened, and they subsided at once into apparently hard-working and attentive clerks. Mr. E— told me that I must go back home; but I told him that it was no use my doing so, that I had determined to go to sea, and that I was quite sure it was the best plan for me, and would give the least trouble to my father. It ended in my being supplied with a little cash to purchase a suitable outfit, with my father's reluctant consent for me to go. A day or two afterwards I received a letter from my uncle in Sunderland, saying that if I was determined to go he would find a ship for me under the command of one of his own friends; and so a few weeks afterwards I left London in midwinter on board a large East Indiaman called the *Santipore*, Captain L—, chartered by Her Majesty's Government as a troop-ship.

We had a very long and stormy passage on this my first voyage. I had no favour shown, and had to do my full share of work in all weathers. We had new sails, and there were no double topsails in those days. I well remember being up with others on the topsail yard for hours as we vainly

tried to handle a new sail frozen and stiff until it was almost as hard as a board, as we tried to reef it in some of the fierce gales that were blowing. If anything would have disgusted a lad with the sea, that voyage from London to Cork would certainly have done so. At Queenstown we took on board a regiment for Corfu, which was then a British protectorate. From Corfu we moved another regiment to Malta, and whilst in that part I saw a very grand sight. The Mediterranean fleet were all assembled there under Admiral Dundas, who had his flag on board the *Britannia*. They were waiting for orders from England, and whilst we were there the Admiral received instructions to take up a station at the Dardanelles, which was one of the first acts prior to the declaration of the Crimean war. I think there were no ironclads in those days, and I shall never forget the sight of such a large number of wooden walls of England as were gathered together in that port.

From Malta we shifted another regiment to Gibraltar, and then took on board the 26th Cameronians for North America. We had a good passage across, and landed all in safety at Quebec. On the day on which the troops landed there, an event took place which I believe altered the whole course of my life. We were breaking out the lower hold, to get some of the cargo which was to be landed with the troops. I was sent up from the 'tween decks to get a light, and whilst I was away the ladder had been taken away from the chocks of the lower deck, and stood upon one of the hatches. The consequence was that as soon as I stepped on the ladder it slipped away at the bottom, fell down the hold, and carried me with it. I fortunately fell across the combings of the 'tween-deck hatch, and so escaped death; but my leg was broken in two places, and I had to be taken ashore at once to the hospital. The vessel sailed without me, and poor Captain L—, I believe, was lost on his next voyage, with all hands. Had it not been for the accident at Quebec, I should in all probability have been amongst the number. I



lay for many weeks in the hospital, and I shall always remember with gratitude the care and attention that I received there. I still remember making an impression upon one of the young medical students which I am sure he remembered for a long time. I had a machine fixed to my leg to draw and keep the bones apart, and occasionally one of the surgeons had to tighten this, which, of course, gave me very great pain. One day, however, the doctors came, examined the leg, and found everything satisfactory. But after they left one of the students decided to practise a little on his own account, and took hold of the key to tighten the machine up another cog. This I did not approve of, as the doctors had not themselves ordered it, and I manifested my disapproval by shooting out the leg that was well full into the young man's stomach with such force that he was nearly sent on to a bed on the opposite side of the room. He turned quite pale, and passed on after the staff; and I noticed afterwards that he generally gave my bed a wide berth. He most certainly never again attempted to give me a taste of the rack!

I felt very sad indeed when I left the Marine Hospital at Quebec. I decided to go off into the backwoods if I could, and my first stay was at Montreal. As soon as I got there I went, of course, to the barracks, to see the men whom we had brought over. They were delighted to meet one of the *Santipore* lads again, and I was at once taken into the barracks, and kept there until I was strong enough to leave. No men could have been kinder than these men were to me. They shared their rations with me, and always managed to find a bed for me somewhere; and though my being there was quite against the rules, the officers inspecting at night seemed always to take care not to look in the direction where I was placed. It was just at this time that what are known as the Gavazzi Riots took place. Father Gavazzi had been preaching against Romanism in Montreal, and this had caused some rioting. The 26th had been called out to suppress the rioters, and on

one occasion the Mayor gave orders to fire. The men elevated their muskets as far as possible before firing, but some people on the top of the hill unfortunately were hit, and there was much bad feeling excited.

After leaving Montreal I managed to work my way up on to the Lakes, most of my time being spent on the deck of a cargo steamer called the *Reindeer*. For such an old tub as she was they could not have selected a more inappropriate name. I have a very distinct recollection of sleeping for many nights on a lot of nail kegs which formed part of the cargo on deck, and many times I had to get up to turn over a keg from which the nails were projecting. However, she carried us safely up the St. Lawrence, through the canals, over Lake Ontario and Lake Erie; and finally I landed at a port some distance from New London, in Ontario West. Finding my way to New London, I found some relatives there, by whom I was kindly received. Mr. D— and his wife, who was my mother's eldest sister, had lived there for some time, and through their influence I obtained a situation in a large general store. New London at that time was a very small place, and the district round was most of it still in a state of nature. The farmers, with whom our business was principally done, depended on the winter months for getting their supplies out to their farms, for there were few made roads in those days, and it was only when the snow had levelled up the ground that they were able to get their goods out. During my stay in this place I had one very narrow escape, and learned a lesson which I think I have never forgotten. In the store in which I was employed there was another young man called Edwin S—, who had been there much longer than I had. My education, however, was somewhat better than his, and I was rapidly advanced to occupy positions to which he thought himself fully entitled. In addition to this there were some other reasons which made him very angry with me. The consequence was that, like foolish young men, we were often



quarrelling. He was much stronger than I with his hands, but I had the advantage over him when it came to the use of hard words. One day I angered him so much that he came to strike me, and I, in a furious rage, seized hold of a large knife, and threatened to kill him. A few days after this we both went out shooting pigeons one morning before breakfast, and were in a lonely place about six miles from the town. We only had one gun, and he, after firing it, gave it to me to shoot. I had loaded the gun, and took aim at a flock of pigeons, but thinking they were out of range I dropped the piece across my elbow, and was putting the hammer down when it slipped from my finger and exploded the charge, which passed within a few inches of my companion's head. Had he been killed I cannot see how I could possibly have escaped. It was known that I had displaced him from his position, that we were constantly quarrelling, that I had threatened to kill him only a day or two before, and that a boyish love affair had increased the bad feeling between us. It would have been very difficult indeed to prove that he had been killed accidentally. We were both very much upset, and no more shooting was done by us that day.

I might have done very well indeed in this position. The gentleman I was with pleaded hard with me to stay with him, and promised that if I would remain twelve months he would set me up in business in the rising town of Goderich, on Lake Michigan; but I felt drawn strongly towards England, and finally decided to return. I could not possibly give any good reasons then for that wish, but I have done so many times since God sent me to the Mission field. I have often felt the truth of Bushnell's words, that every man's life is a plan of God, and I feel certain that He brought me back from Canada to carry out in me His Own loving purposes.

I had a rough experience going home. When I reached Quebec I found that men were very much needed, as there were many ships lying there whose crews had deserted them. I thought it better, therefore, to go home before the mast

rather than pay for my passage, and so shipped as ordinary seaman on board a barque called the *Olive*, of Gloucester. I selected this vessel because I thought she would make the longest passage of any vessel in port; and as the wages were good, the longer the passage the more money there would be to draw. However, she disappointed us all in that respect, for we had strong westerly gales nearly all the way across the Atlantic. We had a large deck cargo, which soon shifted in the heavy gales. The vessel shipped large quantities of water, and we did little or nothing but man the pumps the whole of every watch. The crew consisted of a set of the biggest ruffians I have ever sailed with. They were what are called "runners," and came from New York to Quebec simply to get ships to take them home. Mine was the only chest in the forecabin; all the rest had what is commonly known as "a stocking full" of clothes each. The captain was armed, and I think had to keep his cabin door secured every night. We were glad enough to know one evening that the captain expected to make the land early in the morning. It was my morning lookout watch, and when I was relieved at eight bells (4 a.m.) I told the man whose watch it was that the orders were to keep a sharp lookout for land. He appeared to be very sleepy. I did what I could to rouse him up, but he was always a useless, careless fellow. Going to my berth, I laid down without undressing, as I felt restless, and my mind was very busy thinking of the home and friends I had left some five years before. In about an hour I heard a great noise on deck, and all hands were called. I was one of the first out, and, to my amazement and horror, I found that we were almost ashore on the west side of Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel. Fortunately for us, there was a strong ebb tide, which took us out of danger, but no ship, I think, ever had a narrower escape. There is a good lighthouse on the island, but we had run almost against the inaccessible cliffs at the rate of about six knots an hour against a strong tide. In a few minutes longer we should have struck the rocks



and drifted off immediately down channel, and in all probability every one of the crew would have been drowned, or crushed to death by the floating logs. There were men on board who had lived a life-time at sea, but were so impressed that morning that, with a sailor's superstition, they refused all offers to ship again in any vessel bound for Bristol.

I was glad to get ashore, and as soon as we were paid off I started for my old home in the north. I could not, however, settle down in England, much to my father's sorrow. I had the choice of several situations, either in one of my father's offices, or in other establishments to which I could readily have gone through his influence; but I felt very unwilling to accept any of them. It was a source of wonder to many why I persisted in my wish to go abroad again, and I myself could at that time give no satisfactory reason for it. I can, however, do so now, as I firmly believe in the guiding hand of God. He had something for me to do, though I knew it not, and He was leading me by a hand which I did not see. I decided to go to New Zealand, I think simply because it was the farthest place from England. I would as readily have decided to go to Central Africa if there had been any chance of getting there. My father at last consented, making it a condition, however, that I should go as a passenger and not as a sailor.

I left London in the ship *Duke of Portland*, in March 1855. Amongst our passengers were Bishop Selwyn, of New Zealand, Rev. J. C. Patteson, afterwards Bishop of Melanesia, and Rev. — Carter, another of Bishop Selwyn's clergymen. I have none but pleasant memories of that voyage, though life on board an emigrant ship, especially if you were not a saloon passenger, was very different indeed to what it is in these days; but I was young then, and cared little for what are called the inconveniences of ship-life. During the voyage I joined a Bible Class conducted by Mr. Patteson, and though I cannot remember receiving any great spiritual benefit at that time, I have always been thankful to God that I was

brought into such close connection with one of the grandest and best men I have ever known. Bishop Selwyn conducted a class for learning Maori, which I also joined, and some of the lessons he gave us then in the proper pronunciation of native names I have never forgotten.

We landed in Auckland, and, after making inquiries, a young companion of mine and I started for Onehunga, where I was told my uncle and aunt, the Rev. T. and Mrs. Buddle, were living. I well remember one incident of that walk. When I was leaving England, my father begged of me to give up the bad habit of smoking, which I had contracted at sea. I said then that I was afraid to promise to do so on the voyage, but that I would do my best if spared to reach New Zealand. On our way I found that I had neglected to bring tobacco, etc. on shore. I purchased some as we were going up the street, and smoked as we went along. When about half-way to Onehunga I was going to smoke again, but just then I remembered the promise I had given my father, and I threw pipe and tobacco over the hedge, and decided at once to give it up.

I had a kind and loving welcome from all at the Parsonage, and it would be simply impossible for me to state all that I owe to the good man and his loving wife who took such an interest as they did in the friendless lad from the old home. I soon found a situation in town, but the home at Onehunga was always my home. Every holiday was spent there, and invariably I stayed there from Saturday till Monday each week. The influence of that Christian home caused me to feel that there was something wanting in my life, and, under God, I attribute my conversion to the good impressions received there. I was not preached to except by the powerful influence of Christly lives. Day by day I realised more and more that there were higher things than I had dreamed of, that the life I had lived was very far from that which I ought to live. I realised with a great sorrow the imperfections and sinfulness of my life. Every week I experienced the power of sermons which were never spoken or preached at me. In a short time I felt con-



strained to meet in class. My first class-leader was the late Rev. J. H. Fletcher, afterwards Principal of Newington College, Stanmore, but then Principal and Headmaster of Wesley College, Auckland. I have never forgotten some of our meetings in that old college. The class was composed principally of young men, and I have never met with any man better qualified to deal with young men than my old leader, whose memory I revere and love. It is a great pleasure now, in the latter years of my life, to think of those days in Auckland: and I often wonder how it is that the Church-life of to-day seems so different to what it was then. I well remember some years ago, in Sydney, hearing Mr. Fletcher say that he had never known such prayer-meetings and such week-night meetings as were held in the old High Street Church in Auckland. We young men never dreamed of staying away from the Monday prayer-meeting, and the large schoolroom at the back of the church was always well filled with an earnest and devout congregation. Often, too, the congregation at the week-night service was almost as large as that which gathered in the big church on the Sunday. The names of the Revs. R. B. Lyth, John Whiteley, J. H. Fletcher, Alexander Reid, and Isaac Harding are always associated in my mind with those services, which I so valued and loved.

I cannot call to mind any particular day on which I first realised the pardoning love of God. I had long experienced the throbbings of a new life, new thoughts, new desires, and a new purpose in life; and at some special services held in Auckland, when the Rev. J. Whiteley was in that circuit, I fully realised my acceptance through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and determined to live in accordance with His will, and to labour for His sake, that some might be the better for my life. I became associated with the Young Men's Christian Association, and afterwards became a local preacher in the Auckland circuit. In the year 1859 the Rev. Isaac Harding, who was at that time the superintendent of the Auckland circuit, spoke very earnestly to me about offering for the regular work of the ministry. Living as I was in the family of one of the old New Zealand

missionaries, and being associated continually with one of the grandest missionaries that God ever gave to our Fiji mission, the Rev. R. B. Lyth, I had often thought of devoting my life to mission work. Mr. Lyth had often expressed a strong desire that I should go to Fiji to engage in the work which he loved so well. When Mr. Harding spoke to me, I told him that I was willing to offer myself exclusively for foreign mission work, and that, if accepted, my desire was to go to Fiji.

I cannot give the account of the quarterly meeting at which I was recommended as a candidate better than by telling the story as told by Mr. Harding, at a Sydney conference many years afterwards, when I had returned from the New Britain mission. He said at that meeting: "Mr. President, I claim the privilege of saying a few words on this occasion" (the annual missionary meeting), "because I think that I have done something for mission-work in my lifetime. I well remember that many years ago I had a great fight with a quarterly meeting in another colony. My work, sir, was to convince that quarterly meeting that my young friend, sitting over in the corner there" (pointing to me) "was fit to be a missionary. They said he was not: I said he was; and so we discussed the point. I only succeeded in obtaining the recommendation of that quarterly meeting by a very small majority. Mr. President, do you know what was the objection which they persistently urged against my nomination? They had no objection against his character, or against his ability as a preacher; but I will give you, in their own words, the objection which they persistently urged. They said: 'Mr. Harding, he is a good young man, but he is such a meek, mild, young lady-like person that we are sure he has no spirit whatever that would make a missionary. He is utterly devoid, sir, of any self-assertion, and we, therefore, do not think that he is fit for the mission-work.'" I need not say that when Father Harding gave that speech there was some laughter in old York Street Church; but I myself have always thought that the members of the Auckland quarterly meeting were very good judges of character.



I was accepted at the conference of 1860, being first appointed to Fiji, as I wished ; but this was changed during the conference to Samoa, as another missionary had arrived from England, and it was thought better that he should go on by the first vessel, whilst I could wait until the second voyage in the end of the year.

As soon as I received notice in Auckland of my appointment I began to make preparations for my work. One of the most important was that of securing a suitable helpmeet in the great work to which I was appointed. This necessitated a visit to the mission-station at Waingaroa, where the young lady was living whom I had long thought to be best qualified for that position. There were no railways or coaches in that part of New Zealand in those days, and so I had to make a long journey of five or six days along the west coast before I arrived at my destination. I was naturally somewhat anxious to get there, and on the last day I pushed ahead as long as I could, and arrived on the shores of Waingaroa harbour some time after sunset. There was no boat available, and the distance was certainly too far for any one to attempt to swim ; and so I had to camp down on the sandy beach almost in sight of the mission-station. My poor pony shared with his rider the misery of nothing to eat. The mosquitoes, however, evidently considered that there was a good feed for them, and in order to disappoint them I had to dig with my hands a deep hole in the sand, put my saddle in it, and then lie down myself and cover every part of my body except my head with sand, whilst the poor horse stood patiently by trying to eat the tough bush which grew on the beach. However, the longest night passes, and at early dawn I managed to get a native canoe, which landed me at the mission-station. Here I was fortunate enough to succeed in the important matter for which the journey was made, and I then prepared to return to Auckland, intending to come back in a few weeks to be married. Just, however, as I was strating, a native messenger came from the Rev. T. Buddle, the Chairman of the District, informing

me of the date on which I was to arrive in Sydney, which was much earlier than we had expected. It was very clear that there was no time to return to Auckland, and so preparations had to be made for our marriage at once.

I could give, I think, an interesting account of the troubles I had to get a licence from a magistrate living in a wild, out-of-the-way place in the bush, and in inducing a gentleman, who was also intending to be married, to let me have the ring which he had provided for his own expected wife, but this is not necessary. Let it suffice to say that on August 2, 1860, I was married to Miss S. L. Wallis, the second daughter of the veteran missionary, the Rev. James Wallis, of Waingaroa. In this instance the statement that, "Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord," received a good illustration.

Our honeymoon was as different from the ordinary one in these days, in some respects, as it is possible to imagine. We had to swim two horses across the Waingaroa harbour the evening before we started. Then on the next morning we all crossed in canoes. The horses were saddled, and in a short time my dear wife's friends said good-bye to her for many long years, and we, accompanied and blessed by many prayers, began our long overland journey to Auckland. Our party consisted of a young brother of my wife and two Maori lads. My wife rode one horse, and the other one carried a large number of bundles, parcels, and boxes, which were all thought to be absolutely necessary, but many of which I often fervently wished had been sunk in the harbour before we started.

I sometimes think I could write a book about that journey. We travelled over a small narrow bush track, which led us along the sea coast, with long divergences round the head of some immense swamp ; and then again through some portions of dense bush, along which some large mobs of cattle had been driven a few days previously. In some parts of this vile road the mud was almost up to our knees, especially where some great root crossed the track. These roots were often completely hidden from us by the mud, and only became



apparent as we tripped or fell over them, and "fetched up" on our hands and knees in a deep pool of liquid mud. We had to camp out to leeward of a flax bush, or in some dirty native house, each of the six nights we took on the journey; and I need hardly say that the flax bush was by far the cleaner and more comfortable place. When we reached Waikato Heads I got a canoe, and proceeded to swim one of the horses across this wide deep-sea harbour. All went well until we got about half way across, when the brute refused to swim another stroke. I had her head up on the canoe, and I let her go once or twice, just that she might experience the sensation of drowning; but she had evidently made up her mind to drown rather than to swim. So I had to haul her head on board again, and the natives who were pulling the canoe had to drag her all the rest of the way. She was a valuable mare, worth in those days about £100, but during that long pull I often wished that I was a rich man, and could have let her go, for she was only shamming after all. When at last I saw the bottom, I did let her go, and she sank very quietly until her feet touched the bottom, when she decided to live a little longer, and so swam to the beach, from which she quietly regarded us with great satisfaction. I returned to the other side in the canoe, but we decided not to risk the other horse. So when we had all crossed the harbour we packed the impedimenta on the one horse, and all walked the rest of the way.

Our last night out on the west coast was by far the worst, as a very furious gale, accompanied with heavy, driving rain, blew down our little shelter tent, and drenched us most pitilessly, long before daylight. But space will not permit my telling the whole story of the memorable journey. It may have been an appropriate introduction to the life my wife and I were to live, but it was certainly not a pleasant picnic, when considered from one side only. Going and returning, however, it was the best journey I have ever made, and, with the exception of the time I spent in the canoe at Waikato Heads, I was happy all the time. We received great kindness from the Maoris along the way, and,

in fact, the only lack of hospitality we experienced was when we took shelter in an old deserted Maori whare, and were at once attacked by thousands of fleas, that absolutely compelled us to stand shivering on the hill top, turning our backs to the pitiless driving rain, against which it was not possible to proceed. However, we got home at last, and were received most lovingly at Onehunga by those who, ever since my arrival at New Zealand, had been to me, not uncle, aunt, and cousins, but father, mother, sisters, and brothers, and who now rejoiced greatly that the sailor lad whom they had received so kindly some years ago had been called to the work in which their own life had been lived, and that he was being accompanied to his life-work by the daughter of one of their oldest friends and fellow-labourers.

We left Auckland in the steamer *Prince Alfred*, on Tuesday, September 4, 1860, and had a quick (for those days) though stormy run to Sydney of five days and five hours. I had been reading the beautiful memoir of Richard Williams, one of the missionary heroes of Captain Allan Gardiner's unfortunate mission to Tierra del Fuego, and had laid the book on one of the skylights. I saw a gentleman, Captain Cellum, take it up, and read a little, and then begin to speak about it to his wife. On my offering to lend him the book, he told me that he was chief officer of the *Ocean Queen*, the vessel which conveyed the party to Tierra del Fuego. He gave us a very interesting account of the mission band, and was specially loud in his praise of Dr. Williams. It will be remembered by those who have read the pathetic story of the death from starvation of every member of the party, how they went to those inhospitable regions with an utterly inadequate supply of provisions, depending for their subsistence on fish which they were not able to catch, and on birds which they had no ammunition to shoot. Captain Cellum asked me if there was any mention in the book of the loss of their powder, and was much distressed when I told him how fatal that loss had proved. He told me that when the vessel arrived at San Francisco he was breaking out stores in



one of the stern lockers, and to his surprise and dismay he discovered the powder which ought to have been sent ashore at Tierra del Fuego. I have always regarded the memoir of Richard Williams as one of the best books I have ever read, and have wondered how we, as Methodists, know so little of one of the holiest and most devoted missionaries that ever went to preach to the heathen. Dr. Williams was a medical man, who had established a most lucrative practice in England. He was local preacher and class-leader, and though he joined the Mission which was organised by a member of the Church of England, he remained an earnest and devoted member of our Church to the time of his death. His memoir ought to be in every Sunday School library.

We were kindly received in Sydney, and were much encouraged when we heard ourselves often commended to God in the prayers of our many kind friends. I was ordained by Revs. J. Eggleston (president), S. Rabone, S. Ironside, and T. Adams, in the York Street Church, on Wednesday, September 19; and on the following Wednesday, September 26, we sailed in the *John Wesley* for our appointment, and arrived in Tonga on October 18. The brethren there told me that they had decided to keep us in the Friendly Islands, instead of going to Samoa, and they wished me to consent to this arrangement. I told them, however, that I could do nothing to interfere with my Conference appointment, and that if they thought that a change should be made, the chairman himself must take the responsibility of making it. The end of the matter was that we went on to our own appointment, and arrived at Samoa on October 30.

It may, I think, be interesting in these days of steam communication to realise how different the conditions were in those early days. The captain of the *John Wesley* would not approach the Samoa Islands within five or six miles, and it took several hours' hard pulling in the boats after the vessel had been sighted before any one could get on board. In our case Mr. Dyson did not reach the vessel until nearly dark, and then we and all our

goods and chattels were put into the boats far out at sea. We did not reach the shore until about three o'clock in the morning, after the crew had been pulling nearly all night in heavily laden boats and having had to come through a passage which was very seldom smooth, and often a very dangerous one. As soon as we were clear of the ship, the vessel was on her way back to Tonga.