

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MATTHEW BURNETT in VICTORIA

to 1871

There were many itinerant evangelists working in Australia during the second half of the Nineteenth Century. The second of these was Matthew Burnett, who arrived in Victoria late in 1863. He seemed to have two aims. One was to win converts to Christ. The other was to promote the cause of the temperance movement. The misuse of alcoholic drinks was a major social problem in Australia. Burnett's crusade on this issue was part of his overall social concern, which was a natural part of the gospel that he preached. Although his efforts were based upon the churches, which increasingly tended to be "middle class", he used various techniques in trying to reach the "lower classes", and many of his converts came from that part of society.

The campaigns of both Burnett, and "California" Taylor, benefited from the raised spiritual qualities flowing from the recent revival. Their campaigns came in the afterglow of the revival. But the campaigns also served to give some focus to the spiritual energies and desires of the people, and so provided a high point in the story of the 1859 revival in this part of the world.

Matthew Burnett was born in Yorkshire in 1839. As he approached manhood, he was wild and reckless. Some details about Matthew's conversion are given in a memorial biographical statement about Mrs Burnett which was published in the "Wesleyan Chronicle" in 1871.

11. Matthew Burnett in Victoria to 1871

Before their marriage, Sarah M. Gibson was a person who had learned some of the deeper lessons of prayer and faith. In her Christian work amongst "the poor and fallen", she had met Matthew, who was five years younger than herself. "A reckless youth, hastening to early ruin, engaged her compassionate concern. She sought to save him.... For twelve months she pleaded without ceasing for this, until, being in an agony, she prayed more earnestly, and in the climax of her mighty intercession, cried, 'Lord, let me die rather than his soul be lost.'"

The Lord "gave her a distinct assurance that he had heard her concerning this thing also, and that this soul too" should be part of her crown in the day of the Lord Jesus. At the same time, "the sin-convincing Spirit arrested the youthful profligate, and wrought strangely on his heart." That very evening he sought God's mercy, "stricken and penitent, with strong crying and tears, at the altar of prayer." (1.)

Early Preaching

In due course, Matthew and Sarah were married, and migrated to Australia in 1863. They lived in the Melbourne suburb of Prahran, and Matthew started being invited to preach in the Methodist churches of the district. The first reference to his preaching to appear in the "Wesleyan Record" is early in 1864,

when Burnett had preached at the Drysdale Church Sunday School anniversary meetings, on December 20, 1863.

"Mr Burnett first visited this circuit in October last, and preached in Drysdale Church every evening for three weeks, besides holding open-air services almost every afternoon in other parts of the circuit. The church was crowded to excess every evening, especially during the last week, and very many souls were, we believe, truly converted to God. After Mr. Burnett's departure revival services were carried on at Portarlington, where the Holy Spirit was poured out in a still more remarkable manner. In spite of wet and stormy nights, bad roads, and no moon, numbers from all parts of the country flocked to hear, and every night at the close of the sermon many persons, chiefly adults, came forward at once to the penitent form.

A remarkable case occurred during this revival:- a young lady, twenty years of age, had been completely dumb for two years. The best medical skill was obtained, but with no benefit. She was obliged to learn the dumb alphabet, and communicate her thoughts in writing. One evening she came forward to seek the mercy of the Lord, and at the penitent form her voice was restored\; she sang and praised God. She wrote to her doctor in Geelong a day or two after to tell him that Jesus, the Great Physician, had healed her both in body and soul. To God be all the glory!" (2.)

After Christmas, Burnett was reported preaching at the Oakleigh Sunday School anniversary services, on December 28th, 1863, and at the Moorabbin Church Anniversary, on 3rd January, in the Brighton Circuit. (3.) On March 3rd, he preached at the Church Anniversary at the Frankston church. (4.)

April 10 saw Burnett preaching at the Church Anniversary services at Charles Street church in the Melbourne Fourth Circuit. "The Rev. Mr. Standing occupied the pulpit in the morning, and Mr. Burnett afternoon and evening. The church was crowded to excess, and a very gracious influence was felt. At the prayer-meeting many were in deep distress of mind, and several were enabled to believe to the saving of their souls." (5.) Burnett was also one of the speakers at the tea-meeting on the Monday. This circuit also included the Richmond church.

At Clarksdale, in the Scarsdale Circuit, "On the 24th of April our church in this new and rising township was opened by Mr M. Burnett, from Prahran, preaching morning and evening. On the following Sabbath he preached again, in continuation of the opening services. The tea-meeting was held on May the 2nd.

The anniversary sermons of (Smythesdale) were preached on Sunday, May the 15th, by the Rev. S. Knight and Mr. Burnett. At Clarksdale and Smythesdale Mr. Burnett has been, and in the latter place still is carrying on revival services with the most gratifying results." (6.)

Burnett was still at work in the Scarsdale Circuit several months later. Mid-September he was preaching at the Anniversary services at Scarsdale church, and at Happy Valley. The report from this circuit finishes by saying, "Mr. Burnett has been labouring in this circuit during the last few months, and, as the result, a great number have been added to the Lord and to the church." (7.)

Matthew developed his own theory of practical evangelism. Hilliard said that "In Melbourne Burnett had discovered that the poor of a city would attend outdoor meetings in great numbers if they were also entertained." (8.) In pursuit of this technique, Burnett developed a system of having torch-light processions, with banners and flaming torches, brass bands and singers. Open air meetings and processions led people to more traditional evangelist meetings, often held in secular halls. He emphasised the standard evangelistic message, and also heavily emphasised a call to total abstinence, and signing the pledge. This pattern of activity all developed before the entry of the Salvation Army, whose activities were often very similar.

Hilliard says, "The people loved it. Many conservative churchmen disliked Burnett's flamboyant methods, but they were easily persuaded that Burnett was

justified because he got results - thousands of pledges, hundreds of reported conversions." (9.) He often worked in league with the local Methodists, but, civic leaders backed him even more than church leaders, because they appreciated the value for the local society of the transformation of drunkards, which happened often enough as a result of Burnett's work.

Blamires and Smith described him as "a thin, spare man of bilious temperament". He was unwearied in the Lord's work. "There were extravagancies (sic) in his personal actions\; exaggerations, apparently unwitting, in his assertions and published statements of success\; a laudation and bespattering with praise of all and sundry, of big men and little men, who helped him in his labour, that did not commend themselves to persons of more sober thoughts and ways\; but despite these drawbacks, he was the agent of the reform of hundreds of drunkards, and the conversion of a number of degraded sinners\; and we, therefore, honour the man and are glad for his mission. Brighton, Scarsdale, Clunes, Drysdale, Ballarat, and other Circuits, were in quick succession the scenes of his unique labours\; and later on he was employed in the Metropolitan Circuits, as, indeed, in most of the land. Matthew Burnett was a welding of egotism and enthusiasm, employed as a Protestant devotee, and as a self-constituted dervish in the cause of religion. He was a forerunner of the Salvation Army, and introduced some of their tactics and strategy: flaming placards, monster meetings, torchlight processions, sensational methods, stirring, noisy exercises, having often more of sound than of sense, more of shouting than of grace. However, he indulged in no irreverent slang, but gave sound instruction, and now and again a powerful gospel sermon. These means together brought about like results with the Salvation Army, the bringing of all sorts of fish into the Gospel net. His movement was an erratic, comet-like orbit in our planetary system, going in and out among the regular and steady courses pursued by Circuit Ministers, and after years of labour he passed to other colonies." (10.)

Part of Burnett's strength was the intercessions of his wife. She did not have good health, and stayed in Melbourne with her family, spending much time in prayer, following her husband with her intercession. She also came into a number of deeper experiences of the holiness of God, and of coming to know for herself the experience of "perfect love". (11.)

Clunes Circuit, 1866

Another example of Burnett's work appears in a report from the Clunes Circuit. "Mr. Matthew Burnett being about to leave this circuit, after four months of incessant and successful labour, preached his farewell sermons on Sunday, the 27th May, 1866. Many came from every part of the circuit, and numbers from other circuits. The church was filled in every part both morning and evening, and a large number had to go away, not being able to get inside. In the afternoon, a 'love-feast' was held, after which the minister of the circuit administered the Lord's Supper to over 173 persons. This was a season of special blessing.

On Monday, the 28th May, a valedictory tea-meeting to Mr. Burnett was held - the Superintendent of the Circuit presided - and nearly all the local preachers and class leaders in the circuit were on the platform. The meeting was addressed by nearly all the office-bearers in the circuit, who bore testimony to Mr. Burnett's zeal and usefulness. An address was read to Mr. Burnett, by Mr. William Price, expressive of his zeal, purity of life, usefulness, and firm attachment to our doctrines and discipline, after which a handsome purse containing one hundred sovereigns was presented to him. Mr. Burnett appropriately and feelingly replied. The meeting was one of great interest and profit." (12.)

Creswick Circuit, 1866

"We have been favoured with the labours of Mr. Matthew Burnett, who came from Clunes to the Creswick Circuit on the 2nd of June, and remained with us up to Sept. 17th. He commenced his labours amongst us in a depressed state of mind, chiefly caused by the misrepresentations of Creswick Methodism and the Methodists of Creswick, which had been volunteered to him by people who had not learned to speak evil of no man. At the reception meeting on June 4th, Mr. Burnett had an opportunity of correcting his thoughts and impressions of Methodism in Creswick and its environs\; and a still better opportunity was afforded him by visiting the several classes, in which he found evidences of spiritual progress, exceeding, as he several times said, anything he had met with either in England or in this colony. Thus reassured, and knowing his position, Mr. Burnett went on with his six o'clock a.m. and twelve a.m. prayer meetings, five o'clock meetings for enquirers, and half-past six public meetings until Sept. 17th without cessation. On Saturday, June 30th, Mr Burnett held his first working men's meeting. These meetings have been a growing success.

The services with which Mr. Burnett commenced his labours were sufficient to try - if not to over-try - the strength of any ordinary man, yet during the last weeks of his stay he largely increased them by holding two, and often four services per day in the country places. In this way the gracious soul-saving influences of his labours were brought to tell on Newlyn, Kingston, Dean, Rocky Lead, and other places. Twenty or more miles of riding were thus added to his labours during many days. It could not be said of any one of these special services that it was indifferently attended, excepting the latter noon-day prayer-meetings\; and mostly the churches, or other places in which they were held, were crowded - often to excess.

It is not an easy thing to estimate the result of such labours\; indeed, it is impossible to estimate them\; some of them, however, may be enumerated. The quickening of believers, not a few of whom profess to have obtained the blessing of sanctification\; the salvation of scores, if not of hundreds of souls. More than 200 are on trial for church-membership in the Creswick circuit. Other circuits, and other churches also, have shared in the good done. The result of Mr. Burnett's labours in the noble cause of Temperance better allow of being put in figures. The working-men's meetings are held for the purpose of advocating teetotal views. These were crowded, and their interest well-sustained. At these meetings more than 700 people have signed the pledge. Some of these were miserable drunkards. Since they took the pledge they have become members of the church and are walking worthily. God bless them and save them ever!

Sept. 17th, Monday, was a very wet, cold, stormy day. We have had many wet days and nights during Mr. Burnett's stay, but they have not affected the gatherings materially. It was so on this day, in spite of cold, rain, hail and snow. Five hundred people came to Mr. Burnett's farewell tea-meeting. The church was crowded in every part at the public meeting, over which the superintendent of the circuit presided. The addresses of Messrs Price, Richardson, Hobbs, Cooper, Gardiner, Jebb, and others were good and well listened to. During the meeting the chairman placed a check for 150 pounds in the hands of Mr. Burnett, the amount having been cheerfully subscribed as a testimonial and monetary acknowledgement of Mr. Burnett's valuable services. Mr. Burnett's reply was manly, yet tender and increased the esteem in which he is held by his many friends in the Creswick circuit." (13.)

Four years later, Burnett returned to the Creswick Circuit, and met some of his old friends. A first meeting with members of one of Burnett's cell groups is described in a letter to the editor. The writer did not really want

to go, because he was afraid of emotionalism. But he went, mainly out of courtesy toward the lady who pressed the invitation upon him. It was held in a Wesleyan Church vestry. Tables of food had been laid out by the wives of the minister, and the Mayor. The Mayor himself, who was a Wesleyan, was also present, and other gentlemen who sympathised with Burnett's work.

"I need scarcely mention that Mr. Burnett himself was present, happy and at home with his band of about a score of men and women - reformed drunkards. The proceedings were commenced by singing grace, and a most social, chatty, enjoyable tea followed. To an onlooker like myself (who naturally tended to be critical) the picture before me was a happy one. The tea over, the real business commenced in earnest. A stirring melody was sung, in which all joined heartily\; and appropriate prayer was offered by Mr. Burnett, after which he addressed the company affectionately and earnestly, stated his pleasure at meeting them again after four years' absence, of his sympathy for them all, especially with those who had fallen, and his prayer was that they might be kept until glory should crown their struggles here. The Mayor followed with a short, appropriate address\; hymn followed hymn, intervalled by so many sad experiences, happily past...

On many of the countenances were still visible the traces of the years of guilt and shame they had passed through.... There were others whose happy beaming faces told of years of sobriety, of contentment, and close kinship to the Redeemer. One in particular I noticed, who previous to Mr. Burnett's first visit, four years ago. I had known as perhaps the most inveterate drinker in the district. I have known many a victim of the cup, but this one disgraced them all. Chased by a burning thirst from bar to bar, often in a state of delirium, a nuisance to the town, a pest to society\; his home a scene of unqualified misery, his wife and children subjected to brutal treatment.....\; yet there he stood before me, modest, trembling, yet confident, after more than four years' pilgrimage, clothed and in his right mind, with his home renovated, his wife and children gladdened and made happy, a good citizen, an active working Christian, with the tears streaming over a happy face, rejoicing that he had ever heard of Mr. Burnett, had ever listened to his impassioned offers of a Father's mercy, of a Saviour's love. Next to his Saviour, he said, he owed his deliverance from the vices which poisoned his being to his friend Mr. Burnett." The assembled group included others whose conversion had resulted in strong and steady Christian witness. There were others who had confessed Christ, but who had fallen back, and who were there seeking renewed help. These others "less confident, more humbled, who impressed one as feeling they were not worthy to be present, whose tail of their own temptations and falls, their struggles against the besetting sin, and their utter despairing, told in broken accents, wrung out the sympathy of all present. Some had run well for a year, others two, and one more than three years after Mr. Burnett's leaving. The poor creatures had had another taste of the evil, and feeling degraded and plunged deeper and deeper into the trap set for them\; but here they were again, sad yet rejoicing, happy, but subdued, (knowing) they had grieved their Lord, brought disgrace upon the Church, and sorrow to the hearts of those who watched over them...." Yet they were there, returning to God, and to their Christian friends. (14.)

Ballarat, 1867

In those days, the name of this centre of gold mining was also often spelled "Ballaarat."

If Matthew Burnett was not tired out after his strenuous efforts in Creswick, almost immediately he began working in the Ballarat Circuit. Here, he worked first in some of the smaller, outlying churches, before he began working

in the central church. By February, 17th, 1867, he had started work in the Black Lead congregation, for one week only.

"The church was crowded at each of the three services on the Sabbath, as well as every night during the week over which his labours extended in that place, all classes attended to hear the word, and the result was most gratifying, many believers receiving the blessing of 'purity', and not a few gathered in from the world."

After Black Lead came evening services for a week with the congregation called Scotchman's, and with services at Napoleon during the afternoon. "Crowds flocked from all around to hear the good man, scores remaining outside who could not get admittance. After two or three services in this place 'the mighty power of God' came down upon the people, and numbers were obliged to cry aloud for mercy. The scene on his last night here was one never to be forgotten; for no sooner had he finished his sermon, and given the invitation for sinners to come up, than some sixteen or seventeen rose from their seats and forced their way through the dense congregation towards the communion rails, where Mr. Burnett, the members of the church, and other friends from a distance, laboured hard, until after twelve o'clock, pointing sinners to the 'Lamb of God'; during the week about forty found peace 'by believing in Jesus,' and most of the members were 'built up in their most holy faith.'" (15.)

Next he worked at Durham, Garibaldi and Hardie's Hill. "His labours in this neighbourhood were almost as successful as at Scotchman's, and it is believed that about one hundred were added to the church" in the three weeks in which he toured through these places.

After this, he worked in the central Ballarat area solidly until almost the end of the year.

"On Monday, 2nd (December), a valedictory soiree was given in the large hall of the Mechanics' Institute, Ballaarat, to Mr. Matthew Burnett, who has been labouring in the circuit from October, 1866, until the middle of November of this year (six months of which were spent principally in Lydiard-street and Barkly-street, and one month at the Charlie Napier Theatre.) The Rev. W. L. Binks presided over the public meeting, and in his opening address strongly eulogised Mr. Burnett for his devoted labours in Ballaarat and elsewhere; and the densely-crowded assemblage was addressed in a similar strain by David Blair Esq., the Hon. W. M. K. Vale, and Messrs Jones and Burt, M.L.A.'s.

Mr. Burnett's eighteen meetings for females, the average attendance at which had been about 700, and his thirty-eight working men's meetings, have been productive of incalculable good to the town and district. It is stated that 3600 persons signed the pledge in connection with the females' meetings, and about 3000 in connection with the working men's meetings, besides hundreds more who have signed in the country districts.

Mr. Burnett's labours in the church have been signally blessed and owned by the Great Head of the church; but it is to be regretted that his unwearied exertions and excessive toil have compelled him for a season to retire into private life, having nearly lost his voice." (16.)

Geelong, 1868

This exhaustion did not stop Burnett for very long. By mid-February he had started a long stint in the Geelong circuit. Again, he followed the plan of conducting shorter missions in the smaller and outlying churches, followed by work in the central parts of the city.

"Mr. Matthew Burnett who had been invited by the quarterly meeting to labour in this circuit, arrived on the 22nd of February, and entered upon his duties by preaching twice on the following day in the Chilwell Church. The special services thus commenced were carried on every day for six weeks; and

they became increasingly attractive, as was evidenced by the crowds which came night after night to join in the worship. At a leader's meeting, held after Mr. Burnett's departure, it was found that 135 persons had been added to the fellowship of the church in Chilwell, while about thirty more had joined in other parts of the circuit.

From Chilwell Mr. Burnett went to Highton, where he laboured a fortnight in connection with the opening of the new church\; the people of this neighbourhood were prepared for his visit, and great good was accomplished.

Mr. Burnett, accompanied by the Rev. E. S. Bickford, now spent a fortnight at Mount Duneed and Freshwater Creek. Every evening the little churches were thronged, and a spirit of inquiry and anxiety pervaded the district for miles\; when these services were brought to a close upwards of one hundred persons came forward, and joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

In connection with this visit to Mount Duneed, and Freshwater Creek, afternoon services were held at Connewarre, German Town, Wauru Ponds, Jan Juc and Stone Chimney. The churches at these places were well filled each afternoon, and many sought and found mercy.

The next place visited by Mr. Burnett, was Ceres, where he laboured for a fortnight in the Temperance Hall, and conducted afternoon services at Devon church, Wauru Ponds, and Mount Moriac. From Ceres Mr. Burnett went to East Geelong., where he spent almost a fortnight with similar success\; conducting afternoon services at Kensington, Moolap and Hampstead. He is now labouring at Murgheboluc\; when he will visit Jan Juc and Duck Ponds, after which Mr. Burnett will visit Geelong, and conduct a series of services at Newtown, Ashby and Yarra-street." (17.)

Mention is then made that Burnett had been well assisted by the four circuit ministers. At Ceres, he was assisted by a Presbyterian minister, a Primitive Methodist minister, and a Bible Christian minister. Many local lay leaders gave much time in supporting these meetings, and helping in making them successful. "In nearly every place visited by Mr. Burnett, they have carried on the services for two or three weeks after his departure.... though hundreds have been awakened by his special instrumentality\; yet all have not joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Many belonged to other denominations: the names of these, as far as possible, have been obtained and made known by the superintendent of the circuit to the various ministers to whose pastoral supervision they belong." (18.)

On 12th July, Burnett again visited Chilwell, and remained there for two weeks. By that time, the size of the congregation at Chilwell had increased to such an extent that the church had to be enlarged in order to seat 200 extra people. The extension was expected to be completed by November. Burnett loved being involved in opening new or extended church buildings. Then he went to Ashby, where he was able to take part in opening an extension to the church building. This church "was filled each evening to overflowing, the word was frequently proclaimed with power, and, in consequence, many have been added to the church." (19.)

Next he went to Newtown. The services in this area included a number of great outdoor meetings.

In this way, many were reached who never went to church. The report concluded:- "Mr. Burnett has been assisted throughout by the ministers and office-bearers of the circuit. One and all have done their utmost to help forward the good work. It is most gratifying to find that the whole of this neighbourhood is being visited with the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit. Some few weeks ago a revival broke out at Connewarre, under one of our local preachers, Mr. John Minns. This brother, feeling that God was about to visit this neighbourhood, laboured there every evening for three weeks, when it was

found that seventy souls had been gathered into the fold of Christ. To God be all the glory!" (20.)

During this mission to Geelong, Burnett also preached for the Bible Christians several times. The Bible Christian minister, the Rev. J. Teague, said, "Some of the most improbable persons to be influenced by these awakenings of the Spirit..(so far as human judgment would expect)...have been brought to obey the power of God unto their salvation, and are now bearing public testimony for Christ." In due course, the Bible Christians reported an increase of about eighty, in that circuit. (21.)

Statistics on Drunkenness in Victoria

To those who might think that Temperance was a Methodist fad, peculiar to the Victorian era, and there was really no great problem in it, statistics for drunkenness in Victoria were published in the August "Wesleyan Chronicle", and in viewing them, we must remember that the colony of Victoria was only founded during the 1830s, by a very small number of people originally.

A Select Committee led by Sir Richard Mayne looked into the question of the sale of liquor on Sundays. The total number of persons charged with being drunk in the metropolitan police district between January 1831 and December 1840 was 235,607. Of this, 84,538 were females. Between 1858 and 1867 inclusive, the total number charged with being drunk, or with being drunk and disorderly was 101,189 males and 83,002 females (total 184,191.) This showed (the report said) a marked decrease in the number of males charged with being drunk, while, considering the increase in general population, the number amongst females was increasing. The metropolitan police district boasted 6549 public houses, and 4421 beer-shops, of which 59 were known to be disorderly houses. (22.)

Belfast Circuit, 1869

In July, 1869, Burnett was preaching in the various centres in this circuit. "We have been favoured with a very gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit in answer to the prayers of God's people, and in conjunction with the visit of Mr. Burnett. At Koroit a very large number of persons have been turned to God, and many of God's people have been quickened by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The societies at Kirkstall and Hawkesdale (adjacent settlements) have also been stirred up and increased. In the circuit town, some who had little or nothing else than the name of religion, have been brought to Jesus, and many of the careless and rebellious have been saved. We cannot number the new converts at present, but they are more than the most sanguine believer in the church here had thought of, and the blessed work is going on. The society at Rosebrook, three miles off, shares the blessing. The distinctive features of the present revival are answers to prayer for individuals, and the advantage of giving in the addresses prominence to the plan and to the sufficiency of salvation. An opening service was held in Belfast last Sabbath afternoon, at which there were about 1300 serious listeners. To God be all the praise! (23.)

Burnett continued working in this circuit until nearly the end of the year. His farewell meeting was held on Monday, December 20, and he was presented with a framed portrait of himself, painted by a local artist. The local minister, the Rev. J. W. Crisp, had worked with Burnett, and backed him up solidly, in both evangelism and social concern, and had stood with him "in all trials, and against all opposition."

No sooner had he returned home, however, with the hope of regaining his strength after a long period of strenuous activity, than he was approached by members of the Frankston church, where he was greeted enthusiastically by many

friends and converts from the past. But this does not seem to have led to any lengthy campaigning, because by early February he was preaching in various centres of the Maryborough Circuit, and enjoying his customary success. (24.)

By mid-1870, he was again in the Creswick Circuit, as we saw in the "letter to the editor", which was referred to previously.

Mrs Burnett's Death, 1870

On 25th October, 1870, Mrs Burnett died. Her final illness lasted for a short period, following the birth of a baby. Her Christian witness during her last illness made a strong impact on those who knew her. While she seems never to have been present in her husband's sphere of work, she had backed him up steadily with her prayers. Her efforts in this regard, and the saintliness of her character, impressed many of Matthew Burnett's friends, so much so that a special "In Memoriam" poem by W. Stitt Jenkins was published in the "Wesleyan Advocate", appreciating the formative influence she had on her husband, and the many periods she had spent at home with the children, but without her husband, as he had been in various locations involved in his evangelistic work for months on end. (25.)

A lengthy biographical statement about Mrs Burnett appeared some months later. (26.) (See chapter 19 following.)

Sandhurst Circuit, 1871

The early part of 1871 saw Burnett working hard in the country areas around Bendigo, with his usual energy and enthusiasm, and with some interesting results. The people, however, were well aware of the family difficulties under which Burnett laboured, following his wife's death.

"California Hill. - The church at this place has been enlarged, by an addition measuring forty feet by twenty-two feet, with vestry and orchestra at the back, at a cost of 900 pounds. The contractors for building, Messrs. Johns, have performed their work to the entire satisfaction of the committee, as also did Mr. Hall, who made the seats. The day of re-opening was Sunday, May 7, when the Rev. Joseph Dare preached morning and evening, and Mr. Burnett in the afternoon. The weather was unfavourable, but the church was well filled, especially so in the evening. The ladies made excellent provision on the Monday, and sustained the credit of their tea-meetings. The Rev. W. P. Wells occupied the chair at the public meeting, and the speeches by Revs. Messrs. J. Dare, D. O'Donnell and C. P. Thomas, were of a first-class character, as also were those given by Mr. Fiselle and Mr. J. Jeffrey. Mr. Michael Thomas read the report\; the proceeds were a little over one hundred pounds. Votes of thanks to the ladies who gave the trays, to the choir, who rendered excellent music, and to others, were heartily accorded by the meeting." (27.) .

"Sandhurst Circuit. - Farewell Meeting, Sandhurst. - A circuit meeting was held at Forest-street, on the 15th May, as a mark of respect to Mr. Matthew Burnett, and to bid him farewell on his departure from the circuit. He has been labouring for some months in Sandhurst and the neighbourhood with varied but encouraging success, and many through his earnest and indefatigable efforts, in conjunction with those of resident labourers, have been saved from degrading vices, and led to engage in the services of the Lord Jesus. Many friends from different places in the circuit came to the tea, which was provided in the school-room, and at the subsequent assembly in the church a full and profitable meeting was held.

While ascribing the praises to God, very cordial mention was made by several speakers of Mr. Burnett's untiring energy, enterprising zeal, and useful gifts, which had been a means of blessing to many precious souls. The country places were strongly represented, and there perhaps Mr. Burnett's usefulness is more apparent, and the fruits of his labour promise to be more permanent than in other parts.

Much Christian sympathy was expressed for him in his family trials, and prayers were offered that the God of providence and grace would guide and go with him in his future career." (28.)

Maryborough and Amherst Circuit, 1871

From Bendigo, he went to work in the Maryborough and Amherst Circuit. Certain details of this work were reported in the "Chronicle."

"Foundation Stone of New Church, Craigie. - As time rolls on, the progressive character of the various religious denominations of this young colony is made manifest in the erection of new and improved places of public worship, and, without vaunting, it may be safely averred that in no section of the Christian Church are greater advances made than by the Wesleyans.

The people of McCallum's Creek are keeping pace with the requirements of the age. For many years past they have been content to worship in a somewhat fragile wooden structure, which has been enlarged from time to time, until by a long continued effort they have been enabled to venture into something more substantial and commodious. The memorial stone of an entirely new edifice was laid Monday afternoon, 5th inst. (June), in the presence of a large assemblage of persons, by Mr. Matthew Burnett. On the Sunday previous special sermons were delivered by him to crowded congregations, notwithstanding that the weather was raw, cold, and unfavourable.

To give our readers some idea of the new church, we may describe it as being in what is known as the early English period of gothic architecture, the designs being furnished by Mr. T. H. Lightfoot, architect of Maryborough. It will be built throughout of solid bluestone. The main building will be forty-five feet by twenty-five feet on the floor inside, and entered by a small porch, thus forming a relief to the otherwise heavy front." (Here followed a lengthy description of the new church.)

The message in the sealed bottle said: "This corner stone of a Wesleyan Church at Craigie, in the County of Talbot, and Colony of Victoria, was laid by Matthew Burnett, on the 5th day of June, 1871, being the 33rd year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria\; His Excellency John Henry Thomas Viscount Canterbury being Governor of the Colony\; John Watsford, President of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Conference\; William P. Wells, Chairman of the Castlemaine and Sandhurst District\; Martin Dyson and Richard Osborne Cook, ministers of the Maryborough and Amherst Circuit\; Joseph Jennison and Henry Clarkson, Circuit Stewards\;" etc., etc..... The Church Trustees were listed, along with the Building Committee, the architect and the builders.

"After the stone had been declared well and truly laid, Mr. Burnett delivered a short address." There was an offering. The tea meeting followed, and the people were entertained with a list of speeches. (29.)

"Opening of New Church, Craigie. - About five months ago, the memorial stone of a new Wesleyan Church was laid in our church reserve at Craigie, and now the building has been opened for public worship. It is of solid bluestone, and is 45 ft. by 25 ft. on the floor inside. Externally, the building has a massive appearance, which is partly relieved by a small porch in the front, and by projecting buttresses from the walls. The lead lights, with coloured margins to the windows, adds much to the beauty of the whole. The church will cost

about 480 pounds, and, after the opening services, the debt on the building will be about 300 pounds.

The services were conducted on Sunday, Nov. 26th, by Mr. Matthew Burnett, to very large congregations. The tea and public meetings were held on the following Monday. The ladies, who presided at the tables, pleased every one. Mr. Foreman, of Mount Bolton, took the chair at the public meeting. Addresses from Revs. W. Woodall, W. H. Williamson (Episcopalian), and Mr. Matthew Burnett and others, were received by an enthusiastic audience with applause. The whole services were greatly enlivened by the excellent choir, and considered to have been a good success." (30.)

Matthew Burnett travelled back to England for a period between 1872 and 1874, and spent much time observing, and trying to learn from, the evangelism of D. L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey, who were conducting a mission throughout the British Isles in that period. These years also saw a period of revival in many parts of England and Scotland, partly related to Moody's and Sankey's mission.

On his return to Australia, he came back to Victoria, and worked for some years under the umbrella of the Home Mission Office. This was followed by several years spent preaching around various circuits in South Australia, commencing in 1880.

CHAPTER TWELVE

REVIVALS IN VICTORIA

1871 to 1876

At the Annual Australasian Wesleyan Conference in January, 1871, which was held in Hobart, the Rev. John Watsford became President of the Conference. In his speech upon installation as President he expressed the belief that his ministerial colleagues were still all true followers of everything that John Wesley had stood for. This claim, however, was one that he would not have repeated some years later, if one considers later statements in his autobiography. His Conference sermon was on the subject of revival.

In April, 1871, he moved from Ballarat to the Brunswick Street Circuit in Melbourne. His colleagues there were John Eggleston, Joseph Nicholson and Thomas Adamson. The main church building was being repaired, and the normal meetings were held for a while in the school room.

Watsford described that there was immediate response to his preaching, with church members blessed, and there were some conversions. His diary for April 23rd says that he preached at Coburg at 11, addressed the Sunday school in

the afternoon, and preached to a great crowd at Brunswick Street at night. Fifteen persons sought mercy, and many found it.

The next day, at the prayer meeting, there were "eight or nine" penitents. On April 27th he preached on Entire Sanctification. "The school room was filled, and many were in the church, and some outside at the door. There was a blessed feeling. Many were praying 'Create in me a clean heart, O God.' It was difficult to close the meeting: some professed to enter into the glorious liberty."

12. Revivals in Victoria 1871 to 1876

"Similar entries are found in my diary week after week for some time. The members of the Church were consecrating themselves fully to God and working for Him, and He greatly blessed us and saved souls. And so it must ever be. If entire sanctification is not preached, and the members of the Church are living without it, but little will be done in leading sinners to Christ. But if this great blessing is urged upon the attention of God's people, and they press into the enjoyment of it, the world outside must feel the influence, and sinners will be arrested and converted. A revival of holiness in the Church means an awakening among the unsaved." (1.)

For Watsford, similar events followed in 1872. "In 1872 we had souls saved in many places in the Circuit\; sometimes we had showers of blessing, as extracts from my diary, similar to those quoted elsewhere, would show." (2.)

The Overall Picture in Victoria

The overall picture, however, was not as good throughout the colony. Declines in membership were reported for several years, and almost no local revivals were reported in the "Wesleyan Chronicle" as having occurred anywhere in Victoria in 1871 and 1872.

In 1871, a number of circuits wanted to see revival in their midst, but very little seemed to happen. The best results in country areas, so far as "Chronicle" reports showed, was in the Stawell and Ararat Circuit. In August, the Ararat people said, "We are now having 'Special services'. Our prayer has been, 'Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice.' Already 45 persons have come forward as penitent inquirers, most of whom have witnessed a good confession." (3.)

One month later, at Great Western, came the news, "Here for some time, partly owing to the removal of members and others from the district, we have had but little to report in church matters\; during the last twelve months, however, several interesting conversions to God have taken place, the Church has increased, and the congregation become more settled. In consequence of this improved state of things, it was resolved a short time since to line the inside of the church, erect a porch, and paint the outside of the building." Tenders were called, and a tea meeting held to raise the funds. (4.)

The Clunes Circuit reported that forty members had left for other parts of the colony, because of the economic stagnation which was prevailing generally. If this had not occurred, the Circuit would have shown an increase in membership for the year. (5.)

Efforts to Encourage Special Prayer for Revival

For several years, the Methodists in Australia had been following a call by the Evangelical Alliance to hold, during the first week of January, a week of special prayer meetings for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on churches around the world. The Alliance was a Fellowship having an international influence. These special prayer efforts were held widely through England, North America, and Europe, with some wonderful results.

Combined prayer meetings were held in the capital cities, and in some other locations. In New South Wales, some modest signs of revival flowed from efforts to support this combined prayer and these are mentioned in our chapter about revivals in that state.

Special prayer meetings were held in Melbourne in 1872, from which the following report came:-

"Week of Special Prayer. In accordance with the invitation of the Evangelical Alliance, the week commencing Monday, January 8th, has been devoted to special prayer throughout the Christian World. In a large number of the churches in Melbourne and its suburbs, special devotional services were held, in which the ministers of various denominations unitedly took part. Mid-day services were also held in the Assembly Hall, Collins-street. We understand that the excessive heat of the weather during the greater part of the week, affected the attendance at these services\; nevertheless, they have been seasons of very gracious influence, and have been well attended. Is it too much to hope, that the united earnest prayer arising from so many countries and hearts, throughout the world, will bring down showers of blessing?" (6.)

So far as can be gathered from information in the "Chronicle", NO revivals appeared in Victoria as a result of this special prayer.

But GREAT RESULTS appeared in other parts of the world.

"THERE has been a remarkable revival movement in all the Protestant Churches in the United States since the week of prayer at the beginning of the year. The Western Christian Advocate (Cincinnati) says:- 'Our revival department in the last eight or ten weeks has exhibited an accession to the Church on trial, within the bounds of our circulation, of some 8,000 or 9,000 persons' The membership of the M. E. Church South during the past year is reported to have increased about 50,000. If this be correct, the net increase for the year of the two Methodist Episcopal Churches, North and South, is about 107,000 members." (7.)

"REVIVALS IN AMERICA. - The North-western Advocate (Chicago) reports great spiritual prosperity in that section of the Church: 'Our hearts were never more gladdened than they have been during the past fortnight by reading of the wonderful revivals through the north-west. Many of them are marvels of spiritual power. The reports have been so numerous that we have been compelled, for some weeks, to divide them, placing part on the fifth page and part on the

sixth page\; this too, after having made all proper abridgement. In some places, the Spirit of God seems to have swept utterly away prevailing scepticism, and to have leagued with Himself the maturest wisdom and the greatest social power of the community. In many places, the work has embraced chiefly whole families with their heads. Indeed, this is so often mentioned that it seems to be a characteristic of the present gracious outpouring. Let prayer and effort abound, for verily this seems the set time to favour Zion." (8.)

Perhaps it was the excessive heat of January in Victoria, as the report said, or there may have been other reasons. But the January idea just did not seem to work in Victoria.

A New Call to Prayer

In May, 1872, news of another call to share in a special week of prayer for revival appeared in a circular letter sent to the ministers of various denominations in Melbourne and some of the principal towns in the colony. It was also published in the "Chronicle"

The circular letter read as follows:-

"Reverend and Dear Sir,

Communications have been received from the Hon. Arthur Kinnaird, Doctor Merle D'Aubigne, and Doctor Duff, enclosing suggestions for a week of United Prayer, in May, 1872, by Christians throughout the world - similar to that held in December, 1869, at the time of the holding of the Ecumenical Council at Rome.

A small number of ministers and laymen, representing different denominations, met in the Assembly Hall, Melbourne, to confer together, as to whether any and what steps could be taken to enable those Christians in Victoria who might be so disposed to join their brethren in Europe and other parts of the world in a season of United Prayer.

It was resolved that meetings for prayer be held in some central place in Melbourne, about noon on each day, during the week commencing 19th May, and on the evening of Wednesday in the same week, and that the co-operation of ministers of the Gospel in Melbourne and other places be invited.

In accordance with the above, we have been requested to inform you that meetings for prayer will (God willing) be held in the Assembly Hall, Collins-street east, on the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday of the week commencing on the 19th May - the meetings to commence each day at half-past twelve, and last for one hour\; also that on the evening of Wednesday, the 22nd May, there will be a meeting for prayer in the same place, at half-past seven in the evening. It is hoped that all denominations will unite together in rendering the meetings as numerous as possible. We also beg to enclose you a paper containing the order of proceedings proposed for the meetings in Melbourne.

Should the above commend itself to your approval, we trust you will announce the intended meetings to your congregation on Sundays, the 12th and 19th May.

At the Conference it was also thought desirable that, besides the meetings in Melbourne, meetings for united prayer should be held, where practicable, in the suburbs of this City, and in the principal towns of the Colony\; and that the ministers in different localities be invited to communicate with each other in reference to the holding of such meetings.

Trusting that the foregoing will meet with your favourable consideration and co-operation, we remain,

Reverend and dear sir, yours faithfully,

M. H. Becher.

John C. Symons.

Melbourne, May, 1872." (9.)

The subject of prayer for the first day in the Assembly Hall was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the churches world-wide. The subject for prayer on the second day was the need for unity and love. On the third day, the prayer was for the spread of the Gospel in all the British colonies, and for the defeat of Romanism in those places. The fourth day involved prayer for Europe. The fifth day encouraged prayer for mission work in other places, and the prayer for Saturday was for watchfulness, prayer and alertness, in view of the signs of the times. (10.)

This call to prayer was similar in many ways to the previous call, and, in Victoria, it was probably supported faithfully by many people. However, it seemed to meet with a similar LACK OF SUCCESS, so far as obvious answers to prayer were concerned. No local, Victorian revivals of any significance in the Wesleyan churches were reported in the pages of the "Wesleyan Chronicle" during 1872.

United Methodist Free Church, East Collingwood, 1872

The Rev. George R. Cox reported in the Victorian UMFC periodical:- "On 21 April {1872} a gentleman who had heard Mr. Ross preach in the street, came to enquire the way to Zion. He was at the evening service, and came to the penitent form, where, after wrestling with God in prayer, the love of God was shed abroad in his heart, and he declared what God had done for his soul. The following week we held prayer meetings, when several were converted; and on the week succeeding and for several weeks a prayer meeting was held in the chapel, every morning at six o'clock; and again in the evening at half-past six o'clock, at seven o'clock those present went in a body singing through the streets, to collect strangers into the chapel.

When there, there would be a short pointed address or sermon; and then a prayer meeting, and night after night some were converted. More than 50 persons have found the peace of God through these means, some young, and many aged, even to gray hairs. At the church quarterly meeting, held on June 11th, we added six full members to the church, with 32 on trial.

The good work is continuing, every Sunday evening one or more is set free. The chapel, which at one time was not half filled, is now so full that forms have to be placed in the aisle....." (11.)

1 8 7 3

The source of new success, from an organisational viewpoint, came from the fact that in the next year the Australasian Wesleyan Conference took up the issue of special prayer, within its own sphere of influence. The decline in membership continued, and this showed up in the statistical returns the following January, when the Conference met. On the last day of the Conference of 1873, the following motion was adopted.

"WEEK OF SPECIAL PRAYER.

On the motions of the Revs. T. Buddle and E. I. Watkin, it was resolved - 'That the Conference deeply regrets the decrease of members in our colonial churches, as reported in our general returns, resolves that the week succeeding Sunday, 4th May, 1873, be observed through this Connexion as a week of special prayer, and directs the superintendents of circuits to bring the subject of a revival of spiritual religion in all churches before our people.'" (Fifteenth day of Conference, Monday 3rd February, 1873.) (12.)

(a.) Here, superintendents of circuits were directed to do something about it, throughout the Colony.

(b.) Furthermore, when the time approached, the editor of the "Wesleyan Chronicle" got behind the project in a very significant way.

Editorial Support

This support came in two forms. Firstly, in April, a substantial article on the subject appeared on page two. And, secondly, a lengthy quotation from a tract about prayer for revival was included. The tract reflected a high quality of spiritual life, and of intercessory prayer. This is not meant to imply that other good material on the same subject did not also appear, from time to time, or that these other pieces were of poorer quality. But these two editorial acts, and the quality of the two pieces, were very appropriate, at the time.

Indeed, some of the other articles bearing on the promotion of the work of God are of high quality. One such was the "Annual Address" from the 1872 Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Conference to all the church members throughout Australasia and Polynesia. It covered several pages, and was published in full in the March issue of the "Chronicle." (13.)

(1.) The first part of the "editorial support" for the special prayer effort, appeared on page two of the April issue. It sought to link the present need of Victorian Methodism to the general principle of the need for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The article is reproduced here in full.

"WEEK OF SPECIAL PRAYER.

Among the many important resolutions of the late Conference, perhaps the most important was the following:- 'That the Conference deeply regrets the decrease of members in our colonial churches, as reported in our general returns, resolves that the week succeeding Sunday, 4th May, 1873, be observed through this Connexion as a week of special prayer, and directs the superintendents of circuits to bring the subject of a revival of spiritual religion in all churches before our people.'

The past year has not been a successful one. Our congregations were never so large, our Sabbath-schools were never so well attended, but conversions have been few and far between\; and, neither by growth from within, nor by conquest from without, have there been many additions to our Church members.

The analysis of the District General Returns shows the following as the result of the last year's Labours:- In New South Wales, an increase of 15 members\; Queensland, increase 107 members\; Victoria, decrease 537 members\; South Australia, decrease 520 members\; Western Australia, decrease 9 members\; Tasmania, decrease, 41 members\; New Zealand, increase, 70 members.

As a Church, we have been accustomed to measure our progress by the number of those who meet in class. There were 915 fewer persons meeting in class in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand, in the quarter ending September 30th, 1872, than were at the same period of the previous year. We admit that the class meeting does not measure the whole of our progress. There are many who are converted through Methodist instrumentality who do not meet in class. They were never so numerous as they are now. But the class meeting is a measure of our progress, though not a complete one\; and the fact of such a falling off in the number of our Church members must be accepted as a positive proof of a want of spiritual power among us.

No doubt the decrease in South Australia and Victoria may be partly accounted for by the 'leakage' caused by removals of Church members, arising from the migration of population. But, making all allowance for the loss by removals, considering that in Victoria and South Australia there are 513 churches, 106 ministers, 835 local preachers, 5477 Sabbath-school teachers, and

more than 100,000 attendants on our services, we are forced to the conclusion that, spiritually, the past year has been one of decline, and not one of progress.

Various are the causes assigned for this decrease in our membership. Some find the cause in the pulpit. It is said that there is not that clear ring from the Methodist pulpit on the doctrine of entire sanctification as the privilege of the Christian, on eternal punishment as the doom of the impenitent, that there was some years ago. Others say that there is too little pastoral visitation\; that modern Methodist preachers need to ponder the remarks made by John Wesley, when, on visiting Newcastle, in 1772, he found fewer members than there were two years before - 'This,' he said, 'I can impute to nothing but the want of visiting from house to house, without which the people will hardly increase either in number or grace.'

Some find the cause of decline in the fact that some of the leading laymen of our Church, to whom God has given wealth and social position, do not give personal service, but content themselves with giving merely pecuniary support to the Church. Others attribute our declension to the worldly conformity of many of our members in dress and amusements. There are some who assert that we have been priding ourselves too much on our Church organisation, that we have been 'sacrificing unto our net,' instead of remembering that it is 'God who gives the increase.'

There is, no doubt, more or less truth in all these suggestions, but whatever may be the causes of our want of progress, we are sure that the Conference has taken the only course to bring about a better state of things, in deciding on a week of special prayer.

Our Church has not lost its belief in the power of prayer. A 'philosophy, falsely so called,' may tell us that prayer is useless. We know better\; 'We speak that we do know, we testify that we have seen.' The experience of thousands of our Church members in this land finds expression in the language of the Psalmist - 'I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.' The history of our Church is rich in records of religious revivals, which were preceded by periods when 'prayer had been made, without ceasing, of the Church unto God.'

There is no Christian Church that more readily adopts Tennyson's words than ours, -

'More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.

* * *

For what are men better than sheep or goats,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves, and those who call them friend?'

We need a revival. To quote from a pamphlet recently published by a Methodist member of the British Parliament, - 'We want revivals. We must have them, rich and gracious outpourings of God's Spirit among us - revivals in which, overwhelmed by the power of the Spirit, scores and hundreds shall fall down and cry for mercy. They will come if we only wrestle for them in prayer, and with ceaseless work labour in God's cause.'

We may hope for a great revival. The Rev. W. Arthur said, at a meeting in London, a few weeks since, - 'He believed that they never were, as a people, in such a position as at this moment for a great and wonderful revival of religion. They never had such an amount of raw material - unconverted hearers of the Gospel.' That is as true of Australasia as it is true of British Methodism. We never had so many under our influence - so many needing conversion in our congregations.

We appeal to the readers of the Chronicle to come up to the help of the Lord. Let there be special prayer for those who preach. There is more in the

proverb 'Like priests, like people,' than some are disposed to admit. Very much depends upon the spiritual tone of the preachers, itinerant and local. If their souls prosper and are in health, the congregations to whom they minister will glorify God in them.

Pray for those who teach. Sabbath-school work was never so important as it is now. Pray for those who are taught. One of the great wants of many of our societies is the want of converted youth and maidens. Let there be special prayer for those who have wandered away from our Church. The land is full of those who know the bitterness of a backslider's experience. Pray to Christ to heal their backslidings, and restore to them the joys of His salvation.

There are nearly a thousand Methodist Churches in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand; and if, in the week succeeding Sunday, May 4th, the voice of earnest, believing, persistent prayer and supplication ascend to heaven from all these sanctuaries, God will avenge His own elect. Young men and maidens, old men and children, will be converted. 'The Lord shall comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places, and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.'

We commend to our readers the extract from the admirable tract of Dr. Jobson, on the 'Want of Methodism,' which appears on page 58." (14.) (In both cases, the article has been broken up into paragraphs for easier comprehension. Emphases are in the original)

"The Want of Methodism at the Present Time."

(2.) Despite what is for us a difficult writing style, Dr. Jobson's tract, 'The Want of Methodism at the Present Time.' sounds a call to a greatly enriched life of intercessory prayer, and should, I think, be viewed as a truly great piece of spiritual and devotional writing. Again, what was published in the "Chronicle" is produced here in full, although it was only an excerpt from an original publication.

"THE PRESENT WANT OF METHODISM.

THIS is what Methodism wants at the present time - united, importunate, persevering prayer.

Prayer such as John Welsh, of Scotland, offered, who was accustomed to rise at midnight to pray, and in a cold winter's night wrapped in plaid around him, praying on until morning. Prayer such as one of a former generation offered who wrote in his diary on a certain date, what surprises us of the present degenerate age: 'Prayed this day two hours less than usual.' Prayer that does not bow down man in mere form for a few minutes, to offer petitions which are forgotten as fast as they are delivered; but which shuts the door of the closet when entered, that the suppliant may remain to plead with God in the secret place of His pavilion. Prayer that swells beyond formal expressions into groaning agony that cannot be uttered. Prayer, not always loud and vehement in sound, but which intensifies all inward feeling, and so fills the soul with urgent desire that it lingers and supplicates long at the Divine footstool. Prayer that shall bring working men and women of business from their labour, their shops and counting-houses at noon-day, to seek God's blessing and salvation upon themselves and families.

Prayer such as was offered a few years ago in New York, when merchants, tradesmen, and pious men and women, assembled at mid-day in Fulton-street, and presented before God united and agreed petitions, which were so signally answered in the conversion of relatives, friends and neighbours. When reprobate sons in different vessels, far apart on the high seas, were convinced of sin, and led to seek mercy from God on the very day, and at the same hour of prayer.

When notorious sinners in the outskirts of the city, who had so demoralised the district in which they lived by profligate wickedness that it had obtained the ominous designation of 'Hell's Corner', became speedily so changed, through the conversion of its occupants in answer to prayer, that it was named 'Paradise'.

Prayer such as was witnessed in a revival in Scotland, of which it was affirmed, that prayer had such mighty hold upon the people, that if it had been published for their favourite preacher, Dr. Chalmers, who was then in the full flight of his popularity, to preach in the Church, - and announced that a public Prayer-meeting was to be held in the Town Hall, at the same time, the favourite preacher would have been forsaken, and the Prayer-meeting crowded.

Prayer such as the holy woman had, who had pleaded with God for the revival of His work in the Church to which she belonged, until she could bear the burden upon her devout soul no longer, and she went to her minister in tears, exclaiming that if the Lord did not pour out His Spirit and save the people, she must die.

Were prayers like these - fervent, importunate, agonising prayers - to pervade Methodism, what a blessed change would speedily come over it! How soon should we have gratefully to exclaim, 'The winter is past, the rain is over and gone\; the flowers appear on the earth\; the time of singing birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.' If ministers were to give themselves to prayer, as required, as well as to the word\; if their sermons were prayed over, in preparation, prayed through before delivery, and prayerfully preached\; and if the people were to strive and help together with them in their prayers, so that preaching and ministrations should be amidst the mingled breath of united supplications, what difference of character, and of effect, would appear in the sermons preached, and in the ministrations performed.

Clothed with the power of the Spirit, sermons would sound, not stale and lifeless, but fresh and startling as voices from the eternal world. How solemnly joyous would be our public assemblies! and how changed would be the entire aspect of our church associations! Instead of gathering as mourners, to lament our low and lifeless condition, we should meet together joyful before the Lord. Then should our Zion, no longer sit Rachel-like, weeping for her children because they are not, but at the Divine call, should arise and shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon her. Then, attracted by the appearance of the Church in her beautiful garments, rising youth, and they that are immediately around it, would join themselves to it, saying eagerly, 'We will go with you, for the Lord is with you.'

When the life of God is fresh and strong within the soul, there is no reluctance to Christian fellowship. Joyful with the experience of saving grace, the exclamation is now, as of old, 'Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.' Then there is earnest desire to know all that can be learned from the religious experience of others, of the Holy Spirit's work in the hearts and lives of regenerate men, and of the seasonable help and blessing to be obtained in the time of temptation and trial. But, when spiritual life is low within, and there is little or no progress in the knowledge and service of the Most High, then there is no desire to communicate to others, or to say anything upon the state of the soul. Then objections are started and urged against meetings for Christian fellowship, and a looser state of Church recognition and association is pleaded for. The richer and fuller baptism of the Holy Ghost, to be obtained in answer to prayer, would render class meetings, love feasts, prayer meetings and week-night services joyfully welcome. And then, as at the beginning, when the followers of Christ continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers, fear and wonder shall come upon all around, and there shall be added to the Church daily such as shall be saved.

Blessed period! when the Lord shall thus comfort Zion, and when he shall thus comfort all her waste places. That period will have arrived when the Church prostrates itself before God in united, earnest and believing prayer, and not till then. We may have organised agencies, adjusted systems of doctrine and discipline\; we may have chapels, schools, ministers, local preachers, leaders, and liberal subscriptions and donations, to any extent\; but unless by prayer, ministers and people take hold on God's strength, all will be spiritually helpless and vain. If, on the other hand, ministers, stewards, local preachers, leaders and members, give themselves to prayer, and continue instant in it - not for one week only at the beginning of the year, but during all weeks throughout the year - resolving to allow God no rest until He make Jerusalem a praise on the earth, then shall He arise, He and the ark of His strength, and declare that the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, has come. Then shall there be 'showers of blessing,' 'floods upon the dry ground\;' and then, when the Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high, the scene of barrenness and waste, as now lamented, shall be changed into that of fertility and strength - 'The wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be counted for a forest.'

If this great want of prayer to God for the exertion of His saving power among us be supplied, all attendant benefits desired will be realised, and Methodism will be prepared of the Lord for higher service in the Church, and more extended achievements in the world that has ever yet been known. On every side, and in every region, both at home and abroad, its help is needed and called for\; and with its enlarged and enlarging means and opportunities, it shall go forth blessed of God, and made a blessing.

It is not, however, for the enlargement and honour of Methodism only, that we must thus strive together in our prayers. It must be for the glory of God, and the salvation of men. If ministers seek the Holy Spirit's power to increase their own reputation as effective preachers, - and if our people seek increase of Church membership merely to roll away reproach, - then the spirit of godly sincerity is lacking, and the Divine blessing will not be vouchsafed. Methodism must continue to be viewed as the work of God if it is to prosper, and its purpose must be, as at the beginning, 'to spread scriptural holiness through the land.'

If it seek only, or mainly, the glory of a name, or the aggrandisement of a sect, it will soon appear forsaken of God\; and be left to fall into ruin under its own weight of accumulated instrumentality. But sustained and carried on, as in past times, with godly motives, and with entire dependence on the Holy Spirit, it shall prosper abundantly.

Who is on the Lord's side? is now the practical inquiry. Who will separate himself from the world, and from all that hinders approach to the mercy seat\; and, bowing himself in believing prayer to God, join himself to those who will perseveringly seek the saving presence of the Holy Ghost to render effectual the means and agencies of salvation employed among us? Who will begin this work of prayer at once, and urge others to unite in it? Who that duly ponders the responsibility attached to profession and place in the Church dare refuse this personal service for the increase and prosperity of the work of God?

Methodists of former generations were wont to devote the noontide hour of Friday in each week to united intercessory supplication. Without esteeming one day better than another, let as many among us as are likewise minded, thus improve this hour of Friday in each week. May the God of our fathers fix the resolve for this steadfastly in the hearts of thousands, and lead us all to it. AMEN." (15.)

For the year 1873, which was the first year of the Wesleyan effort in Victoria at having its own special prayer, the results were mixed. The "Wesleyan Chronicle" published a long series of reports from many circuits about what they did, and what happened. The reports in the May issue came from Wesley Church, North Melbourne, Carlton, West Melbourne, Brunswick-street, St. Kilda, Geelong East, Albury, Beechworth, Castlemaine, Clunes, Daylesford, Echuca, Kyneton, Maldon, Mortlake, Tarnagulla, Walhalla, Terang, Warrnambool and Williamstown. There is also a lengthy report about a camp meeting held in the Portland Circuit. Other reports followed later.

In these May reports, many circuits had special meetings for prayer, and found that the church members were blessed, their dedication and desire for holiness increased, but only a few conversions occurred. In some cases, no conversions occurred at all, in direct link with these special gatherings. Other circuits experienced more obvious blessing, and saw numbers of conversions.

We can speculate that perhaps God was refining His people. Perhaps He was testing their resolve to pray, in an effort to show how much they really wanted His blessing.

As an example of the range of these reports from circuits, consider the following:-

"Carlton. We have lately joined with our Christian brethren in the week of special prayer. Although no very striking results have as yet manifested themselves, yet we know that much spiritual good has been accomplished. Many of our people have been led to personal examination, some to humble themselves before God, and most have sought and found a quickened and happier religious experience."

"St Kilda. The services held in this circuit during the week of special prayer were well attended, and have been seasons of great spiritual good. At Mount Erica, last Friday evening, three penitents sought and found pardon. These are the only conversions that came under our notice during the week. We are holding special services this week at St Kilda and Prahran. At the latter place last evening the answer to prayer came. It was a time of unusual spiritual power. There were ten penitents, most of whom were able to rejoice in God as their reconciled Father."

"Albury. Our meetings passed off quietly. The members are, however, being quickened, and last night, at a tea and fellowship meeting, there was more feeling than we have had for months. We hope next month to be able to speak of the wondrous works of God amongst us."

"Castlemaine. Noon-day and evening prayer meetings have been held throughout the week in Campbell-street Church, Castlemaine, and week evening prayer meetings at Campbell's Creek, Chewton, Fryerstown, Muckleford, and Wesley Hill, and in other parts of the circuit. Some of these meetings were fairly attended - to say they were well attended would be misleading. Beyond the comfort and encouragement of those of our members who attended them, we know of no special results. In two instances anniversary services interfered."

"Geelong East. Prayer meetings were held in nearly all the churches in this circuit during the week succeeding 4th May. At Yarra-street it was a week of special grace. The Lord poured out on his people the spirit of grace and of supplication. Mid-day prayer meetings were held alternately in Yarra-street, and at the Newtown Church, in the Geelong West Circuit. Some of the times of refreshing enjoyed in those mid-day prayer meetings will never be forgotten. On the Friday evening at Yarra-street, there were some indications of good - several seekers after salvation. It was resolved to continue the services for another week. On Sunday evening, at the prayer meeting after the service,, the cloud of the Divine presence broke in blessings on our heads. The communion rail was crowded with penitents. Nearly a score found peace with God, and went

home rejoicing. The services of the week have been crowned with God's blessing. Every night there have been penitents. Last night (Wednesday,) there were thirty anxious inquirers, the majority of whom found peace. Young men and maidens and children, have received the Holy Ghost, and we are hoping to see 'old men' seeking the Saviour." (16.)

The June issue of the "Wesleyan Chronicle" contained several more reports about the special meetings in other places, and more details about the special meetings in Geelong. These had been continued through the month of May, and there had been people enquiring after salvation most nights. Conversions had also occurred at South Geelong, Freshwater Creek, and other places. (17.)

The July issue reported signs of revival from the Ballarat Circuit. These were noticed in the business of the quarterly meeting, held on 25th June. After the quarterly meeting, in the evening, the ministers and local preachers met for consultation and prayer. "It was a preachers' fellowship meeting, in which each recounted his experiences in the work of preaching the Gospel, and at the close all partook of the memorials of the Saviour's death. It was a time of heart-searching and consecration, and will not soon be forgotten. The special services in the Lydiard-street church have been greatly honoured of God. During the past week about one hundred conversions have been recorded, and still the work goes on. Many of the young people of our Sabbath-school were among these triumphs of divine grace. At Sebastopol - Pleasant-street - and also at Rubison-street - souls have been saved\; and it is our earnest prayer that the whole circuit may be baptise from on high." (18.)

North Melbourne, 1873

North Melbourne was part of the same circuit as Carlton and Wesley Church, and had the largest Sunday School amongst all those in the Wesleyan centres in Melbourne. (724 pupils on the roll, with 186 over fourteen years of age.)

"The revival at North Melbourne began during the week of special prayer, which was marked by great spiritual earnestness and power. Many members of the Church, humbled by a sense of unfaithfulness, and awakened to a consciousness of spiritual loss and declension were drawn out to renewed and entire consecration to God. This mood of spiritual contrition and renewed dedication is always one which fits the Church to be used by the Holy Spirit in the ingathering of souls. It proved so in this case. By a sort of moral contagion the feeling spread through the congregation, and night after night fresh penitents came forward to seek for mercy. The meetings, which were continued during the week, were characterised by great seriousness, and an entire absence of excitement. Appeals of a very earnest and affectionate, but very simple, character were made by one or other of the circuit ministers each evening, and were accompanied by a signal degree of spiritual power. The North Melbourne Wesleyan Church is happy in the possession of a very large and noble Sunday-school\; a special service of a very interesting and successful character was held in it every afternoon, for some six sabbaths in succession, numbers of the senior scholars presenting themselves as penitents at each service. Altogether, over eighty persons have been added to the Church. The special services are past, but we have had conversion at nearly every ordinary service since, and we are trying to realise the ideal of the Apostolic Church, when there were added to them daily such as should be saved." (19.)

Richmond Circuit, 1873

"We have been favoured by the Great Head of the Church with a gracious revival of religion in this circuit. The impulse was first given in connection

with the week of special prayer, appointed by the Conference. It was evident that God had heard and answered the prayer of his people on that occasion, and it was determined to seize the first opportunity for holding another series of special services in various parts of the circuit.

Church-street. - The services commenced here on Sunday, 20th July, and were continued for four weeks without intermission. As they proceeded, the interest and feeling of the people manifestly deepened, and many, night after night, were awakened to a sense of sin, and earnestly sought salvation. The meetings were characterised by the greatest decorum and solemnity, with, perhaps, a little too much of sedate reserve for such a time.... Many members of the church made it an occasion of fresh consecration to God, and others, who had long lived without a clear sense of acceptance, now specially sought and found it. Some who had wandered sought restoration. Parents rejoiced over their penitent sons and daughters, and Sabbath school scholars and teachers bowed together at the communion rail, pleading for mercy. Children and adults, of various ages, up to grey hair, are included in the number of the saved. With some there seemed to be extreme difficulty in coming to Christ, while others, by a prompt and ready acceptance of the Saviour, stepped in before them, and were saved. On Monday, the 11th instant (August), after three weeks, during which the services gave no sign of abatement in power or blessing, a society tea was held, when the new converts and penitents were collected together, suitably advised and directed, and appointed to classes. It was a time of joy and thanksgiving. The services were continued throughout the week, ending in a fellowship meeting on Saturday night." (20.)

At the Hawthorn Church, in the same circuit, the start of a movement took place on Sunday evening, 27th July, when a sermon on the words "What must I do to be saved?" produced a profound effect. It was from this point "that sinners began to come forward, seeking salvation, and they have been coming ever since. Night after night, as we bowed before the Lord in prayer, a blessed influence has rested upon us, and penitents of all ages, from childhood up to mature age, have taken up their cross, confessing their sinfulness, and calling upon the name of the Lord. Under that gracious influence, those who came to mock have stayed to pray. Hard hearts have melted\; stubborn knees have bowed\; eyes, all unused to weeping, have poured forth the tears of Godly sorrow for sin\; and the people of God have sung songs of rejoicing because of the manifest tokens of His presence in their midst. Amongst the older boys and young men of our congregation has the good work had its most marked success\; and not a few who had caused the most anxiety, more by their unmanageable exuberance of youthful spirit than by any real vicious tendency, are now ranged on the Lord's side." (21.)

At Hoddle Street, the outbreak of revival followed a slightly different pattern. "Special services commenced in this place, on Sunday, 10th August\; and our people were greatly encouraged by the gracious influence attending them through the week, but no special results appeared till the Sunday following, when a good work began. In the afternoon among the Sabbath-scholars, and in connection with the evening service, the Holy Spirit brought out his work. Thirteen and fourteen persons, principally adults, came forward seeking mercy, most of whom found the blessing of pardon before the close of the meeting. This is but a beginning here. The whole of this good work bears indubitable evidence of being the genuine result of the Holy Spirit's agency, searching the inmost of the mind - revealing its sin - subduing its rebellion, and leading to intelligent faith in Christ as a present Saviour. Therefore, glory to God alone." (22.)

A longer report about events in the Ballarat Circuit also appeared on the same page.

Carlton (Wesley Church Circuit.), 1873

Two weeks of special meetings were held here, which resulted in about forty conversions. "The first convert was an old man, for whom his wife had prayed for twenty years. Many were the senior scholars from our Sabbath-schools, and the children of pious parents." The person who wrote the report thought that the pool of unconverted people related to that church had been fully utilised, and was hopeful that the result of the revival would be a keen team of workers to reach others outside the church in the community at large. (23.)

Berwick Circuit, 1873

In 1873, the Rev. E. B. Burns was appointed to this circuit. He was not able to take up his appointment because of deteriorating health, which led, within a few months, to his death. The President of the Conference filled the vacancy by taking a student from Wesley College to man the appointment. The student's name was E. Orlando Knee. It was this man who was used by God in the revival which visited two churches in this circuit, Frankston and Hastings, This visitation occurred in two ways, quite different from each other, and also different from what happened in the other Melbourne circuits.

"At our last quarterly meeting it was resolved to hold special services throughout the circuit as soon as the fine weather should set in, accordingly arrangements were made for commencing the special services sometime in September, but providentially our arrangements have been upset, and we have had to commence them sooner than we anticipated. On Sunday, 20th July, the funeral sermon of Mr. John Renorf was preached, and that night the long-prayed-for blessing came, and we had the droppings of the shower. On Monday night the people crowded up to the usual preaching service, many strangers to Christ\; the formal sermon to believers was thrown aside, a short practical address given, and then we went at once to the prayer meeting, and that night three were set at liberty. It was then thought advisable to continue the services throughout that week and the week following\; this was done, and we have realised in an especial manner God's presence and blessing. Though the nights were dark and the distances great, yet the people gladly wended their way to the house of prayer, and sought a blessing for themselves and others. If space permitted we could tell of some remarkable cases of conversion, and still more remarkable answers to special prayer. Many who came to the house of God to mock and scoff at Divine things have been among the first to cry for mercy, and are now rejoicing in a Saviour's love."

"Hastings. - Special Services. - The Special Services have been productive of much good, although in a somewhat different manner to those at Frankston. Our cause here has been torn asunder by internal dissension, and as 'a house divided against itself cannot stand,' so our cause at Hastings, having been for a long time divided against itself, was fast falling away. But the people of God determined that they would not stand in the way of a revival of the work of God\; prompted by the Good Spirit they buried their little differences, and went in, heart and soul, for a revival of the work of God. Night after night we tarried in the house of prayer, and still no blessing came\; but on Thursday night the long-prayed-for blessing came, and God's people went on their way rejoicing.

On the following Sunday, 10th August, there was a still larger manifestation of the Divine presence, some gave their hearts to God, but many left under deep conviction for sin. Altogether the services were continued for a fortnight\; souls have been saved, many who were never seen in the house of God before have been induced to attend, some who left us have returned, and are actively engaged in working for God. God's people have been quickened and

revived, and all have determined to consecrate themselves afresh to the Lord, and live more than ever for His glory." (24.)

Drysdale Circuit.

A very brief report on the next page said that, at Paywit, they had held special services recently, with encouraging results. "The glory of God filled the sanctuary, and new converts are witnessing for Christ." (25.)

Ararat Circuit, 1873

"We have to record an interesting revival of the work of God in this place during the last quarter. In answer to persevering believers in prayer, God has visited Zion. In connection with the ministry of God's Word there have been striking cases of conviction and conversion." (26.)

Sandhurst, 1873

A subsequent history of the various Wesleyan churches in the Bendigo area (published in 1901) mentions "a great revival" which affected several of the Bendigo churches, and then swept generally through the whole Sandhurst area, in 1873. (27.) This revival is not mentioned in the "Wesleyan Chronicle."

Review of Events in 1873

By casting our eyes back over the events described in the last few pages, we can see that, at least in Victoria, the call to special prayer which was supposed to happen early in January had fallen into disuse, or was not focussed upon in such a way as to produce a result.

The same applied at first to the second call, which was supposed to happen in May 1872.

It was only when the Conference as a whole officially supported the call to prayer which was held early in May, 1873, that the situation began slowly to change. It does not seem to have changed quickly, but, over the following few months, some wonderful movements of the Spirit took place in various locations.

Because such interesting answers to prayer took place in this way in 1873, the Victorian Wesleyan Conference held at the beginning of 1874 took up the same proposal again.

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Perhaps the most noteworthy reports about revivals during 1874 which appeared in the "Wesleyan Chronicle", as well as in several other denominational publications around the country, were the lengthy descriptions of marvellous revivals occurring in England and Scotland. These revivals seemed to begin largely in the meetings being held in Edinburgh, and other places, by the American evangelists, D. L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey. But, soon there were outbreaks of revival in many parts of the British Isles, and reports of these reverberated around the world-wide Christian community. Many people began to pray for similar events to happen in Australia, just as there was similar prayer in many parts of the world.

So far as Australia is concerned, there do not seem to have been any revivals which happened particularly as a result of this inspiration from "home". But the influence of these "home" revivals had an undoubted effect every time anyone here thought about the local need for revival, as we shall see.

The Call to Prayer in 1874

The Wesleyan Conference, meeting in January of 1874, had their normal "Conversation on the Work of God", and bemoaned the obvious decline in full membership which was continuing from the previous year, and which the revivals of 1873 had not been strong enough to overcome.

The April issue contained editorial support for this call to prayer, in much the same way as had happened in 1873.

"WEEK OF SPECIAL PRAYER.

Our readers will remember that at the recent Annual Conference long and anxious consideration was given to the 'State of the Work of God' within our Church. A large decrease was reported in our membership, although in all other respects the statistics presented were satisfactory. As the result of this 'conversation' the following resolution was adopted, and ordered to be printed in the Minutes of Conference, viz.:-

'Resolved:- After a long and prayerful consideration of the State of the Work of God, we record our thankfulness to God for the gracious visitations which have been vouchsafed during the past year to many of the circuits pertaining to the Conference. At the same time, we feel that the decrease in the membership of our Church, although to a large extent accounted for by the removal of valuable members to new settlements, calls for humiliation before God, and renewed devotion to His service, on the part both of ourselves and the office-bearers and members of our Church.

We direct that the first week of May be appointed as a week of special prayer throughout all our circuits, and that the superintendents of circuits shall endeavour to secure the hearty co-operation of the office-bearers and members of our Church in their respective circuits in the services of that week, as well as in those of the usual character. We also direct that special attention be given to the young people of our congregations, and that their early conversion be specially sought.'

After discussing further aspects of this matter, the editor went on to say - "We do not know what arrangements are being made for carrying out the direction of the Conference for 'special prayer' during the 'first week of May'. Each circuit will of course make its own arrangements. The signs of the times in Great Britain are encouraging. In Edinburgh many thousands have professed conversion in connection with the labours of Messrs Moody and Sankey. Similar results are taking place in other towns of Scotland; while in our own church at Newcastle-on-Tyne, Bristol, and other places, encouraging religious movements are taking place. Let us with fervent prayer, simple child-like faith, and full personal consecration, enter upon the coming services, and God will send upon us, and His whole Church, showers of blessings." (28.)

This article in April was followed by more lengthy information about the English revivals, including news about revivals in Methodist centres. The May issue had a special editorial about them, and five pages of news, all in the normal small type. The June issue contained a special four-page "Revival Supplement."

But, of course, the May issue contained the first rash of reports about what had happened in some of the circuits during the week of special prayer. These bits of news came from Wesley Church, Carlton, North Melbourne, Brunswick-

street, Emerald Hill, St. Kilda, Ballarat, Clunes, Daylesford, Kyneton, Maldon, Mortlake, Portland, Preston and Heidelberg, Sale, Sandhurst, Sunbury, Tarnagulla and Dunolly, Walhalla, Wangaratta and Warrnambool.

These reports followed the same pattern as the previous year. In some circuits, the prayer meetings were times of refreshing amongst the Christians, but only a few conversions occurred, if any. In some instances, the meetings were not very well attended for one reason or another. In other cases, signs of revival were evident, and there was ardent desire for greater things. (29.)

Drysdale Circuit

The June issue contained several interesting pieces of news about revival efforts. "We have 'glad tidings of great joy.' During the last five weeks we have had very successful special services. Mr. Burnett conducted the meetings for eight days. Eighty-five persons have taken a public stand for Christ., most of whom have witnessed a good confession. Some members have received the higher blessing of holiness, and many others are earnestly seeking it. This blessed revival is extending to other parts of the circuit." (30.) A later report from this circuit appeared in the August issue, and is referred to below.

There were several other references to Matthew Burnett preaching in Victoria again, in Ballarat, and in the Scarsdale and Linton Circuit, having returned from his recent trip to England. The June issue also contained a report from the Geelong West Circuit, mentioning results from the week of special prayer, in which quite a number of conversions had occurred.

Avoca Circuit

"For weeks past we have been favoured throughout this circuit with signs of an approaching revival of God's work. These signs were an increased attendance at the various week-night services\; a more decided and livelier tone in the life and religious experience of our members\; together with a generally expressed desire for, and belief in the approaching work of the Spirit."

After the evening service on May 31st, there were four penitents who found relief for their concern in Christ. "Special services were commenced on the following evening, at one of our country appointments, Percydale, and continued throughout the week\; the result of such services being, that twenty-three persons professed to have obtained pardon and peace through believing in Jesus." These services were to be continued in the coming weeks, in other locations around the circuit. (31.)

The July Issue of the "Chronicle" contained one and a half pages of news from the English and Scottish revivals. It also had an update from the Avoca Circuit "We closed our last report from this circuit with the expressed desire for 'showers of blessing,' this desire has now ripened into a realised fact. We have been conducting special services at the following places throughout the circuit, with the undermentioned results." At Homebush, saints had been quickened, and sinners converted. At Natte Yallock, sixty-two persons handed in their names as having been converted. "At the close of this series both minister and leaders were unanimous in the opinion that it was a genuine work of the Holy Spirit, and the most remarkable they had ever witnessed."

Avoca was the head of the circuit, and was the leading place, so far as finance, numbers, intelligence and respectability were concerned. But the congregation there was one of the weakest, with respect to "working, praying men." So, the meetings were started in Avoca with particular awareness of dependence upon God, and that God would honour the workers, even if they were few.

"We are now in our second week of services at Avoca, and have indeed had a glorious time. Already between forty and fifty persons have professed to obtain the blessing of pardon." The style of the services was identical to that of a normal Sunday service.

At that stage of the meetings, over 150 persons had handed in their names as having been converted to Christ. "The character of the converts has become more varied since we last reported the work. The list now includes the old man and woman of sixty-five and seventy-three years down to the girl and lad of fourteen and fifteen summers. In some instances whole families have been brought to the Saviour, including father, mother, and several sons and daughters, who have reached manhood and womanhood. In more than one case a grandfather was seen in penitent sorrow kneeling beside a weeping grandchild. The most glorious feature in the whole movement, however, is the fact that every agency seems to be hidden and forgotten, and none but Jesus is exalted or praised." (32.)

Echuca Circuit, 1874

"For some time past a gracious work has been going on here. Special services have been held every night for the past fortnight, with results which call for deepest gratitude to God. Many have been led to decide for God\; backsliders have returned to the good old ways\; believers have been greatly quickened, and the spirit of believing prayer has been poured out. The services are being continued\; the gracious influence is still extending, and in humble confidence and hope, we expect greater things than these. To God alone be all the glory." (33.)

Sandhurst Circuit, 1874

"We are being favoured in this circuit with a most blessed revival of the work of God. At Eaglehawk special services have been held for several weeks in succession, and it is believed that in connection with those services, at least thirty persons have been converted. At California Hill the work has broken out with a delightful spontaneousness and power. Within a fortnight more than a hundred persons, varying from fifteen to sixty years of age, have 'just given their own selves to the Lord...' Besides these, a whole host of children in the Sabbath-school have been making their way to the cross of the Saviour."

"At Long Gully, the revival services are now in full vigour." Many conversions had occurred. The same results had been seen at Forest-street, at Bridge-street, and at Huntly. "The new converts have shown themselves exceedingly active in seeking the salvation of others., the piety of the old members has been wondrously quickened, the latent talent of the Church developed, and each officer and member ready" to serve the Lord more fully. (34.)

Stawell and Ararat Circuit

"Stawell - Since the week of special prayer, held in accordance with the resolution of the last Conference, there has been a gracious revival of religion at Stawell, the services have been continued for several weeks, during which God's people have been much refreshed by His presence, and many led to seek purity of heart, at the same time the cry of the penitent has been heard and the

rejoicing of new born souls. Numbers of the scholars in the Sabbath-school have given their hearts to Jesus, affording in a majority of instances a clear evidence of a change of heart. Backsliders have been reclaimed, and a spirit of enquiry is found on every hand. The great Head of the Church is confounding those who deny the efficacy of prayer, and we have often been compelled to exclaim, 'O wondrous power of faithful prayer!'"

At Ararat, Matthew Burnett had been involved in laying the foundation stone of a new church, on Monday, 25th May, as well as preaching to very large congregations on several days in both Ararat and Stawell. (35.)

Maryborough Circuit, 1874

"We are thankful to be able to report progress in this circuit, for while God has been blessing others He has graciously remembered us. At Chinaman's Flat principally, during the last few weeks, the power of the Lord has been present to wound and to heal. From thirty to forty have sought and found peace with God, and we are expecting other parts of the circuit to be visited with showers of blessing." (36.)

Brighton Circuit, 1874

"A revival state of religious feeling and life has taken place in two or three societies of this circuit. This is the most marked in Brighton and Moorabin, where some interesting cases of conversion have occurred, and where the Church members have sought a deeper piety, and have manifested greater activity and zeal. To strengthen and extend this work of the Holy Spirit, special services were held, at which some ministers from other circuits and of other denominations kindly assisted, and in which the local officers and members heartily joined. These meetings were times of great blessing, were attended by the awakening, converting and sanctifying power of the Spirit of God and have resulted in the union of many souls with Christ. We record this with grateful praise to God, and are looking for further manifestations of His saving grace." (37.)

Drysdale Circuit

"The blessed work of revival in this circuit is deepening and widening. In addition to Drysdale, special services have been held at Newington, Portarlinton, East Bellarine, and Queenscliff\; and at each of these places many have been converted, and some believers have been entirely sanctified. This week (12th July,) services are being held at East Bellarine, and Queenscliff\; our churches are crowded, and nightly there are fresh cases of conversion. Altogether, in this circuit, during the last two months, not counting members of society, one hundred and fifty persons have taken a public stand for Christ - this includes the eighty-five mentioned in our last report. Many of the services have been conducted by Mr. Burnett, and the others by the superintendent of the circuit, and Mr. James Smith, a noble veteran from Hobart Town, and our own self-denying local preachers." (38.)

One month later, extra detail was provided.

"We stated in our last report our belief that God would do greater things for us. This has been realised. The holy unction, especially at East Bellarine, was such as to astonish the most sceptical, and all have acknowledged the work to be of God. The total number of those who have taken a public stand for Christ is 200.

We desire to record that the origin of this revival may be traced back to the gradual improvement of the Church\; and the superintendent of the circuit referred to this improvement at the quarterly meeting, held 6th April. The members of that meeting unanimously resolved to co-operate in any special efforts that might be put forth. A preliminary week of prayer was at once held at Drysdale, and such was the spiritual influence that it was announced that three weeks of special services would be held, to commence on 3rd May. It was then ascertained that Mr. Burnett was in Geelong, and his help was secured. He was in the circuit at various times, making a total of about four weeks, and conducted services in most of the places where the revival has been experienced. During the rest of the time, amounting to eleven weeks, the services were conducted by the superintendent, Mr. Smith, of Hobart Town, and our own local preachers, as mentioned last month. The friends state that this is the most extensive revival that has ever taken place in this circuit. The Lord has been mindful of us. He has blessed us. (39.)

Scarsdale and Linton Circuit, 1874

"We thankfully report a gracious revival of God's work in our circuit. At Newtown special religious services have been held nightly for two months, during which time there have been many blessed outpourings of God's Spirit\; scores of penitent souls have come forward as seekers of salvation and have professed to find peace with God. The good work had its commencement when Mr. M. Burnett was visiting the place to preach anniversary sermons, and on that occasion, as well as on a subsequent visit of a day or two, the members and office-bearers of the Church received a gracious quickening from on high.

At Italians, the Word has been preached with great success. The Gospel has proved the power of God to the salvation of many. Backsliders have been reclaimed, careless sinners arrested and converted, whole families brought to Jesus. Now, where a few months ago we had only two members, we have two large society classes.

Brownsvale has also been visited by a gracious awakening by the Spirit of God\; between twenty and thirty, who a few weeks ago were living in sin, have had their hearts broken by repentance, and have come to Him who alone can bind up the broken-hearted. At Smythesdale, though there has not been any general move, several souls have within the last week or two found God." (40.)

The quarterly meeting, held on 1st October, reported an increase of 104 in people on trial for membership.

The superintendent minister (the Rev. C. H. Ingamells) reluctantly had to decline the circuit's invitation to stay for another year, and thus complete a three year term. Although he had greatly enjoyed working in this circuit, he found that he could not do justice to the demands of the seventeen societies scattered through the circuit, and also perform the reasonable demands of his home life. (41.)

Castlemaine and Sandhurst District Report

A wide-ranging report was published in the September issue of the "Wesleyan Chronicle", before the district meeting. It summarised many aspects of the Wesleyan work, mentioning areas where revivals had been experienced. Some of these instances of revival we have referred to above, but several other places are mentioned as having seen some revival, about which no report was published. So, the relevant part of the District Report is as follows:-

"Times of blessing have been granted to several circuits, or parts of circuits in this district of late. At Campbell's Creek, Vaughan, and other

parts of the Castlemaine Circuit\; at Long Gully and Eaglehawk, in Forest-street Circuit\; and Kangaroo Flat, Golden-square Circuit, Sandhurst\; at Chinaman's Flat, Maryborough Circuit\; and in the Kyneton, Talbot, Inglewood, Avoca and Echuca Circuits, many have been converted, and our people have been justified in singing heartily our old Methodistic song of gladness and of progress, -
Break forth into singing ye trees of the wood,
For Jesus is bringing lost sinners to God."
(42.)

When the District meeting was held, some weeks later, the statistical returns for the district showed a decrease of 93 full members, but a very large increase of members on trial. There were 250 more people meeting in class than at the same time last year. In three or four circuits there had been a large exodus of members to other areas of the colony which were being newly opened up for agricultural purposes. (43.)

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The Victorian and Tasmanian Annual Wesleyan Conference took place in mid-January of 1875.

Several events took place which were to have a profound effect in the next few years. One of these was that the Rev. John Watsford was set apart from circuit responsibilities to be in charge of a new Home Missions Department. The reason for this was that, in the past, there had been a certain amount of government financial support for the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan and Presbyterian denominations. The Wesleyans had used their part of it to build churches and schools, support weaker country circuits, and help open up church work in new areas. The Victorian colonial parliament decided that this financial support would cease after 1875 for all the churches. This would place a great strain upon local finances, if any costly projects were still to proceed, until a time of adjustment had occurred.

It was also a time when unusually large areas of Victoria were being thrown open for land selection by prospective farmers. This created a great need to supply facilities and man-power for public worship and evangelism in the new areas. Many of these farmers were Methodists.

John Watsford had devised a plan to raise funds for the new outreach, and to help provide needed manpower to preach the Gospel in these new areas. So, the Conference gave him the job of putting his plan into action. (44.)

The migration around the colony would also create havoc with circuit membership figures, because the names of many of these farmers would be removed from the roles in the circuits where they had previously lived. After they moved, they would no longer be meeting in the class meetings. Meeting in class was the only official test of church membership for the Methodists. The names of those moving to the new areas would not be able to be used for statistical purposes until class meetings were established in these areas.

No doubt, many of these farmers were lost to the church through "backsliding" spiritually, in their new circumstances, or because some other denomination moved into that area first, and they joined the other church. But a good many became lay preachers and leaders in their new locations, and started up Methodist societies and preaching places wherever they went. The "home missionaries" followed them.

The Conference, however, had to face up to a decline of 236 in the number of full members, although there was an unusually large number of people on trial for membership (1086), no doubt arising from the revivals late the previous year. (45.)

In the "Conversation on the Work of God", the Conference members discussed every angle of the subject, as they often did, but did not conclude upon any course of action to attempt rectifying the situation.

United Missions in Various Places

Several of these ecumenical efforts at evangelistic outreach were reported during the year. Major activities of this kind took place in Emerald Hill, Geelong and Ballarat. One might have expected that united efforts would be even more successful than ones run by individual denominations, and have been more likely to have reached the proportions of a revival. But this does not seem to have been the case, in 1875.

One of the Emerald Hill reports was as follows:- "We hear that a good work is going on just now in the Temperance Hall, Sandridge. The meetings are crowded to excess, and the power of the Lord is being felt by many. Numbers are giving up sin, and coming over to the side of Christ\; and greater things are expected at the hands of the Lord." These meetings were not every night, but a few times per week, and went on for a month or more. (46.)

Kilmore Circuit. 1875

The Rev. James W. Tuckfield was the minister in this circuit, and he led special meetings in a number of locations in this country area. Reports about these meetings were scattered through several issues of the "Spectator."

"Lancefield. The special religious services in connexion with our church at Lancefield have been brought to a close. They were continued for nearly three weeks, during which the people attending the meetings were truly benefited. On Thursday evening last, an 'experience meeting' was held, when notwithstanding the darkness of the night and almost impassable state of the roads, a good number of the people were present, some coming from a distance of six miles in order that they might enjoy spiritual good by speaking and hearing about God's goodness to them and others. The great good which has been done in this part of the circuit has not been confined solely to the members of our Church and the unconverted\; members of other branches of the Christian church have had their souls refreshed at our prayer-meetings, and it has truly been a most glorious sight to witness the poor humble penitent seeking for mercy, at the side of one who feels that he needs the blessing of holiness. Oh the power that was in those meetings! The blessed influences of the Holy Spirit appeared to rest upon everyone in the sanctuary.

The class-meeting, which had become a thing of the past, has been re-established, and for the future will be connected with a prayer-meeting, weekly. Our minister, the Rev. James W. Tuckfield announced on Thursday evening that, God willing, he would commence a series of services at Rochford (Monument Creek), on or about the 23rd of this month. May God honour his work there also. (47.)

"Monument Creek - Rochford. A short time since, reference was made in the 'Spectator' to the glorious and grand work which had been going on at Lancefield - souls being convinced, converted and sanctified by the Divine power of the Holy Spirit. The labours of our minister have been owned of God in a like manner at Monument Creek.

During a period of eight days, which were devoted to visiting the people and praying with them in their homes, God truly manifested His mighty power in the awakening of precious souls. Night after night, notwithstanding the darkness of the evenings, the heavy rains, cold winds and muddy roads, the little church on the hill was well filled. On each evening, the Rev. J. W.

Tuckfield preached to the congregations assembled, closing a service always with a prayer-meeting, when invitations would then be given to those who had not taken a stand for Jesus, to go forward, and thus testify their sincerity in the matter. The minister urged upon all to accept Jesus as their Saviour, and, in a beautifully simple and clear manner, illustrated the plan of salvation in such a way that all present could understand, from the youngest to the oldest in the church. Many souls were brought humbly to the footstool of Divine mercy, and most of them were able to testify afterwards that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

O how the Lord did bless his people! Why, it was a heaven on earth to many, so greatly were the influences of the Holy Spirit felt. Sturdy manhood could not stand it, but had to bow at the side of tender youth - some seeking the blessing of forgiveness, others panting after holiness\; and blessed be God, getting it, too!

On Monday afternoon (28th), at three o'clock, a meeting of a conversational character was held, at which there were about twenty persons present, and so sweetly was the time spent in this way, that that event will not be easily erased from some precious memories - so mighty was the power of God. On the same evening, being the last in the series of special services held in this neighbourhood, an 'experience meeting' was held, at which a number of persons testified for Jesus, and delightful was it to hear each of the speakers narrate his past and present prospects.

One young man who had recently been induced to assure his life in one of the insurance offices, said that he felt far happier since he had assured his soul for heaven, glory to God! After a short prayer-meeting, in which a number took a public stand for Jesus, the Rev. Mr. Tuckfield, as usual, read a religious pledge-card, whereon is stated that the person signing this card thereby 'promises to discountenance sin in any form, and to live in humble dependence on the grace of God to help him.'

Mr. Tuckfield informed the meeting that these cards were sent to him from the Rev. Mr. Goldsmith, of Adelaide, who first instituted the plan, which he (Mr. Tuckfield) approved of very well, as he did the Temperance pledge. After a number of such cards had been signed by, and given to, those present, the meeting closed with the doxology and benediction." (48.)

"The quarterly meeting was held on the 6th instant (July). Grateful reference was made to the material and spiritual success of the past quarter, - particularly to the revival of the work of God at Lancefield and Rochford, and also at Mickleham, where (D.V.) special services will immediately be held." (49.)

"Mickleham. The Rev. James W. Tuckfield commenced special services here on Monday, 12th inst. (July), and continued them for a week. A considerable number of persons have manifested concern for their soul's salvation, twenty-six of whom have taken a public stand for Christ, and nearly all of this number have signed the 'religious pledge-card.' Little excitement prevailed, but the power of God was felt by all in the crowded church..... The last Monday night meeting was specially memorable - old and new converts gratefully acknowledged God's goodness\; unconverted persons stood up and spoke of their sinfulness, and asked for the prayers of the church.

One young man told of his praying mother in England\; of the powerful strivings of the Holy Spirit for the last few days\; that he had several times decided to go to the penitent form\; but, at the last moment, Satan won the battle, and he procrastinated. But tonight he had re-resolved, and to avoid parleying with Satan, he ran miles to the meeting, and now he would publicly surrender himself to God. Then he went up to the penitent form, and, in a short time, received a clear sense of pardon, and again stood up, and, with deep emotion, urged all to give their hearts to God.

Another young man, who that night received Jesus, went to the other end of the church, and pleaded with a companion to yield at once. But the half cannot be written. The glory of God filled the church. Most of the large congregation wept aloud." The meetings were to continue for another week, led by a layman, and further blessing was expected. (50.)

In December, a similar movement was seen in Broadford. "We are in the midst of a blessed revival. Twenty-six persons have come to the penitent form, and, with others have signed the religious pledge-card. Our district meeting returns will not show all this, as, generally speaking, half the converts in country circuits are members of other churches." (51.)

Fitzroy Wesleyan Sunday School. 1875

This account provides an interesting example of a small revival which swept the senior department of a Sunday school. "For some months past the spiritual well-being of the scholars - particularly the young men, whose attendance has been very erratic - has occasioned much solicitude to the teachers. After every available appliance had been employed to attach these permanently to the school, there was still much irregularity to lament.

How to reach and apply saving truth to them, quickly widened into anxiety for many others. The church, just then, was too weak to render much aid in its weekly prayer-meetings, where the number had fallen to the typical two or three. Still, it was felt that any general work should begin there, and to secure combined supplication a number of teachers and others agreed to attend each Tuesday-night prayer-meeting for three months, unless very pressing business intervened.

The immediate effect of this resolve was to quicken the zeal of all who professed faith in Christ. Special prayer was offered for the scholars in the church meetings, and two or three came there mourning, and found peace. Very soon the little church caught the spirit, and much heart-searching followed. The prayer-meeting increased weekly in numbers, earnestness and power, until one evening in May each present felt they could realise faith to look for immediate results. From that day the work grew apace. On the following Sunday the school was penetrated with marked solemnity\; ten accepted the invitation to stay for prayer and guidance, all subsequently testifying that Jesus was their Saviour.

During the next week the prayer-meeting had to adjourn to the church for ampler accommodation, sinners sought and found pardon at home, and on the succeeding Sabbath seventeen more were added. A week of prayer was decided upon, especially for the neighbours, the scholars, and their parents. Circulars fringed with 'exceeding great and precious promises' were distributed, chiefly through the new converts, who found in this their labour an agency greatly blessed of God. Many parents were led to seek Christ, and the sympathy and prayers of believers largely enlisted.

The special services closed after three weeks' continuance, from which the sum total may be gathered that fifty or sixty in all have professed to find forgiveness, most of whom have since met in junior or senior Society classes. Adults who have long mourned their sins have been liberated\; the unconcerned have become anxious, and the working power of the school nearly doubled.

The death of two young disciples, each about fifteen years of age - one after three years, the other after only a month's profession - greatly deepened the seriousness of the scholars. Both gave incontestible evidence of an intelligent acceptance of Christ as their Saviour. With so many young converts the teachers' responsibilities have become infinitely increased, that these may be surrounded with helpful influences, and fortified against the after-damp not infrequently succeeding revivals, now that the stimulus of continuous meetings is withdrawn." (52.)

Nicholson Street, North Fitzroy.

"We are very happy to be able to report that there has been a good work in this place during the last few weeks, and that between forty and fifty have professed to give their hearts to God. The work commenced - as we believe all revivals of religion ought to commence - in the hearts of the members of the church. For some time past there has been an increasing desire that God would indeed visit us with the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. At all the meetings for prayer that were held the great burden of the petitions was that we might be quickened and abundantly blessed. It was arranged that we should have first a week of prayer for the members only, and that we should seek during the week to get prepared to carry on more efficiently the work of God. We felt that our prayers were being heard and answered, and that we should yet see and experience a gracious revival.

The following week we held special services every evening, except Saturday. Small circulars were printed, and distributed all over the neighbourhood, inviting all to come to the services. The attendances were very good indeed, although the weather was very uninviting. There was a gracious feeling pervading the meetings, but during the whole of the first week none yielded to the invitations given to 'decide to seek for pardon.'

Our faith was tried, but still we prayed, expecting that the blessing we so earnestly desired would come, and we were not disappointed. On Sunday, August 1st, at the seven o'clock morning prayer-meeting, the fire seemed kindled in every heart; and all engaged in the blessed work of the Sabbath with greater zeal, and looking for the answer to our prayers. It was indeed a glorious Sabbath, and one which many will remember. There was joy on earth and in heaven over sinners repenting and turning to God. Twelve or fourteen (most of them connected with the school) were seekers that evening. During the (next) week several others found the 'peace which passeth understanding.'

On the following Sabbath (August 8th) there was a great breaking-down in the school in the afternoon, and very many of the dear children were converted to God. Every one of the young women in the senior class professed to have found peace.... At the service in the evening many more were brought to the feet of Jesus, and nearly all were made happy in the salvation of God. Since then, others have been brought to the point of submission to God, and received the adoption of children.

We would humbly ascribe all the glory to God, and devoutly pray that we may have that grace and wisdom given to us to care for the 'lambs of the flock,' to save them, as far as we can, from the dreadful tendency to backslide. We earnestly pray that the work may still go on, until the whole of the neighbourhood is visited with copious showers of blessing." (53.)

St. Kilda, 1875

"During the whole of June this circuit was in great affliction. Its superintendent was seriously ill (probably the Rev. W. A. Quick.), and while confined to his bed it pleased God to take from him his esteemed colleague - the Rev. W. D. Lelean.

According to human probabilities, therefore, the prospect for a prosperous year for the work of God became very dark; yet the Lord has been better to us than our fears. St. Kilda has been visited by a gracious revival, and other parts of the circuit are confidently looking for times of refreshing. It seems as though affliction could 'work together for good' as well for a circuit as for an individual believer.

Before Mr. Lelean's death there was 'a token for God' at St. Kilda in the awakening of six or more young ladies of Mrs. Ellis' school. Again, on the 11th July, when the Rev. J. Watsford preached on behalf of the Home Missions, the Divine power was present, and at the conclusion of the morning service a young lady came as an inquirer to the vestry. It then became evident that the time had arrived when a series of special services might be held with great advantage to the work of God at St. Kilda. They were strongly desired by the office-bearers and members, as well as by the minister, and arrangements were made to commence them on the 2nd inst. (August.)

As a preparatory measure a circular containing a short address to the congregation and the general inhabitants, with an invitation to the services, was struck off, and one thousand copies were put into circulation by members of the church.

The first service was devoted to the subject of holiness, and brought great blessing to our members. It was a time of such spiritual power as prepares God's people for the work of saving souls.

On the Tuesday and Wednesday following there was a softening influence upon the congregations which made us feel that the Lord was present, owning our services and encouraging us to expect greater things. On Thursday evening the power was greater and more manifest. In response to an earnest appeal the penitents left their pews and filled the communion. Others joined them in the vestry at the close of the first service, and a second meeting was held for the seekers alone. It was a sight to bring tears of joy, for among them were several young persons representing some of our most esteemed families as well as the Sunday-school; and it thus became evident that the revival we had been praying for was to be a 'blessing' upon the 'offspring' of God's servants, according to his promise. Several obtained peace to their souls that evening by resting as penitents on the Lord Jesus Christ.

There were similar results at the meeting on Friday evening, and at the close forty persons gave their names as either newly converted, or still seeking the Saviour. It was now determined that, as there were still a few inquirers, Saturday evening should be employed, and on that night also good was done.

Before the revival commenced, the minister had requested the children of all the families attending the church to meet him in the vestry on the Saturday afternoon. It was a blessed meeting. About fifty surrounded the minister, and not one of the number was unconcerned. Some had received peace, to others it was more than peace the Lord had given them - they were thoroughly happy, and many were yet sorrowing for their sins.

It now became plain that another week must be devoted to the work. A second thousand handbills was got out, and on Sunday the minister addressed the school. Thoughtfulness and good behaviour had been already observed by the teachers, but now a solemn influence rested on all. In the school and in the congregation some were still seeking the Lord. And the same during the whole of the week - not an evening passed without a few penitents coming forward, or a few finding peace to their souls.

On Tuesday last we were able to ascertain in part the results of the past fortnight's labours. It was announced on Sunday that the minister wished to meet all who had received a blessing during the services. A large number came; and among them several who were already members in class, and some who were members of other churches. But, after omitting all these, forty-six had their names entered with a view to joining the society classes. The leaders were present with the minister, and then and there the new converts chose the classes in which they would meet. Three new classes are formed, and some of the old ones are strengthened by additions.

While all glory is given to God, it must be thankfully acknowledged that He has provided excellent help in this revival work. The minister has had the assistance of his young colleague, Mr. Saloway, and of several laymen, two of

whom came from other circuits - Mr. Macdougall from Richmond, and Mr. Capper from Brighton. Mr. Henry Reid (Reed) of Launceston gave a powerful address to a large congregation on the last Friday. It is also a matter of thankfulness that the Rev. J. Watsford, amid all his labours, and the Rev. J. Dare, notwithstanding his indisposition, have been able to render valuable help." (The Rev. Henry Saloway was stationed in another part of the circuit.) (54.)

Preston and Heidelberg Circuit, 1875

"At the earnest request of the friends I send you as condensed as possible, and yet imperfect, notes of what God has been doing in our circuit. Some eighteen months ago a series of sermons on 'perfect love' was preached, throughout the circuit, by our minister, the Rev. R. Hart, on such texts as Matthew 5:40, 1 John 1:7\; and the members everywhere were urged to seek this higher life. A very earnest desire for the blessing sprang up in all parts, and at the March quarterly meeting, 1875, a circuit tea-meeting was held at Mr. S. C. King's, Ivanhoe, followed by a 'holiness meeting,' at which the Rev. P. R. C. Ussher did us good service. A large number left the meeting earnestly seeking the great blessing. At Linton special services were held, at which several attained to the higher life, and a few souls were set at liberty.

A second circuit tea-meeting was held at Linton in September, 1875, a glorious season, never to be forgotten! The first ten persons who spoke professed to have found Christ as a Saviour from all sin. (1 John 1:7.) Nineteen of those present came forward seeking the same blessing, several of whom realised its enjoyment, and a number who were seeking pardon returned 'to their Father.' From that onward we have been enjoying a very rich and gracious baptism of the Holy Spirit.

At Yan Yean, Whittlesea, Thomaston, Preston, Alphington, Heidelberg and Eltham, special services were held, with glorious results. (The report then gave examples of people whose lives were touched.)

At Yan Yean a Roman Catholic who had been seeking peace of mind in his own church in vain, came to the services and was fully happy. At Whittlesea, a coloured man, well primed with drink, was sent to disturb the meeting, but was arrested by the Spirit. He signed the temperance pledge, and a few nights after found Christ, and has been happy ever since. At Thomaston and Alphington a number of young people, say from sixteen to twenty years of age, found peace with God.

On November 14th, Preston and South Preston churches were closed, and a camp-meeting was held in a paddock about mid-way between the two places. A band of young men from Collingwood rendered us noble service, singing through the two villages before and after the services. In the evening at Preston, short addresses were substituted for the normal sermon. There was a thorough breakdown, so that special services which extended over a fortnight were commenced.

The larrakin band has been completely broken up, and those whose mouths were filled with oaths and curses a few weeks ago may now be heard praising and glorifying God in His sanctuary. Believers, too, have been built up\; and where there was a short time ago so much deadness amongst God's people in different parts, that one felt compelled to exclaim 'Can these dry bones live?', there is now the greatest spiritual life and rejoicing.

Tickets on trial (for membership) have already been given to over fifty in the circuit, and there are a number at Eltham and Heidelberg who have been added to the church since the visitation of classes. Besides this we must reckon several bands of young converts at Thomaston and Preston formed into catechumen classes, and those who have found peace in our meetings but belong to other churches.

While we desire humbly to give all the glory to God, we cannot but acknowledge with gratitude the services of many willing workers. Among them we may mention Mr. J. Niven, who has conducted several of the special services, and also visited all classes (of people) from house to house. Mr. S. C. King, who has thrown himself most heartily into the work, bringing out bands of young men night after night from Fitzroy, and giving us his personal help; Mr. David Lowe, and many others, who so cheerfully rendered us good service. Whilst thankfully acknowledging this help, we desire to give all the glory to whom alone it is due - our Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our experience of this revival is that we do not require to wait for the arrival of such useful men as Messrs Moody and Sankey, but we have the means in our hands - faith and work - for shaking Melbourne to its centre with a glorious revival." - Grateful. (55.)

Early in January, 1876, the quarterly meeting was held, when a fuller view of the results was possible.

"Though many of the friends had come long distances, there was a large gathering, and the greatest harmony and good-will prevailed. The circuit has been greatly blessed with a glorious revival, many of God's people obtaining the blessing of entire holiness, and a goodly number gathered to the church from outside. The friends accordingly were anxious to hear results. The number reported on trial for membership was 64, not including converts at Heidelberg and Eltham. The income was considerably above expenditure..... The young men lately brought in have formed a Saturday-night prayer-meeting, which is well attended, and at which several conversions have taken place. The Rev. R. Hart received a very hearty and unanimous invitation to remain a third year." The new year's watch-night service had been supported by sixty people, instead of the normal fifteen. (56.)

Sandhurst, 1875

At some stage during 1875, a revival occurred at Bendigo, quite possibly in the winter months when special services were more likely to be held. The main impact was in the churches of the Forest Street Circuit, although other, local churches may also have been affected a little.

No report of this revival appeared in the "Spectator". The details we possess appear in W. J. Palamountain's biography of the Rev. A. R. Edgar.

Alexander R. Edgar was accepted as a student in the Wesleyan ministry in Victoria at the Conference early in 1874. He was placed (by request of the circuit) at Kangaroo Flat, which was part of the Golden Square Circuit in Bendigo. The superintendent minister under whom Edgar spent two years there was the Rev. T. James.

The Golden Square Circuit, along with many others, was badly affected at this time by a serious economic recession, especially affecting the mining industries. These bad effects on the circuit were made worse by many members leaving for the extensive newly opened farming areas in more distant parts of Victoria.

Although Edgar saw some conversions in his normal work, the revival occurred mainly in the neighbouring Forest Street Circuit, during special services in which Edgar was heavily involved.

Palamountain says:- "The work, however, went on in spite of difficulties, and his ministry was blessed to many. The adjoining circuit (Forest Street) was also visited by a very gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the short space of about two months 250 people were added to the membership of the Church. The work was especially glorious because of the number of young men who were led to decision. In the Forest Street Church alone, within a fortnight 150 persons made the great decision. In the Sunday school, on one afternoon, 100 scholars

were also led to Christ. In this work A. R. Edgar had a large share, for he records his 'thankfulness to God for such a wonderful manifestation of His power, and prays for the lambs of the flock.'" Edgar kept a diary during this period. (57.) Edgar left Kangaroo Flat in April, 1876, to spend three years in the Inglewood Circuit, where we will meet him again.

The Work of Matthew Burnett, 1875

Matthew Burnett had arrived back from England about the middle of 1874. He had already been preaching in a number of places during the latter part of 1874. But, during the first half of 1875, he was back into full stride, with his particular style of special work in several circuits. The report from the Blackwood Circuit comes from that period.

A dividing line occurred, however, at the beginning of September, when he became an official home missionary, working with the Wesleyan Home Missions Department, but with the liberty to work in any circuit which requested his services. This period of his life continued until 1880, when he moved to South Australia. He commenced with eight weeks of solid work at Wesley Church, in central Melbourne, followed by a period at Richmond.

Blackwood Circuit, 1875

This circuit had only just been formed, at the Conference in January. The first quarterly meeting was held on 5th July, 1875. The minister of the circuit, briefly, was the Rev. Edmund Bickford.

"We have lately been favoured with a visit from Mr. Matthew Burnett, the Yorkshire evangelist, who conducted special services for a fortnight at Barry's Reef. Many have repented and turned to the Lord. It has been found necessary to continue the revival meetings for another fortnight. About sixty persons have professed conversion. Mr. Burnett initiated, with great success, a series of Saturday night Working men's Meetings\; the result of which has been that 300 persons have already signed the (temperance) pledge. Mr. Burnett held three of these meetings, returning all the way from Geelong expressly to conduct the third, on Saturday, July 3rd. On this occasion Mr. Burnett gave a very interesting lecture on his recent visit to Europe, and the leading social reformers he met with. A small admission was charged, the result of which was that, after paying expenses, the sum of nearly six pounds was handed over to the local Mechanics Institute. A complimentary and farewell tea was given to Mr. Burnett on Monday evening, June 28th, and was very largely attended.

On Friday evening, July 9th, in continuation of the special services, the Rev. E. S. Bickford preached to a large congregation. The Word was with power, and several sought the Lord." (58.)

Burnett's New Situation

"The (Home Mission) Committee have arranged for Mr. Burnett to be employed as a general home missionary. For the last month he has been successfully labouring in Geelong. On Sunday next he will commence his labours in this city in connexion with Wesley Church."

Watsford then gave an outline of the work Burnett would be doing there. "His work will be especially among the perishing masses in the back lanes of our city\; and I am sure everyone who loves the Saviour will give him all the help they can, and will earnestly pray that God will bless him in the good work."

Ever since the "Spectator" had been published, in nearly every weekly issue, Watsford provided a column describing Home Mission work, but mainly a description of where he went himself, and where he preached. The column gives us a good biography of his life from 1875 to 1879, in travelling all over Victoria. (59.)

Wesley Church, 1875

The superintendent minister at Wesley Church at the time was the Rev. J. G. Millard. He provided several progress reports upon the work. The following one appeared at the end of two months.

"Home Mission services have been conducted, as our friends are aware, during the past eight weeks in this city by Mr. Matthew Burnett, with considerable success and encouragement. Prayer-meetings have been held at noon daily, and in the evenings the singing bands have made excursions into the various lanes and alleys of the city, gathering as they have marched the curious, the thoughtless, the drunkard and the profane, who have been, in some instance, almost irresistably led into the place of preaching, held by the power of song, or the Spirit of God. The scenes have been such at Wesley Church has not known before - men in their working garb, gay women suddenly arrested in their course of sin, drunkards solemnised by the passing token of earnest effort for their reclamation, thoughtless and giddy youths, struck with the need of making a safe and happy path for life that shall lead to a bright eternal home.

Strange events have happened. Mingling with the song of praise, or the voice of earnest prayer, there have been heard the rough and coarse expressions of the debased\; the hollow utterances of the debauched\; the hopeless words of the despairing. Amid and over all there has been manifest the divine power, girding his servants with strength, and guiding their efforts straight home to the heart....

Eleven fallen women have been rescued and restored to their friends, or found temporary homes in the refuges. At the meetings held on Monday for counselling the converts, exhorting them to hold fast the beginning of their confidence, and directing them to suitable classes, and to join the churches for which they may have preference, many rose and testified of God's mercy to them in connexion with Mr. Burnett's labours.

One said, 'On Sunday morning fortnight I was playing cards till two o'clock\; in the evening I heard the singing bands, and from curiosity followed it: and did not leave the church until God had taken away the burden of my sins.'

Another described the depth of mental anguish and despair to be such that preparation had been made for the violent taking of life\; but on the way to commit the rash act, the singing band was met, the words of exhortation came home to the heart, and peace and joy took the place of dread and despair.

Another:- 'I now realise that Jesus has saved my soul from all sin\; I found the blessed Saviour while you were singing "Almost Persuaded."'

Another:- 'The other evening I happened, in the company of another man much older than myself, to be drinking in a public house, situated in a street through which the band passed\; we joined in the company, and followed to the church, heard the prayers for those who had not found the Saviour\; words of kindness were addressed to me, but I was unwilling to receive Christ, as for thirteen years I had been a backslider separated from His church\; I came to the services, and during the singing of the words "O Wanderer Come", my soul bowed down and came back to Christ.

Another:- "I have been one of the worst of sinners, on the broad road to ruin\; and had not God, in His merciful providence, interferred, my destruction must have been inevitable. I was snatched from the verge of hell, to which I

was going headlong. When first asked to go to the communion-rail, I laughed\; but the words had made a deep impression on my heart, and I could not rest\; so I went up the next Sunday, and gave my heart to God. I have now given up all my sins, theatres, and old associates, which nearly caused my ruin, and intend, with God's help, to serve Him.

Many other testimonies were given of God's love and power to save. Suitable words of advice were offered by the Rev. J. G. Millard and Mr. Burnett\; and with many a heartfelt prayer for God's blessing, and expressions of love and friendship, this successful series of services was brought to a close. May the fruit appear after many days and in many places, as the address-book shows that of those who have given in their names many reside in Fitzroy, Carlton and Hotham, as well as Melbourne. Will God's people continue to offer supplication for His blessing on the efforts now about to be commenced in Richmond." (60.)

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The Annual Conference for 1876, held in the second half of January, went through the agonies once again flowing from the announcement of a decline in full membership the previous year. These figures were always hard to evaluate, because weekly attendance at a class meeting was still the sole criterion for full membership. Like any other criterion which might have been chosen, this one had its full range of difficulties and peculiar results flowing from it. Attendance at class meetings was slowly becoming something that was not done so much by Methodists.

The decline was 449 full members, although 1263 were on trial for membership.

The published record of the Conference has this reaction.

"The Rev. R. Hart proposed that a convention similar to the one recently held in London for the promotion of holiness should be held in Melbourne.

The Rev. J. Eggleston seconded the proposition. Eventually this motion was merged into one proposed by the Rev. E. I. Watkin to the effect that, with a view to promote, with God's blessing, a revival of religion in our churches, special evangelistic services be held during the year in all our circuits, and that a committee consisting of the President, the ex-President, the General Secretary of Home Missions, and the chairmen of districts, be a committee to arrange for an interchange of pulpits among our ministers, to arrange for a convention or conventions of Christian workers, and to make such other arrangements as would in their judgment promote a revival of religion." (61.)

Several months later, a large convention of Christian workers was organised at Wesley Church, lasting for two days, and an extensive coverage of the proceedings of that gathering was published in the "Spectator."

No doubt, a good many special evangelistic services were held during 1876 in many places, and converts were won to Christ, but reports upon these special efforts were not published. During 1876, NO NEWS OF ANY REVIVALS in normal Victorian circuits appeared in print that year.

News about special meetings were reported relating to the ministry of Matthew Burnett. News of revival in Tasmania, Fiji, the United States and in England, appeared. This included a number of pieces about Moody and Sankey. The only Victorian revival described occurred in one of the newly opened farming areas, southeast of Melbourne.

Dromana, 1876

John Watsford mentions this revival briefly in his autobiography, but the best details are in one of Watsford's special Home Missions columns, in the "Spectator."

"A GOOD WORK. Six weeks ago Brother Seccombe wrote me from Berwick, - that while at Balnarring - the most distant place in his circuit - he had heard that a good work was going on among the people in one or two places in the mountains at the back of Arthur's Seat, and in two or three small towns on the coast\; and he determined to visit them. He did so, in company with Mr. Carr, and they saw the grace of God and were glad.

They found that about thirty had been converted\; that most of these were earnestly working for God, striving to lead sinners to Jesus\; and that a very gracious influence was spreading among the people all over the district. Among those who were foremost in the work were some who had been members and local preachers in our church, but they were here far away from any Methodist place of worship. Mr. Seccombe told them that I would no doubt visit them, and he wrote, pressing me to do so. I determined to go as soon as possible, but my other engagement prevented me doing so at once.

On Monday 18th (December), I started for the district, and on the evening preached at Frankston to a good congregation. On Tuesday Mr. Seccombe drove me in his buggy to Dromana, where I met Mr. Shand, the leader in the work, who has been made a great blessing to the people. He gave me some account of the work, as did also our friend Mr. Ninnis, who has the state school here. In the evening I preached to as earnest a congregation as I ever had the pleasure of addressing\; there were about 120 present. After the first service, we had a prayer-meeting, to which everyone remained, and a great grace was upon us all.

On Wednesday we visited several families and conversed with some who had lately received good (been converted), and I was greatly delighted with the deep interest manifested in religious things, and by the clear and simple testimony borne by some to the power of saving grace. We found some in great trouble, refusing to be comforted. We tried to show them the way of salvation, and prayed for them that they might soon see the salvation of God. At two o'clock we drove to Rosebud, a little fishing village about three miles from Dromana. On the way we called at a house where Mr. Shand introduced us to two or three who were earnestly seeking God. At 3 o'clock I preached to about 25 persons, and we all felt that God was very near. After service we drove on to Boneo, about six miles from this, and I preached in the evening to about sixty.

Here and at Rosebud I met and conversed with others who had lately been blessed, and among them I found some very remarkable cases of conversion. I was very much pleased to find how earnestly, and yet with all simplicity and humility, they witnessed for Jesus, and were trying to save others.

On Thursday we drove seven miles to Mr. Shand's, in the mountains, where I preached at 3 o'clock to about 25, and we had a blessed meeting. In the evening at 7.30, I preached again at Red Hill, about seven miles from Mr. Shand's. At this service we had about eighty persons, four or five of whom were earnestly seeking the salvation of their souls, and two professed to have obtained it.

The land in these mountains is very good, but heavily timbered\; a good deal of it has been selected, but only a small part is cleared. There are a good many farmers in the neighbourhood, and among these there has been a blessed work. Meetings had been held at Mr. Shand's for some time, when it was found that the people began to feel more than usual interest in them, and the leaders were encouraged to hope and pray that God would pour out His Spirit abundantly. One evening the power of the Lord was present to heal\; seven or eight were in deep distress about their souls, and most of them found the Saviour.

From that time the work has been gradually extending and deepening. There has not been any great excitement, but deep feeling and anxious enquiry as to the way of salvation. Many have come to hear, and have gone home to search the

Scriptures and pray for mercy. Those who have been converted have been taught to begin at once to work for the salvation of others.

Bro. Shand has laboured hard, preaching in many places, and visiting the people in their homes\; a number of excellent young men have rallied around him, and greatly helped him in the work. They have regular services in six places, and everywhere God is with them. A singing band has also been made a great blessing.

On Friday morning I preached at Hastings at 7 o'clock to about twenty persons, and then took coach and returned home. It has been a week, this, such as one does not often have. I have heard more about religion than I have heard in a week for some time. Not mere talk or cant, but earnest religious conversation, asking questions about the way of salvation and bearing testimony to the goodness and mercy of God in saving. I have met with the young, full of fire and zeal, rejoicing in Jesus\; and with the aged, who were in darkness for years but have now seen a great light, and we are filled with adoring gratitude for the great change which has been wrought in them. I am sure all our friends everywhere will rejoice over what God has done in this place, and will pray that the good work may prosper yet more and more. The Home Mission Committee will, I have no doubt, when I meet them, do something at once for this district." J. W. (62.)

Matthew Burnett, 1876

As mentioned, the editorial staff of the "Spectator" included several efforts to support special services. One of these created interesting reactions from several letter-writers.

One of the editorial columns was called "Easy Chair Chat", controlled by someone who called himself "XYZ."

"The watchword which is sent down all the lines of the Methodist Church this year is special evangelistic services. That watchword is a right brave and Christian one\; and if the campaign be entered upon energetically and wisely, the position of the church will be a different one at the year's end. But a high degree of both energy and wisdom will be needed. It is significant to notice how almost entirely barren of tangible and abiding results to the church some kinds of special efforts are.

The work even of Moody and Sankey under the testing of the great critic, time, is diminishing in magnitude. Mr. Spurgeon, who took a most prominent part in that revival, and whose bias is wholly friendly, has said publicly, 'The new converts are not in the churches. Where are they, I know not. I confess I was never so bitterly disappointed in my life.'

Mr. Matthew Burnett recently carried on in a Melbourne circuit eight weeks of continuous special services. They were reported to be highly successful\; the conversions were said to amount to hundreds, and the results were diligently garnered. But the additions to the membership of that circuit at the end of the quarter amounted to just eleven names.

Of course there is a gain in these special services in the quickening of the spiritual life of the church which cannot be expressed in figures nor written down in official statistics. But the absence of any result which can be tangibly recorded is bitterly disappointing, and gives a right to complain.

We shall need to look well for our methods in the new work we undertake. The link betwixt revival efforts and the sober and orderly membership of the church must be kept very clearly and strong." (63.)

This editorial evoked a number of responses.

One letter-writer claimed that the falling away after Moody's meetings in England was due to theological inadequacies in Moody's preaching. He claimed to possess evidence that Moody preached much about faith in Christ, but hardly ever

talked about repentance and holiness. This, he thought, was the cause of the alleged falling off of the converts.

Another writer thought that eleven new church members in a quarter was not so bad, but that it ought to be done every quarter - which would lead to 44 additions every year. This would be better than what happened at present.

A much more serious attack on XYZ came from a member of Wesley Church who said that the figure of "eleven" new members was entirely mistaken. XYZ had not been telling the truth. Over 100 names of converts were given to the superintendent minister of the Wesley Church circuit, nearly all of whom were now meeting in class. 36 were received on trial for membership at Wesley Church, plus others at North Melbourne and Carlton - which were other churches in this same circuit. Several neighbouring circuits also benefited from Burnett's work.

The most interesting reply, however, came from one of Burnett's converts, who signed his name to the letter. This signing of the letter was unusual, as most letter-writers used nom-de-plumes.

"SIR, - I happen to be one of Mr. Burnett's converts, and since my conversion, have been almost nightly in the society of men and women brought to Christ through this evangelist's instrumentality. This being the case, it is my duty to say a word or two in reference to the remarks made upon Mr. Burnett's labours by the author of 'Easy Chair Chat.'"

After endorsing the comments made in the first two letters we referred to, above, which had been published the previous week, he said, - "But I go further. Numbers of adherents of all sections of the visible church flocked to the scenes of Mr. Burnett's labours, were converted, returned to their own denominations, and do not appear on the rolls of our Wesleyan statistics. For example, I was brought up a Baptist, and, although still a Baptist in principle, am a member of Wesley Church. Thus my name appears in that church's register. My case is an exceptional one, the rule being that the various denominations to which Mr. Burnett's converts nominally belonged reap the benefits derivable from their conversions.

Every Monday night for a number of weeks past, after the prayer-meeting service held in Wesley Church schoolroom, it has been the custom of a few of my sisters and brothers in the Lord to repair to a house in Little Flinders-street, and there hold a cottage service. Now, the head of this cottage was converted through the instrumentality of Mr. Burnett, but instead of his name appearing in the register of the Wesleyan body, it appears in the register of another denomination. Cases of this kind could be multiplied in illustration of the fact that the results of Mr. Burnett's labours cannot be estimated by the figures of mere circuit rolls.

It was only last night that an influential member of Wesley Church informed me that he had received a letter from a woman, who was one of Mr. Burnett's converts, expressing her indignation at XYZ's strictures on the labours of Mr. Burnett's evangelistic efforts\; and he closed this intimation by remarking, 'I am led to understand that her name does not appear in our church's books\; but many a sick and dying man and woman living in the dens of low Melbourne bless, and will bless, God for sending such labourers as Mr. Burnett and Mr. Coles across their paths.'

It is worthy to remark that the singing bands which go out with Mr. Coles into the streets and lanes of Melbourne are chiefly composed of Mr. Burnett's converts\; and such of them as attribute their conversion to other instrumentality frankly admit that Mr. Burnett imported a vitality into their midst which has ever since given an impetus to their zeal in the cause of Christ.

The same, to a great extent, may be said in reference to the singing bands in Richmond and Collingwood, some of the members of the latter of which hail

from Fitzroy and Carlton, and other suburbs and districts. In fact, the brother who heads the Collingwood singing band, and who devotes one or two nights per week to preaching in the lanes and alleys of (Collingwood), has more than once told the members of his band that the force of Mr. Burnett's example constrained him to put forth the evangelistic efforts which are now being blessed and meeting with such a measure of success in Collingwood."

I remain, yours, etc., John K. MacIntyre (64.)

Following the two months that Matthew Burnett spent in the Richmond Circuit late in 1875, for several months it is not clear where he was working, until we find him spending seven weeks in the Clunes Circuit, ending in early May. A return series in the Blackwood Circuit followed that. Early July saw him in the Daylesford Circuit, and this was followed by a period at Castlemaine, ending in mid-August. The rest of the year he spent in northern Victoria, and in the border areas. This included some weeks in Albury, and even a brief visit to Wagga Wagga, deeper into New South Wales. Then he went to Yackandandah, and the El Dorado Circuit, then Barnawartha, Wandiligong and Bright.

The Impact of British and American Methodist Revivals

On this occasion, the efforts of the Rev. E. I. Watkin, and others of similar mind, in having motions passed at the Annual Conference in support of special services, did not seem to have made much, if any, difference to the health and growth of the denomination. Though, no doubt, the convention on holiness seemed to be quite a valuable enterprise.

The thing which helped to create new possibilities for the next year or two was news from England.

The call to united prayer for revival during the first week of each year, issued by the Evangelical Alliance, had been supported well in Britain and the United States, for a decade since the call was first issued. News about widespread revivals, associated with this call to prayer, had filtered down to Australia, from time to time. While Australian churches had tried to follow this example of united prayer, it had never really developed in a way which would lead to large results.

It seems that, in the northern winter months of 1876, British Methodism had really taken up the challenge of holding special evangelistic efforts on a very wide scale.

Consequently, some months later, the British Methodist Conference was able to report an increase of full members of 14,867 in the year, with 33,214 others on trial for membership. (65.)

This news, which was repeated the following year, created the impact in the Victorian Wesleyan Conference which led to larger things in 1877 and 1878.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

BETTER YEARS FOR VICTORIA

1877 to 1879

As the new year dawned, many Christians gathered to pray for the work of God, in response to the call from the Evangelical Alliance. But, as in the northern hemisphere, the winter months always seemed a better time for special efforts. As a result, in the stifling January heat of southern Australia, no great turning of events occurred in Victoria.

As noted at the end of the last chapter, however, the Wesleyans had been particularly impressed by the revivals experienced by British Methodists early in 1876, as described in the British Methodist periodicals, and as demonstrated by the British Conference returns. They were watching to see what would happen during the northern winter, this time, and they wanted the same kind of success in their own colony.

Even by mid-January, the first news was filtering through. The English "Watchman and Recorder" contained accounts of some of the mission meetings. A two-day convention for "Methodist Office-bearers, and other workers" was held in City-road Chapel, in London. A description of this meeting was given in the "Spectator." Dr. Osborn's address was said to be very encouraging. A younger minister described a revival in which he had been involved. There was an open session, when anyone could speak. The singing and sharing was great. It reminded those present of Malachi 3:16 - 17, where those who feared the Lord spoke together, and the Lord took notice, and was there. (1.)

The Victorian and Tasmanian Wesleyan Conference met over the end of January, and into early February. This Conference was the first to combine lay representatives into some of the Conference gatherings. Previously, all power had rested with the ministers in Conference.

13. Better Years for Victoria 1877 to 1879

The general returns reported an increase of 419 in full members for Victoria and Tasmania through 1876, with 934 on trial for membership. This followed decreases over the previous several years. The motion which affected the future in these matters was moved by the Rev. E. I. Watkin (again), and seconded by the Rev. R. Hart. "That

this Conference thankfully recognises the spiritual results of the past year\; and with a view to promote, by God's blessing, the further revival of religion in our churches, requests the President of the Conference, the chairmen of districts, and the General Secretary of Home Missions, to arrange for District and Circuit Revival Missions, of the same character as those which have been so useful in connexion with British Methodism." (2.)

The President that year was the Rev. Edward King, of the Williamstown Circuit.

By the month of March, Matthew Burnett had returned from his holidays, and was campaigning in the Kilmore Circuit, in conjunction with the minister, the Rev. James W. Tuckfield.

The quarterly meeting of the Yackandandah Circuit (March 26th) reported what was for them the exciting news, that their full membership had risen to sixty, as a result of the visit to the district by Burnett late the previous year. (3.) They also began their special services early in May, which was earlier than most other places, importing help from the Kilmore Circuit. "We have received communication from the Rev. J. W. Tuckfield of successful revival services being held in this circuit. He reports of believers quickened and many conversions, while awakenings are still occurring daily." (4.)

New life was also appearing in the Inglewood Circuit, where the minister was the Rev. A. R. Edgar. A "decided improvement" in the congregations was reported by John Watsford in the "Spectator", based upon a letter he had received from Edgar.

A paid local preacher was hired from Golden Square to share the work at Inglewood. Special blessing seems to have come to meetings being held at Mr. Westcott's farm. Palamountain says, "The good work referred to as going on at Mr. Westcott's was a work of ingathering, for many conversions took place under the roof of Mr. Westcott's farmhouse." (5.) But the blessing spread through the whole circuit, influencing Wedderburn, Fernehurst, Boort, Kurracca, and many other places.

Editorial Support

Again, there was good editorial support, through the columns of the "Spectator", strongly encouraging the desire to see revival in Victoria. Apart from contributions from the editors, themselves, numbers of other articles appeared, which could provide any student with a study on their own.

One, the first of a short series of articles, by the Rev. T. James, began with the famous statement: "The history of revivals is the history of the progress of the Church of Christ." (6.)

Perhaps the key editorial appeared on May 12th. "A few weeks since we expressed the hope that efforts would speedily be made similar to those which have been so highly honoured of God in England, to promote a revival of the work of God throughout the Methodist churches in this colony. Since then, the committee appointed by the last Conference to consider this important subject, and to arrange for Revival Missions, has met, and, after long and prayerful consideration, agreed to the following recommendations:-

1. That a week of special services be held in the month of May, or as soon after as possible.

2. That superintendents meet leaders, local preachers, and other workers, once or twice in the week preceding, for conversation and prayer with reference to the work of God.

3. That bands of workers be organised for house-to-house visitation\; and a special choir, as large and efficient as possible, for conducting singing.

4. That the Friday preceding the week of services be observed as a day of fasting and prayer.

5. That noon-day prayer-meetings be held from Monday to Saturday.

6. That from Monday to Friday, meetings be held each evening, during which appropriate addresses should be delivered, and prayer offered.

7. The following subjects are suggested as suitable for addresses and prayer:-

The Holy Spirit's..... influence essential to the prosperity of a church.

The unfaithfulness of professors a hindrance to the prosperity of Zion.

The importance of entire sanctification.

The duty of witnessing for Christ.

Means to promote a revival.

The conversion of our children.

The sinner's danger.

The penitent's encouragement.

The blessedness of religion.

8. On Saturday evening a meeting for bearing testimony.

These recommendations have been embodied in a circular, and forwarded by the President to all the Wesleyan ministers throughout the colony, and we trust will be adopted, and speedily put into practice in all our circuits.

The existence of revivals of religion, as at Pentecost, in the earliest and purest days of Christianity, furnishes the strongest argument in favour of the use of every means to promote them now. Such efforts have been signally owned in the past. Methodism received its origin in a revival\; its history is everywhere marked by these extraordinary effusions of the Holy Spirit\; these have given it its world-wide extension and influence\; and thus its onward progress must still be marked.

Nothing is more apparent than the necessity which just now exists for such a visitation - to destroy worldliness and formality in the church, to raise the tone of piety amongst us, and to bring to decision numbers who have long sat under our ministry. We trust the young will specially be benefited. What a blessing would it prove if even but a thousand of the elder scholars in our Sabbath-schools were to be converted and brought into connexion with the Church this winter.

We trust that no local difficulties will be permitted to interfere with the carrying out of the arrangements, but that, as suggested, the effort may as nearly as possible be a simultaneous one.

Let it be remembered that the personal dedication of God's people - their getting into sympathy with Christ in this great work of soul-saving - is the first step\; then the suitable use of means will appropriately follow. Let the local preachers and leaders rally around the ministers, and let all make those sacrifices which attendance at the mid-day prayer-meetings and evening services may involve.

Already reports have reached us of gracious and hallowed seasons, of sinners converted and believers sanctified, from several circuits\; and we trust soon to hear the work becoming general. Let the cry be universal - 'Wilt Thou not revive us again\; that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?' 'O Lord, revive Thy work.' " (7.)

Many localised revivals took place in Victorian circuits during 1877. Many of these were reported upon in the "Spectator". Including all of these reports here would, however, make our book unacceptably large. In a few cases,

laymen sent in reports, but a report written by the minister was also published at a later date. Samples only are included here.

Brunswick Street Circuit, 1877

This large Melbourne circuit was one of the first to report movements of the Holy Spirit, and these continued for some time, as special services moved slowly from church to church around the circuit.

The first special services took place in the main church in Brunswick Street, starting on May 6th, followed by meetings in the church in the suburb of Brunswick. The June quarterly meeting intervened, allowing a review of the situation. Then followed special meetings in Gipps Street church, and at Coburg and Northcote. The next quarterly meeting, late in September, provided an on-going overview.

This report refers to the church in the suburb of Brunswick. "For some time past indications of a revival of religion have been observed here. The class and prayer-meetings had an improved attendance, and warmth and heartiness had taken the place of coldness and formality. A number of conversions had occurred in connexion with the Bible class. Cottage prayer-meetings and a tract distribution society had been organised and entered into with considerable spirit. To prepare for special services circulars were distributed amongst the members of the congregation, informing them that such services would be held, commencing June the 10th, and soliciting their prayers and co-operation.

On the Sunday appointed there was a large attendance at the evening service\; but though many seemed deeply impressed, yet none obtained pardon so far as was known. On Monday, one soul was able to rejoice in the Saviour's love. (On Tuesday, there was no response.) Wednesday was a gracious season. At least eleven persons professed to find mercy, and many of the people of God were greatly blessed. The other evenings of that week were fruitful in blessing to more than seventeen others. Sunday last was the occasion of a most remarkable display of divine grace.

A special service had been announced for the school, and the attendance of the prayer-leaders had been secured. After a hymn and short prayer, a simple address was given upon the necessity of regeneration. There was a careful and studious avoidance of anything that would excite emotion, or unduly work upon the fears of the scholars. Prayer was then offered for the school, a present blessing being especially desired. Before singing the next hymn the scholars were asked to consider,..... whether they would yield themselves to Jesus that afternoon, or say, 'Go Thy way for this time,' and those who had resolved to come to Christ were invited to kneel at some forms which had been placed down the centre of the school.

While prayer was offered some boys came forward and knelt as seekers of salvation. Three girls next presented themselves. All were invited to remain\; those who did not wish to do so were permitted to retire during singing.

On invitation to the centre forms being repeated, about fifty boys and girls from the ages of ten or eleven and upwards came forward at once. Three long forms were now filled with weeping scholars now seeking the Saviour. In almost every class there were some left praying for mercy.... A sense of the near presence of God filled every heart. Simple instruction was given while the penitents still remained kneeling. After another season of prayer, those who had found pardon were asked to rise. Almost all did so....

At the evening service a large congregation was present. More than twice the number seen on any other occasion remained to the prayer-meeting." (8.) Other conversions occurred as the meetings proceeded. But a climax of these meetings occurred on June 24th. "The preaching of the word by the Rev. Joseph Dare was with power, and at least twenty-five were penitently seeking Jesus in

the prayer-meeting which followed." (9.) The series of meetings at Brunswick finished one week later.

At the June quarterly meeting, held on Thursday, 28th June, "After deducting 17 removals, and four who had ceased to meet in class, there was an increase of 24 new members (for the quarter), with 68 on trial for membership, not including some sixty who have since been received into the church at Brunswick." (Perhaps the membership intake at Brunswick took place on Sunday, July 1st. The report was probably written by the following Wednesday. It was published on Saturday, July 7th.)

After the business was over, the meeting took somewhat of the form of a Love-feast, and many testimonies were borne of personal benefits received and gracious results witnessed during the quarter\; while, amidst the offering of fervent prayers, many consecrated themselves afresh to God, and to His service. Our Revival Services at Brunswick-street, and at Brunswick, have been specially honoured of God, and we are looking for similar manifestations at Gipps-street and Coburg, at which places special services are about to be commenced." (10.)

No report about the Gipps Street meetings appeared in the "Spectator", but reports did appear about the meetings at Coburg and at Northcote, which were other parts of this circuit. (11.)

Regarding the Sackville Street Church, in Collingwood, which was also a church in the Brunswick Street Circuit at that time, the Rev. W. L. Blamires reported that, for several Sunday afternoons, the ministers had taken the opportunity to impress upon the Sunday school children "the present dedication of themselves to God." A good number of the girls responded positively to this. A break-through amongst the boys came a little later, in an evening service.

"About thirty are gathered into the Church or catechumen classes. We are at present holding special services, hoping thereby to strengthen the young converts, and to gather to Christ some of the unconverted in this neighbourhood. The members of the church are greatly revived, and are praying, looking and working for a further revival of religion in our midst. And as an earnest we are happy to add that fifteen persons presented themselves for the prayers of the congregation on Sunday evening last." (12.)

The September quarterly meeting occurred quite late in the month. "Our quarterly meeting was held in the vestry of the Brunswick-street Church. About forty representatives of the various churches of the circuit, after a social cup of tea, entered upon the business of the evening, and were greatly cheered by the satisfactory and highly encouraging state of both the spiritual and financial interests of the church which were laid before them. The returns for the (quarter) showed an increase of fifty members, with 170 on trial for membership\; while a large number of the children of the Sabbath-schools who are believed to have trusted in Christ have been placed in catechumen classes, and confided to the care of suitable persons for spiritual oversight and culture....

After the close of the business of the evening, an interesting and profitable conversation took place respecting the work of God in the circuit. During the past six months every one of the churches has been graciously visited from on high, and we are looking to Him who 'giveth the increase' that this may be only an earnest of yet greater good to come." (13.)

Sandhurst: Golden Square Circuit, 1877

On 19th May, 1877, the Rev. John Watsford reported on his visit to this circuit, and to the neighbouring Forest Street Circuit, as a normal part of his promotion of Home Missions. He also gave some details in his autobiography. He preached in the Forest Street Circuit from Sunday, 6th May, until the 10th. The minister in the Golden Square Circuit at that time was the Rev. Spencer Williams.

"On Sunday, 13th inst. (May), I preached at Kangaroo Flat in the morning, and the Rev. S. Williams preached at night\; Mr. Williams preached at Golden Square in the morning, and I at night. In the afternoon I addressed the young people of the Sunday school, and was greatly pleased to see the attention paid by them when I pressed them to give themselves to God while young. The rain began about four o'clock in the afternoon, and at the time for the evening service it fell heavily, and the night was very dark. This greatly affected the attendance, but we had a tolerably good congregation, and the power of the Lord was present to heal.

During the first service many felt greatly\; more than half the congregation remained to the prayer-meeting. At first there was some resistance, but the praying men pleaded most earnestly with God, and the mighty power came upon us and many were subdued. Ten or twelve came at once to the communion-rail - all of them, except two, fine young men. Some of them were in great distress. It was very affecting to see the joy of the parents when their sons came forward, and the joy of the teachers who had laboured and prayed for them\; the greater number of these found peace. There were others in distress in different parts of the church. Bro. Williams had been very anxious about the matter, and had been expecting that God would visit the people and bless them, and he was filled with joy when he returned from his appointment. The praying men and women have been pleading for this, and longing and waiting for the showers of blessing. (A further meeting for enquirers was appointed the next evening, before the missionary meeting.)

On Monday evening we had a meeting at six o'clock\; the vestry was crowded, and many could not get in. Three or four were in distress. When the time for our missionary meeting came, we found it difficult to leave the penitents\; but as we thought our meeting would not interfere with, but rather help soul-saving work, we held it. There was a large congregation and a good collection (for Home Missions), and many seemed to feel deeply as they heard the story of God's work at home and abroad. When closing the meeting Mr. Williams invited any who were seeking God to remain for prayer, and a good many did so. At this, and the former meeting, five or six professed to find the Saviour. Others were much concerned about their souls, and I have no doubt there will be a sweeping work in the place. (This prophesy was very amply fulfilled.)

Tuesday evening we had a Home Missionary meeting at Kangaroo Flat, and a good number were present. At Golden Square, Bro. Harkness led the meeting, and they had a blessed time. Many were in distress, and more than twenty came forward penitently seeking God. Glory be to God! O for a great revival in every circuit over the land! And why not? God is faithful, who has promised. The blessed Spirit will not fail us. Jesus is mighty to save. Believing prayer will bring the power."

On Wednesday evening, back at Golden Square, "we had a blessed meeting.... the attendance was very large, and many were in deep distress. Between fifteen and twenty professed to find peace. Some of the cases were deeply interesting. The work is spreading. J. W." (14.)

For later publication, the Rev Spencer Williams provided another account of Watsford's visit, and of events both before and after, showing a wider picture of the revival. It provides an interesting example of God pouring out the Holy Spirit BEFORE the special meetings could be arranged.

"A blessed work of soul-saving has recently been wrought by the hand of the Lord in this place. For some time previously a good feeling has pervaded the ordinary Sabbath services. The prayer-meetings were well attended, and marked by great earnestness and fervour, and many of God's people began to entertain a cheering hope that the Lord would shortly bless them with a richer outpouring of His Holy Spirit, and that souls would be saved. Nor was it long before this cherished hope was realised. Taking advantage of the direction of Conference in reference to 'Revival Missions', and of the hopeful state of

things in the church, the officers and leaders of the church were convened for the purpose of making the necessary arrangements for holding a series of special evangelistic services\; but before the arrangements were matured it pleased the Lord graciously to visit His people, and a blessed work began which has filled many a heart with gladness and many a house with praise.

On Saturday evening, the 12th of May, the usual prayer-meeting was one of great power and blessing. On the Sabbath morning following, the minister of the circuit preached, and exhorted the people to pray for, and to expect the saving power of God to be exerted that day."

The Rev. John Watsford was to preach that night, but - "The night was unfortunately extremely wet and boisterous, and the congregation was consequently comparatively small\; but the power of God was present to heal, and several were enabled to rejoice in the Lord as their Saviour. A prayer-meeting was announced for Monday at six o'clock, prior to holding the annual Home Mission Meeting. The large vestry was crowded to excess, and some three or four young persons were in distress of soul and earnestly seeking the Lord. It was difficult to close the meeting. An adjournment was, however, made to the church, where a large congregation had assembled.

At the close of the public meeting any who were seeking mercy were invited to remain for prayer, when at least one-half of the congregation remained. Several persons came forward to the communion-rail to be prayed for, and many found the Lord to the joy of their souls. Arrangements were made for continuing the services, and for upward of four weeks meetings were held every night.

The congregation on each occasion was large, and pervaded by a spirit of solemn earnestness. Noon prayer-meetings were also held, and these sacred hours were in many instances seasons of refreshing and power. The gracious influences experienced in some of these will never be forgotten by many whose privilege it was to attend them.

Among those who sought the Lord at these meetings were some who had well-nigh abandoned all hope of mercy, under the impression that they had forfeited their day of grace, but were enabled to trust in Him who is 'able to save to the uttermost', and found redemption in His blood. One young man who had permitted his mind to be tainted with sceptical notions, deeply convinced of his sinful condition, sought earnestly night after night, sometimes ready to give up in despair\; he was brought into the blessed liberty of the children of God while in his own room about midnight, silently waiting before the Lord.

A man who had been induced to attend one of the meetings, not with any intention of becoming a Christian, became deeply convinced of sin, and yielding there and then to the Spirit's drawings, cast himself at the feet of divine mercy in overwhelming distress. When the Lord spoke peace to his soul, such was his surprise at the boundless mercy of God, that he could scarcely realise the fact\; reminding one of the experience expressed by Israel of old on their return from Babylon - 'We were like them that dream\; our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.' His faith in Jesus had brought him more than he expected\; and the fact of him being now among the saved was something so marvellous, so good, that he could hardly realise it, and he was filled with wonder, love and praise\; and these would find their appropriate expression in a look of astonishment, followed by profoundest adoration, and then by bursts of grateful praise. On returning to his home he told his wife what the Lord had done for his soul, and most of the night was spent in prayer. Both are now travelling homeward, and making good progress in spiritual things. This man had been for some time the particular subject of the prayers of one of his fellow-workmen.

Another came forward in deep distress, and sought mercy for a long time, but without success. Miserable and wretched while at work, and scarcely able to perform his duties aright, a few of his associates - good and faithful men - left their work, and held a prayer-meeting in the mine\; and there from the

depths they cried unto the Lord. He found no peace, however, for several days\; but true to the blessed promise, prayer was heard, faith was honoured, and the blessing was realised while he was alone wrestling with God in his own home\; first it descended as the gentle dew, and then as the teeming shower, filling his soul with glory and joy.

On a Saturday evening, at a fellowship meeting, one after another of those whom the Lord had blessed told of the wonder of His love\; and while one was declaring how the Lord had saved him, a young man rushed out of one of the pews, exclaiming, 'Oh Lord, save me! save me!' and was immediately followed by others. Some brethren prayed for them and with them, and others went on testifying of the grace of God. The young man was soon enabled, with bounding joy, to exclaim, 'I am saved - I am saved!' The minister, in one of his addresses, while explaining the nature of repentance, pointed out the necessity of restitution where that was possible. The following day an envelope containing a specimen nugget was laid at the door of one of the leaders, with a note saying that it belonged to a certain company, and was returned to its owners.

The Sabbath-school for several weeks presented a scene most interesting and refreshing to the Christian soul. On more than one occasion the routine of school work was suspended, and the time occupied in prayer, and in assisting the scholars who were anxiously seeking the Saviour. The members of the senior classes, with but few exceptions, have all been converted to God, and many of the younger scholars have professed to find the peace of redeeming grace. In these various meetings there was nothing approaching to extravagance, and everything of a sensational character was carefully avoided. The meetings were conducted chiefly by the minister of the circuit, and the local preachers. At some of the meetings the Revs. R. Edgar and S. Adamson, and Mr. Frazer (a member of the Presbyterian Church), rendered valuable service.

The number who professed to have found the Saviour at these services is about 150. At the quarterly visitation in June, notes of admission as probationers for church membership were given to about 75 persons. Catechumen classes have been formed for the younger converts. A gracious influence continues to pervade the congregation. The prayer-meetings are well attended, and the power of God to save is still experienced, though not now manifested to any considerable extent. For a week or so during the last month special evangelistic services have been held at Kangaroo Flat, and not without fruit, though it has not been abundant.

As an evidence of the genuineness of the work on the hearts of the young people, it may be mentioned that novel-reading is giving place to Bible-reading, the prayer-meeting is chosen instead of the amusement hall, and there is a readiness to devote time and labour in the service of the Lord Jesus. Will the lovers of Jesus pray for us, that pastor and people may have all the wisdom and grace needed at this important time." (15.)

Sandhurst: Forest Street Circuit, 1877

Although the Rev. John Watsford had visited the Forest Street Circuit for the week previous to the time he was at Golden Square, the revival movement did not fully affect the Forest Street Circuit until some weeks later. The ministers in the Forest Street Circuit were the Revs. Henry Bath, W. H. Fitchett, and S. Adamson.

The Rev. W. H. Fitchett writes from Eaglehawk:- "The work here lasted for five weeks, and resulted in the conversion of over one hundred souls. No extraordinary means were used\; the whole church by steady degrees was kindled to a mood of spiritual ardour and prayerfulness, and then the ordinary machinery of the Church, supplemented by a mid-day prayer-meeting proved in the highest degree effective.

The revival was marked by some affecting scenes and incidents. In one of the quietest meetings, a man who had been seeking God for days suddenly found pardon, and leaping to his feet, broke the hush of prayer by crying to the whole meeting to praise God with him. A mighty wave of power seemed to sweep over the whole congregation, and in an instant penitents were in all parts of the building crying aloud for mercy. On another occasion two young men, brothers, found peace at the same moment, in different parts of the building, and, on rising to praise God, discovered each other, and fell on each other's necks before the whole congregation, with tears and sobs.

The work was not confined to the meetings, but went on in the homes of the people, and in the depths of the mines. A wife started for one of the meetings, leaving her husband at home as nurse\; scarcely had she left the door of the house when a passage of Scripture was applied to the husband's heart, and wrought conviction in him, and he began to weep and pray before God. When the wife came home it was to find her husband rejoicing in the pardon of sin. Nearly the whole of the senior classes of young men and young women in the Sunday-school have been converted, and give promise of both stability and usefulness.

The services were brought to a close with a recognition meeting, which was characterised by overwhelming feeling and rapturous joy. Parents thanked God for the conversion of children, wives for husbands, and husbands for wives. One old saint, who had served God for forty years, stood up to tell, in trembling accents, how rich had been her experience of mercy, and was followed by a child in the new-born rapture of forgiveness. It was the happiest and most remarkable meeting ever held at Eaglehawk."

The Rev. S. Adamson writes from Long Gully:- "There has been a good work going on lately in this part of the Sandhurst Circuit. A few weeks ago it became apparent that the spirit of God was working in His own convincing power upon the congregations that assembled in the Church, that in the evening of each Sabbath being very large and most attentive. When the 'set time' seemed to have arrived, special services were commenced. A mid-day prayer-meeting was held to which a few earnest souls resorted from the midst of daily toils. The presence of God was very graciously manifested at these meetings. The services, which were held in the Church every evening, were largely attended, and as a result of them, some have been added unto the Church. The Sabbath-school largely partook of the good influences, and not a few of the boys and girls have given themselves to Jesus. Some of the young men and young women of our congregation, and a few adults of more mature years, have experienced a change of heart. To God be all the praise." (16.)

English Methodism: Their District Meetings in May

In English Methodism, District Meetings were held in May, and their Annual Conference was held late in the northern summer. News arising from these District Meetings filtered through to the Australian colonies by late June. News was eagerly awaited, because it would be the first clue as to whether there had been another great increase or not. Australian Methodists looked up very much to what happened in their "mother" church.

"The question begins to be asked - Will there be an increase in members this year: and, if so, to what extent? There has been a good deal of spiritual activity throughout the Connexion. Revival missions have been held in many places\; Conventions of Christian Workers have been numerous, reports of religious awakenings have come from many quarters, all of which betoken life and energy, are encouraging, and leave no doubt of good being done.

But, rightly or wrongly\; we have been accustomed to apply a definite test, and to measure our success or otherwise by that test. The question, then,

is:- What effect have all these things had upon our numerical return of membership? I hear that in Cornwall there will be an increase of about 1,400. I have no figures from any other part\; but I shall be very thankful if by the next mail I will be able to tell you that there has been an increase throughout Great Britain, and that it has been a large one." (17.) Sadly, news from the English Correspondent was not published as regularly as one might have liked. The final figures came out in the "Spectator" in late October, with the rest of the description about events at the Annual British Conference.

Stawell Circuit, 1877

"The work of God has been revived in this district. Souls have been saved each night and also at the noon-day prayer-meetings\; and the work is widening." (18.)

Stawell had apparently been thought of as a hard place to preach the Gospel with success, due largely to the influence in the local press of "free-thinking, infidelity and Spiritism." However, the Rev. R. Hart was able to work well with other denominations in the area, and a combined response occurred, when the President's circular arrived encouraging special services.

"Cottage prayer-meetings were inaugurated and carried on in Welshtown, Moonlight Hill and Cornishtown, with marked signs of success. The members of the Church were stirred up to diligence\; and when the prayer-meetings were discontinued special services were held. At the same time out-door services were started in Welshtown, which have been carried on ever since." The doctrine of entire sanctification was emphasised regularly by Mr. Hart in his own church, and a few conversions began to occur.

On that basis, a combined effort was organised, involving several denominations. Preaching services took place in different churches by arrangement, and noon-day prayer-meetings were held regularly. Normal services, however, still continued, as well.

A climax was experienced on Sunday, June 24th. It was "a glorious day. The Rev. R. Hart preached both morning and evening, and in the afternoon addressed the Sabbath-school. The Spirit of the Lord moved the assembly, and the communion-rail was soon filled with penitents. In addition to this, there were many in their seats seeking pardon for their sins. The majority of those who openly professed their desire for salvation professed to receive the witness of the Spirit to their adoption into the family of God. The services lasted for three weeks, with varying success, and there has been a great accession to the ranks of God's people.

The full amount of good done we cannot yet tell, as cases present themselves almost every day of those who have been either quickened or saved through the means of the services. Other churches are also benefiting, and the movement is general. Altogether, the tone of society in the town is much improved, and Christians work with much greater hope and willingness.

Our church is crowded in the evenings. It is the rule rather than the exception to have to put forms down the aisles to accommodate the people, while many, observing the church to be full, leave for other churches. Probably one of the best proofs of the influence which this revival is exercising over the town is seen in the fear which infidels are feeling and expressing in the newspapers.

We have had a visit from Dr. Somerville, but it was too short to leave any striking marks for good. The third series of special services is now being held in the Baptist Church, and we are hoping and praying for good results. The majority of the converts are young, and special provision is made for them by a class conducted by Mrs Hart." (19.)

St. Arnaud Circuit, 1877

Three reports appeared in the "Spectator", from mid-July to early August, about a revival in the Conover church, in the St. Arnaud Circuit. The circuit minister involved was the Rev. R. O. Cook, who had seen remarkable revivals in northern Tasmania in 1861. From several details in these reports it is hard to know exactly when the revival started, in June or early July.

"The first of a series of special services to be held in this circuit is being conducted in this place (Conover) under very auspicious circumstances. For some time a deep spiritual feeling has been pervading various parts of this circuit, and it was thought that the 'set time to favour Zion' had arrived\; so that preaching services were commenced on the 2nd ult. in the Conover Church, and have been continued all the week with a large amount of success. The ministers and laymen have combined their efforts in this work..... The Holy Spirit has been present in great power in response to the believing prayers of God's people\; and notwithstanding the darkness and the roughness of the road, together with the long distances some have to travel, the services have been well attended. From fifteen to twenty have entered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and have been made partakers of divine grace. Their testimonies of the saving power of the grace of God have been very clear and distinct.....

Even after the meetings have been formally closed, in consequence of the lateness of the hour, the people have been, as it were, irresistibly inclined to remain until those seeking have found the Saviour. God's people have been united in the work, and are yet earnestly praying that the fire kindled here may extend throughout the whole district, burning up the dross of sin, and shedding light, and love, and holiness on all around. The services will probably be continued, so that a still greater ingathering of souls will take place into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ." (20.)

The good work did continue, although the rate at which conversions occurred slackened. "As those who lived in the immediate vicinity were converted, those who were living further away, and many of whom had never attended a place of worship, have come to the meetings, and gone away 'rejoicing in the Saviour'. In some cases, whole families have been brought to the Saviour. On Sunday, 15th inst. (July), the class meeting was even more largely attended, and at the preaching service conducted immediately afterwards by the Rev. R. O. Cook, the church was filled to its utmost capacity. A love-feast was held in the afternoon, and it was a time of refreshing.....

Between forty and fifty have been the happy recipients of God's favour so far, and we trust that many more will be the saved of the Lord. As there is only one family on every 320 acres of land, and sometimes not even that, it can be easily imagined what a widespread work it is. It has been accomplished 'not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.' The servants of the Lord have long been sowing, and now the harvest has arrived. The services are being continued." (21.)

"The result of this work has been the formation of several new classes, as well as enlarging considerably those already in existence. The new converts are not the only ones who have benefited during this revival. Many old ones have also been turned from their apathy and have made fresh consecrations of themselves to the service of Christ. It is intended to establish prayer-meetings in various parts of the neighbourhood, so that the young converts may be looked after, got to work, and also be the means, under the guidance of God's Spirit, of inducing others to come to the same fountain, where they have been washed and made clean." (22.)

Blackwood Circuit, 1877

"During the past five weeks special religious services have been held in two of the most important churches in this circuit. They were commenced in Barry's Reef, and continued for a fortnight, during which time twelve or fifteen professed to receive the forgiveness of sins. Many of the older members of the church have been quickened, and the congregations greatly increased.

Three weeks ago we started at Simmons Reef, and at the love-feast held last Sunday evening twenty-five remained with the older members as witnesses of the saving power of Christ. Among the new converts are some who have been for years in Simmons Reef, prominent and very fruitful servants of the devil. May the Lord in His great mercy keep them steadfast..... These services, conducted by the circuit minister, who has been well sustained by the praying men of the churches, have been characterised by a deep and earnest seriousness, rather than the excitement so frequently associated with religious revivals." (23.)

Ararat Circuit, 1877

In Ararat, there were signs of blessing over a six-month period, marked improvements in attendance at the class-meeting, and at church services. But, when they tried to arrange their special services, their plans all seemed to go wrong. Initially, this caused disappointment. But the collapse of plans drove the leaders to prayer. "Can He not use the weak things of this world to confound the mighty? And we all cast ourselves upon God, trusting Him implicitly, and the blessing came."

The blessing, however, did not come in the way it had been expected. The people who the organisers thought would be first to be converted did not come to any of the meetings. Other people, comparative strangers, were converted instead. The special services in Ararat only lasted for a week. "Last Friday a meeting was held in the Ararat church for those who had given their hearts to God. The objects of the class-meeting were explained, and the Rules of the Society read. Twelve gave in their names to the various classes, and as several of those who recently found the Saviour have been meeting in class, and others belong to other churches, the result is encouraging. May God send us showers of blessing." (24.)

Penshurst Circuit, 1877

Three instalments of an account of a revival at the Dunkeld church in this circuit were published, and one account of meetings in Penshurst itself. The circuit minister was the Rev. J. Leslie.

"God has graciously visited us in Dunkeld, and, in answer to the united prayers of His people, many souls have been brought to Him. The movement began thus:- At our last quarterly meeting we decided to hold special services at Dunkeld during the first moon. The want of such services was felt because spiritual life was at a very low ebb. The brethren pledged themselves to give all the assistance they could. The services were commenced, and they were true to their word: night after night they came long distances, and gave help. Special times for united prayer were fixed, and carried out\; special house-to-house visitation attended to, and the meetings were carried through with success.

Three evenings passed away before a breaking-down took place, and on Thursday 26th ult. (July) after a fervent address by a zealous Christian worker

- Bro. Macan - who came from Hamilton to help us - nine came forward seeking Jesus. (Several stories follow about those who were converted that night.)

Over twenty souls decided for Christ on the next evening. These seekers for salvation were of all ages, from early youth to ripened age. (Another story followed here.) At every subsequent meeting souls were won for Christ, and the quickening influences of the Spirit of the Lord realised by His people."

After relating other incidents, the third Dunkeld report concludes with:- "As far as the general results of this work of God are concerned, the following will speak for itself:- An occasional visitor to this town made the remark the other day to one of the inhabitants, that he did not know what had come over the people of Dunkeld, they were so different from what they used to be, they all seemed so kind to each other. We pray that such a peculiarity may long distinguish the place\; it has too long been noted for its impiety. Fifty-two souls have been brought to Christ during these special services. May the God of all grace keep those who have decided to live for Him." (25.)

The meetings in Penhurst itself were combined with the Presbyterians, but somehow the possibilities did not develop as they wished, and the number of conversions was more limited. (26.)

Hawthorn Church, (Richmond Circuit.) 1877

"Our Church here has for some time past been rejoicing in the manifestation of Divine goodness. We have here some good and faithful men and women of God, who love Zion above their chief joy, and are devoted to the cause of our gracious Redeemer.

Early in May last, as soon as the summer languors passed away, and the bracing frosts of winter imparted fresh physical vigour and strength, the office-bearers met together, and it was decided to hold a society tea-meeting, for the purpose of bringing before the members of society the spiritual interests of the Church, and engaging them to a renewed consecration of themselves to the Lord\; to call upon His name, that He would come and save us with a full salvation, and the people by His grace. The meeting was one of great interest and blessing. There was a large attendance, and the stirring practical addresses delivered by Rev. H. Baker, and the brethren, Orton, Ricketts, Cleverdon, and Hordern, the earnest prayers offered by others, and the great grace that rested upon us all, augured well for the prosperity of Zion.

As soon as the Sunday-school anniversary was over, prayer-meetings were held every night for three weeks, and were well attended. During this time the people of God were greatly quickened and blessed. Many were led to seek a higher state of grace\; a thirsting for the Word was manifest, and the spirit of grace and supplication was poured upon us from on high. Many unsaved ones were deeply impressed and felt their need of a Saviour, but no decided cases of conversion took place during that time.

On Sunday afternoon, 24th June, the Rev. H. Baker addressed the children of the Sunday-school from the words- 'Is it known that any in this school have been converted to God?' A deep feeling pervaded all present\; and at the prayer-meeting that followed, thirty of the elder scholars remained, and earnestly sought the Saviour.

On the next Sunday evening, July 1st, twelve persons came forward at the close of the service seeking Jesus. It was then announced that the Rev. H. Baker would preach every night that week. The attendance was most encouraging, and each night several were convinced of sin, and sought and found Jesus. A few have been brought to the Saviour since, and nearly all who professed to find Jesus are giving evidence of a thorough change of heart. A new class has been formed, consisting at present of twenty-five members, whilst others have joined other classes more convenient to them.

On Thursday evening, August 2nd, a united service was held in our church, the body of which was well filled. The meeting was opened in prayer by Mr. Rosier. Mr. A. J. Smith read a portion of the Scriptures. Earnest, telling addresses were given, more especially to young men, by the Rev. H. Baker, Rev. J. Patten (Presbyterian), and Mr. Nichols (Independent). The united choirs, led by Mr. Wilson, conductor of the Wesleyan Church choir, added great interest to the meeting by the spirited manner in which they sang some of Sankey's hymns. We are still waiting upon God for His blessing, and trust yet to see many more added to the Church of such as shall be eternally saved." (27.)

Creswick Circuit, 1877

The Rev. E. W. Nye was minister in Creswick at that time. "On Friday, May 18th, a meeting of leaders and other brethren was held in order to arrange the carrying out of the Conference resolutions as to a 'Revival Mission'. It was decided first to begin holding weekly cottage prayer-meetings in various outskirts of the town, and in July to hold a week of special services. On Sunday, July 15th, a week before the special services were to be held, the Rev. Ralph Brown, from Ballarat, visited us as Home Mission deputation. In the afternoon he addressed the Sunday-school, urging the scholars for immediate decision for Christ. A large number of the elder scholars responded to the appeal\; and again, after the evening service, several sought the Lord.

Home Missionary meetings occupied most of that week, but during the fortnight following services were held every evening, at which addresses were given by the Rev. S. Bracewell, and Mr. James Bunyan (Primitive Methodist), the circuit minister, and esteemed local preachers of the Creswick and Clunes Circuits. On almost every evening some were known to be penitently seeking the Lord\; and over forty - most of whom belong to the Sunday-school - have found peace with God. In some cases several members of one family have given their hearts to God, and are unitedly serving Him. Many of the converts have joined existing classes, while for the others suitable classes have been formed. Encouraging indications of good have also been met with in another of our Sunday-schools, and we are praying and looking for a continued manifestation of God's power to save." (28.)

Clunes Circuit, 1877

The minister at Clunes was the Rev. Robert Flockhart, whom we have met in several other locations where revivals were taking place. "For months past a very gracious and growing holy influence has been the experience of our people throughout the whole circuit\; congregations have improved, and the Spirit of healing has been manifested. In the Sabbath-school at Clunes many of the scholars have given their hearts to God, and are meeting in class. A deep religious feeling is resting upon the minds of our young people in the neighbourhood, and a general awakening in reference to the great subject of the soul's salvation is felt on every hand.

Our classes are well attended, and earnest interest is taken in this time-honoured institution of our church\; never was the class-meeting more prized than now. Some time ago we established cottage prayer-meetings. These have proved to be a tower of strength, and been greatly blessed to our people. Our tract society has been 'scattering seeds of kindness' and fruit is appearing. The week-evening prayer-meetings are well attended, and men and women have been clothed with power from on high: taking hold of and prevailing with God on behalf of the Church and the world.

The noon-day prayer-meeting on the 2nd August, held for the benefit of the young men of our colony, was a season which cannot but be productive of good. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit on that occasion were simply overwhelming\; every heart seemed filled with the fulness of the love of God. All the church is aglow in holy expectation of seeing even better things than these. It is a pleasure and profit to be connected with our Zion at Clunes. The unity, peace and prosperity in our midst, both in spiritual and temporal affairs are causing the members of the Church to rejoice and be glad in the God of our salvation. For the widespread good we are led to cry out, 'Ebenezer - hitherto hath the Lord helped us.'" (29.)

The Circuits around Geelong, 1877

Several reports came in from the Geelong area, about revival, or about making the most of what flowed from the visit of the Rev. Dr. A. N. Somerville.

The Rev. R. Fitcher was minister at the Yarra-street church in Geelong. "For some months past we have had evidences of the presence of the Holy Spirit's convincing and converting power in our midst\; consequently, when the special mission services commenced, the people of God were to some extent prepared to enter heartily upon the work. These services were ushered in on Sabbath, July 8th, and being attended with gratifying success, were continued for three weeks. It is with feelings of gratitude to Almighty God we now record that night after night penitents came forward to be prayed with and directed to the Saviour of sinners.

Just at the commencement of these services, the removal, after a short and severe illness, by death of the late Mr. Henry Derrick, an estimable young man, respected and loved by all who knew him, produced a deep and lasting impression upon the minds of several young men in our Sabbath-school. The majority of those who have decided for Christ are young men and young women connected with our school, and just the kind of material we require for the Church of the living God. A pleasing feature in connection with the movement was the presentation of the requests for prayer at the noon-day and evening meetings, also the manifest operations of the Holy Ghost in the homes of the people, leading them to a decision for Christ. The noon-day prayer meeting was well attended throughout, and proved a rich means of grace to many. A testimony-meeting held during the services was numerously attended, and several bore witness to God's power to save and sanctify. Many of the young converts have already joined the Church, and are in classes. A new society class, especially for the young men, has been formed, and its leader has received great encouragement.

Said a young man to the minister one evening - 'There is no hope for me, sir\;' and he looked as if he believed what his lips had given utterance to. He was kindly spoken to, and earnestly urged to pray for a broken and contrite heart. He retired, and at the throne of grace sighed - 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.' That cry was heard\; and the next post brought a letter to the minister, telling of his deliverance and conversion to God. The Holy Spirit is still convincing and converting in our midst. Last Sabbath night, at St. Albans Church, ten young persons decided for Christ. Our earnest prayer is that there may be daily added to God's people such as shall be saved." (30.)

Another report from Yarra Street Church said:- "We are happy to report that the 'Revival Mission' commenced in Yarra-street Church about a month since, has been attended with most gratifying results. The ministers of the circuit have been assisted by the Rev. J. de Q. Robin, and the nightly services, as well as the mid-day prayer-meetings, have been well attended. A very large number of persons, most of whom are rising into manhood and womanhood, have resolved to consecrate their lives to the Saviour." (31.)

There was also a very good response in the Sunday schools. This, in turn, placed a heavy responsibility on the various leaders, to foster and care for the converts of all ages.

Chilwell, Geelong West Circuit, 1877

At that time, the Rev. T. Groves was the minister in this circuit. "The showers of blessing so richly and so generally descending upon the circuits of the colony have reached us here. The Lord has been graciously reviving His work, and the work is still going on. The last Quarterly Meeting gave its most careful consideration to the question - 'What more can be done to promote the work of God in this circuit?' and the outcome was the convening of a meeting of Christian workers from all parts of the circuit to enlist sympathy in the blessed work of saving souls, and to agree upon a plan of special services to cover the circuit. A gracious work having already commenced amongst the young at Newtown, we decided to commence there. The result was a week of very great joy and blessing. The services at Newtown were followed by services at Chilwell and Ashby, and at each of these places the hand of the Lord was with us.

Many of our young people have taken a decided stand for God. Nor has the work been confined to the young\; we have had the sinner of eighty years bowed in penitence beside the sinner of ten years. Both have sorrowed for sin together, and rejoiced in God's pardoning mercy together\; besides which there has been a blessed quickening of our church members, showing itself in increased numbers in the class-meetings, prayer-meetings, and at the Lord's table. It has gladdened our hearts to see the large numbers anxious to affectionately remember their Saviour in the way in which He Himself has appointed. Many prayers have been offered up for the spread of the work throughout the colony, and all seem to be resting in the belief that the set time to favour Zion has come, and that the wave of reviving grace will not cease to roll till it has reached every circuit, and every congregation in every circuit." (32.)

Conference of Methodist Workers.

Unlike the gathering of this kind in the previous year, the conference in 1877 lasted only for one evening, and was not addressed to the issue of growth in holiness.

It was held in Wesley Church on Monday evening, August 27th. It was chaired by the President of the Conference. Entry was by ticket only, and there was a very large attendance from all around the city of Melbourne.

The President made a number of comments, including the observation about the present revival movement in Victoria, that "few circuits in Melbourne, or throughout the colony, were at present un-refreshed. Some long unblessed had received gracious manifestations of God's presence."

He then invited the Rev. Joseph Dare to give an address on how best to capitalise upon the present wonderful situation. Amongst his comments, Dare was reported as saying, "God had blessed us during the past winter by reviving His work in our midst. Never perhaps has Methodism in this colony been more blessed than recently with the revival spirit\; hundreds of our young people were deciding for Christ, and it was high time that we should form plans for aggression on the kingdom of darkness." He also deplored the decline of open-air preaching. His comments about the many recent conversions reflected especially what was happening in the Brunswick Street Circuit, where he was stationed.

The first to speak after that was the Rev. John Eggleston - now very much the senior minister still in active work. He "gave an interesting account of recent revivals in Geelong, Stawell, Ballarat and Clunes, and spoke of the

benefit which followed the labours of Dr. Somerville in (Geelong). Methodism was well-nigh perfect in its machinery, but steam was required for its working. No organisation could succeed without the power of the Spirit from on high. He felt specially thankful to God for the reviving influences with which as a Church they were being visited, and trusted that yet richer blessings would be vouchsafed."

This was followed by lengthy discussion and comment from various people in the audience, and the meeting eventually closed in prayer. (33.)

Ballarat, 1877

The superintendent minister in one of the Ballarat circuits was the Rev. E. I. Watkin. He wrote:- "During the last three months - in special services held in the Ballarat West Circuit - about 120 persons have publicly sought Christ and His salvation. Special services have been held at Rubicon-street, Wendouree, Buninyong, Hiscocks, Black Lead and Magpie.

At Lydiard-street we have not held any weeks of special services, but have sought special blessing upon the ordinary week-evening services.

For some months past we have scarcely held a Monday evening prayer-meeting without some showing themselves as anxious enquirers. Last Monday evening three professed to find peace\; most of those who have been converted are the senior scholars in our Sabbath-schools. There are some fine youths and young men among them, who, if they are faithful to God, have the energy of character which will make them active and useful members of the Church.

Special services are arranged for in other places in the circuit, and will be held during the next two months. A very solemn impression has been produced upon many in our congregations, more especially in the southern part of the circuit, through the sudden death, by a mining accident, of Mr. David Morgan. He was a much respected local preacher, converted in the Talbot and Amherst Circuit some eighteen years ago\; he maintained a consistent Christian character up to the time of his death\; he was a good type of the local preacher who have been converted and brought up in connection with Victorian Methodism. He preached his last sermon at Mount Mercer on Sunday, August 5th, from the text:- 'Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh,' and on the following Tuesday was killed instantaneously. He was a good man, and his loss is a serious one to the Garibaldi Church, and to the congregations in the south of the Ballarat West Circuit." (34.)

Belfast Circuit 1877

The Rev. J. F. Horsley sent in the following:- "It was never my lot to labour in a circuit in which spiritual life seemed so low, nor where the ordinances of Methodism had so little hold upon the community. Class and prayer-meetings and preaching services alike were very thinly attended.

But during the last few weeks the Lord has visited us in mercy, and has sent refreshing showers upon the dry ground. Upon the old and young, members and adherents, and also upon many who did not attend any place of worship, the Holy Spirit has been poured, and now all is changed. Class-meetings are well attended, and two new ones established\; and for units who attended our prayer-meetings we now have tens. To God be the praise!

Every week for the last three months we have had conversions, and now we have to tell to the glory of God that over sixty have professed to find the Saviour, and still the blessed work is going on. A goodly number are under conviction, and are seeking for the light. We have had no excitement: a quiet

power has pervaded the assemblies, and the circuit has been permanently benefited."

One problem which had not been overcome at the time of writing the report, was that a block of young men of the "respectable larrikin class" sat at the back of the church regularly, but peer pressure within the group prevented any of them from responding to the Gospel.

A Home Missions visit from the Rev. John Watsford was expected, so Horsley organised a one-day convention on the promotion of holiness. Watsford shared the speaking responsibilities with the district chairman, the Rev. J. Albiston. Horsley described it as "a day of mighty power and much spiritual blessing." It concluded with an evangelistic meeting addressed by Watsford. Lunch had been provided, and people came from many parts, including Koroit and Warrnambool.

"It was an experiment, which was greatly honoured of God, to show that such meetings are possible in country circuits where the population is much scattered. The Spirit of the Lord suggested it, blessed the preparatory arrangements, prepared the hearts of the people, and then filled us all with His abiding presence. Praise His name!" (35.)

Drysdale Circuit, 1877

The Rev. C. H. Ingamells writes:- "In the closing week of July special prayer-meetings for the revival of God's work were held in the vestry of our church. There was a good attendance of the members each evening, and a blessed influence attended the services. One young man found the Saviour.

It was then announced from the pulpit, and by handbills distributed throughout the district, that special services would be held in the church, and these have, with the most blessed results, continued to the present time. At least sixty have professed to find peace through believing in Jesus. Many of these are young men and young women from seventeen to twenty-five years of age. Christian parents who have long prayed for their families have wept for joy at seeing their sons and daughters yielding themselves to the Saviour. The whole church is quickened into new life." (36.)

Nearly twelve months later, the Rev. John Watsford was visiting this circuit, in the normal course of his promotion of the Home Missions work. He reported:- "The revival in the circuit in 1877 was a very blessed work, and the fruit remains. A large number of young men were then converted, and they are still in the church, and doing well." (37.)

News From the British Conference

The British Conference was held late in July, through into early August. A full description of it all was reproduced in the "Spectator". The part dealing with the numerical returns, including membership figures, appeared at the beginning of the "Conversation on the Work of God."

When the time came for this part of the business, the President made an introductory statement - emphasising that, whatever came out of the "Conversation", the result would be the total surrender to Christ of everyone present.

"Mr. John Bond presented the numerical report which showed the total number of full and accredited church members to be 382,289, being an increase on the year of 9,377; on trial for membership - 28,063." (38.)

Another part of what was published about the Conference, however, gave a slightly different set of figures. These were:-

1876. 372,938 full members.

1877. 382,555 full members.

Increase for the year - 9,617.
On trial for membership - 28,037.
Deaths - 5,425.
Candidates for the Ministry - 187.
New members (as far as reported.) - 48,181.

This showed a wonderful increase in full membership. The Conference meeting would have been a time of praise and thanks to God for such great results. (39.)

The set of figures, however, revealed one of the peculiarities of the method used by the Methodists to calculate the number of full members. When the number of new members is compared with the size of the increase for the year, one sees that over 30,000 members were lost for reasons other than death. The main reason would be that these people had "ceased to meet in class."

"Ceasing to meet in class" covers many reasons, really, from having migrated to Australia, moving to another district, joining another denomination, having become a backslider, or any combination of these. So, a serious problem becomes visible in leakage of members. This was nothing new, of course. It had been known, and bemoaned for many years, and much work had been done in trying to fix it.

But, the size of the increase would have been widely noted in Australia, as well as the reason why the increase had been possible in the first place - revival work, and the emphasis on holiness.

The Work of Matthew Burnett in 1877

From time to time, circuit ministers sent in reports about Burnett's activities, for publication in the "Spectator." But, seeing that he was an accredited agent of Methodism's Home Missions in Victoria, Burnett sent in many letters to the editor, some extremely brief, explaining what he was doing, and asking for the prayer support of as many people as possible. These two sources of information - reports written by others, and his own letters - provide a good idea of what he did through the year.

He worked at such an enormous pace, and had such an output of labour, that he was always completely exhausted by the end of a year.

March of 1877 saw him returned from his summer holidays, and he commenced work for the month in the Kilmore Circuit, as mentioned earlier. His first letter said:- "I have again resumed my much loved work among the masses, and hope in God this year to witness a great ingathering of souls in each district I expect to visit." (40.)

For some reason, he found great difficulties and obstacles in this area, and he called for more prayer. However, before he left he could say that 110 had signed the temperance pledge during the last week he was there.

On the other hand, Kilmore circuit had seen blessing over a long period, as the minister, the Rev. James Tuckfield, reported several months later. "I am about to start on a three-days trip into the country parts of my circuit, and have only time to send you a few lines. There is much in the spiritual condition of this circuit that is very satisfactory. During the last two years and four months we have had a revival in every part of the circuit. A large proportion of the new converts have continued steadfast: some of them are now preaching the Gospel. I will only particularly refer to one case of conversion, that of a poor woman, who was benefited during Mr. Burnett's visit five months ago. She had been a drunkard for twenty years, but signed the pledge, and also gave her heart to God. She met in my class every week, and gives undoubted proof of growth in grace. The people here love revival work. All the Protestant ministers in Kilmore now unite in a public evangelistic service every

Wednesday evening. The good news of God's work in connection with the labours of Dr. Somerville and Mr. Varley is a blessing to us here. Our prayer is for a richer baptism of the Holy Spirit - a greater endowment of power." (41.)

The month of April was spent in the Maryborough Circuit, where the minister was the Rev. Thomas Angwin. Burnett's efforts here received widespread support from the Protestant denominations, and were very successful. There were many conversions, and hundreds of people signed the temperance pledge. His Saturday night Working Men's Meetings were continued for many weeks after he left, with continued success. Later in the year, combined evangelistic special meetings were held, and Dr. Somerville also spent a few days preaching in the town. A long report about all these things was published in the "Spectator."

At the beginning of May, Burnett preached for a weekend in the Ballarat Town Mission. The rest of the month he spent in the Avoca Circuit. He started working at Natte Yallock, and twenty people professed conversion during only four days. The ministers continued special meetings there.

"At Homebush, where special services have not yet been held, the Lord has already begun to make bare His mighty arm in the conversion of the sinner." This seemed to be specially in relation to the Sunday school, and the work of the superintendent.

"At Avoca, where Mr. Burnett is conducting mid-day prayer-meetings and street-meetings at night, followed by services in the church, the Lord is beginning to save." (42.)

A later report said that Burnett left Avoca after the four weeks he had agreed to stay in that circuit, but his leaving seemed to coincide with a climax being reached in the outreach work, and better results might have been obtained if he could have stayed a bit longer. (43.)

The month of June was spent in the Steiglitz Circuit, at Mount Egerton for two weeks, then at Gordons, and finally at Ballan.

July was spent in the Williamstown Circuit, working with the Rev. Edward King, President of the Conference. Their report on his work was as follows:- "We have to record with thankfulness to God the results of special religious services held during this month. Mr. Burnett has been labouring amongst us with his accustomed zeal and energy. At noon each day many have assembled for prayer\; numbers have attended the street-preaching, and every evening our large schoolroom has been filled with worshippers. Many have sought and found the Saviour, and others are anxiously seeking Him. The good done has not been confined to our own church, but several from other churches have obtained spiritual benefit. Mr. Burnett's working men's meetings, held each Saturday evening, have been attended by crowds of people, and more than six hundred persons have signed the total abstinence pledge. Amongst these are drunkards whose case had come to be regarded as almost hopeless. We are full of hope that the revival of the work of God amongst us will increase in power and spread throughout the town and country districts." (44.)

A few weeks later, the Rev. Mr. King sent another report.

"On Sunday, August 5th, our sacramental service was memorable. So large a number of communicants had never presented themselves at one time at the table of the Lord, and with many it was their first communion. It was a joy to see members of the same family, united by the love of Christ in a tenderer bond than of kindred, kneeling side by side at the Lord's table. Our new converts have joined the various classes, and it is good to hear them speak of the happiness they feel in the service of God and the fellowship of His people. The young men are forming themselves into a band for work amongst the sailors and others, and have already been successful in bringing souls to Christ. The special services are being continued under the form of united meetings held in the various Protestant Churches in the town. Last week a meeting was held each night in the Presbyterian Church\; this week the meetings are in the Free Methodist Church. The attendance is excellent, and a very gracious influence rests upon the people

assembled. We are holding a united prayer-meeting each day in the Welsh Church. We are praying and labouring for a general revival of religion throughout the place." (45.)

The month of August was spent in the Scarsdale and Linton Circuit, working with the Rev. J. B. Smith. This was the first circuit Burnett had worked in, at the beginning of his career in Australia. He worked mainly in the centres of Newtown and Smythesdale. They were blessed times. Altogether, forty-six professed conversion, and 162 signed the temperance pledge, but Burnett's boundless zeal for Christ, and his apparently endless supply of energy, helped to produce a great stirring amongst the church members. Lengthy reports were published about this work. (46.)

At their next quarterly meeting, members discovered that the circuit had lost 100 members through removal to other places during the last twelve months, but they rejoiced in having, at that stage, 47 new converts. (47.)

September was spent in the Preston and Heidelberg Circuit, with the Rev. P. R. C. Ussher. In these meetings scores of conversions occurred, and 350 signed the pledge.

In October, Burnett returned to Prahran, which had been originally his home church. The minister who welcomed him was the widely experienced and respected Rev. W. L. Binks. In a letter to the editor, Binks provided his appreciation of what Burnett did in those four weeks.

"Sir, The people in the district of Prahran have had the valuable services of Mr. Burnett for the last four weeks, and it is only due to that laborious servant of God and the church to acknowledge the vast amount of good that has been accomplished through his labours.

For four successive weeks the people have gathered in large numbers in the new schoolroom to listen to his earnest appeals on the necessity of personal salvation, and a large number, especially amongst the young, have openly decided for Christ, and not a few have been seriously impressed who never attended any place of worship. May they be the crown of his rejoicing in the great day. The working men's meetings on the Saturday evenings, held in the Prahran Town Hall, were crowded to excess; many were unable to get within the doors.

Over seven hundred persons have taken the temperance pledge as the result of his energetic labours and able advocacy of the temperance cause, and amongst the number several of the most intemperate men and women in the district. There is but one opinion as to Mr. Burnett's tact and determination to reach a class of persons hardly ever reached by ministers and other labourers.

Mr. Burnett closed his labours on Monday evening by giving a most interesting lecture on his recent visit to England, etc. The Rev. J. S. Waugh moved, in highly complimentary terms, a vote of thanks to the lecturer; after which the following resolution was received in a most enthusiastic manner:---

'This meeting desires to express its deep sense of the value of Mr. Burnett's labours during the last four weeks in Prahran and South Yarra. We gratefully acknowledge the spiritual good resulting from the religious services which have been held, and especially recognise his untiring zeal for the welfare of the intemperate and the outcasts of society; and we beg to assure Mr. Burnett that very many will be ready to give him a hearty welcome to labour again in this district, and most devoutly we wish him "God speed."'

I am, sir, yours etc., W. L. Binks." (48.)

The first half of November was spent preaching at Whittlesea. For the second half, he returned to the Steiglitz Circuit, to preach at Egerton again.

The month of December he spent in the Colac Circuit, firstly at Ondit for a few days, and then in Colac itself, finishing two days before Christmas, before going on his well-earned holidays. The report sent in by the minister at Colac included what had been repeatedly the experience of those who worked with

Burnett - that those who had signed the pledge at his meetings included several noted local drunkards.

Burnett sent in a brief letter, outlining his work for the year. He said that "many" souls had been saved in the ten months of work that year, and over 3,000 had signed the temperance pledge. (49.)

The Visit to Victoria of Alexander N. Somerville, 1877

Somerville was by now an elderly Scottish Presbyterian minister. His first experience of revival had been in Scotland, in 1839 at Kilsyth, Dundee, and other places, during a widespread spiritual movement arising through the ministry of a fellow theological student at that time, the Rev. William C. Burns. Part of this revival had occurred in the Dundee church being pastored by the saintly Robert Murray McCheyne. By 1877, Somerville had become a travelling evangelist, working with the Glasgow United Evangelistic Association. Even at this stage of his life, Somerville was still a dynamic and dramatic preacher. The old man also had a great rapport with children, and held meetings especially for them.

He arrived in Victoria late in June, 1877, with his son, who acted as song-leader for him. For three and a half weeks he preached in Melbourne, mainly in central locations. This finished on July 19th. It was only towards the end of this period, and after he had finished, that his sermons and activities became more fully reported in the "Spectator." However, he received wide support from the major denominations.

From there, he travelled to Ballarat for about two weeks of meetings. On his way from Ballarat to Geelong he spent a very brief time in Stawell. The Geelong period lasted from August 4th until 13th. Two days were then spent in Maryborough, and two in Castlemaine, before spending about eight days in the Sandhurst churches of Bendigo, finishing on August 27th. Within a short time after that, he was preaching in Sydney, having travelled overland.

All of these later meetings, until he had left Victoria, were more or less reported on in the "Spectator". At Sandhurst, it was said, that 150 persons had made public profession of conversion to Christ. (50.)

After his meetings in Geelong were over, the local inter-church evangelistic committee organised meetings to encourage those who had "been awakened under the preaching of the Rev. Dr. Somerville." Only twenty-five candidates responded to this effort, due, they thought, to some kind of misunderstanding about time and place. However, the noon-day prayer-meetings continued, in the Y.M.C.A. building. Members of the Y.M.C.A. tried to carry on the evangelistic outreach, flowing from the impetus given by Somerville's meetings, and several conversions occurred.

Somerville's preaching in Australia did not spark any revival. There were a good number of conversions, and, no doubt he provided encouragement to many Christians. But his contribution to the Victorian landscape provided an interesting additional aspect to a scene which already included so much of revival in progress before he arrived here.

Henry Varley in Victoria, 1877

Henry Varley was a successful English businessman. Over a period he had also become very successful as an evangelist. Earlier in his life, Varley had lived for a period in Geelong. Some years after returning to London, he had sold his business, and had become involved full-time in evangelistic outreach.

He was not such a dramatic and colourful preacher as Somerville, but had a magnetic, charismatic personality. He was an inter-denominational evangelist,

although he had many sympathies with the Open Brethren. By the time he returned to Melbourne in 1877, he had led great evangelistic campaigns in many parts of Britain and the United States, and, as a result, his name had become a household word in many Christian circles around the world.

He arrived in Melbourne on Wednesday, August 1st, and immediately started attending the noon-day prayer meeting, and taking part in it. He preached in a number of churches around the city of Melbourne, and its inner suburbs, although more neutral locations were often used, as well. This preaching campaign continued until the end of October. His activities were reported fairly fully in the "Spectator".

The meetings took place several times per week, at least.

Early November, however, saw him launch an interesting experiment. Even at that stage of the history of Melbourne, the Flemington Races had gained a strong grip on the population, especially on the first Tuesday of November, which had just been declared a state holiday. Varley decided that he would try to organise a counter-attraction to the Races, offering people a form of entertainment for a public holiday which did not have the questionable moral connections that gambling on horse races had.

"Mr. Varley's Picnic at Brighton"

The picnic held at Brighton Beach on Tuesday last, under the direction of Mr. Varley, and intended to supply a counter attraction to the Flemington Racecourse, was, in point of numbers, a complete success. At the lowest computation there must have been from 10,000 to 12,000 visitors during the day. The spot chosen was a piece of open ground in front of Grimbley's Hotel, where a spacious pavilion was erected.

From ten in the morning until two in the afternoon heavily laden trains were running at short intervals, bearing thousands of young and old, all bent on holiday-keeping, to the selected spot. Not only was the open space covered with picnickers, but in the shade of the mangroves for a mile along the beach every nook was occupied with its family and social party 'on pleasure bent', while the paddocks were enlivened with cricket, rounders, and other forms of amusement\; and notwithstanding the sprinkling of rain which frequently disturbed the arrangements, all seemed heartily to enjoy themselves."

At eleven, a service was held in the pavilion, conducted by Varley, with a Mr. Lawrence acting as song-leader. At three, an open-air service was held, addressed by Harrison Ord (Brethren evangelist). When Varley rose to address the gathering, after Ord's sermon, the rain fell heavily, and everyone rushed inside.

Since it now appeared that this Tuesday was established as a public holiday, the "Spectator" columnist hoped that some event like this picnic could become fully established "to counteract the vicious attractions of the racecourse on that day" A combination of picnic and camp-meeting, he thought, would hallow "innocent amusement and recreation" with "the exercises of worship." (51.)

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1878 was even more a year when somehow revivals only occurred when the ministers had time to organise and preach through special meetings, and when the climate was right for that kind of activity.

1877 had also seen revivals occur widely around Victoria. In 1878, the reports of revival came only from a few places and districts. There may well

have been better responses generally around the colony, but this is not reflected in the limited list of circuits from which news of revival came.

Despite the previous year being one of widespread evangelistic activity, and one which some thought was the year filled with revival power more than others, the increase in membership reported at the January Conference in 1878 was relatively small. The published report went as follows:-

"The Secretary of Conference read the roll of church members for the past year, from which it appeared that the total number in Victoria and Tasmania was 11,962, showing an increase on the year preceding of 178 members, with 1,769 on trial for membership.

The President said he had never known during the twenty-five years of his ministry such a gracious work among the young men of their church as he had witnessed in the Brunswick-street Circuit during the past year."

After some discussion, the "Rev. E. King said he joined with the brethren in thanking God for what had been done during the past year, and with a view of securing a further revival of God's work, he moved that they request the President of Conference, Chairmen of Districts, and General Secretary of Home Missions, to arrange for special religious services during the coming year."
(52.)

Early May saw the President's circular letter to all the ministers published, under the heading of "Revival Services."

It began:- "My dear Brothers," And after referring to, and quoting, the minute about the business above, said:-

"In accordance with the above, the committee met on the 25th ult. (April), and agreed to recommend the following:-

1st. That revival mission services to be held in all our circuits during the months of May, June or July.

2nd. That these services be commenced with a meeting of the Society for the Promotion of Holiness\; to be followed by mid-day prayer-meetings and evening services.

3rd. That the neighbourhood in which the services are held be well canvassed by house-to-house visitation, and that every publicity be given by means of placards, handbills, advertisements, etc.

4th. That at least one evening in each week of services be devoted to the young people of the congregation, and another to the subject of 'Entire sanctification.'

5th. That, where practicable, ministers in neighbouring circuits be asked to interchange, in order to assist in these services.

During the past winter great good resulted in several of our circuits from special services held in our Sabbath-schools during the afternoon session\; many of the elder children were brought to decision for Christ.

Please to arrange for the carrying out of these services in your circuit in either of the months named you deem most suitable. Trusting that you may receive 'showers of blessing,' I remain, my dear brothers, yours very truly,
Joseph Dare.

President of the Conference.

Melbourne. May 3rd, 1878. (53.)

Most, but not all, of the notices about revivals, resulting from these special services, were published in groups, at the end of winter, and in early spring. The first of these was from the Rev. J. F. Horsley, who by now had moved to North Melbourne.

North Melbourne, Wesley Church, and Carlton, 1878

"I have been requested to draw up an account of the blessed revival which we have had during the past few weeks in this circuit. As the organisation was more elaborate, and the work more extensive, and as the work in its glorious results of conversion began at North Melbourne, I am compelled to commence with the record of that which was done here.

North Melbourne\;- A few weeks' survey of the neighbourhood of Hotham, a visit to the Town Hall, to make a careful record of the number of houses and population, of church accommodation, and public-house accommodation, revealed this fact, that, exclusive of Roman Catholics, sick people, and children, we had 10,000 people living around us who did not attend any place of worship. A great amount of work lay at our doors, and a goodly number of Christians in our church were, comparatively speaking, unemployed. I thereupon wrote an appeal for Christian workers, and had it distributed freely in the congregation. I wanted visitors to go from house to house, in the streets and lanes of the neighbourhood, with illustrated tracts and appeals to the conscience and heart. Local-preachers, prayer-leaders and singers were wanted for out-of-door work\; also singers for a strong choir to conduct the singing in the services. My appeal was responded to with enthusiasm. Old and young, men and women, offered their services for Christ. One young man said to me, 'I mean work, I do, sir\; the Lord has laid His hand upon me for it.' Passing a group outside of our school in the dark one evening, I overheard the earnest remark by an old grey-haired member of our church, 'I mean to go, to do whatever I am set to.' I mention these cases to show the spirit in which the work was undertaken.

Wednesday, the 3rd of July, was set apart to seek for the baptism of the Holy Ghost upon every worker and upon the neighbourhood. This was indeed a memorable day. The early morning prayer-meeting in the vestry, from 7 to 8 o'clock, was crowded\; and 'great grace' was upon us all. The Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Binks came up from Wesley Church to be present. At half-past 10 o'clock we met for the first session: 'The baptism of the Holy Spirit necessary to the success of the Mission,' and 'Renewed personal consecration a preparation for Mission work,' were the subjects spoken to by the Revs. Blamires, Shaw, White, and Horsley. In the afternoon from 3 o'clock to 5, father Watsford, and the brethren Neale, J. J. Watsford, and Horsley, spoke upon 'Mission in its relation to the world, with special reference to the needs of Melbourne,' and 'The Mission in its relation to the families and young people of Methodism in the Home and Sabbath-school.' At 7 o'clock we commenced the meeting for the promotion of holiness. I was assisted very kindly in this meeting by Bros. Neale and White, and we closed a hallowed and blessed day by gathering together around the Lord's table. The meetings were well attended, and the power of the Holy Ghost was present and rested upon us all. This day's blessing was an assurance of the great success of the Mission. Then our dear people went to work\; nearly three thousand houses were visited\; services were conducted every night in different localities in the streets and courts of the neighbourhood.

The evangelistic choir, with Miss Williams usually at the organ, and Mrs. Smythe and Mr. Wales on either side, rendered invaluable help. I have been in revivals where I have had to lead or personally sustain the singing\; and this strain was as severe as the talking and preaching required. Some brethren hesitate to undertake revival work because they cannot sing. With previous arrangements carefully made and a little training a suitable choir could in most places be gathered together and efficiently relieve the preacher of this labour."

Horsley went on, at some length, to describe details of the advertising, before describing how there were hardly any professions of conversion on the first few nights of meetings. After that, a break occurred.

"On Sunday there were three or four conversions\; Monday one\; Tuesday two\; Wednesday one\; then on Thursday came the breakdown with fourteen conversions\; Friday twelve\; and Sunday twenty-two. Then on for three weeks\;

some nights were very hard and difficult, but every night souls had reason to rejoice. I have the names of great numbers, of scores who thus sought the Saviour, without counting those under twelve years of age. Old men and children, young men and maidens...." He goes on to describe the wide range of conversions, and some little snippets of what happened, here and there. For example, "A daughter so worked and prayed that her widowed mother\; three sisters, and two brothers, were all converted. Many who for a long time had been members of our church, but who had lived without the assurance of the favour of God, have now found peace. At the last meeting of the special services, fourteen came forward to seek the Lord\; then on the following Sabbath six fine young men, over twenty years of age\; and at the prayer-meeting on the Monday, seven others."

They had to stop these meetings so that the other churches in the circuit could have a turn, as well.

Wesley Church. The congregations at the meetings held here were of a different kind from those at North Melbourne, where many young people had been present. At Wesley Church, there were mostly older people, and those who were unaccustomed to attending public worship at all. Many were drunk. There were some very interesting cases of conversion. Most of the older Sunday school children had already professed conversion. (54.)

Carlton. A few weeks later:- "During the past month the Palmerston-street church has been the scene of a very blessed revival. From the results at Wesley Church and North Melbourne we had been encouraged to expect that special good would be done, and we are thankful to say that we have not been disappointed. The preparatory meetings for prayer were largely attended, and the power of the Holy Spirit richly experienced. Many were disposed to work as well as pray. The whole district was divided into sections. Thousands of handbills were distributed, and where practicable an earnest invitation was given to come and hear the word of life. Many outside the regular worshippers responded to the invitation so that the congregations every evening were large. There was no excitement, but a deep religious feeling, and a spirit of anxious inquiry pervaded all the meetings. We have had to rejoice over numerous conversions. Some of the little ones have found Jesus. Most of the young men and women belonging to the senior classes in the Sabbath-school have decided for God, and are now full of zeal for the glory of Christ and the salvation of those around them.

Last Wednesday evening a meeting was held for the recognition of new converts and the enrolment of those who had received Christ as their Saviour during the services. Notwithstanding the inclement weather, there was a large gathering, and a very profitable season it was to all present. The children were first of all taken aside, and after suitable advice had been given they were formed into catechumen classes, where they will be instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly. A few words of counsel were then addressed to those further advanced in years, especially on the important duty of witnessing for Jesus. When the request was made, between fifty and sixty rose at once to acknowledge Christ.... We are now reaping the fruit of years of persevering toil on the part of many who have laboured faithfully in the vineyard of the Great Master. The Holy Spirit is still working in our midst. We are expecting still further manifestations of His saving power." (55.)

Clunes Circuit, 1878

"The Rev. R. C. Flockhart writes:- It is our pleasing duty to record a very gracious work of God in our midst. The spirit of hearing and deep interest in the various departments of the church, have been manifested for some months

past\; and several having been added to the church from time to time, the faith of Zion has been encouraged. Our people were ripe for a great work of the Spirit when the Revs. Messrs Watsford and Ralph Brown kindly paid us a visit\; and since that there has been a very general move in the Sabbath-school, while several from the congregation have given themselves to God. More than 150 have professed to have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. We are arranging for the younger portion of the converts being met in catechumen classes under the care of efficient leaders, and for the others to be placed in the regular classes. The cry of the church is still for greater things than these. May a great work of God spread over the entire land." (56.)

When, in due course, the Clunes Quarterly Meeting was held, on the 1st of October, the returns showed that during the year 35 members had removed from the district, and 29 had ceased to meet in class. Yet, despite these losses, the total full membership had increased by 15 in the last quarter, with another 68 on trial for membership, with 55 catechumens, plus five other communicants. "When reference was made to the spiritual work with which the circuit had been favoured, all rose and sang 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow,' after which the chairman led in prayer." (57.)

Sandhurst. Forest Street Circuit, 1878

"During the past six or seven weeks the kind hand of the Lord has been over this circuit for good. He has, through the blessed power of the Holy Spirit, revived his people, reclaimed backsliders, and brought sinners to repentance. We are just now saying, 'The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.' Last quarter, at various points in the Circuit, we received droppings of the most glorious shower, and at last Quarterly Meeting it was agreed that we should pray for and expect the promise to be fulfilled - 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.'

About six weeks since, mission services were commenced in Eaglehawk, and continued for three weeks, resulting in the gathering in of a score of souls. At Long Gully meetings were then held, which are still going on, in which over forty have been led to decide for God. Habitual neglecters of God's house are now daily worshippers in His temple. A remarkable feature in the work in Long Gully is that, with few exceptions, all are adult persons. We are now holding services at White Hills and California Hill.

Sunday, 11th August, was a memorable day for California Hill. A special service was held in the Sunday-school, at 3 o'clock, for young people. Over fifty of the scholars were seeking Christ, many of whom were enabled to rejoice in that Saviour who says - 'Suffer little children to come unto Me.' Over a hundred have professed to have found Christ at California Hill, and the work is still going on. At White Hills, the scene of great exploits in the good old times, the church has been praying on night after night for six weeks, and God has graciously answered their prayers. He has made bare His arm as in the ancient days, and a goodly number have decided for God. So far the work has resulted in the gathering in of over two hundred souls. May God increase the number a hundredfold! This week services will be held in Forest-street, where we pray that great things may be done in the name of the holy child Jesus." (58.)

In due course, the Forest Street Circuit Quarterly Meeting was held, on September 24th. It was announced that there had been 80 removals, 5 deaths, and another 83 had "ceased to meet in class", during the year. Yet, despite this loss, the circuit had seen an increase for the year of 43 full members, making a total of 709. In addition, 262 were on trial for membership, and there were 83 catechumens. (59.)

Perhaps even more interesting were the returns which were announced at the next quarterly meeting, held around the end of the year. At that meeting, the full membership had risen by 176 for the quarter, to a new total of 885. In addition, there were 63 on trial for membership, and 117 catechumens. (60.)

Maldon Circuit, 1878

"While we have had the pleasure of hearing, through the columns of the 'Spectator' of the work of God prospering in other parts of the colony, we are truly thankful to our loving Father for the rich outpouring of His holy spirit on this circuit. Special services have been held by the Rev. J. W. Tuckfield, and God has kindly owned the means adopted.

Between fifty to sixty persons have humbly and yet boldly put on Christ. The members of our church have been quickened by the influence of the Spirit, and altogether, it has been a time of rejoicing from the presence of the Lord. To Thee O! God, shall we ascribe all the honour, praise and glory for ever. Amen." (61.)

Other Circuits

"Revival News" reports also came from several parts of the Geelong district, including Yarra Street, as well as Chilwell, Ashby, South Geelong, and Newtown. But these reports all had the flavour of normal evangelism than of revival.

A brief comment came from the Berwick Circuit. "God has graciously blessed the people of Keysborough with a glorious revival. For nearly three weeks during August the Rev. Mr. Lindsay has been holding special services. God has abundantly blessed the labours of our dear brother by giving him souls for his hire. These special means of grace have been the means of greatly quickening the church, restoring backsliders to their first love, and causing sinners to flee from the wrath to come." (62.)

Reports of good evangelism also came from Hawthorn, and the Kilmore Circuit.

Many times special services were held, in circuits all around the colony, which were not as successful as these ones in Bendigo had been. Indeed, it had always been a common thing for special services to be held a number of times through the year for a whole range of purposes, such as Sunday school anniversaries, church anniversaries, and a list of other reasons. For example, the Hamilton Circuit had special services to help improve their financial position (not primarily for outreach). They held revival services in a smaller centre called Byaduk. The brief report on these was "Revival Services were held at Byaduk during the month of August, resulting in the quickening of believers, and a few conversions." (63.)

News also came from the Brunswick Street Circuit, of God's work in several of their locations. But these were mostly related to the work of Matthew Burnett, to whose efforts for the year we must now turn

The Work of Matthew Burnett for 1878

It appears that Matthew Burnett did not always have the best of health. Also, when one remembers the prodigious amount of work he put in each year, wherever he went, it is surprising that his health had not been completely broken long before.

Christmas, January and February were spent in New Zealand, and in Tasmania, for the benefit of his health. His first letter to the "Spectator" for 1878 was dated 6th March, and came from his little "Yorkshire Cottage" in Geelong.

He spent three months working around various centres in the Gippsland District, encouraged by the Chairman of the Gippsland District, the Rev. John Harcourt.

For example, in March, he started out working for several weeks in Sale. This was followed by visits to Walhalla, to Bairnsdale, to the Omeo Circuit, and to the Port Albert Circuit, including Yarram and Tarraville. These places were relatively new areas. They were unlikely to be visited by any evangelist of wide fame. It is a credit to Burnett, and to the Home Mission work of the denomination, that he was willing to spend a reasonable segment of time in these areas. Much good was done, and many conversions occurred.

Stawell Circuit, 1878

On June 8th, he started work in the town of Stawell, working with the Rev. Richard Hart, for two months. Hart's final report on the campaign went as follows:-

"Eight weeks ago Mr. Burnett commenced his labours in Stawell, and few if any would have ventured to predict such a glorious success as we have seen. Large singing bands have marched through the streets frequently, accompanied by torch-bearers and crowds. And this sympathy with the work has not been confined to our own Church. People of all creeds and grades of society have cheerfully joined in the work, and attended the services. So much for appearances.

What are the results? To anyone asking such a question I should like to be able to give some of the testimonies given at our praise meetings, on which occasions our church was crowded. There were present those who had been drunkards, swearers, profligate men, and abandoned women, 'clothed and in their right mind,' and as these rose and spoke of the depths from which they had come, the feeling in the large congregation was almost overpowering.

But our best days were yet to come. At the Working Men's Meeting, held on Saturday evening, August 3rd, an hour before the time for starting, numbers were turned away from the Town Hall..... The enthusiasm of the meeting rose to its greatest height when two men, notorious for their drunken and vicious habits, rose and, in the name of over seventy confirmed drunkards, thanked Mr. Burnett for coming down to them and giving them a helping hand\; and as one expressed himself, 'The best of all I have Christ now.'

On Sunday afternoon, August 4th, we had a strange spectacle for Stawell\; hundreds accompanied the singing bands down Main-street, and on the Cricket Reserve Mr. Burnett addressed a crowd of 2,000, Protestants and Catholics, rich and poor, high and low. 'The word was with power.' In the evening, Mr. Burnett preached his farewell sermon, when aisles, communion rail, and even the pulpit were crowded\; and at the same time I had to address a large crowd in the open air\; while both vestries were filled. The sermon was most effective, and at the prayer-meeting afterwards the aisles were again filled with kneeling worshippers, and the communion rail crowded with penitents. God was with us, and we had such a prayer-meeting as I do not remember ever to have been in before\; we could not get the people away till midnight.

On Monday afternoon the last Mothers' Meeting was held with excellent results\; and in the evening 'the people of Stawell' gave Mr. Burnett a valedictory tea-meeting, when between 400 and 500 sat down to tea, quite upsetting the expectations of the caterer and of the committee, who had founded their calculations on the usual type of Stawell teas. The concert, and lecture

on J. B. Gough, was to have commenced at eight, but as the hall was filled by seven, we had to start an hour earlier, and many were unable to get in. The enthusiasm of the meeting was wonderful, and Mr. Burnett's statement of results - 1370 signatures to the (temperance) pledge - was received with great applause. But figures give but a faint impression of what Mr. Burnett has done - that can only be known on 'the great day.' Stawell has received such an awakening as will still produce its results, and we look upon the work as likely still to grow. We thank God Mr. Burnett was able to stay here so long.

Mr. Burnett had to work against a great deal of prejudice when he first came up here, but by his intense earnestness, his gentleness and amiability, he has won all hearts, and I am quite sure there is no place in Victoria where Mr. Burnett is more highly esteemed and beloved than in Stawell. There is but one opinion, and that is deep regret that he has to leave such a grand work just at its height, and still spreading. For myself, I am glad to have had the opportunity of working with Mr. Burnett, and cheerfully bear testimony to the arduous toils he has undergone, and the immense work he has done in our midst. Our people have worked well with Mr. Burnett (one good lady secured no less than forty-two signatures to the pledge), and all wish him God speed, and a quick return to Stawell.

I am, sir, yours faithfully,
Richard Hart.

Wesleyan Parsonage, Stawell." (64.)

Collingwood, and nearby centres

The months of August and September were spent working in the Collingwood area, within the Brunswick Street Circuit. The Gipps Street congregation was also involved in this work. At the completion of that time, Burnett paid from his own pocket for three women to continue his work in Collingwood for another twelve months.

Very lengthy reports about Burnett's work in Collingwood appeared in the "Spectator."

This was followed by four weeks at Emerald Hill, which was now the centre of a circuit. He worked there for most of October, and was working in Sandridge (in this same circuit) later in November.

However, on this occasion, he did not keep on working through December, but left for New Zealand, again in search of relief for his health.

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The year of 1879 was very quiet, so far as revivals were concerned, or, at least, so far as revivals were concerned which were reported upon in the "Spectator."

The Rev. Spencer Williams was elected President of the Victorian and Tasmanian Wesleyan Conference in the place of Dr. Joseph Dare. The silver-tongued Dare had been awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by the University of New Orleans during the previous year, while he was President.

Several leading ministers had retired at the previous Conference of 1878, including the Rev. John Eggleston. (The others were Samuel Ironside, Thomas Williams and J. C. Symons.) However, Eggleston did not live long to enjoy his retirement. He died suddenly during this 1879 Conference, and the meetings were adjourned so that members could attend his funeral. A lengthy oration and appreciation was given at the funeral by Samuel Ironside, who had been on the same ship with Eggleston and his wife when they first came to Australia, many years before. This address was published in full, in the "Spectator."

Because of the pressure of business, the "Conversation on the Work of God" at the 1879 Conference was very short, and almost non-existent. So, very little attention was paid to the revivals of the previous year, or was given to the need for deeper workings of the Holy Spirit in the coming year. In one way the manner in which church business is conducted is strange. Many times the most vital business for the Kingdom of God gets pushed out of the way by a mountain of machinery matters, and other things which appear to be pressing.

The statistics which were announced at the Conference were that there were 12,296 full members (as against 12,018 for the previous year), with 1,433 on trial for membership. The report claimed an increase of 278 in total membership over 1878. (65.)

Meetings which corresponded to the Conference on Holiness seem to have been organised this year by the United Evangelistic Association in Melbourne, and thus were interdenominational in nature.

Special meetings began to be thought of, as the months passed, and there were several editorial efforts which appeared in the "Spectator" to promote interest in these meetings, and in evangelism and revivals.

Apart from the work of Matthew Burnett, however, only two revivals were reported as occurring in Victorian circuits during 1879.

Brunswick Street Circuit, 1879

By the May quarterly meeting, this circuit claimed to have the largest membership of any Wesleyan circuit in Victoria, with 920 full members, with others in addition on trial, or as catechumens. To some degree this growth was due to the powerful evangelistic preaching of Joseph Dare, their superintendent minister. Matthew Burnett had also been working in several of their smaller centres, as well as benefiting from the value of the normal outreach activities of their many members. .

The first report of their special meetings for 1879 appeared early in August. "In this circuit 'showers of blessing' have come upon us, and in several of our congregations 'signs and wonders' have been wrought. At Brunswick-street a preparatory sermon was preached on the evening of 29th June, and a society tea and meeting were held the day following, at which a large number gathered\; and special prominence was given to the experience of personal holiness as a pre-requisite for successful work. Very rich influence rested upon us, so that many sought and obtained entire sanctification. That week was devoted to nightly prayer-meetings\; and the central meeting for the promotion of holiness on the Thursday night deepened still further the earnestness of God's people.

For three weeks afterwards special services were held every night with blessed results. Some of the meetings especially were bright with the glory of the Lord, the holiest influences were poured upon us, and our consciousness of the divine presence grew most real and intense. Many entered into the peace of God, especially among our young people\; while the members of the church have received a gracious quickening. The ministers of the circuit were assisted by the Rev. John Watsford, and by many valuable helpers, in carrying on these services. The recent school anniversary Sunday was a memorable day. The Rev. R. Fitcher preached\; and at the evening service we received an abundant outpouring of the Spirit\; a number were arrested and saved, and great grace was upon us all.

At Sackville-street special services were conducted for a week by the Rev. J. Watsford, with marked effect upon our members\; while some of the unconverted were induced to come out on the Lord's side.

At Brunswick, some of the ordinary services have been very blessed seasons, and fruitful in soul-saving. The fire spread to Nicholson-street\; and

on Sunday, 27th July, four found peace through believing, and others remained under conviction of sin. The classes have increased in size, and a larger attendance has proved a growing interest in these important means of grace.

With gratitude to God we record the good work among our Sunday scholars during the past few weeks. At the Jubilee School several have decided for God. At Fitzroy-street many of the scholars have obtained mercy. At Clifton Hill, after an address by the Rev. W. Williams, no less than forty from the upper classes stayed to be prayed for on the dismissal of the school, and all declared their determination to serve God. About the same number took the decisive step at Nicholson-street last Sunday afternoon at a similar service\; so that the work is still spreading, and our teachers are being greatly encouraged. May all our schools be thus baptised with saving influences." (66.)

Some weeks later, another progress report appeared.

"Special services have been continued in this circuit in several of the places with visible success. Our work has embraced since the last report Coburg, Fitzroy-street, Nicholson-street, and East Brunswick, and we are thankful that so many have been impressed and saved during these services, of which many have been seasons of special power and abundant grace. Some of those converted are in the senior classes of our Sunday-schools, some are members of the general congregations, and others are of the class who do not usually attend any church, but who were induced to come to our special meetings by the distribution of bills detailing the services, and by the personal efforts of our people.

The work in our Sunday-schools continues to spread. A special service was conducted in the Coburg school on the afternoon of 24th August, when nearly the whole of the scholars, except the infants, stayed, by their own choice, after the school was closed, to pray and seek Christ. In the other schools previously reported, catechumen classes are now formed, and special attention is being paid to the scholars who have professed conversion. We trust that in due time these will enter our society-classes, and will be fully and permanently united with the church." (67.)

Tarnagulla and Dunolly Circuit, 1879

"We commenced our special services in this circuit a week ago. Goldsborough, where there is now a large population drawn thither by the success of the Queen's Birthday Mining Company, was fixed upon as the starting place, the services to be afterwards continued throughout the circuit. The superintendent, Rev. T. Grove, preached on Sabbath evening, 10th August, and every evening since, except Saturday.

We had good meetings to begin with, a very solemn feeling pervading the congregation. By Tuesday evening the church seemed to get into full sympathy with the work\; and on Wednesday evening the first-fruits of what we expect to be a large harvest of souls were gathered in. Since then not less than forty persons - young, middle-aged and old - have rested upon the 'Rock of Ages' and still the work goes on unabated. The Lord grant that the shower may come down on every part of the circuit." (68.)

Three weeks later the story was continued.

"The special services at Goldsborough were brought to a close a week ago. The concluding service was one that will not soon be forgotten by those who took part in it. About forty out of sixty of the new converts bore a blessed testimony to the grace of God, and then partook of the Lord's Supper, the others being at work in the mines and unable to attend. A special feature in the work has been the number of heads of families brought to God, their conversion being followed by that of their grown up sons and daughters. The effect of the work has been to largely increase the congregations, and to give a fresh impetus to the work of God in all its departments.

Many of the converts have already joined the classes, and expressed their appreciation of that means of grace in no measured terms, and we are expecting many more to join. As a result of the services at Goldsborough alone, we hope to report a satisfactory increase in our members on trial.

Last week we commenced a series of services at Dunolly. Rev. James Moy Ling, our Chinese missionary, who paid a visit to the district to excite interest in the Chinese work, preached on Sabbath morning." (69.)

These Dunolly meetings were followed by others at Tarnagulla.

A very brief report about the next quarterly meeting revealed that over 100 had joined the classes, and become members on trial. (70.)

No doubt there were special efforts of one kind or another in many of the circuits around the colony, but these may not have produced results that the local people thought were significant enough to report.

The September quarterly meeting in the Forest Street Circuit, in the Sandhurst district, in Bendigo, reported that they had lost 153 members over 12 months. Many of these would have been removals, as the whole colony was suffering very difficult economic circumstances that year.

Despite these loses, however, there had been an increase for the year since last October of 146 full members, probably due largely to the revival of the previous year. They also had 106 on trial for membership, and 263 catechumens. The total number of people "meeting in class" in the circuit was over 1,300. (71.)

Matthew Burnett Concludes His Work in Victoria

At the start of the month of March, Burnett began his "beloved work" for the year, after a lengthy visit to New Zealand, and brief visits elsewhere.

His first sphere of work was in the Echuca Circuit for a month.

This was followed by extended activities in the inner city of Melbourne for almost the rest of the year. He spent April and May in Brunswick and Collingwood, which were parts of the Brunswick Street Circuit.

Apart from a brief period in July when he took part in the Ballarat Town Mission, he worked for the whole period from 31st May until the middle of October in the various centres of the Wesley Church Circuit. He started in North Melbourne, then moving to Carlton, and then to Wesley Church itself, followed by a return period in Carlton, again.

Late in October he worked for a short time in the central Brunswick Street church itself. Strangely enough, this was in fact the first time he had worked in that church. Each other occasion when he had worked in this circuit he had been majoring in one of the other centres in the circuit.

In mid-August, a very interesting piece appeared in the "Spectator", in relation to the Brunswick Street Circuit, under the title of "Home Mission Work", which cast a sidelight upon the work Burnett had done in Collingwood the previous year.

"The first tea-meeting in connection with the new scheme of 'Home Mission Work' took place on Thursday last, 21st August, in the Grosvenor schoolroom, which has been kindly placed at the disposal of the Home Mission Committee by Mr. Puckey for a period of twelve months, free of charge, either for rent or gas\; about 120 persons sat down to tea.

After tea came the public meeting, which was one of unusual interest, inasmuch as there were lady speakers to address the meeting. After singing and prayer, the Rev. E. Taylor took the chair, and Mr. Puckey gave a verbal report, from which it appears that several years ago our people tried this as a preaching-place, but for the want of the home missionary spirit it soon ceased. This had been tried on three separate occasions, and each with the same result.

After the first visit of Mr. Burnett to the city of Collingwood last year three Bible-women were appointed, one especially for this locality, which is situated about a mile and a half from Gipps-street church, and about the same distance from the church at Richmond. In the course of two or three months, it was resolved to try open-air services, which ultimately led to the opening of this place.

In December last about 250 slips were printed and circulated, intimating that the Rev. E. Taylor would preach in the Grosvenor Schoolroom on Sunday, 3rd December, at three o'clock. The first meeting was small, but in a short time the congregation increased to about 100, and has continued to the present time. During Mr. Burnett's second visit to Collingwood he preached in this schoolroom on two successive Sundays to congregations of over 300 persons, besides attending a mothers' meeting, and was greatly delighted with the result.

Mrs. Oxley, the Bible-woman of the lower part of Collingwood, addressed the meeting, and it was soon evident that many of those present had been reclaimed, convinced of sin, and converted to God through her instrumentality.

Mrs. Varcoe, another of the Bible-women, addressed the meeting, and it was evident from the addresses of these ladies that they are eminently qualified for the very important position which they hold.

Votes of thanks to the ladies, to the choir, and to the chairman, with the doxology and benediction, brought the meeting to a close, all determined, by the help of God, to pray for the prosperity and success of the grand scheme of home mission work." (72.)

Even during the middle of the year, Burnett was expressing wishes to visit many of the country circuits again, where he had ministered previously. But, for some reason, the plan changed when the end of the year approached. The reason is not clear.

At the end of October, his arrangement with the Home Mission Department was terminated, and he began preparing to move to South Australia.

A very large testimonial meeting was arranged in the Melbourne Town Hall. A full report of this meeting, and of the appreciation which was extended to Burnett, was published in the "Spectator." But, perhaps a better inclusion here is the editorial for November 7th, 1879, under the title "The Burnett Testimonial."

"On Monday night last, a large audience assembled in the Town Hall to present a testimonial, and say farewell to Mr. Matthew Burnett; who, as he told the meeting, would 'shortly leave Victoria. His present intention was to go to South Australia, and after labouring there for a few months (he actually stayed for three years), to continue his labours in New South Wales, then New Zealand, afterwards in America, next in England, and if spared, in the evening of life to resume his work again among the masses of Victoria.' On another page we give a report of the meeting.

Mr. Burnett arrived in the colony in August, 1863, and shortly after commenced to hold revival services in the Brighton and Berwick Circuits. After six months' labour there, he visited and held services in various other parts of the colony, including Clunes, Creswick, Ballarat, Sandhurst, Geelong, etc. In connection with his evangelistic services, Mr. Burnett laboured with great zeal and success in the cause of temperance. After nine years of unceasing work, during which he is said to have delivered over 4,000 public addresses, besides holding numberless other meetings, it was not surprising that under so severe a strain, his health should have broken down, requiring a voyage to England for his recovery.

His return to the colony, early in 1874 - after an absence of about two years - was not accomplished without great peril. The ship in which he was a passenger - the 'Loch Maree' - was dismasted in a severe gale, and was in consequence compelled to put into Gibraltar to refit. While detained there, he laboured very successfully among the soldiers and sailors of the garrison and

ships of war\; so that when he left, he received tokens of goodwill from officers and men.

With his health recruited, Mr. Burnett again entered upon his work with renewed energy. In 1875 he was engaged by the Wesleyan Home Mission Committee, under whose direction he has visited almost every part of the colony, holding evangelistic services. The results of these labours, have, from time to time, been reported in our columns\; so that it is unnecessary for us to speak of them at any length. That much permanent good has been effected by these many revival services, must be readily admitted\; but that excitement was followed by re-action, and the statements of numbers have often been the product of a too sanguine mind, cannot be denied. This, however, is more or less true of most revival efforts.

It has been Mr. Burnett's custom to devote his Saturdays particularly to the work of the social and temperance reformation, and it is in this department of philanthropic enterprise that he is most widely known, and will be most extensively remembered. He states, that over fifty thousand persons have been induced to sign the pledge in connection with his temperance crusade in Victoria. Deducting a large discount from this number - which we are disposed to do - still the remainder is a wonderful result. A single individual rescued from the curse of intemperance is an incalculable gain\; one man saved from falling into the vice of drunkenness is a work which an angel might envy. How, then, is it possible to estimate the benefits, personal, domestic, social, and national, in the rescue from drunkenness of thousands of human beings.

Mr. Burnett's labours have been herculean. He is an embodiment of earnestness and enthusiasm. He possesses a remarkable power over the masses\; a power which has been, no doubt very properly, called 'magnetic'. He has remarkable adaptation for getting people to work with him, and keeping them at work. We shall not be expected to record our approval of all the methods he adopts\; nor can we pretend to do so\; but we can, and do, most heartily admire his indomitable energy, his oneness of purpose, and his disinterested efforts in the sacred cause of religion, and the noble cause of social reformation.

The large meeting, the generous gift, and the appropriate address - was a fitting close to Mr. Burnett's philanthropic labours in Victoria. He will leave the colony with the consciousness that he carries with him the esteem and affection of large numbers, and that he will be followed by the prayers and good wishes of multitudes, who will desire for him continued health, and success in the great work in which he is engaged." (73.)

Overview of Revival and Evangelism in Victoria, 1836 to 1880

The earliest revivals in Victoria sprang from the work of laymen, more than through the ordained ministers. Twenty years later, the 1859 revival seemed to have its most notable effect in Victoria, so far as the Australian colonies were concerned, although its impact in South Australia is not so well documented.

Then came the impact of California Taylor. Sporadic revivals occurred through his ministry here. It must be noted, however, that both here, and in New South Wales, revivals broke out often enough in other places which Taylor never visited, and sometimes before he arrived nearby. So the revivals had a character and life which was not entirely governed by the human instruments who were involved in them.

As the 1870s progressed, the special evangelistic services became increasingly part of the normal schedule, and were held at a time when they fitted most easily into the rest of the programme of the circuit.

The statistics show that Methodist church membership grew steadily up to 1870. Then occurred several years when no progress was made in this numerical

growth, and which prompted some heart-searching amongst the leaders. By 1877, full membership figures were increasing again, but only by small increments.

1877 was also the time when other visiting evangelists were starting to appear on the scene. They were welcomed and supported by all of the Protestant denominations, whereas Taylor had only been supported by the Wesleyans. Henry Varley and Alexander Somerville already had substantial fame in this area before they arrived here.

Somehow, however, the visits by these big-name evangelists did not seem to bring revival, in the same way as had sometimes occurred through the evangelism which the Wesleyans had conducted at the "grass-roots" level in their circuits.
