

GLORIOUS GOSPEL TRIUMPHS

Preface

I have long been urged to write the story of my life and work in Fiji and Australasia, but have shrank from doing so, lest it might seem to be inconsistent with Christian humility. But my brethren have pleaded another consideration that should have weight with me. They have said that the facts in my possession were not my own, and that if published they might help other workers, and bring glory to my blessed Lord. This greatly influenced me, for I only wish to live to glorify God, and do good to others. But, being still perplexed with doubts and fears, I have taken all to the Lord, and earnestly pleaded for light and guidance. A deep and painful sense of great unfaithfulness would keep me silent, and incline me to burn every record of the past; but, after much waiting up on God, I am now fully persuaded it is His will that I should publish this book, and I have consented to do so. I do not write of any righteousness of my own, or good that I have done in my own strength, for

I nothing have, I nothing am

But I write of my Saviour's love and power, and of the triumphs of His glorious Gospel that I have seen in my life and work.

J. W.
Victoria, Kew,
28th March 1899

Introductory Sketch

By the Rev. W.H. Fitchett, B.A., LL.D.

The reader of this book loses much if he has not a personal knowledge – or, in default of that, a vivid mental picture – of its writer. Great as is the interest of the record here presented, the man is yet greater than the book. Throughout the seven Colonies of Australasia the name of JOHN WATSFORD is, in a sense, a household word, and there gathers about it a singular degree of love and reverence. John Watsford is venerated everywhere, and by men of all Churches, or of no Church, for his saintly piety, his fine record as a missionary and evangelist, his frank honesty, his transparent unselfishness, his utter devotion to the service of every good cause.

Mr Watsford would have been a man of mark in any calling. He has many of the qualities of an orator, and a natural faculty for leadership which is felt by everyone who comes within range of his influence. A fearless man, who speaks the truth and does the right in scorn of consequent; rich in a strong-fibred, clear-eyed common-sense, which sees the path to be trodden when subtler intellects often stumble and grope! A man of resolute convictions and exultant faith, with a capacity for generous and fiery anger against evil only too rare in these pallid days of half convictions about right and polite compromises with wrong!

But to the Methodist Churches of Australasia in particular, John Watsford is a sort of patriarch and saint. He is the one surviving representative of what may be called the "heroic age" of Wesleyan Missions in the Pacific. He has done every sort of work, filled every variety of office, and enjoyed every distinction the Methodist Church can

impose or confer upon its ministers. As a preacher and theologian, John Watsford does not, perhaps, belong to the “modern” school; and, though well read in general literature, and singularly versed in Scripture and in Methodist theology, he has no claims to be, in any wide sense, a scholar. But he represents and embodies all the best and most characteristic qualities of Methodism: its pity for men; its passion for conversions; its faith in a Divine Saviour and a personal redemption; its proclamation of the sanctifying offices of the Holy Ghost; its conception of religion as a present spiritual victory over sin, a creation of saintly character, here and now; its faith in the swift coming and assured triumph of the kingdom of God. And John Watsford has done, and still does, more perhaps than any other single figure to maintain these great and kindling conceptions in the Methodist Churches of Australasia.

As John Watsford stands in the pulpit he is a figure which would delight an artist – especially one of the great painters of what are called the “Ages of Faith,” whose saints and apostles still look down upon us from the frescoes of many a time-stained cathedral. The upright figure; the deep-set, kindly eyes; the head white with the snows of over seventy years; the flowing, snowy beard, as ample as that of Michael Angelo’s Moses. Many elements of natural grace and power give a charm to John Watsford’s preaching. His voice, in particular, has one note of tear-compelling pathos which sometimes melts, in a single sentence, his entire audience. But the true elements of force in John Watsford’s preaching, a sin his character and life, are all spiritual; the force of truth profoundly realised, exultantly believed, and proclaimed in the energy of the Holy Ghost.

That this is not merely an Australian estimate of an Australian minister, over-coloured by an unconscious bias, is shown by the following letter from the Rev. H. Price Hughes, M.A. Mr Watsford has paid only one visit to England, and Mr. Price Hughes kindly supplies the following vivid sketch of the impression Mr. Watsford left on English audiences:-

October 20th, 1899.

Dear Mr. Fitchett, - I am delighted to hear that the venerable Mr. Watsford’s “Autobiography” is about to be published, and that you are writing a brief prefatory sketch of his saintly career. I vividly remember his visit to this country many years ago, when I was appointed as his colleague in the great Autumnal Missionary Deputation to Leeds. We also stay at the same house, so that I saw him in private as well as heard him in public. His missionary speeches to those world-famous, crowded Leeds audiences were simply ideal missionary addresses. They came from his heart. They were full of the spontaneous eloquence of reality and deep emotion. They told the story of one of the most glorious pages in missionary annals. His great spiritual influence swept over those crowded audiences as the wind sweeps over a cornfield in the autumn. You could see the meeting surge in all directions, overwhelmed with emotion and Divine influence. I think I have never heard so effective a missionary speaker; and yet it was so simple and so devout. It was, in truth, the Power of God!

The same impression marked his private life. I was at the Leeds Anniversary again twelve months ago, in my official position as President. I stayed at the same house. I asked my host if he remembered Mr. Watsford’s visit. He uttered an exclamation of delight at the very mention of the name. “Of course! He could never forget that visit;” and he added that the great missionary did not say much about religion, but a religious influence seemed to flow from him in all directions. He had, in fact, that greatest of all gifts which the early Methodist preachers, amid all their shortcomings and infirmities, so richly enjoyed, namely, the unction of the Holy Ghost.

The painters of the Middle Ages tried to express the impression produced by saints, by giving them a nimbus, indicating in their rude way that there is some heavenly influence which radiates from those who live in Christ. Mr. Watsford had that unmistakable but undefinable characteristic of the true saints. And, indeed, the impression he produced on my mind on that occasion long ago, although my intercourse with him was so brief, lives in my memory as fresh and fragrant as ever. Once or twice since then he has favoured me with a letter, and one of my greatest consolations amid the burdens and perils of my work in London is to know that he prays for me. – Yours very sincerely,

H. Price Hughes.

John Watsford's Autobiography is published in the belief that thousands who read it will be conscious of the spiritual stimulus which streams out from the story of such a life; and that thus –perhaps in years to come, when the hand that wrote this tale of *Glorious Gospel Triumphs* has crumbled to dust – these great spiritual “triumphs” may be repeated in other lives, to the glory of God and to the spread of the kingdom of His Son.

W. H. Fitchett

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

My gracious Master and my God, Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honours of Thy name.

Chapter I **Australasia; New South Wales**

Early Days

To be used by God in saving others we must ourselves be saved. To Abraham the Lord said, “I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing.” David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me...then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” To Peter Jesus said, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Let me then first and briefly tell of my early days, and how the Lord Jesus sought and saved me.

I was born at Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia, on December 5, 1820. Parramatta is small and insignificant compared with other towns even in Australia, but as the place of my birth it is to me

A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest.

It is about thirteen miles from Sydney, the capital of New South Wales. Its beautiful river, with villages and orange groves on the banks, has been much admired. In the days of my youth the Governor's country residence was there. The barracks were generally occupied by a large company of soldiers, who, while they did not improve the morality of the place, gave to it an air of life and activity. By the people of Sydney, however, it was regarded as dull and slow-going.

Methodism was no sooner introduced into Australia than it found its way to Parramatta, and the labours of God's servants were there crowned with success. The town has given to the Methodist Church some earnest workers, among whom I may mention Mrs Draper, the excellent wife of the Rev. D. J. Draper; Mrs. Cross, the wife and the devoted missionary to Tonga and Fiji; and the Rev. W. J. and Mrs. Webb, who long laboured in our Mission in Fiji. The Rev. J.G. Millard came from England when a lad, but he was converted in Parramatta, and was there received into the Christian ministry.

I was the third child in a family of twelve, - a large number for our very kind and, I fear, sometimes over-indulgent parents to care for. We were all sent early to the Wesleyan Sabbath School, and were never allowed to be absent from church, morning or evening, on the Sabbath day. My mother's father lived with us for many years. He had been a soldier, and was a stern old man. We children, however, could always reckon on his being on our side, and I think that he often encouraged us to rebel against our parents. Some grandfathers and grandmothers are very foolish, and, however wisely and well they may have brought up their own children, they are not to be trusted in the training of their grandchildren.

As a boy I had my share of troubles, accidents, and hairbreadth escapes. Playing one day with a number of other lads, I fell, and others fell on me, breaking my leg. This laid me up for more than six weeks, a great trial to an active boy. For about a month longer I had to go on crutches, but I was soon able to get along on my crutches almost as fast as I formerly could without them; and few boys dared to attack me then, for a crutch is a formidable weapon. I did not suffer any permanent injury from this accident. Indeed the bone was so well set that when the doctor and a friend of his met me one day in the street, and asked which leg had been broken, I had some difficulty in answering the question, and I thought from their hearty laughter that I had, after all, made a mistake.

Another time I was bathing with one of my brothers and another lad. As we were all standing on a slippery rock by the river's brink, this lad pushed my brother, and the two, holding on to each other, fell into the water, which at the edge of the rock was very deep. They sank together, for neither could swim. I plunged in after them. When I reached them, both had gone to the bottom. They laid hold of me and clung with a death-grip, and I had a fearful struggle to save myself and them. Grasping the sharp projecting points of the rock, I fought my way, inch by inch, with my precious burden until I came to the surface. I felt then that it was an awful time, and I have often since thought how terrible it would have been if I had found a grave beneath the waters, for I knew nothing of religion and was without God and without hope. But in that dread hour of peril He pitied and delivered me.

On another occasion I was in the fields with some boys when we found an old cigar. Putting it between two stones we ground it to power. We then set to work to see who could take most of the snuff we had thus made. I went far beyond my companions, and suffered for it. I was so sick that I could not stand, or even hold up my head, and the boys were compelled to carry me home. On their way, coming to the river, they determined to bathe. The tide was out, and boats were lying dry on the beach. They put me into one of the boats, went off, and soon forgot all about me whilst they

splashed and sported in the water. When they came back the tide had turned. The water, rapidly rising in the boat, had nearly covered me, for I had no power to move. Wet, weary, and faint, I was carried to my father's house. A long affliction followed. For months my life was despaired of, but at length God in His great mercy raised me up again.

One day I was standing in a narrow lane near a coach and four horses. The coachman, leaving the box, carelessly threw the reins on the backs of the horses, which in a moment were off. I ran for a wide gate near at hand. The horses running for the same, I was caught by one of the wheels of the coach and jammed against the gate-post. When the coach passed in I was thrown insensible on the ground. All thought that every bone in my body was broken, and that I was dead. Soon, however, I regained consciousness, and was lifted tenderly and carried into the nearest house. I was in an agony of pain, and yet I remember laughing at an accident that occurred. At the side of the house was a low fence that anyone could easily step over, and inside of it, at one end, was a large tub let into the ground and filled with water for the ducks. One of the neighbours, a funny old lady, came rushing in, and, forgetting all about the fence, fell over it into the duck tub. I heard the splash, followed by the cry, "Old Biddy's in the duck tub," and even in my intense suffering I could not help laughing at poor Biddy's misfortune, although at the same time I felt sorry for the old woman, whom we all liked. When the doctor examined me he found that no bone was broken, but that I was sadly bruised. It was feared that I should feel the effects all my life, but in six or seven months, through the goodness of God, I was as well as ever.

By Sabbath School days were days to be remembered. I am afraid that I gave my teachers much trouble, and I am sure that many of them never understood me. As a boy I was full of life and fun and mischief, though my heart was always easily touched. When cuffed and scolded, my proud spirit rebelled; but gentleness and love soon melted me. I remember that I once tore up a feather pillow that an old man used as a cushion in church. When the stewards found the feathers flying in all directions they vowed that they would punish the offender, intimating that they knew pretty well who he was. All their threats had no power to move me, but when I heard the old man say, "I would not have cared, only it was the pillow on which my dear old wife laid her head when she died," it almost broke my heart, and I was willing to suffer anything for the bad deed I had done.

At another time I was playing with a pet bird of my brother's while he was absent. Coming in, he blamed me for taking the bird out, and struck me a hard blow. Without a moment's thought I threw a small stone I had in my hand and killed the bird. My brother rushed at me and thrashed me severely, but I bore it all without offering any resistance. My sorrow for what I had done was so great that for many days I could not get over that trouble – the poor bird seemed ever before me.

In our Sabbath School was a teacher who soon lost his temper, and who sometimes boxed my ears in the presence of the other boys. He never managed me, and I was wicked enough to feel that I should like to strike back again. There was another teacher who, when I was at all wild, took me aside and always spoke so tenderly that I had soon to give in. Depend upon it, "love will bow down the stubborn neck" when nothing else will. Well would it be for the children, and well for ourselves, if we all

resolved, and in our homes and Sabbath Schools carried out of the resolution to act on the plan indicated in one of Charles Wesley's hymns –

We would persuade their hearts to obey;
With mildest zeal proceed;
And never take the harsher way
When love will do the deed.

I have often thought that if the mighty power of love had been brought to bear more fully and more frequently upon me, I should have been won for Jesus long before I was.

Our Sabbath School Anniversaries were to all of us red-letter days. We did not then have a tea meeting in the evening and a public meeting after, but we had an all-day children's meeting. It was generally on the Monday. The morning from nine to one o'clock was devoted to singing, recitations, speeches, etc., and the afternoon to prizes, procession, and tea. People came from far and near to our festival, and it was a day of great rejoicing. I never did much in the singing, for, somehow or other, they had come to the conclusion that I was not great in that line. Our great poet has said –

The man that hath no music in his soul,
Nor is not moved by concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils

He should have also told us that most men have more or less of music in them. If intense love of music is any indication of this, then I am sure I have. The difficulty with me is in getting it out. I have sometimes told my friends that when young I was spoiled as a singer in this way. They were singing in our church one of those outrageous tunes that go galloping along at a rapid rate, then come most suddenly to a full long stop, and then bound off again as fast as ever. I was singing away with all my might, when they came to one of those sudden stops, and, instead of stopping, I went on with a solo. The congregation turned and looked and laughed at me. I will not say that this drove all the music out of me, but, whatever of it I may have had, it sealed up in me for ever, and I have never been able to start a tune or sing since that hour. But though I had little to do with the singing, I was always brought to the front in recitations, and, whatever others thought of my performance, I had no doubt that in the opinion of my dear mother, and one of two elderly lady friends who were frequently present, it was as near perfection as anything could be. For some of the superintendents and teachers of our school I cherish the most affectionate remembrance. The names of Messrs. James Byrnes, R. Hunt, John Walker, R. Howell, and others, are still very dear to me.

We had then in Parramatta, as we have now in many places, some good men with strange peculiarities. One of these used to visit our school. He was asked sometimes to give out the closing hymn, and pray. We boys were always glad to see and hear the old man. There were two mistakes he generally made that we looked for. In giving out the hymn he put the page on the hymn, as "the thirteenth page on the twenty-sixth hymn," and in his prayer he often quoted Psalm cxxxix. 2, and always incorrectly, saying, "Thou knowest our downrising and our upsitting." This old man had a scolding wife, who greatly tried and persecuted him, but he was firm and immovable, ever faithful to his God. His wife died, and after some time he married another, a quiet, easy-going woman, the very opposite of the former wife, and, strange to say,

the old man now grew cold and careless in the service of God, and died at last under a cloud.

Another of these queer men is referred to in the Life of the Rev. D. J. Draper, by Rev. J. C. Symons. He had the idea that the Superintendent of our school was a bitter enemy of his, and he would pray the Lord to save him from his foe, and enable him to Bear the persecution raised against him; nearly always concluding with, "My dear brothers and sisters, never mind nothing what nobody says to you."

When a boy, I heard and knew most of the pioneer ministers of the Wesleyan Church in Australia, and my love and respect for them was very great. They were indeed earnest, hard-working, noble men. It was a great joy to me in early life to see and hear them, and now, in my old age, I delight to think of them still. The Rev. S. Leigh, the first Wesleyan minister in Australia, did a great work, and did it well. He left for England when I was eleven years old. The Rev. G. Erskine was one of Dr. Coke's missionaries to India. He was the first Chairman of the Australian District. We boys used to think him a stern old man. He would have order in church, and has startled us many a time by calling from the pulpit in his loud, gruff voice, "Drive that dog out of the chapel!" "Take that hat off the window-sill!"

The Rev. Walter Lawry, Mr. Leigh's first colleague, I knew better in after-years, when he was the General Superintendent of Missions. He was a popular preacher, full of wit and humour, and often said queer things in the pulpit. It is reported of him that once, when preaching, a child cried loud and long. Mr. Lawry bore it patiently for a while, and then, kindly addressing the mother, said, in a way with which no one could be offended, "My dear sister, it's like the toothache, there is only one cure for it, you must have it out." I heard him preach at the opening of York Street Church, Sydney. His text was Ezekiel xxxiv. 26. Speaking of "the holy hill," the stability and permanency of the Church, he referred to Popery and its sad work. "But," said he, "at the glorious Reformation, Protestantism arose in all its strength and smote the whore of Babylon in the mouth, and, I was going to say, knocked the teeth down her throat." The well-known Dr. Lang sat near me that morning, and he shook his sides more than once during the service. When I was in Surrey Hills Circuit, Sydney, Mr. Lawry was living near me, and I often saw him. When he had the first attack of paralysis, the effects of which clung to him to the end, I called at once to see him. I said to him, "Mr. Lawry, is it all right with your soul now?" Looking at me in his peculiar way, he replied, "Would you not think me a fool if I had not made that right?" Some six weeks after, when much better, though still very feeble, he insisted on going to church. When I had preached on the Conversion of Saul of Tarsus, he came from his pew near the door. Staggering up the aisle of the church, and standing inside the communion rail, he said, "God has raised me up from the gates of death to warn you once more." Then, while a wonderful influence rested on the people, he prayed them to be reconciled to God.

The Rev. W. Horton, another of the pioneers, left for England when I was about eight years old. I remember well the night when he preached his farewell sermon, and how I longed to hear it; but I had not that privilege, for a neighbour of ours wished also to hear it, and as his wife was too nervous to be left alone, I, an eight-year-old guard, was sent in to take care of her. Another of these first ministers was the Rev. Joseph Orton. He had been a missionary in the West Indies, and had suffered for Christ's

sake. He was the first Wesleyan minister who preached in Victoria. I remember how he used to preach at people in the congregation. I have heard him say, "I want ten of you, twenty of you, to come to Christ tonight. You men and women sitting on the last form there, and that soldier in the corner." But I remember him particularly as one of the ministers present at a Local Preachers' Meeting, where I, as a local preacher, was on my trial for laughing in the pulpit. The facts were these: I had often to preach at Liverpool, nine miles from Parramatta, and when appointed had to take someone with me to lead the singing. One Sunday I tried to secure the help of two or three, and failed. There was a new arrival amongst us who said he could sing, and I took him. I had a very solemn subject – the General Judgment- and had selected the most appropriate hymns. I gave out the first hymn, and my friend started the tune; but of all the singing I ever heard, that was about the worst. There were eight or ten tunes rolled into one. I bit my lip, choked down the laugh that tried hard to come, and got through the first verse. But when he began to sing the second, it was so outrageous that I could restrain myself no longer. I burst out laughing, and the congregation laughed with me, except one stern old Independent who worshipped with us, and who very probably had never laughed in his life. He wrote to the Rev. D. J. Draper, complaining of my levity, and the case was heard at the Local Preachers' Meeting. Mr. Draper was in the chair, and Mr. Orton sat by his side. After hearing the explanation, Mr. Draper said, "We had better go on to the next business;" and Mr. Orton said in solemn tones, "Don't do it again, brother." I promised that I never would if I could help it; and so ended that remarkable case.

Another of the first ministers was the Rev. N. Turner, at one time a missionary in Tonga, then in New Zealand, and afterwards stationed in Australia. He was an eminent Christian, and a thoroughly devoted minister of Christ. He had a powerful voice. It was said that when he preached in the open air he could be heard a mile away, but I think that was an exaggeration. Mr. Turner was always seeking to save souls, and in most of his services sinners were converted. I have known him compelled to stop in his sermon and come down from the pulpit to comfort penitents in great distress. Oh that we had more of that in our day! Mrs. Turner, who came with her husband from England in 1827, and who saw the wonderful changes that took place in this southern wild, lived for some years with her son-in-law, the Rev. John Harcourt, in Kew. She died at Kew, on October 10, 1893, in her ninety-fifth year.

I cannot speak very highly of most of the week-day schools I attended in my early life. There was generally plenty of cane, and little else. The teachers thought they could drive knowledge into children; in these days they have learned the better plan of drawing it out of them. Of one of the masters I have a very vivid recollection. He was a brutal tyrant, who delighted in severely flogging the boys for every trifling offence. When I was between ten and eleven years old, the King's School was established at Parramatta. Its first master was the Rev. R. Forrest, M.A., a clergyman of the Church of England, a gentleman of noble bearing, a thorough scholar, and a most successful teacher. This school at once took its place as one of the first Grammar Schools in Australia, and I am pleased to say that it has never lost its proud position. Gentlemen of the highest attainments have been at its head, and it has always had a large staff of thoroughly efficient teachers. The most popular and generally beloved of the staff in my day, and one to whom I delight to refer, was the Rev. W. Woolls, D.D., who died in Sydney, New South Wales.

To this school I was sent, my father saying to a friend, when he sent me, "That boy will one day be a missionary;" a prophecy which was certainly fulfilled. I remember my first examination in history at the King's School, and how lamentably I failed; but a kind word of encouragement from the Head Master stimulated me to plod on with the determination to succeed. I remained at the school as a pupil for six years, and was afterwards employed as one of the teachers under Mr. Forrest for two years.

While at "King's" I attended the Episcopalian church every Sunday afternoon. The well-known Rev. Samuel Marsden, then very old, was officiating. We boys got to know some of his sermons almost by heart, for he often repeated them, and there were two that we specially looked out for: "David and the ewe lamb" and "Onesimus." A grand old man was the first Colonial chaplain. He excited a great influence for good in those early days of our history, and was much respected by everybody. When his funeral sermon was preached the Methodist church was closed, and all went to the service at St. John's.

All the time I was at "King's" the Head Master was exceedingly kind to me, lending me books and helping me with my studies. I thank God that I was ever placed under his care. And yet I look back on my connection with that school, and my regular attendance at the Episcopalian church, with peculiar feelings. All this might have led to my entering the ministry of that Church. Trained in their school, and with the powerful influence of the Head Master in my favour, there would have been no difficulty in the way. But if that step had been taken, what a different course I should have travelled, and how different the story of my life! I do not know what my Episcopalian friends will think of me when I say that I thank God that step was not taken. Not because I do not recognise and value the good in the Anglican church, or do not respect her many able and devoted ministers, but simply because there is nothing to me like Methodism, - no Church in which I could have done more good. In my youth I was a great bigot. I really thought that there was very little religion outside of the Methodist Church. But I have long ago outlived all that. I have learned to know and rejoice in the great good in other Churches, and to love all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth. Yet still I bless God that I am a Methodist, for all I have and all I am I owe under God to Methodism.

Conversion

In 1838 occurred the event of my life, for which I shall have to praise God "long as eternal ages roll." One evening, with one or two other young fellows, I went to the Methodist Church, Macquarie Street, Parramatta. The Rev. D. J. Draper was conducting a prayer-meeting. I had no serious thought; I went to mock rather than to pray. What was said or sung I do not know; all I know is that after a while a mighty power came upon me. The sins of my whole life pressed heavily on my soul. I trembled before God, and thought I should sink through the floor into hell. I tried to leave the church, but could not. No one came near me. After the service I left my companions at once and hurried away to my home. Someone followed me. I quickened my pace, but the faster I walked the faster he pursued, until, just as I was about to pass through my father's gate, a strong hand was laid upon me, and one who was a leader in the Church said to me, "My young friend, I've been thinking about

you and praying for you. I am going to commence a young men's class, and I thought I would invite you to join it. Others have tried to persuade me not to invite you, but I have been moved to follow you tonight and press you to come."

I could not speak a word, my heart was too full, for I felt that God had sent him. I tore myself away, and running into the house went at once to my room, and there poured out my heart to God and cried to Him for mercy. For hours I continued pleading, but no answer came. I was afraid to go to sleep lest I should wake up in hell before the morning. That night, and many a night after, I drew my little bed near the fireplace, and, setting the candlestick on the mantelpiece, read and read my precious Bible until I fell asleep.

It was our long vacation at "King's," and day after day I spent alone in my room reading the Bible, and praying to God to save me. I was the first to join the young men's class. There they showed me the way of salvation, and prayed for me; but no rest came to my troubled, burdened heart. For six long weeks I was in this distress and bondage, and my poor mother thought I was going out of my mind. One day – how well I remember it! – I went into an upper room, and falling on my knees cried, "O God, I cannot live another day like this. The load of sin is crushing me down into hell. Have mercy upon me, and pardon all my sin, for Jesus Christ's sake, who shed His blood for me." In a moment I saw all my sins laid on Jesus, and I laid hold of Him as my present Saviour. My chains fell off, and my burden rolled away. Glory be to God! The witness of the Holy Spirit was so clear and distinct, that I thought at the time God really spoke to me from heaven: "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." My joy was very great; it was "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Soon after my conversion the *Life of John Smith*, but the Rev. Richard Treffrey, Jun., was put in my hands. I thank God that I ever read that book. It showed me clearly that I must work for God, and that to work successfully I must be fully consecrated to God. I saw it to be my privilege to be sanctified wholly, and sought it with all my heart; and, trusting Jesus, proved that His blood cleanseth from all sin. Again and again in my life, through unfaithfulness, I have lost that great blessing, but the Holy Spirit has brought back my wandering spirit and restored my soul.

Baptized with the Holy Ghost, I had a great longing to bring others to Jesus. I began by distributing tracts. Procuring a large bundle, I set out on my mission, with the determination not to pass by one person, and with the thought that almost everyone would be converted to God. I had given away many tracts without any rebuff, when I came to an unfinished house, on the roof of which a man was shingling. Ascending the ladder I presented a tract, and asked the shingler to read it. Turning on me with fury he said, "Look you, young fellow, if you are not soon off I'll send you down quicker than you came up." I had to beat a hasty retreat, and a feeling of great discouragement came over me. But it did not last long. I was soon at work again, with an earnest desire to save souls from death.

I became a teacher in the Sabbath School, where I sought to win the young for Jesus.

In July 1839 I was received as a local preacher on trial. At that time we had a band of earnest local preachers in Parramatta. Labouring with these, I was much strengthened and blessed in my work.

One of the first persons brought to God as the fruit of my labours was a most interesting case. I was at the time studying hard with a view to the ministry. One day, after some hours reading, I went out for a walk as far as my mother's, for I was not then living at home. When I was about to return, my mother told me of a poor woman, living in a street I had to pass through, whose husband had taken to drink, sold every article of furniture in the house, and left her dying in a miserable state. How I prayed as I went along that God would open my way into that house to speak a word for Jesus to the dying woman! I was passing the gate when a woman, altogether unknown to me, but who must have known that I was a Methodist, called me and said, "There's a poor woman here who can't live very long, and no one has been to pray for her. Won't you come in?" I went in, and found her lying on a wretched bed in one corner of an unfurnished room. Kneeling down near her I asked her if it was well with her soul, and then she told me her sad, sad story. She was the child of praying parents, had been converted in a Sabbath school in the old land; was married to a godless man; lost her religion; came to this country with her husband; had been deserted by him, and was now dying without hope. I told her the "old, old story," prayed with her, and then did what I have attempted to do only once under similar circumstances – I tried to sing. It must have been something awful, quite as bad, I have no doubt, as that of my Liverpool friend who got me into trouble; but, heedless of everything save how to help the dying woman, I struck up –

Come to Jesus, just now!

He will save you, just now!

There was no need for me to sing any more, for as the tears rolled down her pale face, and her whole frame was shaken with emotion, she herself sung so sweetly –

I believe it, I believe it, I believe it, just now!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen!

She had hold of Jesus, the night of darkness was past, and the morning of joy had come. An hour or two later her happy spirit went to be "forever with the Lord." That was my first soul won; thank God, it was not the last.

Call to the Ministry

In 1841 I was recommended to the British Conference as a candidate for the Wesleyan ministry, and was very soon afterwards sent out to supply for a minister who had to leave for South Australia.

The ministers of that day were the Rev. John McKenny, Chairman of the District, one of Dr. Coke's missionaries to India, a fine old gentleman, but almost worn out by his labours in India; the Rev. D. J. Draper, who did a great work in New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria, and who died preaching Christ to his perishing fellow-voyagers on board the ill-fated *London*, which foundered in the Bay of Biscay; the Rev. F. Lewis, a Welshman, full of fire and love, who knew how to bring sinners to Christ, and to whom I owe a great deal; the Rev. G. Sweetman, a sweet man indeed, and one of the best preachers of the time; and the Rev. W. Schofield. The Rev. James Watkin, who wrote the appeal, *Pity Poor Fiji*, that thrilled thousands of hearts, and mine, was another. He was a missionary in the Friendly Islands, and afterward in New Zealand, but was then in Sydney. He was one of the first preachers, and far away the best platform speaker of the day. I was strongly drawn to Mr. Watkin, and

used to consider it one of y greatest privileges to be allowed to walk with him on a Sunday night to his home in Surrey Hills, though it gave me a long walk afterward to my lodgings at the other end of the city. The Rev. Samuel Wilkinson is the only one left of the ministers forming the District Meeting at which I was received. Though now getting very feeble, he is doing a good work among the soldiers and sailors of Sydney.

At that time there came among us the Rev. John Waterhouse, the General Superintendent of our Polynesian Missions. Mr. Waterhouse had the soul of a true missionary. He had just come from Tonga and Fiji, and preached to us on the Sunday from "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." I never saw a congregation melted as that was. Old and young, ministers and lay-men, wept like children. The sobbing of the people sometimes almost stopped the preacher in his sermon. The next day I was introduced to Mr. Waterhouse by Mr. McKenny, who asked, "Do you want a man for Fiji?" Laying hold of me, Mr. Waterhouse said, "I'm afraid he won't do; he's short of a rib, I think. Never mind, be ready when I come again." But he never came again. He died praying, "More missionaries, more missionaries!" and that prayer was answered.

I might tell of many laymen of that day who were earnest workers in our Church, and to whom Methodism is largely indebted. Brother Pidgeon, who laboured as a city missionary in Sydney, was the instrument of great good. He was always at work, and many from among the lowest and worst were brought to Christ through his efforts. Some of the local preachers and leaders in Sydney and Parramatta were men of great spiritual power, men who believed in prayer and fasting, and who did not depend upon a stranger coming now and then to hold special services and bring sinners to Christ. They believed in the Holy Ghost, and pleaded for His coming in connection with the ordinary services. As a result, there were "showers of blessing," glorious revivals, wonderful displays of the Holy Spirit's power in convincing and saving men. We used often to see a whole congregation broken down and unable to leave the church; and numbers, night after night, coming to the house of God and finding salvation, and this no matter who was conducting the service. A more particular account of some of the revivals with which I was at this time connected will not be uninteresting to the reader.

The first revival in Parramatta that I know of was in 1840. Religion had been in a low state. The minister of the Circuit was a good man, but old and nearly worn out. He was great opposed to noise, and marked the men who were very much in earnest. It was the custom then to call by name a few persons to pray in the prayer-meetings, and any who were at all noisy were never asked. Two of our excellent and devoted local preachers, who were always seeking to save souls, were placed on the list of persons not allowed to take part in the prayer-meetings. Very soon I was added to the number. One day the two brethren to whom I have referred said to me, "We are going specially to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the revival of God's work, and we want you to join us. This is our plan: Every morning and evening and at midday to spend some time in pleading with God to pour out His Spirit; to observe every Friday as a day of fasting and prayer; to sit together in the meetings, and, though not permitted to pray aloud, silently to plead for the coming of the Holy Ghost." I think they were a little afraid of me, as they gave me this caution: "Now mind, you must not say a word against our minister, or have any unkind feeling

toward him, because he does not allow us to take part in the meetings. He knows what he is doing, and has his own reasons for it. If we complain, or speak against him, the Lord will not hear our prayer.” We carried out our plan for one, two, three weeks, no one but God and ourselves knowing what we were doing. At the end of the fourth week, on Sunday evening, the Rev. William Walker preached a powerful sermon. After the service the people flocked to the prayer-meeting, till the schoolroom was filled. My two friends were there, one on each side of me, and I knew they had hold of God. We could hear sighs and suppressed sobs all around us. The old minister of the Circuit, who had conducted the meeting, was concluding with the benediction, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God” – here he stopped, and sobbed aloud. When he could speak he called out, “Brother Watsford, pray.” I prayed, and then my two friends prayed, and oh! the power of God that came upon the people, who were overwhelmed by it in every part of the room! And what a cry for mercy! It was heard by the passers-by in the street, some of whom came running in to see what was the matter, and were smitten down at the door in great distress. The clock of a neighbouring church struck twelve before we could leave the meeting. How many were saved I cannot tell. Day after day and week after week the work went on, and many were converted. Among them many young persons. Thank God when the children are saved. Some persons think and speak lightly of the conversion of the young, and, instead of doing all they can to help and guard them, are always expecting them to fall away. Many of the boys and girls converted in that revival at Parramatta are still members of the Methodist Church, and others are “around the throne of God in heaven.” I had a little trouble with the boys one Sunday. A friend had taken me in his buggy to Liverpool, where I preached in the open air. Just as we finished the service about sixteen of our boys ran on to the green. They had followed me all the way from Parramatta to be at the service. I had some difficulty in getting them home again, for most of them were wearied with the long journey of nine miles. I took a number of them into the buggy, and drove a mile or so, then put them down and bade them walk on as fast as they could while I went back for the others; thus driving backward and forward I got them all home at last. One of these boys was the President of the Victoria and Tasmania Conference some years ago.

In 1841 I went to assist the Rev. F. Lewis at Windsor, and we had a blessed revival there. In those days we did not so much arrange for special services or missions; we looked for God’s blessing in connection with the ordinary services. At one of the meetings the Holy Spirit came mightily upon us. We were compelled to continue the meetings night after night. Numbers flocked to them, and we had some remarkable cases of conversion. Among these were some of the best customers of the publicans, and no wonder that they cried out against us. One of them especially did all he could to annoy and persecute me in his little way. When I went down the street past his house he cried after me, “Amen! Hallelujah! Bless the Lord!” But he never injured me in the slightest degree. It was the best advertisement I could have. The people came to the meetings to see what was going on, and the power of God laid hold of many of them. One day as I was passing this publican’s house, he stood on one side of his door, and a little old shopkeeper, who lived opposite to him, stood on the other side. The shopkeeper was about as poor a specimen of humanity as could be found in the town. He was of very small stature, and, having lived in India many years, was wasted and worn, with a face shrivelled and sickly, more like old yellow parchment

than anything else. As soon as I came in sight, the publican gave me the usual salute, and when I had gone by he said to his companion, as we learned afterwards –

“Did you hear what that fellow said in his church on Sunday?”

“No,” was the reply; “what was it?”

“Why,” said the publican, “when he had finished his sermon and was going to hold a prayer-meeting, and old Tebbutt, who was at the church, was going out, he cried, ‘I say, old Tubbutt, if you don’t stop to the prayer-meeting you’ll be in hell before the morning.’”

Of course I never did anything of the kind, but the lie roused the old shopkeeper’s anger.

“Do you mean to tell me that he said that?” he snapped. “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. My wife has two seats in his church; she goes sometimes, but I never do; but I’ll go on Sunday morning and hear for myself, and if he says anything like that I’ll give him as good as he sends.”

On the next Sunday, to my astonishment, the old man was there, sitting right before me. In the middle of my sermon he jumped up as if he had been shot. His wife took hold of his coat and pulled him down again. None of us knew the meaning of his action then, but we learned it afterwards. He declared that I pointed at him and said, “See that miserable old sinner sitting there on a seat that might be occupied by a good man,” upon which he rose to reply that if he did occupy the seat his wife paid for it, when she pulled him back. After the service he walked up and down in front of the church waiting for me, and vowing that he would have his revenge for my exposure of him before the congregation. Some of the people, however, went to him, calmed him down and got him home. Poor old man, I could have taken him up under my arm, and walked away with him! In the afternoon I preached at a place three miles away, and to my surprise he was there. In the evening, when I commenced the service in Windsor Church, I saw him come in and take the first seat on the form nearest the door. Before the sermon was over he fell from his seat to the floor, and literally roared for mercy. After a hard struggle he was set at glorious liberty. For three or four months he went on his way rejoicing, and then died a most triumphant death. “Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?” His conversion caused no little stir in the town. The publican felt he had made a grand mistake, and I have no doubt that his master, with all his cunning and hellish wisdom, thought so too.

In the Sabbath School at Windsor we had a most blessed work. I was giving an address in the school one Sunday afternoon, when the children were greatly impressed. I closed the school, and asked those who wished to decide for Jesus to remain. Very few left. About seventy young persons, from eight to sixteen years old, gathered in great distress around the Superintendent of the school and myself, while we prayed for them. Many of them were soon rejoicing in Jesus. Two cases were particularly interesting. A little girl, seven or eight years of age, was weeping bitterly and praying to God to save her. Her mother, who was a teacher, was kneeling by her side and praying for her. Presently the dear child cried out, “O mother, I do believe; Jesus does save me.” The mother, doubting that her child understood what believing was, asked, “But what is believing, dear?” “O mother,” replied the little one, “believing is just seeing Jesus with your eyes shut.” Had not the Good Spirit opened the eyes of her heart so that by faith she saw Jesus and trusted Him? That child is now growing old, but she is still a member of the Church, and has been ever since that memorable hour when Jesus saved her.

The other case was this: My superintendent had two charming little girls, one about eight years old, the other six. They were always ready for play with me. If my study door was open, dear little Mary, the youngest child, would soon find her way in. She was not sent to the Sabbath School; but that afternoon, hearing the singing and praying, she got out of the parsonage yard, and found her way to the door of the schoolroom. I was kneeling at the time, praying for the children, when I felt someone come very close and kneel down by my side, but had no idea who it was. I closed my prayer and looked down. There was little Mary, with her hands put together, and praying most earnestly. I spoke to her about Jesus, and ever afterwards Mary would have it that she was converted that day, and I thoroughly believe she was. Nearly forty years later I visited England. A few days after landing I received a letter from a lady, urging me to go and see her as soon as I could. She signed her name, but added, "You will not know me by this name, but you will remember little Mary L----- you knew and loved as a child." I went to see my old playmate, and rejoiced with her as we talked over that never-forgotten day.

Castlereagh was a part of the Windsor Circuit, and there we had a good work. The whole neighbourhood at one time seemed moved by Divine power. A good brother lived there named John Lees, a grand man, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." To his house penitents in distress came from far and near, and many were born for glory there. Among others converted at that time was one who had been a great sinner. He was gloriously saved. Strange to say, his wife, who had suffered much from his sins, now became his persecutor. She would snatch the Bible from his hand and throw it out of the window, and do all she could to annoy him. One day he was reading the Bible, when his wife laid hold of it and threw it on the floor. He immediately rose and went into his garden. He had not been there long when one of his children came running to him and said, "Mother's crying so; come, father, and see her." He went into the house, and found his wife with the Bible in her hand, weeping bitterly. She had taken up the book to throw it out of the window, when a sentence caught her eye and pierced her heart like a sharp sword. The hand of God was on her. "Come away to John Lees," said her husband, and, taking a child under each arm, he led his wife without shawl or bonnet, crying as she went, to John Lees, and there, very soon, while prayer was being offered, the peace and blessing of God came into her soul.

The Lower Hawkesbury was another part of the Windsor Circuit where we had a good work. At one place, then called "Green's," when we went to prayer at the opening of the service, the power of God so came upon us that the people could not rise again from their knees for two or three hours. What a time it was! All seemed broken down; many were saved. One peculiarity about the place was that many who came to service there had to say all night, for they came from far. The people of the place gladly provided for all who came, and provisions had often to be made on a large scale.

These were true revivals. The fruit soon appeared in changed lives, in earnest work for Jesus, and in cheerful giving to His cause. What collections we used to have! At one of our missionary meetings at Castlereagh, Mrs. G----- brought in her missionary box. She had collected all the year, and had the silver changed for gold. When the box was at last opened, sovereign after sovereign rolled out, until we counted forty.

At one of our meetings Mr. Lewis and I had to stop the people in their giving. We positively refused to take any more.