

CHAPTER III New South Wales (Now Queensland)

Brisbane

In 1850 I was for a short time in Sydney and Windsor, and then went to Brisbane, Queensland, which is now the capital of a most important and flourishing Colony, but was then a part of New South Wales, and generally known as Moreton Bay. The Rev. Wm. Moore, afterwards a missionary in Fiji, and the Rev. W. Lightbody, had been stationed at Moreton Bay before me, and had laboured earnestly, but our cause was only feeble. The principal church in Brisbane was small, and the congregation was not large. The parsonage was in a back lane. It was a house with two small rooms and a lean-to with two smaller rooms. But we had come from Fiji, and had learned to rough it a little, so we did very well in our new home. We had some earnest Church members, who greatly assisted in carrying on the Lord's work. There were three or four places outside Brisbane, where we had regular services. The most important was the German Station, where a number of excellent Germans lived. Some years before, they had come out as lay-missionaries. Most of them were now members of our Church, and some were local preachers. With their families they formed a good congregation. It was a pleasure to visit them.

During the year the Rev. J. G. Millan became my colleague, and was stationed at Ipswich. We did our best to extend the work of God, and the Lord blessed us. We paid occasional visits to the sheep stations, where we were heartily welcomed, and we had frequently a large number to hear the word.

It is cause for much rejoicing that, with the growth of Queensland, Methodism has made good progress. There are now many Circuits and a large number of ministers. A few years ago it was formed into a separate Conference, and last year union was consummated between the Methodist bodies there. The Brisbane of my day has grown into a large and fine city, and, instead of our little church, we have now one of the largest and most beautiful places of worship in the city.

I had a narrow escape from becoming a rich man while I was in Brisbane. I had just a little money, and my Circuit steward was very anxious that I should have an allotment of land where I might build a house, and live some future day when I became a supernumerary. A Government sale was about to take place. The steward came to me and begged to be allowed to purchase the land for me. I consented, and he went to the sale. When he returned he said, "I have secured an allotment for you, but it is not in Brisbane, but at Sandgate, which will one day become a favourite watering-place. I wanted to get a piece of land in the principal street in Brisbane for you. I might have obtained it for about £92, but I would not bid higher than £90 so I lost it." That piece of land, some few years after, was sold for thousands, and a bank was built upon it. Today it is worth a very large sum. There is no telling what might have happened had it become mine. Some men who have been faithful when poor, have sadly failed when they became rich; so it might have been with me.

Visiting Ipswich, I became acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. H----- and their family. They had not been long out from the old country. Mrs. H----- was the daughter of a

deceased ex-President of the British Conference. She told me the story of her home. Said she: "We were eleven children, and all were converted at home except one brother. He left us, and under an assumed name went on to the stage, and lived a fast life. Every now and then he became very miserable and would return home. When our dear father saw him coming he would throw open the door and, lifting up his hands, cry, 'ere comes my poor prodigal!' After some days he would get very restless and soon leave again. As he went our father would stand at an open window upstairs, and watch him as far as the eye could reach, and then, falling on his knees, would earnestly cry, 'Lord, bless my poor prodigal!'" For years, when preaching in many lands, I have, without mentioning any names, referred to this case, asking sympathy for sorrowing parents, and prayer for prodigal sons. In 1892, when visiting Queensland, I inquired for Mrs. H-----, and was told that she was living in Brisbane, had heard of my coming, and was longing to see me. Early next morning I was at her house. We rejoiced greatly that we were permitted to meet again. Sitting down, I said, "Now, Mrs. H-----, I want you to tell me about your brothers and sisters." "Oh, sir," said she, "they are all in heaven, and I am expecting very soon to join them there." "Ah," I said, "but I want you to tell me about the poor prodigal for whom you and I used to pray." She said, "Twenty-five years ago he was converted, joined the Church, was married to a Christian lady, lived a consistent life, and eighteen years ago died a triumphant death. When he was dying, one of our ministers stood by his bedside and said to him, 'Mr. S-----, you will soon meet your dear father again.' With the tears rolling down his pale face, and with trembling lips, he said, 'Yes, I shall soon meet him again; and when he sees me coming he will lift up his hands and cry, 'Here comes my poor, poor prodigal, safe home at last.'" Glory be to God, parents' prayers are not in vain.