

Chowns: Christians and Citizens.

THE denomination has just lost a man who served us well, but whose service was not limited to our boundaries. The Tract Society, the Bible Society, the Free Church Council, the Federal Council, attest his wide interest in all Christian work. The Liberal Association and the Total Abstinence Association show that he was awake to public claims. It was a family heritage, and it is worth while gathering up some of the ancestral traits.

Two hundred and seventy years ago, a number of General Baptists from churches in several counties, met on New Year's Day at Northampton. The crowning mercy of the battle of Worcester, completing the work of Naseby, had removed all immediate danger from Royalists or from Scots. There was leisure to attend to internal development. And while the Baptists had doubtless come together chiefly to attend to denominational business, for Associations were very active in those days, yet they could not separate without thought on public affairs. So they drew up a letter to Oliver Cromwell, in very frank terms; the gist of it was that it was time to curb his ambition, and to devote himself to the humbler task of redressing grievances. It is most refreshing to read their plain speech, and to see that there was none of the almost slavish adulation to be found too often to-day in Free Church references to Cromwell. These Baptists were well aware of the warts upon his character.

Among the churches which sent this letter were those which we call to-day Friar Lane, Mountsorrel, Arnesby, Foxton, Ravens-thorpe. Every such church had members in a dozen villages, and we may be sure that Moulton was represented at Northampton. And thus John Chown, the weaver, newly come there from Spratton, was learning that to be a good Christian includes being a good citizen, watching public affairs, and warning public men.

With the Restoration humble villagers could do little but live and endure. Even to-day it means something to run counter to the local custom and decline the services of the clergyman; but it meant much more then. The parish registers at Moulton record plenty of Chowns being married and buried, and even being born, but they add such notes as "unbaptized and excommunicated." John Chown owned a Bible, and when the vicar pressed him to conform, he took a firm stand and replied that he found nothing about infant baptism in the Bible. A family bred under such auspices was bound to be sturdy. When the Toleration

Act made it possible to hold meetings, another Chown certified his house for public worship, and conducted service for his fellow Baptists. John Painter and William Painter and the other ministers of the scattered church round Moulton must have rejoiced in such staunch adherents.

There came a time, however, when no General Baptist could be found any longer to shepherd the little flock. It dropped to pieces, some members joining the church at College Lane, a few miles away. In 1784 a Particular Baptist church was formed at Moulton by College Lane, and four Chowns were among the first members. A young minister was told off from Olney, and tried to eke out a living by cobbling shoes and by teaching school; but his heart was not in those occupations, and his success in either was very problematical, so he moved away to Harvey Lane. The village school fell vacant, and a Churchman would, of course, have the preference. William Chown broke the record of his family, and conformed. He had not lost the piety of his ancestors, and he published a tract, "A Warning to Sabbath-Breakers." The joys of authorship prompted him to issue a grammar; and for an Anglican, forty subscribers were forthcoming to help him put out some poems. Such an exception enables us to realize what strength of character was needed to resist the constant attraction to the Established Church.

Two younger brothers did hold to the faith of their fathers. Now Thomas Wood of Moulton had joined College Lane, and had there met William Lawrence, elder of the church. He lived at Kingsthorpe, which village was strong in Baptists, and had sent a pastor to Folkestone. While they were on the roll of College Lane, they wanted a resident minister, and they offered John Chown ten shillings a week to come amongst them. But even an increase to twenty-seven shillings did not enable him to cover expenses, and he went a year later to Stogumber. They recalled him in 1814, and he built up the local work till a church was formed in nine years, independent of College Lane. In 1827 he went to take charge of another daughter church, at Harpole; this pastorate he resigned at Lady Day, 1837.

Another of the family was sent to John Sutcliff at Olney for training, and in 1811 C. Chown began a short pastorate at Burford. John, of Kingsthorpe, had a son John, who adopted the staple trade of the neighbourhood, and earned his living as a shoemaker. But like Nehemiah Cox, of Cranfield, he was anxious to be minister as well. On the edge of the county was a little cause at Byfield, once linked with Chipping Warden, Horley, and Banbury, as one church. It shows the tenacity of the family when we know that he agreed to shepherd this little flock. Every Sunday morning he tramped twelve miles to Daventry, where he might pause to greet some distant cousins,

then another six to Byfield for the day's services. Monday was spent in visiting the scattered flock, and in the return journey; and next day he sat down again at his bench. Some men are content with giving a tithe of their money: he gave two-sevenths of his time.

With such parentage, what is to be expected? One son, Henry, devoted himself to the home church, which he served as deacon; and his son in civil life is to be found on the bench and in the council chamber of the city of which Kingsthorpe is now practically a part. Another son of John is yet to be found, with the joy of seeing his own son secretary of that same church at Kingsthorpe.

The church is proud of the family. When the chapel was enlarged, the corner-stone commemorated another of its children, descended through Thomas, in another line, Joseph Parbery Chown. There was some thought of his taking up the profession adorned by Lorimer in America, by Sheridan Knowles in England; but Milne of Prince's Street induced him to consecrate his elocutionary gifts to the direct service of God. Across at Ravenshorpe, where the Baptist church had joined in that admonitory letter to Cromwell, the first Particular Baptist minister was ending a quarter of a century's work, and retiring. Young Joseph was invited on trial, and though the trial was long, the church was at last satisfied. It is often harder to please a hamlet than a city. Another eighteen months convinced the pastor that he was not properly equipped; a fine voice is something, but a message is more. He consulted John Turland Brown, the new minister at College Lane, and made application to Horton College at Bradford, then under James Acworth, with whom was associated Francis Clowes. They welcomed the opportunity of a man above the average—in ability as well as years.

He learned much from these three men. Brown was a founder of the Liberation Society, and took an active part in all politics. Acworth was the leader of Yorkshire Baptists, and played his part beyond the county; even on his retirement he turned to influence the borough to which he removed. Clowes was a thinker and a writer, with gifts devoted soon to journalism. With such examples, Joseph Parbery Chown learned much and fast. When the pastorate of the second church in Bradford became vacant, his course was shortened at its urgent request, and he entered on a great career for over a quarter of a century. The denomination profited richly, with a new church at Hallfield, a new building for Sion; but the town profited more. In those days there was no compulsory education; he saw the need of developing Sunday schools, and did his part in starting Bradford on that career which keeps her in the front rank of education. Lectures were popular, and Mann of Shipley had done

much; but Chown did more, and soon the great St. George's Hall would be filled every time he was announced. Temperance was not then recognized as much more than the fad of a few; but he threw himself into the battle, not on mere utilitarian or financial or social grounds, but as a Christian. It is no wonder that when Bloomsbury needed a new leader, he was called to transfer his energies southward. But London is too big for a man to exercise the sway in it that he can in a town that has a pride in itself. And thenceforth his influence was more concentrated within the denomination, which honoured itself by calling him to the presidency nearly forty years ago.

His only sister remained in Northampton, and there she, too, devoted herself to temperance work. She was a founder of the Women's Total Abstinence Union, and throughout an abnormally long life gave thought and energy to this and kindred work.

Of later generations we will not speak here. But such a record may show the value of our ancestors, the power of example and training, the gain to a city when men who render to God what is God's, render also to Caesar what is Caesar's. Every generation, from 1648, has seen at least one member in the ministry; the present can show members in several branches of national service.

The Message of Amos and its Bearing on Modern Problems.

IT is sometimes said that we need to-day to get away from the Old Testament, and concentrate on the Gospels. If this means that we must avoid the error of thinking that all parts of our Bibles represent religious ideals of the same validity and of equal authority, then nothing could be more self-evident. But if it means that we can disregard the spiritual history of Israel, and forget that when the full revelation of God came in bodily form, He came as a Jew, then few things could be more dangerous. There were certain features of Judaism which Jesus adopted so thoroughly as to say little or nothing about them. Such were its ethics and its monotheism, and as we are in danger of forgetting that in His day the Jew was the only person in the world to whom there was only one God—for the monotheism of the philosophers was hardly religion—and that no one else ever thought of connecting the ideas of God and righteousness as He did. And it may well be that amongst those whose