

Hilbers has been a great help to me, preaching all the time in my absence to the people at Deeping; he grows in grace."

Mr. Hilbers, his brother-in-law, was a barrister, he had been a pupil of Lord Westbury. Coming under deep spiritual concern he withdrew from legal practice and devoted his life and talents to humble Christian service. Deeping became his home, but most of each year he regularly travelled a round of villages supplying the pulpits at small chapels or relieving some rural pastor for one or two Sundays.

He was a gentleman of culture, with a gracious spirit, and preaching gift beyond many. As his young friend and guest I realised his kindness and tact in dealing with the poor people attached to those rural causes with their narrow outlook and sometimes curious notions.

A Conservative, with a country gentleman's outlook of his period, Tryon disliked political changes and even dreaded some of the altruistic movements that were coming in. His life-work and ministry had a line of its own, distinctive from some with whom he was one in faith and doctrine. Its practical searching "drift" (a favourite word) was seen in the strict self-denial of many of his followers.

As a guest at my parents' home and the friend and pastor of our relatives, as a visitor at his house, a hearer on many occasions, I knew him well and realised the grace and greatness of his remarkable life and ministry.

T. R. HOOPER.

Leadership and Fellowship.

THREE hundred years give ample time for a church to unfold its strength and to test its principles. There are a few Free Churches in the country, as at Horningsham, Tiverton, Lincoln, which have more than three centuries to their credit. In London the oldest Free Church is the Baptist, which began at Wapping on 12th September, 1633, and kept its tercentenary at Walthamstow. The present pastor has told its story, largely from its own records, which run for more than 250 years. Stepping back from the trees, shall we try to discern the wood?

In every century the church has had an unusual number of men above the average. John Spilsbury was laughed at by out-

siders as the great patriarch of the Anabaptist confession; no small tribute when he earned his living by weighing hay. Jerome Sankey won his spurs in the New Model Army and was knighted; his military exploits included capturing a ship in Essex, winning many skirmishes in Ireland, subduing a rebellion in Cheshire; in civil life he became a member of Parliament and was on various committees for reconstruction. Samuel Richardson devoted himself to home affairs, constitutional reform, and theology. John Norcott concentrated on Baptist principles, and his pamphlet is still reprinted. These men made a fine group in the earliest days, when all believers exercised their priesthood and the distinction of a minister set apart was not yet established.

Not only did they give a fine lead within their church, but also they held out hands to the other London Baptist churches, and together made a statement of their beliefs, which dispelled much misconception and slander. Within a dozen years they were giving a lead throughout the land, urging all churches to associate for mutual help and for preaching the gospel. For the rest of the century they were to the fore in such matters. And when the 1689 convention urged that churches should support their ministers, so that all their time should be free for pastoral work, Wapping was perhaps the first to follow the advice.

When the Hanoverian kings gave assurance of peace to all dissenters, this church was prominent in two or three new enterprises. There were disruptive tendencies in theology, some ministers tending to Arianism, others to Antinomianism; this church proved that Scylla could be avoided without being whirled by Charybdis. A sane evangelical preaching resulted in thirteen young men being called to the ministry in twenty-six years; Samuel Wilson was the helmsman who kept the church on its even keel. He gave a lead to the London ministers that they should say plainly what they believed, and should decline to support a Fraternal whose only bond was the practice of immersion; his portrait in wig, bands and gown suggests a man who commanded respect. The church responded to his initiative, and was among the earliest and most generous supporters of the Particular Baptist Fund, for much co-operative work all over the country. And when there were signs of encroaching on religious liberty the church promptly sent its Dissenting Deputies to unite with other churches to uphold the law.

Another great leader was brought from Sutton-in-Ashfield, Abraham Booth, without whom nothing was complete for nearly forty years. In thought he was the great champion of Sovereign Grace, and as he was called to such a prominent church he set

a fine example of sustained and diligent study. Realising the difficulty and the danger of solitary work, he pleaded for a London Baptist Education Society with an academy of its own. His deacons and members well supported him, and not far from the church's home on Prescot Street, Stepney saw a bevy of students. Deacon William Fox founded the Sunday School Society and impressed the duty of every church having a school of its own. When John Thomas, first Baptist preacher in India, came home to find colleagues, it was Booth who put him in touch with the infant B.M.S. Booth then persuaded his deacons that the new movement was of God, and his powerful advocacy won many adherents in London. And when this great new co-operative movement for propagating the gospel abroad suggested a parallel movement within England, it was Booth who laid down the lines of that Home Missionary Society which has done such fine work ever since under the name of its younger sister, the Baptist Union.

A hundred years ago the pastor was Charles Stovel, whose ministry exceeded half a century. He was not content to drift with the impetus of the past, but proved himself another wise pilot. It is astonishing to see the list of societies within the church, the changing needs of the neighbourhood discerned, the quickness to devise new methods of doing good. Still there were men of weight attracted to a man of enterprise, as the name of Judge Willis attests. There was no selfish concentration on the time-honoured site; as members went further afield new churches were welcomed into existence and experienced deacons were dismissed to guide them.

Such a record has many lessons to teach us, and two emerge obviously. Churches owe much to men of piety and ability, who minister to them for long periods. It is a lesson illustrated also by Beddome, Maclaren, Clifford, and scores of others; it is a lesson to be remembered now that another current is flowing. Under such auspices there are trained whole families whose influence tells in all directions. And secondly, a church thus led and thus nourished may do wonders both by inspiring its denomination, and in leavening its neighbourhood; not by introspection and self-cultivation is work achieved, but by fellowship with others in discerning His purposes and actively pursuing them.

W. T. WHITLEY.