

THE
CHURCHMAN

OCTOBER, 1882.

ART. I.—THE THAMES CHURCH MISSION.

“The success of a Mission must, under God, depend greatly upon the earnest, faithful co-operation of praying and believing people.”

HAVING been asked, as one of the oldest members of the Thames Church Mission, to make a few remarks on its origin and progress, I have much pleasure in doing so; though, on comparing its small beginning in 1844 with its present extensive operations, I feel it will be difficult to do justice to the subject within the limits of a short article.

My first acquaintance with Mission work on the Thames was in the year 1835, when, for some years, I had the privilege of being associated with my late excellent friend, Capt. R. J. Elliot, R.N., as an Honorary Secretary of “The Episcopal Floating Church Society,” whose vessel, the *Brazen*, a sloop of war kindly lent by the Admiralty, was moored not far from the Tower, and was known as the “Floating Church for Seamen.”

After fifteen years of indefatigable persistence,¹ Captain Elliot found it impossible to persuade seamen to attend the services, for if on leave they preferred remaining on shore, and if afloat many of them were ship-keeping and unable to leave their duty; and so in this respect the *Brazen* proved a failure. In a higher sense, however, she was successful, as an anecdote will prove.

After the last Annual Meeting of the Thames Church Mission an aged sea captain introduced himself to the Secretary, stating that forty-one years ago he attended the *Brazen* service one Sunday night on his return from the West Indies. God met with him there; the gospel preached by the officiating clergyman

¹ On one occasion, when going to a vessel at night, he fell overboard, and narrowly escaped drowning.

reached his conscience and heart, and he left England a changed man, "to live no longer to himself, but to Him who died for him and rose again." Here is a practical commentary on the text, which has been the Society's motto—"Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."

In the year 1844, several members of the *Brazen* Committee—viz., the present Marquess of (then Lord Henry) Cholmondeley, and the late Admiral the Earl of Waldegrave, Admiral Sir Henry Hope (then Capt. Hope, of *Endymion* celebrity), and Capt. Elliot (founder of the Sailors' Home), deeply impressed with the spiritual destitution of the immense seafaring population on the Thames, met for prayer, and to consider what further steps could be taken to meet the desperate need of sailors entering the Port. They determined *that if the sailors would not come to the floating church, the Gospel should be carried to them by a cruising church.* Their prayers were shortly answered by the Admiralty placing at their disposal a cutter named the *Swan*, which had seen service in the Baltic. She was forthwith specially fitted, and with a resident chaplain, licensed by the Bishop of London, and a crew of five pious men, she sailed forth—as the old Report expresses it—"to do battle for the Lord of Hosts against the powers of darkness for the soul of the sailor." For many years the *Swan* was a familiar object as she cruised between London and Gravesend, or lay alongside the tiers of collier brigs waiting to be unloaded in Bugsby's Reach.

The work increased and extended greatly, and the services of the staff being required in various directions, it was found necessary to supplement the *Swan* by two smaller vessels, in which a Chaplain or Lay-Missionary cruised up or down the river to visit the large emigrant or convict ships, while the "Church" remained at her moorings.

Ultimately the construction of vast docks, with twenty miles of wharves, furnishing accommodation for 1,200 vessels, totally changed the conditions of river traffic; and in 1874, the *Swan* being no longer seaworthy, was gratefully returned to H.M. dockyard, and since that time the visitation has been conducted in boats from the shore. The *Swan* cannot, however, be dismissed without a tribute to the long and faithful services of her master, William Hancock. In 1844 he was coxswain to the late Capt. Charles Rowley, R.N., on board H.M.S. *St. Vincent*, and was on his strong recommendation appointed to the command of the "Thames Church." He is now pensioned, but continues to attend the monthly prayer meetings, and manifest a keen interest in the work in which he was at one time so much blessed.¹ Capt. Rowley himself, when residing near Greenwich,

¹ Hancock was a quarter-master on board the *Dreadnought* between the time he served under Capt. Rowley and his taking command of the

frequently visited the hospital ship *Dreadnought*, and was the means of several conversions among the quartermasters and patients. But especially should be mentioned the valuable work of our late esteemed Honorary Secretary, Capt. E. Littlehales, R.N., whose retirement two years ago, in consequence of ill health, was the more regretted because it was undoubtedly attributable to his unceasing and excessive devotion to the cause, for upwards of twenty years.

The work is being zealously prosecuted under the present Secretary (Mr. E. J. Mather), by a Chaplain (resident at Gravesend), an Assistant Chaplain, six Lay-Missionaries, and eight Senior Colporteurs, not merely from the "Pool" to Gravesend, as formerly, but from Putney Bridge to the North Sea fisheries—indeed to the *world's end*—for who can calculate the influence of the blessing carried forth from these shores by truly Christian sailors or emigrants? A former chaplain, when questioned by a brother clergyman as to the extent of his parish, very truly replied, "the whole world!"

Services are held by the chaplains on the Lord's-day, and Bible and confirmation classes during the week on board the cadet ship *Worcester*, and the training frigates *Arethusa*, *Chichester*, and *Cornwall*, whose captains speak in the highest terms of the spiritual results upon their youthful crews. In a recent letter one of the captains remarked: "Never has there been such marked and decided spiritual work on board this ship as during the past two and a half years." And let us hope the eighty *Worcester* cadets, and the 170 boys from the other ships, who annually enter the merchant service, carry away in their hearts the precious seed which has been sown, to bring forth fruit for God in their after lives.

The senior chaplain's sphere of visitation has been considerably extended east and west of Gravesend Reach, through the placing of a steam launch on that station, the liberality of friends having enabled the committee to purchase a fine suitable vessel (40 feet long). She has been named the *Swan*, by way of perpetuating the memory of the old "Thames Church," and in several instances her appearance has attracted the attention of officers and men who, years ago, attended the services conducted on board her larger namesake. For example, the mate of a steamer exclaimed: "Oh! the old *Swan*! Ah! I used to go on board many years ago to the service when I was apprentice in a collier brig. I shall never forget the old *Swan*. But I am not converted yet, sir. But my mother, eighty years old, is praying for it every day. I hope I shall

Swan, and he was the means of conversion of those mentioned in the text, aided, no doubt, by Capt. Rowley's frequent visits.

before long." Another incident is more gratifying, and illustrative of the truth of that text already quoted, which so many years ago filled the hearts of the founders of the Thames Church Mission with faith and hope, and which has been the Society's motto in all its subsequent operations. The missionary stationed at Northfleet boarded a ship for Melbourne and held a meeting with twenty-five passengers, after which one of them, an old Colonist, said: "Twenty years ago I served my apprenticeship in the coal trade, and was often present at the services on board the *Swan* Thames Church. Of course you remember the old *Britannia*, and her two apprentices Harry and Billy, with whom you took so much pains? You fetched them to the *Swan* each time they came up the river, and often spent half the night talking and praying with them after you had taken them back to their own ship. Harry is now one of our best preachers in Melbourne, and Billy is preaching to the blacks in the West Indies."

It is not for us to know the full result of all this holy work and warfare until the sea shall "give up the dead which are in it;" but God in His mercy, and for our encouragement, allows us to see *some* of its good effects even now. Many are the pleasing incidents related by various members of the staff at our monthly prayer and committee meetings, some proving, like the one just cited, that the good seed had been sown in the heart by the kind yet forcible preaching of a chaplain, lay-missionary, or colporteur. I furnish a few instances from the Journals:—

Last Lord's day evening Mr. ——— accompanied me on board the ——— (the captain of which is a Christian) and gave an address in the cabin to about twenty-eight hearers. Most had listened with considerable attention to the old, yet ever new, story of Jesus and His love, when the attention of the speaker was drawn to two men who were evidently there only to mock. One especially showed plainly that he cared for none of these things, and that apparently all the seed had been sown in vain as far as he was concerned. Seeing this, he said, "during my address to-night I have observed with pain some here appearing quite careless about their souls, and I ask you (turning to myself) to spend one hour to-night in prayer to God for these men." Then, turning to the captain, he made the same request, which was heartily granted, promising to do the same himself.

On returning home, he shut himself up for one hour, crying to God for the scoffers on that ship, and feeling assured that God would, in His own way, hear and answer the prayers. The captain and I did the same. On the following Tuesday we met again. "I have something good to tell you," said I. "I prayed as you asked me, and felt very happy in doing so, and this morning being near the ship, I was hailed when passing in the boat by one of the crew. I went on board and there found one of the men in an agony of soul. He had seen me

passing, and had called me to speak to him about Christ. I need hardly tell you how gladly I did it, and before I left the man was a rejoicing believer." The ship has just sailed for the north, but she has on board of her at least one witness that God hears prayer.

It is deeply interesting to find nine months later the following entry:—

Boarded the ——. Was warmly greeted by one of the men, but was obliged to confess that I didn't remember his face. "Oh, but I know you," said he, "and what's better, I know the Lord Jesus as my Saviour." "Thank God for that," I exclaimed; "but tell me how it came about." "Simply thus," he replied. "It has all resulted from the service held on board the ——— last summer, when the preacher asked you and our skipper to spend an hour praying for us. When I heard him say that, I thought it was quite time I should begin to pray for myself."

Thus it pleased God to answer the prayers of His servants in the case of two poor fellows who previously had been living "without hope and without God in the world."

The labours of the colporteurs are important, and have furnished abundant cause for thankfulness, many cases having occurred of conversion to God from the simple reading of His holy Word. For example:—

Fourteen months ago I went on board a Norwegian vessel, and persuaded one of the men to buy a Bible. During the voyage the Holy Spirit applied the Word to his heart, and on my visiting her a few days ago the poor sailor caught hold of me and almost kissed me, saying, "I am happy, I am happy; Christ is in my heart; Oh, I am a happy man." The mate also testified of the great change in this man. "Oh, it was that Bible that you sold me that did it, you said it was a sure guide. I did not read it at first, but threw it into my chest, and it would have been there till now, only when we were becalmed out at sea I read it for want of anything else. Oh, it is my compass now and my chart, and if I had a pound I would give it to your Society; you shall take all the money I have. I will give it, for God has saved my soul." He then gave me two Mexican dollars in proof of his gratitude.

A second case:—

In visiting the s.s. — a few days ago, I had occasion to speak to the chief officer with reference to the time of sailing, in order that I might get a supply of books for crew and emigrants.

After a little conversation he said, "I have some recollection of your face." Then thinking for a moment he said, "Oh, it was on board the — I saw you. Don't you remember bringing sixteen Bibles on board from your Mission?" I replied I did. "Well," he said, "those Bibles were made a great blessing on that ship. Mr. —, the chief officer, formed a Bible-class with those books, also held service regularly. And I am glad to tell you that it was the means of my con-

version; it turned me right about. I am a happy man now, Sir, and belong to a church at Hackney." I replied, "You feel then that godliness is profitable unto all things?" "Oh, yes, I do," he said; "but I have great difficulties to contend with on board, yet the Lord sustains me. Another great blessing has resulted. My wife also has given her heart to the Saviour, and is a member of the same church. I do bless God that ever you came on board with those Bibles, also that I ever had the company and advice of the then chief officer, Mr. —; he has another ship now and is captain. I know he would like to see you again. If all is well he will be in London in a short time; try and see him. Tell him that his old mate is a happy man serving the Lord, also that he was the chief instrument in God's hands of my conversion."

Again:—

Got our boat out early, and went up the river before the wind rose too heavy. Spent many hours among the windbound craft. The first I boarded was a barge. The master came out of his cabin *with his Testament in his hand*. I remarked, "You have begun early with the good book then." He replied, "Yes, I was just going to see what the Master had provided for me to-day. I cannot read much. I have only learned to read a little this last three months since I was converted. You see this is one of your fourpenny Testaments. I can just spell down a chapter." This man seemed very much troubled because his mate would not join him in prayer. I had a few encouraging words with the young fellow, and got him below and had a nice little meeting, for which the master was very thankful.

Once more:—

Held a service in the cabin of the —, barge. After which the master remarked he went from school into a barge, and could read very well when he went, but never troubled about books for a long time, and lost all his reading. He could scarcely spell a word until he bought a Testament out of our boat, and that Testament had been his school-master ever since. He was thankful to say he could read anything now. He said it was over twenty years since he bought his Testament. He showed it to me. It was well worn, and one of the covers off, but he seemed to value it more than a new one.

From a recent paragraph in the British and Foreign Bible Society's *Monthly Reporter* it will be seen how warmly the Committee of that great Institution appreciate what has been effected. The *Reporter* says:—"The Thames Church Mission has grown into a vigorous and important agency for practically obeying the text which it takes as its motto: 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.' It is, in fact, one of those valuable Home Societies which enable the British and Foreign Bible Society to put the Scriptures into wide circulation, just as the great Missionary Societies do abroad."

I should be occupying too much space were I to multiply these interesting extracts, and would beg the readers of THE CHURCHMAN to peruse for themselves the Society's Report¹ for the present year; it shows very clearly how the work is permeating all classes, from the humblest boatman, or bargeman, to the officers in command of our stately ocean steamers, plying to all parts of the world.

The war in Egypt, too, has given occasion for special activity, the Mission Staff having been authorized by the Admiralty to visit every transport conveying troops from the Thames, and to proceed in the vessels from the docks to Gravesend. By this means these devoted workers have had ample opportunity for conversation with the men, besides presenting each soldier with a copy of the New Testament, and books or tracts. In this way upwards of 18,000 Testaments and 25,000 tracts have been distributed, additional provision being made on board the hospital ships.

In conclusion, I would refer to the most recent addition to the sphere of the Society's operations—the North Sea fisheries. Comparatively few persons know even the *locality* from which many thousands of tons are annually drawn to supply both the metropolitan and provincial fish markets, or realize what a multitude of persons are engaged from year's end to year's end in the terribly hazardous deep-sea trawling. The writer of a very excellent article in the *Daily Telegraph* remarks :—

I once wrote in this journal an account of a voyage in a smack to the North Sea. One such journey is enough for a lifetime, and the recollection of it makes me here declare—and I am sure there is not a sailor living who will contradict me—that of all the several forms of seafaring life there is absolutely none comparable in severity, exposure, hardship, and stern peril to that of the smacksmen. His vessel is a small one; his cabin a little darksome hole; his working hours are full of harsh toil; he has to give battle to the wildest weather, to struggle on for bread through storm and snow and frost, through the long blackness of the howling winter's night, through the grey wilderness of a foaming ocean swept by winds as pitiless as the hand of death. No legislation can alter these conditions of his life. Philanthropy will have its cod and sole and turbot. The fish must be caught, but caught in such a manner that those who shoot their trawls for them catch other things besides—a wild roughness of bearing, a defiance of civilized instincts, a sense of outlawed and neglected life that brings with it a fixed conviction of social immunity.

¹ *Thirty-seventh Report of the Thames Church Mission Society*, 31, New Bridge Street, Ludgate Circus, E.C., 1882. May I venture to suggest to the clerical readers of the CHURCHMAN that congregational collections on behalf of the Mission would be most gratefully acknowledged? At present we receive offertories from only a few churches.

“I’m a fisherman myself, Sir,” a man once said to me; “and I’ll allow that there are many well-mannered, sober, steady men among us; but, taking us all round, you’ll not find a coarser set of human beings in the world; and, if you want to know the reason, you’ve only got to look at yonder smack, heading away into the North Sea, where, maybe, she’ll be heaving and tossing about for weeks, with ne’er a proper influence in the shape of books or company for the men to come at.”

To these poor fellows, then, the Thames Church Mission are now sending out “the Word of Life,” and most gratefully have the missionaries been received. The “Short Blue” fleet, the largest fishing fleet in the North Sea, belonging to Messrs. Hewett & Co., had over twenty years ago its rendezvous at Barking, and at that time the agents of the Mission laboured regularly amongst the crews. On the introduction of steam fish carriers the fleet migrated to Gorleston, as more convenient to the fishing grounds, and from that time the work of this Society ceased to reach the fishermen. Now, however, in a remarkable and clearly providential way, God has led to the resumption of this labour, and has provided a trim little smack, the *Ensign*, to be used as a Mission vessel in connection with the “Short Blue” fleet. Under the command of a godly fisherman, who is not only honorary agent of the Thames Church Mission, but also of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Church of England Temperance Society, and the Shipwrecked Mariners’ Society, this smack is now cruising with the fleet, affording opportunity for regular Mission work. The *Ensign* carries a lending library (who will volunteer to increase the number of volumes?), a harmonium, kindly given by a gentleman whose sympathies had been aroused by the published accounts of this interesting effort—and, by no means least important, a medicine chest, “A Thank-offering” from a dear Christian lady, on her recovery from a very dangerous illness. Some cases of barbarous cruelty to smack apprentices, too painful for quotation, have lately appeared in the newspapers; and can anything, I need scarcely ask, be so likely to prove an efficacious remedy, or preventive, as the spiritual and philanthropic work now so happily inaugurated—prayer for the influence of the Holy Spirit, the diffusion of Scriptural knowledge through the distribution of copies of the Word of God, and the affectionate appeals of the Missionaries?

There are many ways in which the Society’s work for God can be materially assisted; but beyond all other means which the readers of THE CHURCHMAN in their kindness may adopt, I plead for that of which this closing extract so touchingly tells:—

Amongst the many vessels boarded was the —, steamer, where I held a most interesting service; twenty hearers were present. A

the close, one of the sailors said to me, "Did you feel much of the Lord's presence on Sunday? My reason for asking is this: whilst at Hamburg on Sunday, a sailor came into this fore-castle and invited all us chaps on board of a Guernsey brig to a prayer-meeting. Two men with myself went on board, and entered into the brig's cabin, where there were about fourteen sailors collected together. The master of the brig (who was the preacher) said, 'Those of us who will, may offer up prayer. Let us earnestly beseech the Lord to abundantly bless the labours of that excellent Society the Thames Church Mission, for there are some of us here have to thank God that ever it was instituted.'"

We greatly value the help of prayer.

FRANCIS MAUDE (Capt. R.N.).

ART II.—LONGFELLOW.¹

WE lost in the early months of the present year one of the truest, and purest, and sweetest poets of this century. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow died on the 24th of March, "the roaring moon of daffodil and crocus," and his death cast a shadow on many a home on both sides of the Atlantic, and indeed in all countries where the English language is spoken. Wherever his poems had reached—and where had they not?—a sincere sorrow was felt by all who could estimate sincerity and dignity, simplicity and goodness; and even little ones mourned for the gentle poet who had given a voice to their hopes and fears, and who showed how much he loved them in his beautiful poem of "The Children's Hour." The inhabitants of Cambridge, near Boston, which had been his home for some years, were first apprised of the poet's death by the tolling of his age—seventy-five years—upon the fire-alarm bell; and long before the sun went down the tidings of a great loss had been carried far and wide. In a sonnet which appeared in the *Spectator* since his death, he is justly styled—

The bard
Whose sweet songs, more than aught beside,
Have bound two worlds together;

and England, equally with America, has sorrowed over the loss

¹"Ultima Thule." By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Second Edition. London: George Routledge & Sons. 1880.

"In the Harbour." By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. London: George Routledge & Sons. 1882.