

**HISTORY**  
**OF**  
**THE PROVINCE WELLESLEY**  
**MISSION INSTITUTION**

By  
M. ORSLER

This account is based upon the Mission's Minute Book, old newspaper articles, and personal reminiscences of Province Wellesley Anglicans, especially of Mr. Louis Balavendrum. Mr. Orsler, who is now in England but is likely to return to St. Mark's in September as an Education Officer, is gathering fresh material from the S.P.G. in London. He would welcome any letters, memories, or other information of those who read this. Will anyone having such information please get into touch with the Headmaster of St. Mark's School (Butterworth, 122) or with Mr. Balavendrum.

H. WAKEFIELD.

## HISTORY OF THE PROVINCE WELLESLEY MISSION INSTITUTION

### A RIGHT GOOD MAN

The Province Wellesley Mission was the brainchild of the Bishop of Labuan and Sarawak, Walter Chambers, and David Brown Esq. of Messrs. Brown & Co., second generation representative of that well-known family of Presbyterian Browns, the father of whom is buried beside Francis Light. We have the Bishop's letter dated 18 June 1878 in which he outlines the project about which Brown and he had already talked. The Bishop suggests where the money is to come from: the S.P.G. would help, as would the Colonial Government (the Penang Government) but the full support of the Presbyterians would be essential. The Bishop goes on to mention two gentlemen who would be useful on the committee — perhaps they were known for their charity since both in the next thirty years contributed much labour and money to the Mission — Vermont (of Batu Kawan) and Morrison (of Krea Estate). Finally he says: we need £400 p.a. and a house and "a good man who would devote his life to the two objects of gradually raising the entire community and of winning souls to the Lord." Brown in his reply makes more precise the object of the Mission: we want, he says, "the services of a first rate *practical* man" who would "devote his attention not only to the ministrations of religion to the European residents and the natives in general but also to the Education, under Christian principles, of the children of the latter." Brown says the Penang Presbyterians are willing to vote annually £200 to support such work as well as giving up to \$1,000 to assist in building a Mission House: indeed they were so keen to assist such a worthy project that they would consider investing their total property (valued at \$30,000) in mutual trust with the S.P.G. to forward the Mission work. It is as well to remember from the start the financial and other aid given by the Presbyterians to the Mission, without which it may well have been a stillborn idea. Later, through difficulties which the minute book does not clarify, they stopped their contribution in 1891. But in its initiation the Presbyterians played as vital a part as the Anglican Church or any Anglican organisation.

A Mission Committee was formed on the 9th July, 1878. The Bishop was its President and David Brown its secretary and treasurer. The Hon. Walter Scott, J. M. Vermont, A. G. Morrison and the Chaplain of Penang (then the Rev. Mr. French-Smith) were members. There was much work for it to do before the arrival of a permanent chaplain: it must collect funds, find a suitable mission house, select buildings for schools, employ schoolmasters and Tamil catechists. When that permanent chaplain did arrive, said the Bishop, he would be under the Bishop's spiritual care but would be responsible to the committee for the work of the Mission. The meeting ended with the Bishop asking the committee to keep him fully informed about what they did. It was his own project and one reads the tremendous disappointment he felt in a letter dated 12 August 1878 in which he announces "a sudden and rather serious illness" that has come upon him—an illness which necessitated home leave and, ultimately, retirement in 1881. In England the Bishop sees the advantages which his illness may bring to the Mission: he can press the business on the SPG with more energy "than the ordinary forms sanction" and is better placed to find a chaplain. "I find no-one has as yet come forward" he ends. By October someone had.

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That someone was the Rev. H. McDougal Courtney, nephew of Bishop McDougall, Chambers' predecessor as Bishop of Labuan and Sarawak. Mr. Courtney was formerly of Pembroke College Oxford (where "he pulled for two years in the Universities boat race") and late curate to Windsor and the garrison at Woolwich. Bishop McDougall had written to Walter Chambers: "he is in my idea a right good man for your work"; Chambers' comment, after a long and interesting conversation with the proposed chaplain, was: "for some things I should have been glad if he had been a little older but this, if a fault, is one of which he will rapidly mend." Courtney was examined by the SPG commissioners on November 1st, left Woolwich in January 1879, and was in the Province by May.

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Courtney worked for the Mission ten years. He was its practical originator so it is necessary to get some idea of what sort of man he was. One can get an impression from the 8 reports he submitted to the Committee and the Committee's reaction to them. He seems to have been that first-rate practical man that David Brown desired to obtain. An air of "No-nonsense" pervades his reports and probably explains why the Committee were at first scant of praise though later they warmed to him. His reports were brief: "I have avoided giving more details than are necessary" he writes in the first. He is a man of no-illusions though very far from being disillusioned: the Tamils were regularly

chided for "leaving their children exposed to all the evils of heathen surroundings" (non-Christians are all, for him, Heathen): they should realise "how useless their religion is either for a guide to their daily lives or for satisfying the higher aspirations of their souls": he does not hide the fact that Europeans would not travel far to attend divine service or come if it was wet if "No congregation, no service" is a frequent comment of his) nor does he pass over the quarrels of his catechists between each other, the quarrels of schoolmasters and parents, and the inefficiency of much of the religious teaching that went on. Of one catechist he remarks "he had entered too much into trade and jobbing to allow of his carrying on his work properly"; another he distrusts so he is planning to have the man live and travel with him—thus saving travelling expenses.

He expects his schoolmasters to do their job: if they don't he sacks them: \* he expels boys who are continually playing truant and also he expects from the Committee his own dues. When he moved from the Golden Grove House in 1881 he asked for the expenses to be paid and when the currency was depreciated in 1885 he requested that the 10% loss he had sustained because he was on a sterling contract be made good.

As far as finance is concerned in fact, one gets the strong impression that the Committee could not have got a better man. Courtney kept his accounts methodically and accurately and was absolutely honest and fair. This was a factor of supreme importance, of course, since the Mission was running on a shoestring budget. It was indeed a matter of pride to the Chaplain that he had not only founded the schools and kept them going, but by the end of his chaplaincy they were all more or less self-supporting—earning enough money from the Government on account of examination passes to cover their expenses.

So far the realist side of Courtney has been portrayed. But there is another and more important side to him—indeed if there were not one would question why he was working for the Mission at all. He was a man of courage, hope, vision and hard work and these qualities are never long overlaid by his hardheadedness. They can best be traced by reviewing the history of the schools he founded. By the end of 1880 he had got two schools going—one on the Caledonia Estate (also referred to as the Nibong Tobal School) and one at Simbang Ampat, but there was a chance of doing something much bigger with a building which the Government owned at Bukit Tengah. This building had housed a

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\* We read of fares being paid to Indians engaged in India as Mission schoolmasters but never of return fares paid.

Government Anglo / Tamil school but on his rounds in 1880 the Government Inspector had decided to close it. Courtney intends to make of this a boarding Mission School and has already employed a schoolmaster and his wife to run it. By the end of 1881 this Bukit Tengah School was a "progressing" concern; indeed it was to become the focus of Courtney's efforts and aspirations for the rest of his chaplaincy. The first two schools were not doing as much as expected. This was due to three factors:

- (i) Private schools in the areas were luring away the pupils (in 1886 he has the same problem at Butterworth but then some modus vivendi was worked out).
- (ii) There was schoolmaster / parent antagonisms and these lead
- (iii) to a lack of interest shown in the schools by both parents and children.

Still another school had been opened at Prye and, in all, the four schools were teaching 121 pupils. In 1882 Simpang Ampat had to be closed but a new school had been begun at Batu Kawan and plans were progressing to open one on the Malakoff Estate. 160 children were by now on the books. 1883 was a bad year. "For the first half of the year all my schools except Bukit Tengah fared badly; in every case the masters being to blame..... the consequence was that the results at the Government Examination were not very satisfactory." Out go the old masters, in come the new, and by the end of 1884 the schools win good examination results though "there is, however, room for improvement." Malakoff had been started up but it had failed by 1884. Also, despite his increasing confidence, Courtney had the intention to dismiss the master at Batu Kawan. In 1885 the 7th school was begun — at Butterworth.

"As will be seen by the above list I have opened a new school, at Butterworth. It has been for the year on a somewhat different footing to the other schools, that is, the schoolmaster has not been paid by wages. Being doubtful as to the probable success of the school and not wishing to risk further expences on the part of the Mission, I engaged, at the beginning of last year a man to carry on a school there in view of the Government grant to be earned: I promised to superintend the school and his work and to enter the school for examination with the other schools connected with the mission....."

The school had an average enrolment of 24, average attendance of 18; and "for its numbers had done well" earning over \$100 in the Government examination. Its property consisted of 3 desks (12) 6 benches (7) 1 table and 1 blackboard. Total Expenditure on it in 1885 was \$154.10 and since the Government Grant was \$127.50, the future St. Mark's cost the Mission \$26.60 to found.

## REV. COURTNEY'S LAST YEARS

Courtney went on a seven month leave in 1886 but before he went (he went in March, 1886 and returned in October) he founded his eighth school at Byram. What is more significant is that his work went ahead in his absence. He returned more hopeful and with a strong vision of Bukit Tengah "eventually being able to take its place with the three or four schools destined to monopolise the higher education in the Straits Settlements." Certainly for the remainder of his chaplaincy he devoted a great deal of time to transforming this vision into reality.

But 1887 put a temporary damper on his spirits. The Government had raised the standard of their examination: Courtney comments; "however advantageous it may be from an Educational point of view to raise the general standard it certainly is not very satisfactory for those who under special difficulties are carrying on schools and find their estimates of what they can do upset by a varying standard of examination." Yet he ends his 1887 (and last) report on a happy note: 10 Tamil boys have got jobs which have required qualification "in English speaking and writing and accounts."

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What of Courtney's private life? How far did he pay attention to his clerical duties? What was the Committee's opinion of him? He is reticent about his *private life* and perhaps a little naive. He had friends in England enthusiastic enough about his Mission work to give money towards forwarding it: he also seemed to be able to raise money locally, so he must have been fairly popular. In 1884 he got married, to whom we do not know. We only know of the marriage because he has to explain why on a certain occasion there was a lapse in the regularity of Divine Services.

On his death we do not know what happened to his wife: if she had died before him he would have surely mentioned it. What we do know is that his 1886 leave was extended for a fortnight because of "pressing domestic affairs." There is another strange reference to his home life "since my return, in consequence of severe domestic troubles it was necessary for me to forego my duties on one Sunday" (that was on December 5 1886). This statement is prominently placed in the report and more succinctly put into his Service register.

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Although Courtney put most of his energies into his school, he never neglected his *spiritual offices*. He was peripatetic about his large parish, looking after the Europeans himself and superintending the work of his Tamil catechists. One of his early preoccupations was—where are we to build a church? The first idea was to have a central church for the whole province. This was soon abandoned since a central

position would be too remote for all, European and Tamil alike. His next idea was to build one church in the South ("some half-way position between Batu Kawan and the Penang Sugar Company Estates") and one in the North "at the foot of Bukit Tengah Hill," the latter to have priority. Until such a church could be built services would have to be makeshift — in Prye hospital, Butterworth courthouse, Bukit Tengah Police Station and in private houses. They were not well-attended: 9 was a good average congregation and 20 was a host.

Courtney never held a service unless there were more than 3 present; ironically he mentions Butterworth more often than any other place for its poverty of congregations, ironically because there the first church was ultimately built: and in his book "no congregation, no service" or "no congregation, very wet evening" are familiar entries. Nor did the Tamils hold better together: it was necessary to follow them around the province if you wanted to preach to them. In 1887 there were 120 Indian Christians.

For his catechising Courtney depended a great deal on the Tamil Missionary, Deacon R. Balavendrum. As early as 1881 he hoped to build two churches. In 1887 a plan for the Bukit Tengah Church was drawn up estimated at \$3,500. By the end of 1888 \$4,681.86 had been collected for it and many thousands of bricks had been given and bought to build it. Courtney did not live to see it begun but he did spend \$532.61, collected for Church building, on ordinary Mission work. This was his only revealed financial malpractice and who was to blame him for it? Certainly the committee did not, for there is no comment in the minute book on the Secretary's revelation. Courtney did not visit other parishes as much as his successor did: perhaps his energetic and single-minded perseverance undermined the health that could have been revived by change. He preached in Penang in 1881 and paid a visit to Malacca in the same year: in 1882 he visited Taiping and in 1887 he preached a Jubilee service at Kinta. They are the only excursions — save his home leave in 1886 — that he records.

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The Committee must have realised that Courtney more or less measured up to the reports they had had of him for they took no action to call a meeting from his arrival in May, 1879 until he presented his first report on 7 May, 1881. There is no recorded comment on this report yet Vermont, Morrison, Brown and company must have been impressed by the energy with which the chaplain had prosecuted his work, the ideas he had for developing it and the amount he had done for the total cost to the mission of \$579.35. The fact that this report, for 1880, was not presented until nearly half of 1881 had gone by can partly be accounted for by the more leisurely pace at which business was conducted in these days.



The Committee itself only sat 15 times during Courtney's term and on eight of those occasions they came together to hear the Chaplain's reports. The second report was noted as "able" and there was a "full discussion" on it. The third was "satisfactory." Courtney ended his fourth report: "these attempts at advancing Christianity in the province will, I trust, bear good fruit in time." The fifth, for the year 1884, was satisfactory. By this time the membership of the Committee had changed. The Hon. Walter Scott never became an active member and resigned before the real work began. The Rev. Mr. French-Smith had been replaced by Rev. Mr. Walker who in turn was replaced by the Rev. Mr. Biggs, who lasted a long time in the Penang chaplaincy. Bishop Chambers had retired owing to ill-health and was replaced as president by the Bishop of Singapore, Hose. David Brown had gone to Europe but continued to be represented by his relations Edmund and L. C. Brown. Edmund Brown was to have a lengthy connection with the Mission (until 1893) as were Vermont and Morrison and the two members elected in 1884, Sandilands and Comrie. Vermont was owner or manager of Batu Kawan Estate and Morrison Manager of Caledonia. Sandilands was presumably manager of the firm of Messrs. Sandilands Buttery and Co., and Comrie was Secretary of the Presbyterian Mission.

The work done by the Mission was influenced to a large extent by the positions held by the various committee members. The schools were placed on committee member's estates and committee members often volunteered to get and support schoolmasters privately when Mission funds were low. Morrison promised in 1881 to build a Church from "private funds": such promises (there were others) never yielded fruit. It was inevitable and admirable that, working on such a narrow budget as they were, every asset they had should be used in the most effective manner possible.

The sixth report, for 1885, was received with enthusiasm. The Committee ordered a copy to be made and sent to H.E. the Governor. It was at this meeting that Courtney was granted 7 months' paid leave and he was promised that the income he had lost owing to currency changes "should be made good to him when the funds of the institution will allow of it." The Rev. Mr. Biggs and the Tamil Missionary Deacon Balavendrum were to look after the services and the schools aided by Vermont and Brown. Lest the Penang Government be averse from letting Biggs do work on the mainland they were to be firmly told of the services rendered in Penang by the Rev. Courtney on past occasions. Probably this was meant as much as a reminder to the Rev. Mr. Biggs as to the Penang Government since Brown notes later, in his report on 1888, that Biggs only held one service on the mainland after Courtney's death. We shall hear more of the Rev. Mr. Biggs.

Reading between the lines of Courtney's 7th report, one gets the strong impression that he was not very pleased at the amount of work done while he was away. The exception is a word of appreciation for the Tamil Missionary Deacon Balavendrum. But it is to be expected that he would be rather slight of praise for his helpers.

Courtney was thanked for his "able services" when he read his 8th report on 17 April, 1888. Indeed, the Committee were fortunate in possessing a man who appears so forceful and hopeful and persevering even if personally cold and hardheaded. I think that is the best interpretation to be put on his character after reading the minute on his death: "after a few words from the Bishop testifying to the good work earnestly performed by Mr. D. Courtney and to the zeal shown by him in forwarding the object of this institution, it was unanimously resolved that this meeting desires to record in its minutes the great loss the Mission had sustained by the death of the Rev. McDougal Courtney who had been its chaplain since its commencement in 1879." That was written in 13th February, 1889. Courtney had lasted almost ten years. The death of Sandilands was recorded on the same minute.

Courtney taught the higher classes at the Bukit Tengah school during his last years and he often mentions disease breaking out among the boys. A boy died of smallpox in 1884. Perhaps it was of this that Courtney died: perhaps of malaria that often ravaged Europeans in these days; perhaps of hard work and worry.

He could not have been more than 35 at his death but at any rate his was a fruitful life.

### THE TWO SCHOOLS.

The Bukit Tengah and the Butterworth schools call for fuller treatment than the others; the former on account of its importance then, the latter because it was the seed out of which was to come the oak of St. Mark's. This school of course was not known as St. Mark's until it was re-founded since the Church of St. Mark's was only consecrated on January 15th 1895.

As already noted the Bukit Tengah school was housed in a building loaned to the Mission in 1881. Its average daily attendance in that year was 27 and the number of boarders — cared for by the Headmaster's wife whom Courtney had employed from India with her husband — varied from 5 to 8. "I charge \$1.50 for children of well-to-do parents" Courtney wrote "50 cents for those without a father, and nothing for orphans: the children seem to like the school and progress well as they learn a good deal out of school hours: an advantage of having boarders is that it forms a nucleus to attract the other children.....of course I find it difficult to get boarding fees paid but I have not as yet been

#### A. PROVINCE WELLESLEY

The sort of country that Province Wellesley was then is difficult for us to visualise, but a few hints are sufficient to remind us that it was very different from what it is now. Waterways and swamps, infested by crocodiles, abounded. Roads were dusty tracks, bounded by tall lalang in which tigers prowled. Housing was primitive and dispersed. Even the rector lived in what we would now call a "basha," without piped water or electricity. No doubt the plantation houses were more solidly built and comfortable but they were also more expensive. Travel was by horse-drawn gharry. We are told that the Rev. Henham in order to keep his physical condition used to run behind his gharry from Bukit Tengah to take services at Butterworth. He must have been a brave man for the one thing that has not changed is the climate. Death and illness — in these conditions — were commonplace. Walter Chambers, in the third entry in the Minute book, has to retire: Courtney died a very young man: both Sandilands and Comrie die while still members of the Committee. The smallpox epidemic at Bukit Tengah has already been mentioned; also the large bills for medicine and the frequent trips to the hospital.\* There is one other factor that clearly differentiates then from now: dress. Each race dressed in its national costume; the Chinese had queues and the Indian his turban. There was indeed little of that Europeanization of clothes that is nowadays everywhere apparent.

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At the end of his 1893 report the Chaplain had written: "in conclusion I would add that while I am able to give a hopeful report of the work that is being carried on I am aware that there is almost indefinite room for extension of the Mission's sphere of usefulness." We have seen what he had accomplished in eight years: the Bukit Tengah school was flourishing. St. Mark's Church had been built and more and more Tamils and Europeans were coming under his spiritual influence. The Mission finances had a surplus. The Honourable J. M. Vermont must have been satisfied with his decision to carry on the Mission's work in 1891; for if he had been for closure no doubt his word, as the oldest committee member and a constant supporter of the Mission, would have carried much weight.

We have now to see how Henham extended his work in the period 1900 — 1911 for in 1911 his energetic successor the Rev. John H. Smith became the fourth Chaplain of the Province Wellesley Mission Institution.

\* Even in 1906 Rev. Henham couldn't officiate at a Tamil Service 'owing to an outbreak of cholera,' and the influenza epidemic of 1918 wreaked havoc in the community.

23 + 24  
B. Coote

very strict about them." He notes that a friend of Windsor days "who sympathised with missionary work" has given \$10 to the school which in all cost \$500 in the years account.

Average attendance in 1882 had gone up to 40 of whom 25 were boarders. The school earned \$151 from the Government by its successes in examinations but, as Courtney lamented, "the expense of the school has greatly increased." In all, it cost \$772.95 but the actual cost to the Mission was reduced to the 1881 figure by the fees collected from parents and guardians and by gifts from individuals: Edmond Brown gave \$11.46, the Bishop of Singapore gave \$8.38 and Courtney himself donated \$10.

The increase in numbers in this year meant that a new boarding house had to be built and an assistant master hired at \$5 per month. Courtney seemed pleased with the Head because he gave him a raise of \$5 in April which made his pay \$20 per month. Presumably this salary covered the services of his wife for there is no separate entry for her in the accounts.

As already noted, 1883 was a bad year for all the schools with the exception of Bukit Tengah and Courtney proceeded to purge his schools of the inefficient masters. Bukit Tengah progressed: the average attendance had gone up to 51 and the school earned \$317.50 from the Government. The Headmaster again got a \$5 raise in April.

The 1884 report gives us an insight into the conditions the boys lived under. Owing to overcrowding 10 boys out of the 31 then in residence were attacked by smallpox in June. There are no deaths recorded but that conditions did not much improve is shown by two entries: "burial of one boarder Rayapen" (1886) and "expense of catching runaway boarder" (1885). We can judge that the boys had a pretty monotonous diet by the recurring entry of "rice and currystuff" the only article of food ever specifically mentioned. Again only \$31.22 was spent on the boy's clothes — an average of \$1 each. To emphasise the amount of ill-health the boys suffered from it is recorded that \$23.26 was spent on medicine in 1884 — almost as much per head as that spent on rice for each boy per month. The price of rice "making a hole in \$1 per month per boy" is a thing Courtney repeatedly laments.

Combined with the very poor living standards the boys had to endure the constant urging of Courtney and their masters to work hard and so pass the examinations and so win the Government grants. It was very much a "payment by results" system and if, by attending Bukit Tengah, the boys fitted themselves for better positions they certainly earned them.

Still more boys attended in 1885 — 66 being the average attendance: nevertheless the school cost the Mission only \$80 and this

sum was so large only because of "an unusually heavy medicine bill (\$30.32) and the high price of rice." Courtney records "the accommodation for boarders is a more difficult matter than ever and I fear a great deal of ill-health during the year amongst them is attributable to the close quarters I have to pack them into." 38 boys were boarding this year and no new accommodation had been provided since 1882 when there were only 25. (Note: the number went up to 47 in 1889. Brown slashed it to 30.)

Courtney was by now living at Bukit Tengah and presumably had begun to teach, or supervise the teaching of, the higher forms himself. Five boys entered for the 5th standard examination in 1886 but none passed: "the Government Examiner has in the school diary commented very favourably on the excellent work he considers the school is doing but he adds that if it is desired to enter boys for examination above the fourth standard a certificated English master must be obtained." Courtney returns to the subject at the end of his report. He advocates expansion of Bukit Tengah. In the first place the Tamils are enthusiastic about the school: in the second the Government have formed a "favourable estimate" of it. Now is the time to build, now is the time to employ a teacher from England. The Committee found that they still had a deficit on their hands and did not take the hint.

Despite the living conditions and the hard work, 76 was the average attendance in 1887. The accounts do not reveal any new information except that Durasamy's parents have been summoned for the non-payment of fees and that the boarders went to town on Jubilee Day. The only other visits that they made were to Hospital (gharry hire charges of \$3.25). There is one new charge: "messengers to collect boarders." This could be interpreted as meaning that the boys were still not as enthusiastic about their school as their parents. Courtney definitely taught in the school this year: "during 8 months of 1887 I took the English teaching of the fifth and half of the fourth standard completely off his (i.e. the Headmaster) hands, giving him also an extra, that is, a third Assistant." Although the examination results had shown a falling away (which Courtney attributed to the increasing standard of the examination) he was proud to write: "I may add as evidence of the benefits the schools are to the Tamils that 10 boys from Bukit Tengah school during the past year have obtained situations in which some knowledge of English speaking, writing and accounts is necessary."

After Courtney's death and the 1891 bankruptcy of the Mission treasurers, the school at Bukit Tengah was the only one kept going. The schools at Batu Kawan, Puye and Butterworth were in existence again by 1903 but there is no Mission record of them from the bankruptcy until that date, except a brief note on 'Superintendance' in 1892. It is

not proposed, however, at this stage to trace its History beyond 1890. Rather it is necessary to turn to the early History of the school that was destined to fulfil the vision Courtney felt Bukit Tengah could fulfil, but did not, — the History, of the Butterworth School.

The starting and equipping of the *Butterworth School* has already been mentioned. It had a short and not very glorious career — lasting from 1885 until Brown in July 1889 "considered it advisable to close it as there were so few scholars and I was not satisfied with the master." Messrs. Brown's bankruptcy which forced the Mission to close all its schools except Bukit Tengah in 1890 therefore played no part in its closure. It ran downhill on its own account.

A few facts and figures will fill out this sad picture. In its first year the school did well, earning \$127 in Government Grants. Courtney had not expected this; he had made loans to the Headmaster which the latter promptly paid back. The furniture of the school however had been bought by the Mission so Courtney — in order to convince the master that what was good for the goose was good for the gander — clapped a 10% interest charge on that.

In 1886 the school suffered from a rival. This was not the first time this had happened. When Courtney closed the Simpang Ampat school in 1882 he intended the closure to last only a month until he could get a better man who would not quarrel with the children's parents. To his dismay "a high-caste Tamil collected the children in the village temple and set up school there, making at the same time agreements with the parents to send their children to him for a year" — and Courtney was never able to re-open his school there. That he learned from this experience is proved by the following: "the schoolmaster has, however, now entered into an agreement with this man (i.e. the Butterworth rival) which I hope will bring about more satisfactory results this year."

Attendances kept steady during 1887 — 23 boys were taught regularly. The school earned \$159 from the Government and obtained excellent examination results. But Courtney mentions the reason: "many of the boys having failed the year before had been working in the same standards for 2 years." The old master, Nathaniel, was paid off in October and a new man — hired now on a salary and so coming under Courtney's full supervision — was paid \$14 for two months work. His name was Michael.

Butterworth's numbers sagged in 1888 — only 17 pupils were in regular attendance. There was however only a drop of \$20 in the money earned from the Government and examination results reached 84% and 90% of the possible. Something must have gone suddenly and seriously wrong by July 1889 when Brown saw fit to close the school. "The

children who were anxious to learn were transferred as boarders to Bukit Tengah school and were presented for examination there. Four children took advantage of this. The furniture was removed to Bukit Tengah School and the master paid off. I also gave the proprietor one month's extra rent in lieu of notice to quit."

We do not hear again of the Butterworth School until December 2nd 1911 when its expenses were \$17.75: in the same year the Mission paid \$1,733 to the three chaplains under its employment.

### Interlude February 1889 — December 1892

The Rev. H. McDougall Courtney, "our much-regretted chaplain" as Edmund Brown referred to him, was dead, but the work he had inaugurated for the mission had to go on. At the meeting called on February 13, 1889 the Bishop of Singapore addressed those present "on the subject of the appointment of a new chaplain. He pointed out that it was a difficult matter to get a suitable person and some time would have to elapse even after finding the proper person before he could arrive in the Settlement." Until a new chaplain arrived the Honorary Secretary, Edmund Brown, was put in charge of the Mission's work and it was he who wrote the reports for the years 1888 and 1889. It is as well to remember — in view of what happened soon afterwards — how much labour he expended during these years. (1)

It proved impossible to hold the twice-a-month services for the Europeans after Courtney's death so the Government Grant of \$50 a month lapsed. The Tamil Mission work went ahead regularly, both in the North and South of the Province, under the supervision of Mr. Balavendrum. (2) The schools progressed, \$1,455.50 being earned in 1888 as against \$1,338 in 1887, but Brown had seen fit to cut down the number of boarders at Bukit Tengah from 47 to 30. As already noted the boys must have been crammed together since no new building had been undertaken there since 1881: what building there was needed repair. The latter part of the 1888 report deals with the need to start building the church at Bukit Tengah. 120,000 bricks given by the Penang Sugar Estates Company "were now lying on the spot selected by Mr. Courtney and myself as a suitable site for the Church" and \$4,681.86 had been promised as subscriptions. \$600 had been subscribed by the friends of the late Mr. Courtney. It looked as though the Mission was about to be rewarded with its first permanent church. However, no action was

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(1) In January 1890 a cordial vote of thanks was voted to the Hon. Secretary for his services in connection with the working of the Mission.

(2) Deacon Balavendrum was the father of the present Vicar's Warden of St. Mark's, Butterworth.

taken to commence building in 1889 or in 1890 and by mid-1891 it was too late. The blow had fallen which almost ended the Mission's life and we read (in the minutes of a meeting held on the 4th July, 1891) that "the committee approved of the removal of the bricks belonging to the Church Building Fund hitherto stored at Bukit Tengah to Golden Grove Estate for safe custody." It was not until January 1895 that a Church was completed, and that was St. Mark's at Butterworth.

Of his 1889 report Brown writes that "it cannot be considered as satisfactory as those of the past which must be largely accounted for by the fact of the limited amount of funds at my disposal and the want of a Chaplain." No grant had been forthcoming from Government or from the SPG nor had the Presbyterian mission been "in a position to make us their usual-or any allowance." Considerable mystery surrounds the latter statement. It appears that the Penang Presbyterians were still willing to support the Mission but some legal tussle with the Government was preventing them. For our purposes it is enough to note that by August, 1891 their contribution to the Mission stopped for good. The other grants—from Government and the SPG were, of course, dependent on the presence of a chaplain in the province.

But the Committee was clearly worried about the future finances of the Mission. One instance of this: "immediately after the examination owing to want of funds I had to send away all the paying boarders (from Bukit Tengah) but since then some have been re-admitted on condition of their paying \$1.50 per month each in advance instead of only \$1 in arrear which was sometimes never paid."—Brown wrote to the Governor of Singapore, Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, on the 26 June pointing out to him the good work the mission had done and intended to do: this was by way of ensuring the continuance of the Presbyterian grant as well as reminding the Government of their future obligation as soon as the Chaplain arrived. "His Excellency," so the Resident Councillor, of Penang, Mr. Skinner, wrote in reply, "had not failed to recognise the usefulness of the work the Mission had done but a scheme had to be worked out in accordance with Ordinance VI of 1889 and submitted by the body referred to in the Ordinance as the proper one." This has a familiar ring. Meanwhile "the Honourable J. M. Vermont kindly volunteered a donation of \$1,000 for the incidental expenses attending the getting out and engagement of a clergyman: and it was unanimously agreed to record a most cordial vote of thanks to him."

A letter from David Brown Esquire dated 9 May, 1890 brought the promise of another donation. (3) "What we propose doing" the letter read "is to give the property on which the house (that is being

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(3) David Brown was, of course, the co-founder of the Mission in 1879.



used by the Ministers) stands and which contains sufficient land for the erection of a Church, and a small plantation into the bargain, as a centenary gift..... I think this would be a very suitable memorial both of the Centenary and our good father and I would suggest that a small tablet should be put up in a conspicuous part of the Church you are building, or in the ground, to the effect that the ground had been given by the sons who were partners in the firm of Brown & Co. (4). The Committee, in session on the 5th January, 1891 had yet another gift to hear about. Mr. Daniel Logan of Penang had given the Mission \$1,000. (5) Obviously they were delighted with the "munificence" their work attracted. There was another piece of good news. The Rev. W. Horsfall had been appointed chaplain to the Mission and had arrived a month earlier. He was introduced to all the members. It seemed as though the Mission had recovered from the shock of Courtney's death.

In March, 1891 a sub-Committee was set up to go ahead with the building of the Bukit Tengah Church on the lines of a plan drawn up by a Mr. Calcott. In June this sub-committee was asked if it had any report to submit: "in reply Mr. Brown explained that as would appear from the minutes accompanying the plan of the Church the latter had not been in the hands of the sub-Committee at all and that in consequence no meeting had been held." "Considerable discussion then took place." Finally it was agreed that the Church building at Bukit Tengah be persevered with.

Then the blow fell. The Honorary Treasurers, Messrs. Brown & Co. went bankrupt, and with their suspension went \$1,400 of the Mission's money.

The Committee that on the 5th June were at loggerheads over the business of Bukit Tengah Church had, on the 23rd, a much more serious matter on their plate. The bankruptcy was in every respect a crisis: and a crisis always is a test of character. It was not just the matter of the money lost but that factor alone was sufficient to depress men who had been struggling to make the mission work on insufficient funds for over a decade. It was more an issue of confidence: shall we go on or shall we throw up the whole work?

Edmund Brown, no doubt more out of embarrassment than lack of courage, moved that the Mission be closed on the 30th June. The proposal found no seconder. "After considerable discussion it was resolved to carry on the work of the Mission till the end of July"

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- (4) Brown's gift was vested in trust with SPG.
  - (5) Logan's gift was intended by the Committee for the Church building fund. A later minute explained that the money could not be used in this way.

by which time the views of the Bishop could be ascertained. The Committee had decided to wait on events and, as it turned out, this was a satisfactory course.

Before it met again—on the 4th July—a considerable correspondence had taken place on the matter of the bankruptcy. It appears that the Rev. Mr. Horsfall had addressed a letter to the Government asking for "certain assistance." There is no evidence to show that he was asking for personal assistance since there was still enough money to pay his passage back to England, although, as a committee member had pointed out as far back as 5th January, no explicit agreement had been made with him on this point. For whatever object the "assistance" was asked (and it is worth noting that Brown refused to believe that Horsfall had written any such letter) here was an opportunity for the Resident Councillor, Mr. Skinner to write a nasty note to the Chaplain of Penang, the Rev. Mr. Biggs. "Who was responsible," asks Skinner querulously, "for the investment of the Mission funds in Brown & Co.? For the deposit or the investment of the P.W. Church Building Funds in Brown & Co.? Is not the Honorary Secretary responsible, unless it was so ordered? Had the subscribers any voice in it?" Such brow-beating had its effect on Biggs who in turn wrote a hectoring note to the Hon. Secretary which spoke of submitting the matter to legal opinion. The Government, and possibly Biggs himself, thought that Horsfall and Brown both knew of the impending collapse of the company but had done nothing to withdraw Mission funds since "they considered it illegal." "By whom were you informed that it was illegal?" asks Biggs. "This last question is made necessary by the undoubted fact that Messrs. Brown & Co. made payments equally liable to be called illegal within a few days of suspending payment."

Probably Horsfall and Brown did know of the impending failure, but as men of some integrity they would not take advantage of their inside information. Edmund Brown replied to Biggs saying that the matter could best be discussed in Committee "as the subject is such a personal one that I scarcely consider any answer coming from me can be looked upon as unprejudiced by the Resident Councillor."

At the meeting—on 4th July, 1891—this correspondence was read. Biggs expressed apologies for having written his letter "but it was only at the instance" ("dictation" crossed through) of the Resident Councillor that he did so (6.) The Committee expressed itself thus:

- (6) The Committee could not have thought badly of Biggs because they made him their secretary when Edmund Brown resigned. (December 1891)

Skinner as Resident Councillor, could of course put a great deal of pressure on his colonial chaplain.

"the committee, however, could not see that the Resident Councillor had any voice in the matter as the Government grants had all been earned before they were paid and as none of the money given by Government had been used except for the express purpose for which it was granted."

Horsfall had opened this meeting by proposing that the Mission be wound up immediately. He was obviously anxious for this unseemly business, into which he had been dragged less than six months after his arrival, to be wound up. The rest of the Committee were more persistent. They exonerated Brown from any blame connected with the failure and again expressed their appreciation of his services. Vermont then came up with the proposal to write to the Government asking them to double their grant. This was a comeback with a vengeance. Vermont himself wrote the letter on the 14 July. He spoke plainly. Want of funds would impel the Mission to close unless the Government aided it. "It is radically (sic) known the good it has hitherto done in the way of Education. If the necessity existed when the Grant was first given many years ago, it has now increased with the advent of a larger European and Native Christian population."

All he got for his pains was another malicious letter from the Resident Councillor. Was the "lack of funds" to be connected with the failure of Brown & Co.? If so "it seems necessary to say so in a letter to Government and to explain how the funds came to be with Brown & Co." He ended by casting a deliberate aspersion on Brown's honesty.

This was too much for Vermont. He wrote a majestic reply, factual and full of dignity. It contained this defence of Messrs. Brown: "Messrs. Brown & Co. from the conception of the Mission—now some twenty five years—took a lively interest in its welfare, in fact they were the originators, and as they were large landed proprietors in Province Wellesley they subscribed most liberally and assisted the Mission during that long period in every way in their power. I think, therefore, it is hard on them that because a paltry \$1,400 has been lost by their suspension that it should be called in question how the funds came to be in their hands. It had the sanction of his Lordship the Bishop as well as the Committee of Management." He ended: "putting aside the loss of the \$1,400 we should sooner or later have had to appeal to Government for further assistance to carry on this work which there is no denying has done much good."

No reply is recorded.

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On September 11th the Committee decided on a public appeal. Edmund Brown did not attend this meeting at which both he and Horsfall (who did) were chastised for writing letters to one another.

on the subject of their official duties without the previous sanction of the Committee. At the next meeting (15 Dec. 1891) Brown resigned the secretaryship but retained his place as ordinary member. Horsfall coming to the conclusion that he had "no permanency here" asked permission to accept a post offered him at Roweborne, near Perth in Western Australia. He went in March, 1892.

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The Committee were still faced by a dilemma. All its schools with the exception of Bukit Tengah had been abruptly closed by the bankruptcy. (7) If it was to continue to maintain Bukit Tengah and carry on the catechising in the Province and pay Biggs' expenses for an occasional service given to Europeans, it would run up an ever increasing deficit. That deficit was \$240 already, in March, 1892. No Government grant (for spiritual work) or SPG grant or private "munificence" could be expected unless a new chaplain were installed. Yet it required courage to begin all over again.

Typically the Committee decided to ask the Government whether they would pay their \$50 per month until a chaplain arrived. By May 6th the Government had refused.

Typically again the Committee resolved to get a new Chaplain and in the meantime carry on Bukit Tengah.

On November 4th Chaplain Henham was announced.

The crisis was over.

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## FIRST PART OF REV. H. C. HENHAM'S CHAPLAINCY DECEMBER, 1892 — 1900

The Mission had nearly come to a premature end because of shortage of money: by 1894 it was rich enough to have its Annual Reports printed and at a meeting held on 28 March, 1900—"a new minutes book was voted" although there were several pages left of the old. These two decisions prohibit a full retrospective recording of the Mission's work, since—up to the time of writing—none of Henham's printed reports have been located and the probability is that the new minutes book is lost. This chapter on the Mission's work is therefore more sketchy than the previous chapters.

After 1903 the treasurer incorporated into the end of the Minutes book statements of the Mission Accounts from January, 1893 to December, 1911 and on the basis of these alone—in default of more material coming to light—will the last part of the Reverend Henham's chaplaincy have to be written.

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(7) There is reference to the superintendance of day schools (in the minutes of May, 1892) being "carried on."

## FINANCE

After the crisis of the bankruptcy the first preoccupation of the Committee was with finance. Henceforward credit balances at the end of the year are the factors that please it most. Henham became treasurer of the Mission on his arrival (he was present at the committee meeting held on December 19, 1892): the Committee decided that "all cheques signed by Mr. Henham be countersigned by one of the members of the Committee." In August, 1893 Henham asked that John—his Headmaster at Bukit Tengah—be allowed an increase in pay but the Committee decided against it (later on it was generous to both John and his wife) since the chaplain "could not produce accounts to show how far the funds available would meet such expenditure." When Henham produced the Bukit Tengah accounts in 1895 they showed a \$68.82 deficit which the chaplain explained away by saying the Government had not paid for the three boarders they had put into the school. "The Chairman pointed out that the withdrawal of the payment from government only accounted for \$45." The Chaplain then explains that "a year's percentage on the grant for results had been paid to the Headmaster while the Account was credited with only half the Grant." The committee did not haggle further: it was good that the chaplain had such confidence in his Headmaster. Another instance of the Chaplain's vagueness is recorded in August, 1898. The Committee were due to talk over the project for the Butterworth Church but "the Rev. H. C. Henham explained that he had not brought the plan with him: he had an estimate for the Church of \$400 but was not certain if it included the fittings shown."

The Committee exercised an eagle eye over money. Biggs had "exercised his discretion in disallowing certain items in the accounts presented by John" in 1892: "the Meeting approved. The Secretary was quick to point out to the Government that it had not paid the fees of its three Hindu boarders at Bukit Tengah. The Committee ask for a disused bungalow near the Bukit Tengah school which was owned by Government: Henham in his report for 1893 (the only report contained in the Minute book) says: "it would be serviceable" and he believes that the Government would let them use it or at least have it demolished and its material transferred to the Mission compound. He was banking on the generosity of the new Resident Councillor, Captain Anderson, who had replaced Skinner. Government, however, offered to sell the property to the Mission—an offer which is refused with snorts of indignation followed by a decision to build extensions out of their own money. By this time the Committee is feeling surer of its finances: while in 1892 it had been delighted that the Government had voted their annual grant on the promise that Henham was soon arriving, by 1893 it had decided that it would not accept Government money for the Bukit Tengah school

if such grants "might have to be made dependent on such conditions as would interfere with the Missionary character of Bukit Tengah school."

With Henham's arrival, of course, the SPG grant was renewed as well as Government's. Grants were forthcoming from the Sneider Fund for church building and subscriptions were reopened. Annual subscriptions from Wellesley parishioners indeed did much to lessen the committee's worry about money. The amount collected by such means was larger than before due to there being more Europeans settled on the mainland and probably to some extent to the crisis of 1891. No-one who had the slightest interest in the Mission could afford to let it get into such difficulties again. The Committee also raised \$1,565.89 from a Bazaar in the Town Hall, which sum covered nicely the building of the Butterworth Church and left over enough to buy the land at Bukit Tengah on which the Mission House stood. Evidences are forthcoming that the Committee had relaxed their financial stringency. (\*) It is prepared to buy land for a cemetery, to reattap the Chaplain's house (at the cost of \$90) and to pack John off to India for three months' holiday on full pay. This was in 1896. John had controlled the Bukit Tengah school for thirteen years and had been an active catechist for the same period: he had earned a rest.

Before leaving this dull subject of finance there is one incident that has to be recorded. In January, 1895 the Committee decided that it ought to have its accounts annually audited and asked Edmund Brown to do the job. (1) In fact he must have refused this suggestion, for R. Ray Esquire is found to be doing it.

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## 2. THE REV. H. C. HENHAM

The character of the new Chaplain has only been touched upon. the Rev. H. C. Henham, the only son of a family of six. (2) was a bachelor and, as one who remembers him puts it, "a Godly man." Three things emerge about him from the records we have of his work. First and foremost he is interested in the Missionary side of the Institution's work and less in the Educational. During the years under review only the school at Bukit Tengah was kept running and no effort seems to have been made to expand the Day Schools which the Mission was

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- (\*) There was another currency depreciation in 1895 and the Committee added \$15 p.a. to Henham's stipend.
- (1) E. Brown had resigned his ordinary members place on the Committee in November, 1893.
- (2) He had one of his sisters with him for she is holding a scripture class in 1893. She presumably kept home for him.

"superintending" as late as November, 1892. (3) He changes the emphasis even at Bukit Tengah. In 1893 we read that "the rule that boarders in that school should be Christians or prepared to become Christians had not hitherto been enforced." This was said in reference to the question—shall we accept Government Grants on any conditions? Although "a difference of opinion" was expressed there is no doubt that Henham urged the Missionary demands upon the schools' work. He was successful. He writes in his Report that a "definite religious teaching is imparted to the pupils" and by 1896 the Bishop is reporting "very favourably" on the teaching of the school as shown by the answers of the pupils at their recent Religious examination." Henham's energy, then, went in the main into Religious development of which the physical evidence was the building of St. Mark's (referred to below) and the spiritual evidence the increased numbers attending Church services, both European and Tamil.

The second quality which is obvious in the chaplain is his love for the Indians. His generosity to John has been mentioned: he was always urging the Committee to give him and his assistants more pay and laboured hard to get his wife a satisfactory fixed wage. The committee had been satisfied to allow her the money her girls (there were 9 in 1893) earned from the Government by examination passes: it appears that she did not make a success of this "payment by results" system and in 1893 was allowed a regular \$5 per month. Henham very early on is worried because he cannot manage to get round to all the Tamils in his huge parish: they are scattered about on estates and do not have the blessings of religion. He notes proudly that 15 have been baptised in one year and that another boy, now in satisfactory employment near Taiping, is determined to become a Christian in spite of parental opposition. How much the Tamils want a church is proved by the following: "considering the poverty of the latter I consider that their contribution of \$76.50 was an unmistakable sign of their desire for a suitable building for Divine worship." Henham pushed the Committee into founding a cemetery at Bukit Tengah because the Tamils cannot afford the journey to Penang for Christian burial. No doubt his later reports—if we could read them—would contain further references to his care and love for his Tamil parishioners. Such was returned: he is remembered as a man who loved Asians.

Thirdly—and this point has already been hinted at—Henham travelled more, both about his parish and within the peninsula. In 1893 he had given European services at five centres regularly throughout the

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(3) There is no record of what schools were kept on after the bankruptcy, but it seems probable that they were Prye and Batu Kawan, possibly Nibong Tebal.

year: at Butterworth, Prye, Bukit Tambun, Caledonia and Nibong Tebal: "the average attendance for the past year being 15 or 16." There are fewer references to poor congregations. It is a proud moment in Henhams' life when he can record in his Service book: "last service in Butterworth courthouse. First service in the New Church just completed at Butterworth." That service took place on Easter Day 25 March, 1894. 35 attended a European Matins at 9 a.m. : 54 Tamils attended a Communion service at 11 a.m.

It is to the history of this church that we must now turn.

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### 3. BUTTERWORTH CHURCH

On March 2, 1893 the Committee decided to abandon the idea of building an expensive church at Bukit Tengah and instead erect three temporary churches; at Butterworth (which was to have priority) at either Batu Kawan or Bukit Tambun and one in the South. So completely was the former project dismissed that in 1893 the bricks for it — which had been donated by the Penang Sugar Estates — were sold. Mr. J. Turner, then representing that Company on the Committee, stated that he would agree to their sale only on condition that a temporary church be erected on the Caledonia Estate immediately. This does not appear to have been done and may account for the 50% cut in the Company's grant to the Mission in 1895 although the reason given was "that the Company have to provide for the worship of employees who do not belong to the Church of England."

The site chosen for the Butterworth Church was "at the back of the rest house," on land given by the Government. This was in Bagan Luar Road on the land now occupied by the Police Station and continued to be the site of the Church until 1920. The Church was quite a small one and cost \$886.38 to build and equip. The original plan — considered by the Committee in 1893 — was for an even smaller Church costing in the region of \$400. But a successful public appeal heightened the Committee's ambitions and several additions and improvements were decided upon: for example it was agreed "to add 2 ft. to the length of the nave so that five benches may be put in" and to add a vestry and a porch. It was agreed however that an East window would be an unnecessary luxury. In all, there was accommodation for 70 worshippers: this involved over crowding on auspicious occasions such as the memorial service to Queen Victoria in 1901 and to Edward VII in 1910. There is a photograph of the interior of the old Church in the present St. Mark's vestry and Mr. Louis Balavendrum possesses a photo of its exterior which was included in an article on the 60th anniversary of the original Church which appeared in the Sunday Gazette on April 24, 1955.