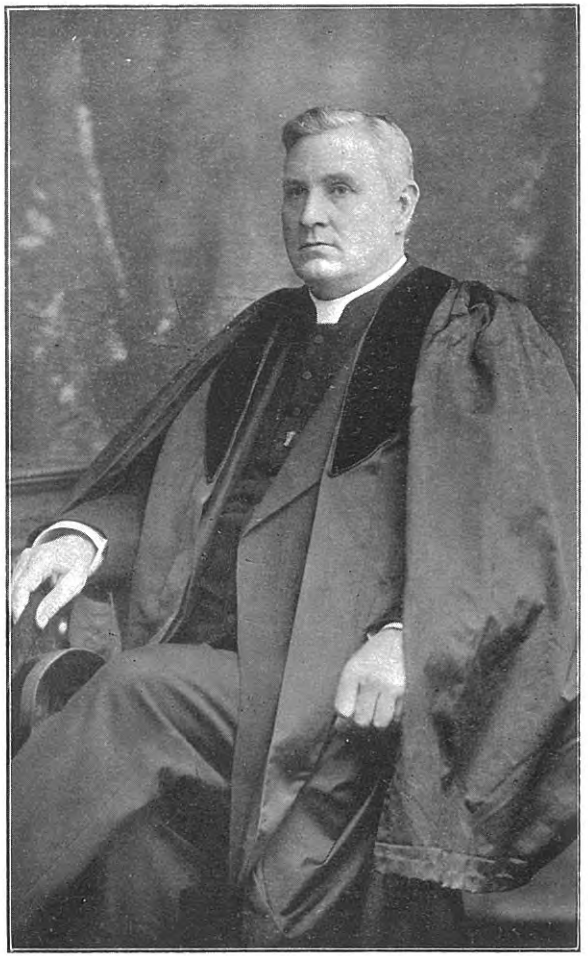
A. R. Edgar:
A Methodist Greatheart.



Alexander Robert Edgar in Presidential Robes

A. R. EDGAR:
A Methodist Greatheart

The Life Story of

Alexander Robert Edgar

who founded the
Central Mission, Melbourne

By W. J. PALAMOUNTAIN

With a Foreword by

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Master Emeritus, Queen's College

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"So they went on, till they came within sight of the lions. Now Greatheart was a strong man, so he was not afraid of a lion. But yet, when they were come up to the place where the lions were, the boys that went before were glad to cringe behind, for they were afraid of the lions . . . . Now as they went up Mr. Greatheart drew his sword with intent to make a way for the pilgrims in spite of the lions."

BUNYAN.

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PREFACE.

On the twenty-third of April, 1914, the Rev. Alexander Robert Edgar entered into rest, but he still lives in the memories of thousands who knew him and loved him, and also of thousands of others whom he led to Christ, and in other ways influenced.

It is fitting that a record should be made of his life and work, not only as a tribute to a great and good man, but as an offering of praise to God, Whose grace and power were so wonderfully magnified in him.

From the first years of his ministry he was marked out as a man of exceptional gifts, and all the early promises of greatness had their fulfilment in his after life. For forty years he stood in the front rank of Methodist ministers in Victoria.

He filled a place in the religious and public life of Victoria that very few men have filled. He was a great Christian, and a great citizen, and his influence went far beyond the bounds of his own State.

It is to be regretted that he did not leave a complete diary or other record of his life. Some such idea seems to have been in his mind at one period of his life, for among his papers was found a brief account of his early days, until the first years of his ministry, which he called his "recollections."

At the request of the relatives, I have prepared this record of his life and work. The task has been a most congenial one, as I have from my early days regarded him as my ideal minister.

It was said of Henry Drummond that "to write his life was to write the history of a fragrance." The same may be said of Alexander Robert Edgar. Assisted by friends, I have gathered some of the leading incidents of his private and ministerial life

that may be an inspiration to my younger brethren in the ministry, and awaken in others the desire for Christian service.

The outstanding characteristic of his successful ministry was the note of earnest evangelism, which, when combined with a burning zeal for social righteousness, and a passionate love for men, made him evangelist and reformer.

The title that has been given to this book is "A Methodist Greatheart," and this fitly describes the man. He was great in every way—in sympathy, and courage, and outlook. The mean and the little had no place in his thought; his horizons were wide, and his purposes generous.

Acknowledgment is made of indebtedness to the friend and colleague of A. R. Edgar, the late Mr. A. J. Derrick, and his "Story of the Central Mission," for much useful information, also for the courtesy of the management of the "Spectator," for making available the files of that journal.

W. J. PALAMOUNTAIN.

Canterbury, 4th December, 1933.

FOREWORD.

I am very grateful to the Rev. W. J. Palamountain for giving me the opportunity of reading the proof-sheets of his life of the Rev. A. R. Edgar. Mr. Palamountain has done his work admirably, and I cannot imagine any book more calculated to inspire our people, and especially our younger ministers, with the zeal for evangelism which is the greatest need of our Methodist Church. As the record of a life spent in the service of his fellow men, and of valiant and ungrudging efforts to benefit them, both spiritually and bodily, it deserves a place in every Christian man's library. It will have also a permanent value as a history of the origin and activities of our Central Mission at Wesley Church. I am glad to have the chance of testifying to the constant help and sympathy which I received from Mr. Edgar in my work at Queen's College, and I shall never forget a trip which we made together to Tasmania, in order to enlist the interest of our friends there in that institution. It was largely through his influence that the late Mr. George Hague consented to join the College Council, and to bequeath to the College a sum for the endowment of the Hague Scholarships there. The more I knew Mr. Edgar the more I loved him; and that was the universal experience of all who came into contact with him. Mr. Palamountain has written the story of his life with a sympathy and clearness which will make his work a Methodist classic; and I most heartily commend it to all who are interested in the establishment of the kingdom of God in the world.

E. H. SUGDEN.

Bradley Lodge, Elphin Grove,
Hawthorn, E.2.

Early Days.

"What am I, O Thou glorious God!
And what my Father's house to Thee,
That Thou such mercies hast bestowed
On me, the chief of sinners me!
I take the blessing from above,
And wonder at Thy boundless love."

—*C. Wesley.*

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

Alexander Robert Edgar was born in the county of Tipperary, Ireland, on the eighth day of April, 1850, and was the second son of Edward and Mary Edgar, who were staunch Protestants belonging to the Anglican Church.

When he was a little more than four years old the family emigrated to Australia, and landed in Melbourne, Victoria, in February, 1855. As there was no house available, the family camped in a tent somewhere near where the Fitzroy Town Hall now stands. They afterwards lived at Windsor for a time. Their stay in Melbourne lasted for about two years, and during that period he attended, with his elder brother, the Church of England Day and Sunday School in Chapel Street, Prahran. It was there that he received his earliest religious impressions, which proved to be among the strongest and most lasting impressions of his life.

One day, when his teacher was describing the love of Christ as shown by His suffering and death for the world, his heart became filled with a great desire to love and serve Him. He determined that if ever he became a man he would tell people of Christ's love, for he felt sure that if people only heard of that love they would forsake sin and love Him too.

That desire never left him. All through his boyhood and youthful days he had no other ambition than to preach the Gospel, and sometimes he was moved to talk to others of what Christ had done. Surely it was with him as with Samuel of old time—he heard the Voice of God, and it was the Divine call for him. He declared that this feeling that he was

called to work for God, though for many years he did not understand the nature of it, made him watchful of his conduct. If at any time he indulged in sinful pursuits or conversation, he became sorely troubled in mind. To use his own words, "Many a time have I sacrificed to God the broken and the contrite heart. I cannot say that I never lived in the practice of sin, for as I think of the past years, and call to mind my manner of life, my heart is uplifted in the words of the Psalmist, 'O Lord, remember not the sins of my youth,' but I can say that never has the Holy Spirit ceased to strive with me. I have often been checked by 'the still, small voice,' and, owing to it have been prevented from running very far into the way of unrighteousness."

He also in early life greatly desired and enjoyed the company of good people and of good books, and was moved with an ambition to improve his mind. During this time he was hoping that God would open the way so that he might have the opportunity of qualifying himself for His great work. We note these things, for it is evident from them that God was early preparing him for the great ministry that he afterwards fulfilled.

When he was seven years of age his parents removed from Melbourne to St. Arnaud, 160 miles north of Melbourne. This was in 1857, and the colony of Victoria at that time was very undeveloped. There were few roads or bridges even in the vicinity of Melbourne, while the country parts were even more poorly supplied.

The journey from Melbourne was taken in a dray, and occupied seven days. Of this journey he says:—"My memory serves me well as I call up my thoughts and feelings as we journeyed on for seven days. It was with heartfelt glee that we, the youthful portion of the family, took our seats on the top of the loaded dray, and responded to the cheers of our companions who had come to say good-bye. The weather was

delightfully fine, and the novelty of camping out at night was thoroughly appreciated. At dawn each day we rose, and were delighted to gather wood for the fire necessary in the preparation of breakfast. A feeling I well remember was the one which entered into my heart as I looked round in the grey dawn, all being quite still but for the occasional chatter of a solitary magpie. Everything wore an air of calmness and peace, that I felt came from God, and my morning prayer went up to Him with truth and simplicity."

The family reached St. Arnaud about four o'clock on the seventh day, and there his parents set up the home that was to be theirs for many years, and in which Alexander grew up to manhood. St. Arnaud was at that time a growing township, and was a rich mining centre, while the surrounding district contained some very fine agricultural land. The township was a very small one, and for some months after their arrival there was neither school nor church. The former want was, however, soon supplied, but it was a year before a minister of the Gospel came to the place.

In the meantime a good many buildings had been erected of a more or less substantial character. A courthouse was also built, and in this building the first public preaching service was held. The officiating minister was the Rev. Andrew Inglis, a Wesleyan minister stationed at Avoca, about 30 miles distant.

A Mr. James Penberthy, who had come from Clunes as mine manager, but had afterwards commenced business as a general storekeeper at St. Arnaud, drove in his buggy to Avoca for Mr. Inglis, entertained him over the week-end, and drove him back again. The Methodist Church had therefore the honour of being the first Church to lift up "the standard of the Cross" in St. Arnaud, as it has been the pioneer in so many other parts of the colony. After Mr. Inglis had visited the place several times, it was decided to build

a place of worship, and this was soon done. The opening of the church was celebrated by the holding of a monster tea meeting, which was provided for by the men of the place, and for which the "modest" sum of five shillings per head was charged.

This building, which was afterwards lengthened by fifteen feet, did service for about sixteen years, when the present brick church was built in 1873. Alexander attended with regularity a day school that had been opened until he was about fourteen years of age, when he was appointed pupil teacher, a Mr. Richards being the headmaster. He did not remain long in this position, however, for his mind turned in a very different direction.

Living in a mining community where there was considerable excitement over gold digging, and where several of his companions had been very fortunate in their search for gold, he naturally imbibed their spirit of adventure. He therefore gave up his position in the school, for which he had received a very small salary, and set out to seek for gold.

In this, however, like many others, he was doomed to disappointment. The work, too, was hard, and he was physically unfitted for it. He was then nearly six feet in height, very slightly built, and he had outgrown his strength. He, however, continued gold digging for about nine months, when he obtained a position as tutor to a family on the Banyinong Estate, in the Richardson District. He remained there for nearly a year.

Of this period he says, "I was happy and comfortable during my stay there. On looking back and recalling my time spent at that place, I see much to be thankful for, though I have often mourned before God for my neglect of Him and for sins committed."

He succeeded well as a teacher, and the people of the district proposed to rent a building and guarantee him a good salary if he would remain with them. His



Mary Haslam Edgar, Mother of A. R. Edgar

parents, however, were not very favourable to the proposal, and he accordingly left. He did not give up the idea of teaching, however, but applied for the position of assistant in the school at St. Arnaud, but in this he was unsuccessful.

He then made another attempt at mining, but was too weakly in body for the work. An opening came, however, in quite another direction. Mr. I. Phillips, district surveyor, offered him a position as assistant. The employment suited him, and he enjoyed it. Mr. Phillips also was well satisfied with him, but there came a period of great business depression, owing to a lull in the gold mining, and his services were dispensed with. He returned once more to the mining, but with little better success, and, as at that time it was hard, on account of the depression, to obtain employment of any kind in St. Arnaud, his position became most difficult.

The Beginnings of the Life Divine.

But if his worldly prospects were unfavourable God was leading him into religious experiences that were new. His mind was often burdened, and though far from being determined to serve Christ, he longed for Him, and was frequently drawn out in prayer. God was seeking him in His own way. He was brought up, as we have seen, in the Anglican Church, but at the same time he was in the habit of attending the services of the Wesleyan Church. He tells us of the benefit received from the ministry of the Rev. Albert Stubbs in the year 1866, and also of attending a theological class conducted by him. He was evidently an earnest seeker after God. If the question be asked how it came to pass that Mr. Edgar became a Methodist, it involves one of the many strange stories connected with early evangelism in this land.

In 1867 a young Wesleyan minister named Richard Fitcher was stationed at St. Arnaud, he having succeeded the Rev. A. Stubbs. Mr. Fitcher was a fine type of evangelist, and, under his ministry, a gracious

revival of religion had taken place, numbers of people, old and young, being converted to God.

Alexander was then a lad in his 'teens, and was attending a confirmation class in his own church. On the way home from this class one evening, with some companions, he went into the Wesleyan Chapel, and stood in the porch. Being anxious to know what was going on inside, he looked through the keyhole and saw several persons kneeling at the communion rail as penitents. The whole thing seemed to him ridiculous, and, turning to his companions, he said, "Anyone with half a grain of sense would never make such a fool of himself." As soon as he had uttered the words something within him said, "You will have to do it yourself."

He could not shake off this conviction, so, after several days of spiritual conflict, he went to one of the meetings. Mr. Fitcher came to where he was sitting and urged him to make his peace with God.

"Cannot I find peace without going forward and kneeling at that rail?" he asked.

The missioner said, "I do not say that you cannot find peace where you are, but if that is what is holding you back from God, I doubt whether you will."

"If I go forward, will I find peace?" he asked.

"If you go forward and seek the Lord earnestly with all your heart, my soul for yours, you will find Him."

"Then I will go," and young Alexander went forward and found peace.

The full assurance of God's pardoning mercy, or, as we should say, the witness of the Holy Spirit, did not come until some time after, when, as he tells us, in the month of June, 1869, he sought and found salvation. The one experience refers to his first decision in the prayer meeting to serve God, the other to the realisation of God's pardoning love in Christ Jesus two years after.

A. R. Edgar was converted to God largely through Methodist instrumentality, and for this reason he became a Methodist, instead of remaining in the Church of his parents. The Anglican Church lost a bishop, but Methodism gained an evangelist.

This may perhaps be the appropriate place to say something of the influence of A. R. Edgar's mother upon his life and upon the life of her family. Mrs. Edgar was a great mother, and did her very best to bring up her children in ways of piety and truth. There was one lesson that she impressed upon them all, and that was the lesson of helpfulness. The elder were to help the younger. The early days were days of struggle for them all, and it was only by mutual help that they could succeed.

The lesson was not lost upon A. R. Edgar, for when in later years, after several unsuccessful attempts to find gold, he finally won success in a mining venture in Stawell, his first thought was to help his younger brother, W. H. Edgar. This he did by paying his fees at the Stawell Grammar School. It was to his mother that he owed the impulse that led him to do this. Indeed, it may be said that his big, generous nature was largely the result of his mother's influence and counsel. He was also greatly attached to his father, who took a deep interest in him, as in all his sons. He made himself their companion, and was very proud of them as he watched their successes in life. So, in regard to both his parents he might well have said with Charles Wesley—

"With thanks I rejoice
In Thy Fatherly choice
Of my state and condition below;
If of parents I came,
Who honoured Thy name,
'Twas Thy wisdom appointed it so."

His mother died in 1901 at Dulwich Hill, New South Wales, at the ripe old age of 76 years. His

last conversation with her on her deathbed was one of his treasured memories. Making a supreme effort over extreme exhaustion, she asked after each of her five sons and four daughters by name. Then, with a smile of resignation on her face, she crooned out one of her favourite Irish lullabies with which in their babyhood she had soothed to sleep each of her children, and shortly afterwards peacefully fell on sleep. A. R. Edgar often spoke of the joy that his last interview with his mother gave him.

Leaving Home.

As St. Arnaud continued to be depressed, the young man felt that the time had come when he must strike out on a new course, and he resolved to go to Ballarat, which at that time was in a very flourishing condition. Being so decided, and having also an offer of conveyance in a waggon, preparations were soon made for his departure. On the eighth of August, 1867, being then seventeen years of age, he bade farewell to his family and started out, as he felt, to face the world. His mother's grief was great at the parting, and, as she wished him godspeed, his own eyes were filled with tears also, and he felt that he never would know happiness again.

His brother, Henry, accompanied him for a mile or so on the road, and then took his leave of him. A. R. Edgar watched his brother till he was out of sight, and then felt that his last earthly friend was gone. Sitting down in the back of the waggon, he wept. The past had often been trying, but there had been much sunshine. He had had friends and sympathy, and a home, but now he had turned his back upon all these, and before him lay a world that to his mind was dark and unsympathetic.

Beyond a few letters of introduction, he had nothing to recommend him, nor did he know a soul in Ballarat. His supply of cash was also limited, amounting altogether to about two pounds when he reached his journey's end.

He obtained lodgings at an hotel, and, after taking leave of his friend, the waggoner, he went to his room with a very heavy heart. His first act was to fall upon his knees at the throne of grace and claim the protection and blessing of God. God answered his prayer, and a great peace filled his soul. From that time he felt that God was directing his goings and sustaining him. These hard experiences were preparing him for his future work. He knew what toil and hardship meant.

He presented his letters of introduction to the person whom they concerned, and was told to call again. This, for some unexplained reason, he never did, and so was cut off from help from that source.

He wandered about the town during his first day's residence in Ballarat, and was delighted with everything he saw in the shape of architecture. He felt, as he said, "a dreaming sensation settle upon me owing to the bustle of the place. Hundreds of people were in the streets, and constantly vehicles were moving to and fro. I, having resided nearly all my life in a quiet, up-country township, found all this strange, and I moved about as though I scarcely knew where I was going, or what I was doing. My life during my stay in Ballarat was a series of trials and hardships.

"I obtained employment during the course of the first week of my stay. The work was hard, and, as I was but a lad, and having to keep pace with men, I found it injurious. However, I continued at it until it was completed, but felt the effects for months afterwards. My next employment was on a farm, where I remained about nine weeks, and then, yielding to the advice of a man with whom I had become acquainted, I started off to Castlemaine to seek work there.

"I met with great hardships during this time. Travelling with a bundle (the sum of my worldly possessions) on my back in the depth of a severe

winter, without food for a day and a night, without shelter, and with a lonely, friendless, forsaken feeling, I wished more than once that the Lord would remove me.

"After walking for two and a half days, my companion and I reached Castlemaine, and resolved on purchasing bread and camping out on one of the surrounding hills. We did so. Tired and footsore, we lay down together under a bush, and were soon asleep. The next morning when we awoke we found our blankets stiff with the frost and our feet so benumbed by the cold that we could not stand upright for some minutes.

"I shall never forget the contrast of my feelings when, five years after this, I entered Castlemaine a preacher of the Gospel, being on my way home from Wesley College to spend the Christmas vacation. 'Truly the Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad.'

"I obtained the work I sought, but it was only for a short time. A week after the night of my camp-out I was on my way, all alone, back to Ballarat. And yet I was not alone, for God was with me.

"I obtained employment a few days after my return, at Warrenheip, and remained there until I was sent for to join my father in a mine which he had opened in St. Arnaud with good prospects, in March, 1869. Our mine did not turn out according to expectations, and we were compelled to relinquish it."

It was at this time that A. R. Edgar obtained that deep religious experience referred to on page 26. "The Lord called me," he says, "and I answered, and sought, and found His salvation, in the month of June, 1869. Since that time my feet have run in the way of His commandments, His service being perfect freedom, and His will my delight. Almost immediately after my conversion the decision, which with a greater or less measure of force had been in

my mind during many years, came to me with great energy. I felt I was called to preach the Gospel, and for the first time this feeling was accompanied with one of great unworthiness, leading me to shrink back from the very thought. I determined to do what I could for the glory of my blessed Lord, but I dared not presume for a moment that I should ever preach the Word of Life.

"Some months after this I was induced to give an address to the Sabbath school, and the same week the minister of the circuit, Rev. G. Schofield, requested me to prepare a sermon after my own fashion, and submit it to him. I did so, and when he read it he asked me to preach it, but I declined to do that. In January of the following year I left St. Arnaud for Pleasant Creek (now called Stawell), about forty miles distant.

"I started with about thirty shillings in my pocket. My brother, Henry, accompanied me for about twenty miles of the road on horseback, and I had to foot it the remainder of the way, about twenty miles. It became quite dark when I was about six miles from my destination, making it rather awkward, seeing that I was on a bush track, and wholly unacquainted with the country. There were also many other roads made by woodcutters, which led away in every direction. However, I succeeded in making the cleared road, and got to Doctor's Creek about 8 p.m.

"After having had something to eat at the hotel there, I again started, and when I came within hearing of the crushing machines I thought, as the night was beautifully fine and warm, I would camp out for the night and go into the town in daylight. So, turning aside, I lay down by a large log and went to sleep.

"I made a start next morning soon after daylight, and got into Stawell long before the people thought of stirring. During the day I fell in with my old schoolmaster, who received me cordially, promising

also to use his influence in obtaining employment for me. He informed me of several families in the neighbourhood whom I knew, and I set out in search of them and found them. One man, an old partner of my father's, invited me to his house. I gladly accepted the offer, and it became my home for nearly twelve months."

The Fullness of Blessing Comes.

That night spent behind the great log on the outskirts of Stawell was a memorable one in the life of A. R. Edgar. He obtained there an experience that he has omitted from his "recollections," but which he related to the writer.

His conversion was a fact that could never be doubted, and the testimony of the Divine Spirit was clear and full. He knew that he had "passed out of death into life." As he developed in Christian character, however, he saw that there was a deeper and fuller experience of God to be enjoyed. In order to possess this, however, he knew that there must be on his part an entire consecration of himself to God, and the reception of the baptism of the Holy Spirit for cleansing and for power. These were great truths that were afterwards made prominent in his preaching.

He decided to make such a consecration, and to seek such a baptism, and there, in the stillness of the night, kneeling beside that great, fallen tree, he gave himself in full and unreserved surrender to God, and received the witness that he was accepted. That consecration was never withdrawn, and that baptism was never forfeited. These great experiences were the secret of his wonderful success as a minister, as they must be of every successful minister.

The culture of his spiritual life was always to him a matter of supreme importance. Indeed, it may be said of him, as was said of the great Puritan, John Howe, "that he was one of the few who, with a truly enlarged and sublime conception of that various excellence, that moral and spiritual beauty which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is designed to form within us, devoted his whole powers and faculties steadily and systematically to the attainment of it."

But, to continue his own narrative—

"My first work in Stawell was in a quarry, and, without exception, it was the hardest work I have ever done. For days together I had to use a 28-lb. hammer, breaking up large blocks of bluestone, many of them weighing several tons when I commenced operations on them with my 'Big Ben.'

"The weather during the whole of the time I was at this work (about eight weeks in all) was extremely warm. I left this employment (much to the regret of the overseer at the works, who offered to increase my wages if I would stay on), to work in the mines. I put in about a year 'for wages,' or, in other words, working for a master, and I then left to join my father, who was managing for a company at Landsborough, some twenty-eight miles from Stawell. But soon after things went wrong with the company, and we were thrown out of employment. I returned to my old quarters at Stawell, but could not get back the place in the mine which I had given up.

"I felt as if a dark cloud hung over me, as though my path was so completely blocked up that escape was impossible. But it was only the dark hour before the morning light broke forth. The Lord had prosperous days in store for me; His hand was guiding me.

"During the time above referred to I had made considerable progress in the Divine life. I joined the Church immediately after going to Stawell, meeting in Mr. Sussex's class, a man of the right stamp. I shall never forget the blessed seasons I enjoyed in that class. It was composed for the most part of Christians who had been walking in the way of holiness for a great many years. I delighted to hear them give expression to their confidence in the power and

grace of God which had kept them and guided them for so long.

Christian Service.

"Several of the brethren were local preachers of great worth; in fact, two of them were the best lay preachers I have ever heard. They were men of great ability, natural and acquired, and, above all, men of sterling quality. I felt my littleness in such company, and fairly trembled when called upon to relate my experience before them. By some means or other I gained their esteem (as I afterwards learned), and very often have I been encouraged to persevere by a kind look, a cheerful word, or a pat on the shoulder.

"I became a teacher in the Sabbath school—a work in which my soul found delight, and I laboured hard to make the lessons interesting to the boys. I think I succeeded pretty well. I also laboured diligently to cultivate my mind, and, as it was inconvenient for me to study at night, I used to get up about 3.30 a.m. —never much later than 4 a.m.—for the purpose of studying. This I did for several months, but, owing to the long hours (ten per day) and hard work in the mine, I was compelled, though reluctantly, to relinquish my long morning's exercise. I felt that my mind was expanding, and my soul prospering, and I delighted in prayer.

"In the month of July of this year (1869) I was called out to preach the Gospel. My first sermon was preached at a little place named Concongella Creek, on Sunday afternoon, 18th July. Brother Makepeace, a worthy man, and a local preacher in the circuit, undertook to lead me and take me in hand. I managed to pull through, though I was exceedingly nervous. On the way home Brother Makepeace remarked that some day I would be called upon to devote myself wholly to the work of preaching the Gospel, a prediction since fulfilled, but which at the time spoken seemed a downright impossibility.

"About the same time two other young men in the circuit (Stawell and Ararat) began to preach—Messrs. David Parry and James Rickard. At the September Quarterly Meeting we three youthful aspirants were proposed to come on the plan as preachers on trial. For the first quarter a mark appeared on the plan to indicate our names, and the local brethren were at liberty to make choice, and hear us. Brother Makepeace claimed me as his man, and several times during the quarter I went with him to the various places and exhorted. The Lord blessed me, souls were saved, and I was encouraged.

"Our initials appeared on the next plan, and, as an evidence of confidence, we were entrusted with the conduct of services in several places. My two brethren and myself were admitted as on trial at the March Quarterly Meeting. I well remember my feelings when I received my plan from the Rev. Isaac Mewton, the newly-appointed superintendent of the circuit. I carried it to God, and in an agony of spirit arising from a deep sense of unworthiness and inability, 'I asked in faith the promised aid.' The Lord heard and answered.

"I found in Mr. Mewton a good friend. He took an interest in me, and directed my studies, assisting me in many ways. We were called upon for examination as accredited local preachers at the December Quarterly Meeting. My health failing me at the time, I was unable to attend. My two brethren got through the ordeal, and a committee was appointed to examine me when I was better, which was about three weeks afterwards. I came up and passed what I was afterwards told was a good examination. If I did it was only the reward of hard work. I studied hard to prepare for it, and I felt glad that the labour was not in vain.

Improved Circumstances.

"About this time my worldly position improved very much. I held a share in a gold mine which paid

me handsomely, and with the success came the thought with great force that God was giving me money in order that I might prepare for His service more fully. I determined to devote all to Him, and wait the leadings of His Spirit. It was soon made manifest that it was to God's work I was called.

"In the month of April, 1871, Mr. Mewton spoke to me about devoting myself to the work of the ministry. I stated that I was willing for anything the Lord called me to engage in. The Church laid hands on me, and urged me to offer myself for the work, and to me, what was more than all, I felt that God called me, and I yielded, feeling unworthy of the high honour thus conferred.

"At the September Quarterly Meeting Brothers Parry and Rickard and myself were nominated as candidates for the Wesleyan ministry, and at the district meeting, in the following November, we were examined, and recommended to receive training at the Provisional Theological Institute, at Wesley College, Melbourne. The Conference of January, 1872, sent Brother Parry to a circuit and Brother Rickard and myself to Wesley College.

Student Days.

"I entered on my student career in April, 1872, at the age of 22. There were ten theological students during my first year—Samuel Adamson, E. Orlando Knee, Robert Philp, John Cowperthwaite, Paul Fairclough, Robert Kelly, J. Langsford and J. Rickard, and two others. We got on well together, and all felt the importance of making the very best use of our time and privileges. I look back on this period of my life with great pleasure. The Rev. J. S. Waugh, D.D., the theological tutor, was all that we could wish—kind, considerate and good. He seemed to be intensely anxious for our welfare and improvement. I shall never forget the earnestness which he displayed many a time while speaking to us of the greatness of the work to which we were called. He would have us throw ourselves wholly into it, and labour faithfully in dependence on the aid of the Holy Ghost.

"I achieved a great victory over my temper while in college. I had given way for some years to great depression of mind, rendering me miserable in myself and very miserable and unpleasant to others. I sought the help of God's Spirit, and by watchfulness combined with prayer I overcame, and God's grace has been sufficient for me ever since. I profited very much mentally and spiritually by intercourse with the other students in our class meetings, and in our prayer meetings. We often held conversations with each other about our souls' concerns, seeking thereby to help each other and to stimulate each other to energy and prayer.

"I well remember one evening, while together in the 'reception room' engaging in prayer. We were visited with the power of the Spirit, and it was in the highest sense of the term 'good to be there.' We continued praying for a long time, and when we rose to leave we felt as though we could not, and fell to prayer again. This was repeated twice or thrice.

"Our connection with the masters, both resident and day, was of the happiest description. We respected them, and paid due deference to their authority and position, and in return we had their goodwill and regard. At all times we found them ready to render any assistance we required.

"We had plenty of hard work to do; in fact, at times we were sadly perplexed to know how to get through. Yet it was not all work and no play. My mind reverts to scenes of wild fun and amusement. After hours of incessant mental toil, when books were laid aside and our minds were let loose, the desire for frolic and harmless, but at the same time necessary, recreation would become irresistible.

"To an outsider our conduct at these times would perhaps have been considered unbecoming, especially in young men called, as we had been, to the work of the ministry, but after the overflow of animal spirits had subsided, all was calm and still again. And while I sought in all things to have a conscience void of offence, I never felt the twinges of a guilty conscience on account of these youthful frolics, nor do I regret them even now."

An event occurred during his term at Wesley College that greatly affected his after life. He had an attack of typhoid fever that proved very severe. Before the fever seized him he was a tall, thin, young fellow, with a constitution that was not too robust. After his recovery, however, he began to put on weight, until in his prime he weighed about eighteen stone. The fever made a man of him physically, and was a blessing in disguise.

It was said of one, Robert Jackson, of Nottingham, that "he was a born preacher, one of the irrepressible type. Wherever he could find a tub he was on the top of it." Something of the same kind might have been said of A. R. Edgar. He had a passion for preaching.

Being in Prahran one Saturday evening, his soul was moved as he saw the crowds of men and women in the streets of that suburb, and he could not resist the appeal that they made to him. Selecting a vacant piece of land, he began to preach the Gospel to all who cared to listen. There were many who did so care, and soon there was a crowd around the tall, young preacher. He said nothing to anyone about this It was his own private affair.

The secret could not be kept. "A chiel was amang them takin' notes," and the affair was reported to Dr. Waugh. He was summoned to the Doctor's study, and a full investigation was made. When, however, all the facts were stated, the Doctor's eyes were moist, and he dismissed the student with the

fervent prayer that God would make him a blessing to thousands, a prayer which was abundantly answered.

It was the custom for the theological students to go into the various circuits for services on Sabbath days, and Mr. Edgar took his appointments with the rest. In this way he gained practice in the art of preaching, and became known to the congregations. He soon gained the reputation of being an able preacher of the Word of Life. His course of training at Wesley College lasted for two years, when he was recommended by Dr. Waugh for circuit work.

As we have seen, it was from Stawell that he entered upon his training for the ministry, and he always retained a warm spot in his heart for that place and its people. He paid frequent visits to the Methodist Church there during his ministry, and his visits always brought blessing with them.

One of his old friends, the Rev. Robert Jackson, says, "His name was a charm that filled the church from door to pulpit, and the services were Pentecostal. Men and women, old, middle-aged and young, during those services saw 'a light that never was on sea or land,' and numbers found a home in the church, and a new life in Christ." There were most remarkable cases of conversion during those visits. A young man and his wife went forward together to the communion rail as penitents, and when the joy of God's salvation broke into their souls they rose to their feet and embraced each other with a love that had been deepened by this new experience. Another young woman was so moved by the Holy Spirit that she left her seat to go forward. She was so overcome, however, with grief on account of sin, that she fell in the aisle.

The older Christians were always looking out for evidences of God's power working in the hearts of men, and were quick in discerning the signs. In this way they greatly helped in their conversion.

An old Scotch lady went to a young man who was sitting in the pew, and said "You ought to be kneeling there at that communion rail."

"I know I ought," he replied.

"Then why do you not go?" she said.

"I will," was his reply. And forward he went, and found the blessing of God's salvation.

Among those who were his companions in those days was Mr. Fred. J. Cato. He became one of Melbourne's most successful business men, a generous soul who is always devising liberal things for the Church and the community. He was the secretary of the Stawell Wesleyan Sunday School in A. R. Edgar's day, and has always retained a deep interest in the church of his youth. Mr. Edgar was always ready to pay a tribute to Mr. Cato's mother, who was a mother to him also in the days of his young manhood. In after years many expressions of gratitude were made by him in acknowledging the care and love bestowed on him by Dr. and Mrs. Waugh throughout his college days.



A. R. Edgar at 25 Years

His Ministry Begins.

"Jesus, confirm my heart's desire,
To work, and think, and speak for Thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up Thy gift in me."

—*C. Wesley.*

CHAPTER II.

HIS MINISTRY BEGINS.

Kangaroo Flat.

When Doctor Lightfoot went to Durham as bishop, a miner, seeing his fine, thickset frame, said, "They sp'iled a grand pitman when they made yon man a bishop." The miner would probably have said the same of A. R. Edgar had he seen the tall, well-built man who began his ministry at Kangaroo Flat in the Golden Square Circuit, Bendigo, in 1874. The Conference made the appointment at the request of the Circuit Quarterly Meeting. It is not usual for a student to receive an invitation to a circuit, but a circuit may indicate its wishes, and this was a mark of distinction at the very outset of his ministry. If it should be thought that A. R. Edgar was a self-confident man, or that he was gifted with too liberal a supply of self-assurance, an incident that occurred at the very commencement of his ministry will suffice to remove that idea. When appointed to his first circuit, the new plan of preaching appointments for the quarter was issued by the superintendent, the Rev. Thomas James. When A. R. Edgar saw it, he was simply appalled at the number of services that he had to take. For each of thirteen Sundays there appeared three times, Edgar! Edgar! Edgar—thirty-nine appointments, besides the services to be taken during the week.

He took the plan to the superintendent, and said, "I can never take all these services." The superintendent simply looked at him and said, "Mr. Edgar, there is only one Sunday in each week." And so he found, for at the end of the quarter he had succeeded in filling all the appointments that had been

given him. It was his first experience of the full work of the ministry, but he found in after years that on many Sundays there would be even a greater demand upon his energies than was required by his first plan.

From his "recollections" we take his own account of his first year's ministry in Kangaroo Flat—

"I commenced my work in this circuit on Sunday, 12th April, 1874, and preached at Kangaroo Flat in the morning and Golden Square in the evening, the Rev. T. James being the superintendent. In every respect that year was a most comfortable one. I found the people kind and considerate, though not the class of people to push matters on. I invariably found them willing to follow, and do their best. Our special services that year resulted in the conversion of about twenty persons, most of whom continued to pursue their way Zionwards. Good results followed a Bible class which I instituted, and the Lord was pleased to convert several belonging to it.

"I endeavoured to work hard and make the most of my time. I bought up the opportunities for reading, and managed to present at the District Meeting a respectable reading list. Owing to a very limited stock of sermons when I came to the circuit, and having to preach to the same people, a great deal of time was spent in pulpit preparation. I prepared all my sermons fully, and the writing of two sermons each week told on my time. I also made it a point to visit my people regularly. I spent four afternoons a week in this work, and thus saw a great many families each quarter. The Lord blessed my labour, and several whom I visited on their deathbeds gave assurance of having sought and found the Saviour, and passed home triumphantly.

"At the September Quarterly Meeting I received expressions of confidence and goodwill from all the brethren assembled. The circuit was very much

embarrassed financially, and it was thought that it must be content with one minister for the following year. After a good deal of discussion, a motion was put, and the majority were in favour of retaining the services of two ministers. That being done, a most cordial invitation was given me to remain a second year, to which I agreed.

"At the December Quarterly Meeting funds were so very low that it was decided to revoke the resolution of last meeting, and ask the Conference to only send one minister for 1875. This was agreed to, but the people of Kangaroo Flat overturned this resolution by guaranteeing the second preacher's stipend, thus claiming their man.

The Conference stationed the Rev. T. James and myself to this circuit for a second year. This year opened rather unfavourably financially, owing to the great depression in mining—actually the only source of revenue to depend on. The falling-off in the yield of gold was very great, very few of the mines were paying. Many of those companies which started out on mere speculation stopped working, and a great many miners were thrown out of employment, a matter which affected the whole community.

"The consequence of this depression was that the people were leaving the district, and our congregations suffered greatly thereby. There was also quite an exodus to the large agricultural areas lying beyond Bendigo. Hundreds were taking advantage of the provisions of the 'Land Act' then in operation, and selecting land with the intention of settling down and making permanent homes for their families."

The work, however, went on in spite of difficulties, and his ministry was blessed to many. The adjoining circuit (Forest Street) was also visited by a very gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the short space of about two months 250 people were added to the membership of the Church. The work was

especially glorious because of the number of young men who were led to decision. In the Forest Street Church alone, within a fortnight 150 persons made the great decision. In the Sunday school, on one afternoon, 100 scholars were also led to Christ. In this work A. R. Edgar had a large share, for he records his "thankfulness to God for such a wonderful manifestation of His power, and prays for the lambs of the flock."

During his ministry at Kangaroo Flat he commenced the keeping of a diary, from which we take a few extracts, which give some idea of the intense earnestness and zeal with which he was carrying out his ministry. It was no cold, official performance of duty, but a delight and a joy, and it is not to be wondered at that such a ministry was successful.

"27th July, 1875—Throughout this day I have been very much drawn out in prayer for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I am thirsting for all the fullness of God. I have made an entire consecration of all I have, and am, to God. I have taken Jesus as my all, and in all, and I wait His guiding hand. I desire to do nothing without His direction. My heart cries out: 'Now, O my God, fulfil my heart's desire, and come in Thy great glory.'

"I visited a poor woman in the hospital this morning, and was enabled to speak words of comfort. On my way home I called at the house of a man who is on the borders of the grave. At the eleventh hour he has made his peace with God, and is now happy and hopeful.

"The whole of the afternoon has been spent in visiting from house to house. My soul was blessed while preaching Jesus to the people. This evening I met nine persons in class, and we all felt the presence and fullness of God. I believe in the communion of saints, and I love it.

"10th August.—Since making the last entry I have had a run up to St. Arnaud to see my dear family. Found but little alteration, but my parents are beginning to show signs of old age. The younger members of the family are shooting up, and if I am spared a few more years will find them grown into men and women. My father and sister, Eliza, are walking in the fear of God, and have felt the renewing power of God's Spirit. I preached in the old place last Sunday week (1st inst.). There were many old faces to be seen of men and women who a few years ago I knew as boys and girls.

"My heart was filled with gratitude to God for all He had done for me, for the way He had led me. I had a good time in preaching, both morning and evening, from Matt. 15: 22, and John 12: 21. I preached again on Thursday evening to a good audience from Job 1: 22. Left home on Saturday morning and reached my circuit at 11 p.m. I felt weary next day, and had a poor time in consequence.

"11th August.—To-day I wrote letters, gave a blind man a lesson in reading with Moon's raised type. Visited during the afternoon. My thoughts have been towards God for a revival of His work. Oh, when shall the time be when this place will feel the glory and power of God. I am waiting for the power of the Holy Ghost. 'Oh, that it now from heaven might fall!'

"29th November.—I am still pressing onward. The fear of God is before my eyes, and I am longing for all His fullness. Since my last entry I have not seen that fruit to my labours I have so greatly desired. I have been blessed in my soul, and I have reason to believe that good has been done. My people stand by me, pray for me, and hold up my hands, but O, my God, where is the power, the influence of the Holy Ghost, that awakening which leads sinners to cry

aloud for mercy? I had a profitable time in preaching yesterday. I pray God to bless it to the hearts of His people.

"The District Meeting was held this month in Forest Street, under the direction of the Rev. G. Daniel. It was, in all respects, a very happy one. Three probationers were examined—Bros. Leslie, Thomas and myself—and were recommended to Conference for continuance on trial. Truly God has been very good to me during the past year. I believe my improvement mentally and spiritually has been considerable. I praise God for this. I have commenced the third year of my probation with renewed energy, more than ever dedicating my powers of body and soul to His Church and service. I feel great delight in my work, whether at my books, in pulpit preparation, or visiting the people, encouraging the feeble, comforting the afflicted, pointing sinners to the Lamb of God. To spend and be spent in such holy toil is my great wish.

"8th December.—Trusting in Christ for full salvation, I am indeed truly happy in my great work. The Lord blesses me abundantly. On Sunday afternoon (5th inst.) we held an open-air service. The Sabbath school children rendered several of the pieces from 'Service of Song,' the Rev. T. E. Ick, M.A., of Eaglehawk, giving connected readings. Mr. Ick also gave a beautiful address on 'The Cross and the New Jerusalem.' The Rev. J. B. Reid, Presbyterian minister, also took part in the service, and gave a stirring address from the text, 'And they began with one consent to make excuse.' I concluded by calling upon the people to give earnest heed to the things they had heard, and urging those who had not found their way to the cross to set out without delay.

"In the evening I preached to a large congregation, a great many strangers being present. I felt the Spirit of the Lord was upon me. The congregation at times was visibly affected. I earnestly pray that

the results of last Sunday's exertions may shortly manifest themselves."

Before leaving Kangaroo Flat for his next circuit a valedictory social was tendered to him. The members and adherents of the church gathered at the tea table, and afterwards a public meeting was held to say farewell. His superintendent was unable to be present, but wrote a letter in which he spoke in kindest terms of Mr. Edgar as "an earnest and zealous colleague, in whom he had placed the fullest trust and confidence."

An illuminated address, accompanied by a purse of sovereigns, was presented to him as the tangible expression of the esteem in which he was held by the people to whom he had ministered for two years. He expressed his gratitude to God for being sent among a people from whom he had received so much kindness and love.

Inglewood.

"Lord, if at Thy command
The word of life we sow;
Watered by Thy almighty hand,
The seed shall surely grow."

CHAPTER III.

INGLEWOOD.

Leaving Kangaroo Flat, Mr. Edgar took up work at Inglewood, some one hundred and thirty miles from Melbourne. He had been appointed to the superintendency of this circuit by the Conference of 1876, which was held at Ballarat that year. Inglewood was then a flourishing mining centre, and there was ample scope for all the energies of a vigorous young minister. The circuit had specially requested the appointment of a minister of some experience, and as Mr. Edgar was then commencing his third year of ministry he was fitted for the position. He entered upon his new tasks with a feeling of utter dependence upon God. Up to that time he had been under the guidance of a superintendent, but now he had to face the responsibilities of the management of a circuit, and he felt that his reliance must be more than ever upon the Holy Spirit.

He had all the ardour of youth, consecrated to the service of God, and he resolved to extend the Kingdom of God in every possible way. One of the very old residents, the late Mr. John Craig, who died in 1933, spoke of him as being "a tiger for work." His ministry from the beginning was blessed of God, and was rich in spiritual results, for men and women were attracted by his earnest evangelistic preaching. He had learned thus early in his ministry the truth of Mr. Wesley's words to his preachers: "You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore, spend and be spent in this work; and go always, not to those who want you, but to those who want you most."

Away to the north of Inglewood, forty miles distant, was a wide stretch of agricultural land that had recently been thrown open for selection. A number of families had settled there, including some who were members and adherents of the Wesleyan Church. A little village named Boort had sprung up, and here Mr. Edgar began preaching services. The journeys were long; there were no made roads, and in winter travelling was difficult. The work also had to be done on horseback. He could only visit this out-station at long intervals, but there were among the settlers godly men who were local preachers, and who rendered no little aid in building up Methodism.

But this was not the furthest limit of his itineraries. There were Catumnal, eight miles farther on, Korong Vale, Yando, North Boort, and Fernihurst. These were all included in the Inglewood Circuit, and were cared for by him. He was the pioneer of Methodism in that part of the State, and his memory is still revered by the few who remain and still remember him. Boort, which was then an outpost of the Inglewood Circuit, has for many years been the centre of a circuit.

At the end of his second year at Inglewood Mr. Edgar married Catherine Haslam, of Geelong. The marriage took place in the Yarra Street Church on 3rd April, 1878, and for the remaining thirty-six years of his life Mrs. Edgar was his true helpmeet, and if his ministry had been successful before his marriage, it was increasingly so afterwards.

The work advanced in Inglewood; congregations grew; converts were multiplied; and it was found necessary to build a new church.

A year after his arrival he wrote the Secretary for Home Missions, the Rev. John Watsford: "I am glad to inform you that a very

decided improvement has taken place in the Inglewood congregation; the Quarterly Meeting has engaged Mr. Ferber, of Golden Square, as hired local preacher, and he is working energetically among the people with good results. I shall now be somewhat relieved, and can devote more attention to the Boort district. I expect to see timber on the ground next week for the church at Mr. Westcott's farm. A service has also been commenced at Mr. Keast's, and the people have resolved to put up a church immediately after the ploughing season is over. A fine congregation will be gathered here. I am glad to tell you that the good work still goes on at Mr. Westcott's. We intend to build soon at Boort and Fernihurst."

The good work referred to as going on at Mr. Westcott's was the work of ingathering, for many conversions took place under the roof of Mr. Westcott's farmhouse.

A year later he wrote again to the Rev. John Watsford: "Our wonderful loving God is blessing us everywhere throughout the circuit. We are gathering our people into church fellowship, and here and there our hearts are cheered by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners. Mr. John Donnes, who followed Mr. Ferber as our circuit assistant, has been working hard among the people. He is living at Wedderburn, where the congregations have greatly increased, and the droppings of a glorious shower are being felt.

"From Wedderburn, in a north-easterly direction, we have six preaching places. The district, known as Boort, is all selected, and I think the majority of the settlers are likely to remain. It is a district of great promise; we have three churches already; and I am making preparation for another. I am hoping

if this coming season turns out according to expectations, that the other places will be supplied with church accommodation.

"We have established classes in five of the preaching places, and they are proving a great blessing to the people. Many who were growing cold and careless have been aroused, and every quarter new members are added. Already we have several Sunday Schools, with a good supply of teachers. We are short of local preachers.

"To the west of Wedderburn lies Kurracca, where we have a church, a growing class, a flourishing Sunday School, and a good congregation. At Yarraberb, a place east of Inglewood, we are doing well."

These letters indicate the zeal with which he was prosecuting his task, and the success that was attending his efforts. He kept in touch with Bendigo during his term at Inglewood, for we find him back in the Forest Street Circuit for the opening of the fine new church at Long Gully on Sunday, 16th September, 1877. He had the honour of preaching the first sermon in the church in which he was shortly afterwards to minister. The preachers for afternoon and evening respectively were Rev. W. H. Fitchett, B.A., who afterwards became the Dr. Fitchett of the Methodist Ladies' College, and Rev. Henry Bath, who was one of the princes of the pulpit in Victoria.

In the afternoon of the same day Mr. Edgar was in his former circuit preaching at Golden Square on the occasion of the anniversary of the Sunday School, and he also addressed the public meeting on the following Monday evening. These were marks of his great popularity, for he was only in the fourth year of his ministry.

At the anniversary of the church at Bridgewater, his old college chum, Rev. Samuel Adamson, was

the visiting preacher. A very novel plan was resorted to for the liquidation of the debt upon the church, which stood at £42. At the commencement of the public meeting, held on the Monday evening, Mr. Edgar expressed a hope that the debt would be cleared off so that repairs and improvements necessary might be effected.

The chairman for the evening was Mr. Christopher Moore, who made an offer of five shillings for every pound contributed, and after part of the amount had been subscribed, he made a further offer of two shillings for every pound. His offers were accepted, and the debt was entirely cleared.

Soon after their marriage a lady named Mrs. Rushbrook came into the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar, and was during all the after years a true friend and helper. She was with them in all the joys and sorrows of life, and their attachment to her was very strong.

The allotted term of three years passed all too quickly. They were years of happy toil. He was in labours abundant, having only one great purpose in view—the glory of God and the good of men. For this he planned and prayed and worked. He exerted a powerful influence among the farmers and among the miners at the centre. The character and worth of A. R. Edgar were tersely summed up by an old friend who knew him at this period of his life: "He was a grand man and had a wonderful heart. . . . He was one of the kindest and most generous men who ever lived, and he was a great preacher." This surely was a great tribute.

Ordination and Afterward.

"The Saviour, when to heaven He rose,
In splendid triumph o'er His foes,
Scattered His gifts on men below,
And wide His royal bounties flow.

"So shall the bright succession run
Through the last courses of the sun;
While unborn churches, by their care,
Shall rise and flourish large and fair."

—Dr. Doddridge.

CHAPTER IV.

ORDINATION AND AFTERWARD.

At the beginning of A. R. Edgar's third year at Inglewood an event took place which is of utmost importance in the life of any minister. He was ordained to the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments. The four years of his probation were ended.

During this time he had pursued the course of study prescribed by the Conference, which had been begun at Wesley College. He had passed all his examinations, written and oral, had satisfied the Conference that he had the grace, gifts, and fruit that are required in a Methodist preacher. He had by the vote of the Conference been received into "full connexion," and now came the solemn ordination by "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

For this important hour in his life he had prepared himself by meditation and prayer during the day, and now appeared before the vast congregation in Wesley Church to take upon himself the sacred vows of ordination and to receive from the Church the authority to minister to the congregations. With him were ordained at the same time John Leslie, E. Orlando Knee, Arthur Powell, John Cowperthwaite, Samuel Adamson, James Lowe, William Reed, and Edward Thomas, all of whom have finished their tasks, and have passed on to their reward.

Before the ordination each candidate is required, in the presence of the congregation, to give a brief account of his conversion, his call to preach the Gospel, and his present religious experience. Concerning these three matters, there was no doubt in

Mr. Edgar's mind, and in clear words he satisfied all of his suitability for the work of the ministry.

The President of Conference for that year was Rev. Joseph Dare, D.D., the Rev. Edward King was ex-President, and the Rev. Spencer Williams Secretary. These, with other senior ministers, joined in the ordination of the young men to the office and work of the Christian ministry by the imposition of hands, after which they partook of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

A copy of the Scriptures is presented to each, and he is given authority "to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments in the Congregation." These Bibles are signed by the President and Secretary of the Conference, but on this occasion they were also signed by Dr. Gervaise Smith, who was the representative of the British Conference. Mr. Edgar's ordination Bible is still in the possession of the family as a very sacred heirloom. The charge to the newly-ordained ministers was delivered by the Rev. Edward King.

The ordinands then entered that great succession of godly men who since the days of the apostles have been inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to take upon themselves the holy office of the Christian ministry. This is the only "Apostolical Succession" of which we have any certain knowledge, and so the ministers of the Methodist Church are never in any doubt as to the validity of their "Orders."

Long Gully—Bendigo.

At the Quarterly Meeting of the Bendigo (Forest Street) Circuit, held on 23rd December, 1878, the Rev. A. R. Edgar was unanimously invited to the circuit as one of its ministers. This was significant, as it was less than three years since he had left the adjoining circuit. It was another evidence of the confidence that the church had in him.

The Conference of 1879 confirmed the invitation, and in April of that year Mr. Edgar took up his duties in the Forest Street Circuit, one of the

strongest circuits of Victorian Methodism. There were three ministers appointed to the circuit that year—the Rev. Edmund S. Bickford (superintendent), the Rev. E. Wason Nye, who resided at Eaglehawk, and the Rev. Alexander R. Edgar, whose pastorate was at Long Gully.

Here he was in the midst of Cornish Methodism, and as his pastorate included California Gully, he had some every excellent and able men among whom to labour. There were local preachers of great worth, and others who as class leaders could instruct and edify the groups of members committed to their care. These Cornishmen, too, were sermon tasters, and the pulpit discourse on the Sabbath often formed the staple of conversation at crib time in the mines during the week.

An amusing incident occurred some years after Mr. Edgar's term at Long Gully. One of the preachers, in conducting a service, had what is generally known as a hard time. He had lost the thread of his discourse, and in his difficulty took refuge in a conversation with a certain Captain Williams that had taken place during the week. "I was talking," said the preacher, "with Captain Williams last week about this very subject, and I said to Captain Williams so and so. Captain Williams said so and so," and the dialogue between them was repeated. By this time the preacher had recovered himself.

Next day, at crib time, one miner said to another: "Well, what did 'ee think of the preacher yesterday?"

Said the other: "I was thinking that if it hadn't been for what Captain Williams said he wouldn't have much to say at all."

They were quick to see the weakness, but they were also quick to see the strength. So when one of them was asked how he liked his minister his reply was: "When you hear Mr. Bath preach you have enough to think about for a fortnight." They,

moreover, liked fire and life, and were quick to discern any preacher upon whom the unction of the Holy One rested.

Revivals.

It was the fashion in those days to look for revivals of religion—times when conversions should take place in great numbers. Perhaps they erred somewhat in not expecting these conversions to take place as the normal result of the preaching of the Gospel. But whether that be so or not, they did expect unusual and even extraordinary manifestations of the saving power of God.

Such revivals have occurred at times without any special preparation being made for them by the church. They have come as a great rain upon the thirsty land, as the breaking up of the spiritual drought. There have been revivals like that of 1859, when far out at sea, without any communication with those on land, the Holy Spirit has fallen upon passengers and crew.

There have been others that have come after much preparation and expectation. The Rev. Charles E. Finney, in his "Lectures on Revivals" (a book but little known now, though well worth reading) gives much valuable counsel upon such matters as these: "When a Revival May be Expected," "How to Promote a Revival," "Hindrances to Revivals," "To Win Souls Requires Wisdom."

A revival may be prepared for, prayed for, and promoted. So we find the Quarterly Meeting of the circuit, held on 24th June, resolving that three months' special services should be held throughout the circuit.

Into these services A. R. Edgar put his whole heart and soul. His colleagues made it possible for him to devote much of his time to this special work, by relieving him of many of his ordinary duties. They also themselves became evangelists, and found that men would respond to the appeal

of the Gospel when preached in faith. This was one of the most valuable effects of A. R. Edgar's evangelistic ministry: he led his brother ministers to discover themselves as evangelists.

One very striking instance of this occurred during his ministry in Ballarat some four years later. The Rev. J. P. McCann joined the ministerial staff of the Lydiard Street Circuit in the second year of Mr. Edgar's term there. A revival was in full swing, and Mr. McCann was brought into the circle of it.

"I thought," said he, "that my ministry was to the Church. I had no idea that I had the gifts of an evangelist, but I found that when I preached for conversions I got them as other ministers did." Mr. McCann's experience has been the experience of others, and that which is needed to-day perhaps as much as anything in the Church is a revival of revival preaching.

But A. R. Edgar did not undertake this work alone. He believed that "we work better when we work together. Trees grow straight and in noble symmetry where they grow together." He had learned the value of "team work," and so he enlisted the co-operation of praying men and women.

The work went forward amazingly. At California Hill there was a remarkable ingathering of young people, and in all the other places there were "signs following."

At the September Quarterly Meeting it was reported that "The circuit had been favoured by a work of grace, and that two hundred and twenty-five persons had professed conversion."

Another aspect of spiritual religion was also emphasised—"the blessing of full salvation" or "entire sanctification"—and in the report it was stated that many members had found this blessing, and that many others were seeking it.

There was an addition of one hundred and forty-six members during the quarter, and at the close of the business of the meeting a great fellowship meeting was held in the church. This, however, was not the end of the effort, for further aggressive work was being contemplated.

In the month of June he visited Maldon on the occasion of the anniversary of the church. At the morning service he preached to the Christian people, in the afternoon to the young people, and in the evening he made an appeal to the unconverted, to which there was a gracious response, for several persons were led to make the great decision.

The work of winning men was his special work, and yet he was not oblivious to the many needs of human nature. In an address that he gave at Golden Square on the occasion of the Sunday School anniversary, he advised the forming of good libraries in connection with Sunday Schools, instead of spending money upon unnecessary luxuries. The future of the colony, he held, was in the hands of the teacher. There were certain classes of people who claimed a large share of his sympathy and time—the sick, the aged, and the poor. His visits to their homes brought comfort and strength. He conversed with them, he prayed with them, he helped them. His pastoral ministry was just as effective as his pulpit ministry, and his three years at Long Gully were years of great fruitfulness. They ended in 1881, when he was transferred to Ballarat.

Before leaving, a valedictory gathering was held which was attended by representatives from every part of the circuit. The chairman, in opening the proceedings, expressed "regret that they were so soon to lose the services of a minister who had given such general satisfaction," and this sentiment was shared by all those who spoke. The goodwill of the people was expressed by the gift of a purse of sovereigns. Mrs. Edgar was not forgotten either.

Ballarat.

"Beside all waters sow,
The highway furrows stock,
Drop it where thorns and thistles grow,
Scatter it on the rock."

CHAPTER V.

BALLARAT.

His next appointment by the Conference of 1881 was to the Ballarat (Lydiard Street) Circuit as the colleague of the Rev. John Cope. His pastorate was at Sebastopol, which was then a flourishing mining centre, as a revival in gold mining was taking place at that time. Some of the mines were exceedingly rich, and there was general prosperity in consequence. The Cornish element predominated in the community, with a sprinkling of Welshmen, so that he found himself in the midst of a warm-hearted and responsive people. His association with his superintendent was of the happiest character. Mr. Cope was one of the kindest of men, an able preacher and a careful administrator, while A. R. Edgar supplied the evangelistic zeal and energy that were so much in demand at that particular time. Their coming to Ballarat synchronised with a most wonderful revival of religion that was taking place.

The Rev. John Inskip, with his wife and other evangelists, were visiting Australia, and they held a fortnight's revival mission in the old Lydiard Street Church in the month of April, which was remarkable for its results. The church was crowded to the doors every night, and under the powerful appeals of the missioner hundreds were converted to God. A short time after the evangelists had left a great circuit love feast was held, when scores of new converts gave testimony to the grace of God received.

Among the visitors to that meeting was a man who electrified all present by his testimony. He was

a stranger who lived some twelve miles away in the country, and was in Ballarat on business.

He began by saying, "Friends, I am not what I ought to be, nor am I what I might have been, but by the grace of God I am what I am." He then poured out his soul in grateful thanksgiving to God for all that He had done for him. It was "Captain Dick," from Happy Valley, near Scarsdale, a little Cornishman who was steward in the church at that place, and the superintendent of the Sunday School. His proper name was Richard Dunstan, but no one ever thought of calling him anything but "Captain Dick." He was, however, an elect soul, and his witness for God stirred the hearts of those who listened to him.

As showing the wonderful effect of the revival, when the Sunday School anniversary was held six months later special thanksgiving was offered for the great work of grace that had taken place among the scholars, and on the following Sunday a most extraordinary gathering was held. Instead of the usual school session there was a fellowship meeting, when for two hours young men and women bore testimony to the power of God that had kept them steadfast. It was a time of wonderful blessing, and "great grace rested upon all."

At the June Quarterly meeting also thanksgiving was offered to God for the revival. It was reported that two hundred and ten persons had been received on trial for church membership, and methods of further aggressive work were considered. The work had to be carried on, and A. R. Edgar was the man for the hour and for the occasion, for no one was more fitted than he for such a task.

He requested that he should be set free from ordinary week-night meetings, so that he might fully devote himself to evangelistic services.

The Rev. Thomas Williams, one of the earliest missionaries to Fiji, was then residing in Ballarat

as a supernumerary minister. He instantly volunteered to supply Mr. Edgar's week-night services so that the way might be clear for him to conduct revival missions.

Another great result of the revival was that the trustees of the church preferred a request to the Quarterly Meeting for permission to build a new church to provide for the increased congregations. The permission was granted, and in due time the beautiful church that now stands on the site of the tent that was first used for worship, was built.

At the same Quarterly Meeting it was agreed to request the next Conference to appoint a third minister to the circuit, and in due time the Rev. J. P. McCann was appointed to share the work with Mr. Cope and Mr. Edgar.

A. R. Edgar now threw himself heart and soul into the revival movement, and arrangements were made for a series of evangelistic meetings throughout the circuit during the whole of the winter months. These meetings were held at Pleasant Street, Rubicon Street, Sebastopol, Black Lead, Buninyong, and even at Garibaldi, fourteen miles distant, and in every case were crowned with gracious results. It would be impossible to describe the interest taken in these meetings. They were held for the most part in the winter, but neither cold nor rain nor bad roads could keep people away. In the mining places they would thread their way along tracks that wound in and out among the diggers' holes, carrying lanterns to guide them, and they came night after night, drawn by a great spiritual magnetism that nothing could resist. It was a gracious visitation from on High.

He was a born leader of men, and men would follow him anywhere, and in any enterprise. He possessed a magnetism that drew men and held them to him. They trusted him, and loved him. Evangelistic bands were formed consisting for the most

part of young converts, together with local preachers and others of maturer experience. All that was required to secure helpers for a mission in any place was to notify the senior school at Lydiard Street on Sunday afternoon that bands would be required during the week, and all arrangements would be made for a company of half a dozen or more for each night in the week.

It may be asked, What were his special methods as an evangelist? Most evangelists have some original or exceptional ways of carrying on their work. In A. R. Edgar's case there was nothing that could be called very original or exceptional. There was certainly nothing sensational, and there were no large choirs or special advertisements. It was the most sane and reasonable work that could be well imagined.

Hymns were sung, chiefly from Sankey's collection, prayers were offered. The Word of God was read. Testimonies were given by those who had an experience of the love of God. Sometimes a short address would be given by some worker, and there was always the faithful preaching of the Gospel, and into this he put his whole heart and soul.

With him, "Now was the accepted time, to-day the day of salvation." He pleaded with his hearers to surrender to God and accept eternal life as the free and undeserved gift of God. Those who so decided were invited to leave their seats and come to the front, where they were instructed and helped.

The great thing that was stressed was that the penitent seeker after God might receive the assurance of pardon and acceptance, and he was exhorted not to rest satisfied until that assurance was received. In most instances it was received, and there followed a radiant joy.

A. R. Edgar's methods of evangelism were successful, and men and women were led in great numbers to the fount of happiness and bliss. Nor was



Mr. and Mrs. Edward Edgar and Family

he less successful in winning souls in the ordinary course of his ministry. At the anniversary of the church at Black Lead he preached from the text, "We would see Jesus." This was one of his favourite and his most fruitful texts. Anniversary occasions are not always the most conducive to spiritual results, yet on this occasion there was a fine ingathering.

Another feature of this revival work worth noting was the way in which results were conserved. The names of converts were recorded, and they were shepherded. Visits were paid to their homes, and they were strongly urged to unite with the church. Mr. Edgar did not regard the matter ended when a person professed conversion. This was only the beginning. The new life had to be nurtured, and the believer edified, and this part of the work was not forgotten.

The work continued through the winter, and as each successive autumn came round for three years the series of services was organised, and the campaign of evangelism carried out.

It is impossible to tabulate the results, but it was estimated that throughout the two circuits, for the fire of revival spread to the Barkly Street Circuit as well, the converts equalled in number those gathered in on the day of Pentecost. The estimate was made by the saintly town missionary, Mr. Martin Hosking. Nor was this the only result.

Great numbers of these converts became workers in the church, as local preachers, class leaders, Sunday School teachers, etc. Others entered the ministry of the Church, among whom were the Brothers Jolly, James McBride, John Polkinghorne, James Smith, Samuel J. Hoban, Charles Hammer, Oliver Dowsing, Samuel C. Roberts (of the New South Wales Conference), John Proctor, and the writer. Charles Upham went to China, Miss Tinney to Papua, and Miss Crebbin to Central Australia, as missionaries.

What was the secret of this man's remarkable success? There was only one secret. He had yielded himself entirely to God for His service, and had received the anointing of the Spirit. There were other factors. He had exceptional gifts of speech, he had a magnetic personality, he had a distinctly evangelistic message, he believed that men might be reached through the preaching of the "Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." But above all was the mighty power of God that dwelt in him, and that made him strong. That he himself was conscious of this is evident from the way in which he was accustomed to emphasise in his preaching the necessity for "the enduement with power from on high."

The strain of all this work was very great, and it was during his ministry in Ballarat that he had the first of those breakdowns in health that occurred from time to time in after years, and that caused so much concern.

In addition to the evangelistic work the ordinary duties of his pastorate were heavy. He was a diligent pastor of the flock, and his visits to the homes of the people entailed a great amount of labour. The sick claimed his chief attention, while the poor and the sorrowing found in him a friend and comforter.

Then there were frequent calls upon his services outside his ordinary duties. Addresses were requested for various meetings, and in many other ways demands were made upon his time and strength. It cannot be wondered at, therefore, that he came at times to the breaking point.

The first occasion was in the Lydiard Street Church, after a Sunday evening service. He had preached with remarkable power and unction to a congregation of upwards of a thousand people. The expenditure of nervous energy was tremendous, and

he was exhausted. The custom was in those days to hold a prayer meeting at the close of the evening service, the preacher coming down from the pulpit and standing within the communion rail.

He had done this, and had announced a hymn, when, feeling that his strength was failing him, he handed the hymn book to a local preacher (Mr. George Duck), and descended into the vestry, which was below the floor level of the church. Here he collapsed, and had to be taken to his home. He was unable to leave his room for some time, and then had to go very slowly for a still longer period.

These attacks of nervous prostration occurred again and again in the course of his ministry, and eventually led to the necessity for a voyage to England to recuperate.

If he was very successful in his work, his success was purchased at a very great cost.

Creswick Mine Disaster.

It was during his ministry in Ballarat, on 12th December, 1882, that the New Australasian Mine disaster occurred at Creswick, about 12 miles distant. This was one of the greatest mining tragedies that Victoria in all her search for gold has ever known. The mine was an alluvial one, and as the "drive" was being extended, some old workings that were filled with water were broken into, with the result that the mine was flooded. The inrush of water was so sudden that it was impossible for the men to get out in time, and twenty-seven miners were imprisoned for several days.

It was a very anxious time, and desperate efforts were made to unwater the mine in time to save the lives of those who were below. The pumps were kept going at highest speed without a moment's stoppage day or night. The strain on the engineers was so great that no one was allowed to enter the

engine room. When at last the water was sufficiently lowered, rescue parties went down, and those who had survived were brought to the surface much exhausted by the terrible ordeal through which they had passed.

But alas! there were twenty-two brave men whose lives were lost. During the pumping operations thousands of people gathered at the mine, among them the wives and mothers and other relatives of the men below—the suspense was terrible. Here was a great need for comfort and encouragement, and A. R. Edgar journeyed from Ballarat to the scene of the disaster to render such help as he might be able.

The crowd was there, and he had a message for them, for he felt that the Gospel of Christ was the greatest thing to meet the needs of people in the time of trouble and anxiety and strain. So he preached to them, and none who heard him will ever forget the message of this Barnabas—this son of consolation.

There were some very beautiful and yet very pathetic incidents in connection with the disaster. The survivors told how the entombed men sang hymns to cheer each other in the darkness, others prayed and commended their loved ones to God, while others scratched messages upon their billy cans. One of them, named Jabez Bellingham, wrote, "There's a land that is fairer than day." These incidents were evidences of the way in which God came near to these men in their time of trouble, while to their loved ones it was of unspeakable comfort to know that they had died trusting in God.

The disaster moved the whole community, and a large fund was raised for the widows and fatherless children of the miners.

In Ballarat a great "In Memoriam" service was held in the Alfred Hall on the following Sunday afternoon. The hall, which was capable of holding

about four thousand people, was crowded to the doors by a sympathising congregation, and an offering was received towards the miners' relief fund.

All the ministers of the city were present, and several took part in the conduct of the worship. The duty of delivering the sermon, however, fell to the lot of A. R. Edgar, and he rose to heights of eloquent preaching. He chose his text from the Epistle to the Hebrews—"For here we have no continuing city."

It was the message for the hour. The brevity and uncertainty of life were emphasised as they had been so strikingly illustrated in the great disaster. The abounding comfort of God in times of great sorrow was set forth, and the minds of his hearers were directed to the permanent home—"the city without foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The impression made upon the vast congregation was profound. It was one of the great occasions of his life when everything conspired to solemnise the hearts of men.

The three years of happy, useful ministry in Ballarat came to a close at last, and he left the city and the circuit carrying with him the prayers and good wishes of thousands who had come under his influence. Farewell gatherings were held at Sebastopol, Black Lead, and Hiscocks, and gifts were showered upon him and his good wife.

Port Melbourne.

"The good, the fruitful ground,
Expect not here nor there;
O'er hill and dale, by plots 'tis found,
Go forth, then, everywhere."

CHAPTER VI.

PORT MELBOURNE.

The Conference of 1884 appointed A. R. Edgar to the South Melbourne Circuit, to reside at Port Melbourne. It was a great change from anything to which he had been accustomed. He was in a new environment, and had to adapt himself to other conditions of work.

The port of Melbourne, like all other seaports, contained a great mixture of inhabitants. There were the respectable and prosperous trades people and artisans, and there were the unsuccessful and the poverty-stricken.

The drink trade flourished, and as a consequence there was a good deal of vice and intemperance. Some areas of the place could only be called slum areas.

The church in Graham Street was a live one, and contained many earnest and devoted souls who were prepared to co-operate in every good work. They found in their minister a leader whom they could follow, and the work prospered from the very outset. There was a fine field for evangelism in the port, and special revival services were soon arranged for. A workers' band was formed that helped in many ways. The members of the band would go out into the streets three-quarters of an hour before the meetings commenced, and visit from house to house. Their method was to knock at the door, tell the people who they were, and, having asked permission, pray for a blessing upon the mission. Before the folk had time to recover from their surprise they had offered a brief petition and passed on. It was a novel procedure, but it was most successful,

for rarely was permission to pray refused, and often the workers were heartily thanked. It was a case of taking the church to the people. Many responded to the invitations given to attend the services, and not a few were led to God. There was another band of helpers who rendered assistance in connection with these revival services. Wesley College was at that time the provisional Theological Institution under the presidency of Rev. E. I. Watkin, D.D., and a number of candidates for the ministry in training were brought into the revival work. They took their part in the visitation of homes, assisted in the meetings, and it proved a good schooling for them, as they were able to see the methods of one who was a prince of evangelists. The results of this aggressive work were seen in increased congregations and enlarged membership.

But there was another section of the community that moved the heart of the evangelist, and that was the neglected children in the slum areas, with their poverty and squalor. It was therefore decided to establish a ragged school to help and rescue the children. The school was started in a hired room in a poor street, and began with twenty children who had been gathered, and, as Mr. Edgar records, "They hadn't a clean face or whole dress or a pair of shoes among them." They were a group of poor little neglected children.

This was the material upon which the workers had to begin. They did not despair, however, but with much prayer and earnest thought took up their great task. God prospered them, and interest began to be taken in the school by the parents, who appreciated the efforts that were being made on behalf of their children.

A delightful change was soon apparent, for after a few Sundays the little ones came to the school with clean faces, tidy clothes, and boots on their feet. The ragged school was a success, and scores

of children who otherwise would have grown up in ignorance and sin, were taught the better way of godliness.

Not only were the effects seen in the children, but the parents also came under gracious influences. The workers visited the homes of the children, conversed with their parents. Many of them remembered the days when they themselves had gone to Sunday School, and chords were often touched that had ceased to vibrate for many years. The power of human sympathy was felt, and the thought that someone was interested in their welfare moved many of these careless men and women towards better things. Not a few of them were brought back to the Church, some were led to God, while others became earnest Christian workers. It was a great piece of social religion and Christianity applied to the actual facts of life.

The spiritual needs of the sailors were not forgotten. Permission was sought from the captains of vessels to hold services on board, and in very rare cases was any difficulty experienced in obtaining this permission. Indeed in most cases the workers' bands were received with gladness by captain and sailors alike. Members of the band would board other ships in the harbour, announce that a service would be held on a particular vessel, and invite the men to join in the worship. The sailors would decorate with flags the poop where the service was to be held, and sometimes they rigged up a pulpit as well.

When the visitors appeared at the gangway of the vessel, they were heartily welcomed by the crew. The services were very homely, familiar hymns were sung, simple prayers offered, and heart to heart talks given. The big minister was always welcomed by the sailors, and soon became quite a familiar figure among them.

After the service was ended the young men of the band would sit with groups of sailors and chat for an hour. Thus in this way they discovered the histories of many of them. Some had come from good homes and Christian parents, and they had not forgotten them. Tears would often fill their eyes when home was referred to.

Local Option Campaign.

Probably the most exciting part of A. R. Edgar's work in Port Melbourne was in connection with an effort to reduce the existing hotels to the statutory number. Not only was their number excessive, but some were of a thoroughly evil character—they were traps for the poor sailors and a curse to many of the residents. Much of the poverty and degradation of the place was the result of the drink traffic. It was decided therefore to make an attack upon this stronghold of evil.

At the first there was but little public interest taken in the matter, and only five persons attended the first meeting that was held. Mr. Edgar and his workers however resolved to persevere, and a strong committee of the best people in the port was formed. The Rev. Mr. Abernethy, of the Presbyterian Church, was in hearty sympathy, and entered with great earnestness into the fight. Meetings were organised, and were so successful that the drink sellers became alarmed, and began to raise opposition. At the second meeting held A. R. Edgar was in the chair, and there was present a very formidable contingent of the friends of the publicans. They had everything cut and dried to upset the meeting, and A. R. Edgar was to be silenced at all costs, even though force had to be used.

The account of that meeting, in Mr. Edgar's own words, is as follows: "As soon as I began to speak, a big, powerful man climbed on to the platform, shook his fist in my face, and said, 'Say another word, and I'll pitch you out of that window.' I showed him my manuscript notes and said quietly. 'When I get to the end of this paper I'll stop, and not before. But don't let me keep you standing there, let me offer you a chair,' and I drew one forward for him. To my surprise, he sat down on it, and kept perfectly quiet till the end of the proceedings. When the meeting was over I went out and found a publican flourishing a big stick over the man's head, and hurling reproaches upon him with adjectives that it would not be polite to repeat. 'You coward,' the publican roared, 'you bargained with us to stop that fellow's jaw, and there you sat all the time as quiet as a sheep. I'll give it to you, I'll knock your head off.' 'No you won't,' said I. 'You can hit me if you like, but you shall not hit him.'" Then turning to the man Mr. Edgar said, "Come along, my friend, I'll see you through," and he led the man safely through the crowd, while the publican went off in another direction. The laurels that night were with the temperance side. The people at last were thoroughly roused, and interest was further increased by the holding of open-air meetings, which were attended by audiences of two and three thousand persons. They were preceded by marches through the streets with banners waving and bands playing lively music. A lorry was made the movable platform, and Mr. Edgar used to announce to the people, "When we have had our say any objector may come forward and have his. We will give him British fair play, a place on our platform, and a fair hearing." This frank offer generally secured a good hearing for the speakers.

On one occasion a man began to interrupt from the edge of the crowd, and the people cried out, "Go to the platform." The man was unwilling to go, so they pushed him towards the lorry and then lifted him above their heads and bundled him on to the platform. He would not speak, however, but disappeared among the crowd.

When the crowd was large the publican party had to be very quiet, but when they caught the temperance folk at a disadvantage, they made things very uncomfortable. They pelted them with paper bags filled with flour; dirt, stones, and rotten eggs. The eggs were the worst. A. R. Edgar had a black frock coat ruined, but, as he said, "It was in a good cause."

Much advertising was done, not by posters and handbills only, but a spring waggon was also used, going all day from one end of the town to another. Mottoes and advertisements were painted on the cover, and at night it was lit up from the inside. The result of the crusade was in some respects disappointing. A certain number of votes had to be cast in order to secure a valid poll, and ignorance of this fact led to defeat.

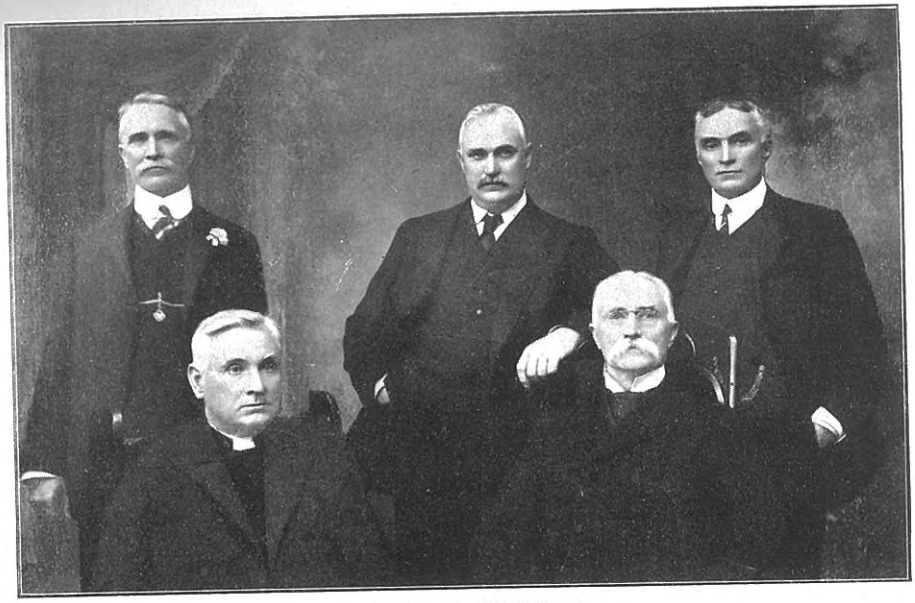
A second poll was taken some time afterwards, when the required numbers were secured, but a flaw in the Act was taken advantage of by the liquor party, and the effort for reduction was defeated again.

The moral effect upon the community, however, was good, and the cause of temperance received an impetus that it had not experienced before. Many were won to reform, and became effective temperance workers.

During A. R. Edgar's term in Port Melbourne his influence was felt throughout the whole of Melbourne. As far as time and strength allowed he helped other churches, conducting anniversary services and addressing gatherings for the deepening of spiritual life. His ministry was very fruitful, and at its close he parted from a people whom he had learned to love.

Geelong West.

"Thou canst not toil in vain;
Cold, heat, and moist, and dry
Shall foster and mature the grain
For garners in the sky."



THE EDGAR BROTHERS

William Haslam
Alexander Robert
Albert Edward
Frederick James
Henry Stephenson

CHAPTER VII.

GEELONG WEST.

In 1887 Mr. Edgar was appointed to the superintendency of the Geelong West Circuit, and resided at Chilwell. The principal church was in Noble Street, a building capable of holding about eight hundred people. His ministry made a great impression from the beginning; the folk were attracted by his warm evangelistic preaching, and conversions began to take place.

One of the very old residents of the place writes about this period: "Well do I remember the expressions of pleasure evinced by the people connected with the Chilwell Church when it was announced that the Rev. A. R. Edgar was to be our next minister. Great expectations were aroused The people got themselves ready to receive him, and when he arrived gave him such a welcome that his heart went out to them immediately.

"It was not long before expectations were more than realised. The people of our church, the people of other churches, and the people of no church soon realised that a man with a big body containing a large heart full of love for all the people, was working for the uplift of all. Truly the world of Chilwell was his parish.

"His methods were not always orthodox. I remember him calling the church people together and asking their help by forming bands of singers and speakers to assist him in his outdoor work. I also remember a man who possessed a knowledge of band music suggesting that a brass band might be of service. Mr. Edgar immediately accepted the suggestion, and the band was formed.

"After a few weeks' practice the band made its first appearance in public, and was a huge success. Where the instruments came from was a mystery, but when A. R. Edgar made up his mind that any thing had to be got he secured it. It was a treat to see the drummer at work beating his drum with vigour, his face shining with love for his task, and his voice joining in the praises. There were great results from these outdoor services, many drunkards and others who were considered past redemption were convinced of their sin, and became good citizens and church members. I also remember the first sermon that I heard him preach from the text, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." The open-air services were generally held in the Kardinia Park on Sunday afternoons after the schools had closed. Great crowds of people gathered and listened with as much reverent attention as though the service was being held in the church. They were very rich in spiritual results, and numbers traced their awakening to the messages, and found their way back to the Church again."

The brass band also enabled Mr. Edgar to solve in a measure the problem of reaching the masses in the city. On Saturday nights a procession would be formed at the post office, and marching to the corner of the Market Square, an open-air service would be held, a lorry serving as a platform. Hearty singing, led by the band, would soon attract a congregation, and A. R. Edgar was usually the speaker, but other speakers were also invited. Sometimes the crowd was greatly interested, and listened attentively, while at other times there was opposition and interruption, as might be expected. Nevertheless, the good work was carried on, and many outsiders were reached and saved from sin.

The gracious work of revival continued throughout the three years of his ministry in Geelong West Circuit. There was an understanding among the

circuit leaders that wherever there were evidences that the Holy Spirit was working, the ministers should follow up the work and arrange for special evangelistic services. One such example of this will suffice.

A young local preacher (now the Rev. J. T. Field) was conducting a morning service in the Ashby Church, the subject of his sermon being, "The Finished Work of Christ for Men." The preacher was in the midst of his discourse when there was a cry from the choir seats, and a young lady had to be carried out. After the interruption the preacher continued his address, but he could see that many others in the congregation were deeply moved.

This was reported to Mr. Edgar during the afternoon, and immediately arrangements were made for a special evangelistic service in the evening. A wonderful spiritual revival broke out, and services were continued for a fortnight, which resulted in the uplift of the members of the church and the gathering in of many.

There were similar revivals in other places that were attended with remarkable results. Drunkards were reclaimed, unhappy hearts and homes were changed, prodigals returned to the father's home. Sleeping Christians were awakened, careless and indifferent sinners were aroused and convicted of their sin. Numbers who were outside the fellowship of the Church were brought into it, and inactive members became "zealous of good works."

It was always a settled conviction of A. R. Edgar's to follow and not to precede the operations of the Holy Spirit; not to decide upon a particular time to conduct a mission, but to pray and work and look for "the set time to favour Zion," and then to spend himself, so as to secure the success which under the blessing of God inevitably followed. One remarkable instance of conversion may be mentioned as

typical, and as showing how the influence of God's servants is perpetuated in the lives of others.

A young man resided in Geelong named Alexander Miller. He was brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as his Saviour through the ministry of A. R. Edgar. He became a very earnest Christian worker, and succeeded in business in a remarkable way. This young man had ideas of the Christian use of wealth, and so built cottages in Geelong and elsewhere as homes for the aged poor. These homes are known as the Miller Homes, and provision has been made in his will for their maintenance in perpetuity. Surely "Godliness is profitable unto all things."

The result of all this gracious ingathering was that the churches became crowded with worshippers, and all manner of beneficent activities were carried on by people whose hearts were warmed with love for God and man.

There was a great revival, too, in Christian fellowship. "Classes," as they are called in Methodism, were renewed or formed. In these circles of believing men and women, which met weekly for fellowship, there was the glow of religious experience that each shared with the other, while members were instructed and edified by the leader. They became centres of power and usefulness.

Another important service rendered by A. R. Edgar was in the formation of a preachers' study class, composed of young men whose hearts had been fired with zeal for God, and who felt moved by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. They met weekly, and he gave them instruction in theology and homiletics. One night in the month was a preaching night, when each in turn preached before the class. The sermon was criticised by the class, and then A. R. Edgar gave his kindly counsel and

advice. In this way many local preachers were prepared for the service of the Church. One of these, Mr. J. T. Field, referred to above, was urged to devote himself to the work of the ministry, and he offered himself in due time and was accepted. His heart was in the work of God among the peoples in the Pacific, and so in 1891 he went with the Rev. W. E. Bromilow as one of the pioneer missionaries to Papua. It was an arduous undertaking, full of adventure and peril, but he was able to fulfil his mission among the brown-faced people of Papua until ill-health compelled his return to the home work. This missionary pioneer was one of the fruits of Mr. Edgar's ministry in Geelong.

Temperance work claimed his attention in Geelong as in other places, and regarding this Mr. Bottrell writes as follows: "Mr. Edgar, like Mr. Matthew Burnett, was an apostle of temperance, and was a great believer in 'the personal touch.' In this way he succeeded in persuading many to 'swear off the liquor,' so that their minds were then in a fit state to receive the truth, and they gave their hearts to God. They afterwards linked up with the Church, and kept by the power of God they remained faithful to their pledges to the end of their lives. Some of these were notorious drunkards.

"A. R. Edgar has been known to sit up all night with a man who was fighting the drink curse, getting the man's wife to prepare hot coffee at intervals, while he himself would be conversing with the poor fellow, praying with him, or reading to him. In this way he helped many back to God. He was of a very kind and thoughtful disposition. I have heard it said that when the family sat down to dinner he would sometimes, after saying 'Grace,' send a portion of the food to some poor person whom he knew was short of the necessaries of life.

"Anatomists tell us that a man's heart is the size of his closed fist, but that was not true of Mr. Edgar. He was a big man in every way."

In the year 1888 a circumstance occurred which seemed at the time likely to turn the whole current of his life. The General Conference—a triennial court—was held that year in Melbourne, and among the inter-Conferential exchanges of ministers that were arranged Mr. Edgar was transferred to the New Zealand Conference. Now nothing but the most extraordinary reasons will prevent a minister obeying the directions of the General Conference in this matter, and under ordinary circumstances A. R. Edgar would have gone to New Zealand unquestioningly. But at this time Mrs. Edgar's health was causing considerable anxiety, and it was considered that such a change would be prejudicial. Under the circumstances therefore the President arranged for such an exchange as would permit of A. R. Edgar remaining in Victoria for the rest of his ministry. It is of course useless to speculate what might have been had Mr. Edgar gone to New Zealand. It is certain that the Church there would have received a great accession of strength, but Victoria would have been the poorer, and the great Central Mission of Wesley Church might not have come into existence. All that we can say is that God ordered this and all things for the best.

There was no doubt as to the opinion of the people of Geelong concerning this, for a great thanksgiving meeting was held, and gratitude expressed that Mr. Edgar was still to remain among them.

One of his colleagues (the late Rev. E. T. Cox) said: "Fancy sending such a toothsome joint to New Zealand as the Rev. A. R. Edgar. Wouldn't the Maories lick their lips and cry for more. If I could have my way I would send some of the tough old grumblers and lantern-jawed smokers!"

Those who knew Mr. Cox knew what an incorrigible humorist he was, but there was more than humour behind his remarks. To him and to the people of Geelong it was a very serious matter, and to have lost their minister by transfer to another Conference at that particular time would have been regarded as a great calamity.

The following letter from Miss Leigh, of Ceres, in the Geelong West Circuit, will be of interest as showing the character of A. R. Edgar and his work there:

"To go back forty-five years is a tax on one's memory, but I have endeavoured to piece together a few incidents that took place during the late Rev. A. R. Edgar's wonderful ministry in the Geelong West Circuit, and which was continued in the East Circuit with even greater power and results. His big, sympathetic heart and wonderful personality drew all to him. Just after he came to the circuit the first sorrow came to our home in the passing of a brother almost grown to manhood. The tender thought and loving sympathy shown by Mr. Edgar was so comforting that a bond of sacred friendship with the whole family was formed that has continued all the years. Going back to those early days it was not unusual for Mr. Edgar to drive out on a Monday for a little respite, bringing his boys and girls with him, who would romp in the orchard or roam in the fields while their father rested.

"I remember one visit in particular. We had an expert gardener budding some apple trees. Mr. Edgar thought that he would like to experiment upon one tree. He did so, and it proved most satisfactory, and resulted in choice fruit.

"I am enclosing a letter which was written after the death of a second brother, whose beautiful and

triumphant death left a great influence on the young life of the district:—

"Malvern,

"2nd December, 1907.

"Dear Miss Leigh,—

"My many thanks for your note and for kind remembrance of our dear lad. I thank God. It is a great comfort to sorrowful hearts that our loved ones are 'with Christ, which is far better.'

"Rowlie has told me about brother. It is good to hear of his triumph over the last enemy. Who can tell what will be the outcome of all his faith and beautiful words of counsel to others? They are not likely to be forgotten. 'He being dead yet speaketh.' Give my love to your dear mother. She has had to drink of a full cup of sorrow, but God is her strength and comfort.

"It is a long way off to October, 1908, but I promise if all goes well to be with you on that date for your church anniversary.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

A. R. EDGAR.

"He was able to fulfil his promise, and the anniversary was attended with much blessing to himself and to the people."

Miss Leigh writes further: "The Rev. A. R. Edgar came to the Geelong West Circuit in April, 1887, and had as his colleagues Revs. Arthur Powell and E. T. Cox. The country congregations were visited monthly, unless sickness or special need demanded more frequent visits. When a week-night service was held, sick ones who did not worship in the Methodist Church were never passed by. His visits to them were an inspiration as were those to his own flock.

"A very gracious revival took place throughout the circuit with steadfast and abiding results. At Ceres many were added to the church. At the concluding service, among those who gave their testimonies was a man who had been a slave to drink. He said, 'The still, small voice was speaking to me throughout the mission. It is "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord," so I yield my unworthy life to Him.'

"What a change came over that home! The little children who were often hungry came to Sunday School and said: 'We have enough to eat now, and daddy reads the Bible and prays every morning.' This new convert, who was a most intelligent man, soon came into the Sunday School himself, first as a teacher and then as superintendent. He became a class leader, and afterwards one of the most honoured local preachers in the Geelong District."

During A. R. Edgar's ministry in Geelong West Circuit he had for his colleague the Rev. E. T. Cox, who was one of the ablest preachers of his day. He had a philosophical mind, and his sermons were full of rich thought. He had his moods, however, and at times became so depressed that he thought himself a failure. One such occasion occurred during his association with A. R. Edgar. He was so conscious of failure after his Sunday's work that he discussed with his wife the question of resigning his ministry. After talking matters over this decision was arrived at.

On the Monday morning he made his way to the Chilwell parsonage to inform his superintendent of his determination, but before he had time to introduce the matter A. R. Edgar said: "I say, Cox, what were you preaching about yesterday morning?"

"That is what I have come to talk to you about," replied Mr. Cox; "I made such a miserable mess of things that I have decided to resign my ministry."

"Why," said the superintendent, "Everybody is talking about your sermon. I have heard from several what a blessing it was to them." Mr. Cox was astounded, and he left the parsonage determined to continue his ministry. It was one of those matters that the preacher himself cannot decide; and it is never safe for him to allow his feelings to be the judge of success or failure. A. R. Edgar was intensely loyal to his brethren in the ministry, and for those who were more intimately associated with him he had a deep affection. Mr. Cox was by no means the only one whom he encouraged with words of commendation. The three years of ministry passed all too quickly, but during that time he endeared himself to his own people, and won the esteem and love of thousands outside.

Geelong (Yarra Street)

"Thence, when the glorious end,
The day of God is come,
The angel reapers shall descend,
And heaven cry, Harvest home!"

CHAPTER VIII.

GEELONG (YARRA STREET).

It was a great compliment to A. R. Edgar that when his term of ministry at Geelong West was ending he should be invited to the adjoining Geelong Circuit, having as its head Yarra Street Church. A very warm welcome was accorded him. He was not a stranger to the people, for he had been their neighbour for three years, and had been frequently in their pulpits and other gatherings.

It was not even necessary for him to form a contact with them, that was already done, so he entered into his work immediately, which was really a continuation of earnest evangelistic and social effort in the Geelong District.

The work of revival soon began in Yarra Street, and was remarkable for the great number of young people who were led to surrender their lives to Christ. They soon caught the vision of service, and became active in the work of the Church.

The congregations in Yarra Street became very large. It was necessary for worshippers to be early at the church to secure seats, while the prayer meeting, held at the close of the evening service, was a means of blessing. It gave the opportunity to those who had been influenced by the message of the Gospel to receive further help and instruction. And Christian people were willing to tarry for prayer, even though it made a very full day. If by this means men and women could be helped in their quest for God, it was certainly well worth while. The meetings held during the week were all conducive to the spiritual success of the church. There was a prayer meeting

held in the church parlour on Monday evenings, when those who had received good on the previous day might obtain further help and encouragement, and where intercession was made for the work of the kingdom of God.

On Thursday night Mr. Edgar conducted a preaching service chiefly for the edification of believers. It was in the addresses delivered at these week-night meetings that he set before the people the higher levels of spiritual experience, and urged them to the attainment of holiness of heart and life. To him the work of conversion was only the first step towards the goal of the "abundant life." This Thursday gathering was the school of Christian life and service.

On Friday afternoon he had a class for adult members, and this was also a power house for service, while on Friday night he held his class for young people. There were some who thought that the best results were to be secured by the mingling of the young and old together, but A. R. Edgar thought differently. He believed that there were circumstances and difficulties and temptations that were peculiar to youth, and the best way to deal with these was to gather the youth together by themselves. It was a great sight to see these crowds of young people gathering from week to week and looking up to their minister for guidance and help.

Another class, conducted by a godly woman, Mrs. Thacker, was held on Thursday afternoon, and was for ladies. The leader was a woman of deep religious knowledge and experience, who had a great gift in prayer, and knew how to encourage and help. That group of godly women, like the women who helped St. Paul, was of great assistance to A. R. Edgar, and, indeed, to all the ministers in their work.

During his ministry in this circuit A. R. Edgar conceived the idea of an "old folks' gathering," and a neat invitation card was sent out which read as follows:—"The Rev. A. R. Edgar and his class request

the pleasure of the company of.....
to a social evening on Tuesday, 28th inst. Tea at six o'clock. E. W. RASHLEIGH, Hon. Sec.
"An early answer will oblige."

The class referred to was his ladies' class of church members, which met on Friday afternoons.

The gathering was a great success. After tea the old folks were entertained, and not the least interesting item of entertainment was a speech by one of the local preachers who went by the familiar name of Sammy Ham. He was a remarkable man, and his quaint humour was only equalled by his wise sayings.

One institution that must be mentioned specially is the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour. One of the young men of Yarra Street, Mr. Howard Hitchcock, had been abroad, and had returned with his mind and heart full of the idea of Christian Endeavour. It was therefore decided to form such a society, and it was possibly the first to be formed in Victoria. Mr. Edgar, according to the constitution, was its president, and Mr. Hitchcock its secretary. In after years the secretary became a notable leader in the community, in which he was a great citizen and a great philanthropist. In after years he had conferred upon him, in recognition of his services to the Empire during the Great War, the distinction of "Order of the British Empire." It is doubtful whether he ever did any better service than that in connection with the C.E. Society. He saw that its organisation was complete, and that the work of its committees was carried out. Christian Endeavour opened up for the young people a great field of opportunity and usefulness. His honoured father, Mr. G. M. Hitchcock, was an outstanding Christian worker also, especially in the Sunday school.

Another man who came under the spell of A. R. Edgar in Yarra Street was Mr. George Hague, a prosperous wool merchant. There was something in A. R. Edgar that attracted Mr. Hague and won his heart,

and they became united in a lifelong friendship that was good to see. It was to the big-hearted brother that Mr. Hague turned for counsel and advice, and he was at all times ready to render any help that he could to his minister.

It was at Mr. Hague's home at Barwon Heads that Mr. Edgar found refreshment and rest from time to time, and there, with his boon companions, Revs. R. Philp and Arthur Powell, he could relax and enjoy the quiet of the little seaside resort. It helped him very much during his strenuous life, as the demands of the great congregation at Yarra Street and the oversight of the other parts of the circuit were sufficient to tax the time and strength of any man.

There were also outside his own flock hundreds of people who were without a shepherd; many of them were poor, and some were profligate and drunken and unworthy. A. R. Edgar, like his Master, looked out upon these folk, and was moved with compassion for them. Cost what it may, they must be tended. Connected with the Church, there was at the end of Yarra Street, near the beach, a mission hall which provided a good opportunity for this labour of faith and love. Mr. Edgar was always a prince of organisers, and he soon set about the task of putting this branch of the work upon a sound footing. A devoted soul named Mr. Wilson, who acted as circuit missionary, was, with his wife, placed in charge of the work at the hall. There was also a band of voluntary workers, men and women, who found joy in the service of God through service to their fellow-men. These all helped to gather in and feed the sheep who had gone astray. Prior to the service on Sunday evening the Band would sing outside the hall; within the worship was bright and helpful, and the message of the Gospel was spoken in all its sweetness and power.

There was also the district around to be visited, so this was divided into sections, and a section was

given to one or two workers to care for. Each was provided with a book for the purpose of recording names and particulars of homes and persons visited. Periodically the minister made an inspection of these books, and was thus able to keep his finger upon the pulse of the movement, and to direct it as was necessary. It was a work that brought cheer to many lives.

The sailors, too, were not forgotten, and a mission to seamen was carried on. Suitable literature was circulated among them, and gatherings held for their moral and spiritual uplift. A. R. Edgar was at home among these men, for he had kindly words for them and entered into their lives. An excellent work was also done among the Chinese in the lowest parts of the city.

A very considerable impetus was given to religion in Geelong at this time by the visit of the Rev. George Grubb, who was a great evangelist, and conducted conventions for the deepening of spiritual life. A. R. Edgar entered very heartily into this work, and was able to render much valuable help to this servant of God.

Mr. Edgar was very happy in association with his colleagues in Geelong East, as he had been in the West. For the first year the Rev. Robert Philp worked with him in the Ashby pastorate, and in the second and third years the Rev. Alexander McCallum. It was during the second year that Mr. Edgar had the serious breakdown in health that necessitated a voyage to England. During his absence Mr. McCallum had to take the superintendency of the circuit, and he proved himself equal to the great responsibility that was placed upon him, although he was a comparatively young man in the ministry. It was a great relief to the sick man to know that the affairs of the great circuit would be safe in the capable hands of his colleague.

A. R. Edgar had a wonderful faculty for remembering people, events and circumstances. He could

tell in after years when he had first met folk, also things that happened in connection with the meeting, and he cherished the friendship of those who laboured with him in the Lord. It was a great gift, and gave to many a feeling of keen pleasure to know that with the passing of the years they were not forgotten.

The Geelong ministry closed his services as an ordinary circuit minister, for in 1893 he was called to the work of founding the Central Mission at Wesley Church, Melbourne.

Before, however, we speak of this period of his life and work, it is fitting that some special reference should be made to the subject of revivals.

A. R. Edgar's record of soul-saving work reads like a romance, and we are naturally led to ask why, at this particular period, there should have been so much of this kind of work done, and why there should not be a continuance of it. We have been recording revivals with which he was more immediately connected, but he was not alone in successful evangelistic effort; there were many others who, if successful in a lesser degree, were nevertheless true evangelists.

Some of these revivals broke out in connection with the ordinary church worship. In August, 1875, the Rev. E. I. Watkin preached in the Brown Hill Church in the Ballarat East Circuit from the text, "And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." A work of God commenced that night that continued for weeks, when it spread to other places, and hundreds were converted to God. In Geelong, during the ministry of the Rev. J. D. Dodgson, a mighty revival also took place.

There were also the visits of the Rev. William Taylor from America, and Mr. Matthew Burnett, the Yorkshire evangelist, when Victoria was stirred from end to end. Later there came the work of Rev. John Inskip, Rev. C. H. Yatman, Dr. Torrey, Rev. Thomas Cook, and Dr. Chapman. The Rev. David O'Donnell and Rev. W. H. Scurr were for years most successful

evangelists, also for many years the Conference set apart men for evangelistic work. Reference has been made to the Rev. Richard Fitcher, who so greatly influenced Mr. Edgar himself. It was a type of evangelism that seemed to run its course and cease to be.

There was another factor that helped very largely, and this was the hunger for the souls of men that was felt by many Christian people. There was what was called "a yearning for souls," a great desire that others should share in the rich spiritual experience. It was the feeling of desire—

"Oh that all might catch the flame,
All partake the glorious bliss."

. . . . .

"Oh that the world might taste and see
The riches of His grace;
The arms of love that compass me,
Would all mankind embrace."

There was also the sense of great responsibility for others which was called "the burden of souls." Souls were in peril, souls might be lost, and men longed, as A. R. Edgar wrote in his last letter to Wesley Church congregation—

"With groans, entreaties, tears to save,
And snatch them from a gaping grave."

One thinks also of the spirit of expectancy that was abroad, when preachers expected results, and were disappointed at the close of their labours on the Lord's day if there were none. They prayed for results, they preached for results, and they expected results. The kind of texts that were chosen and the type of sermons that were preached were for results. They were sermons that had appeal in them, followed by the after-meeting, when "seekers" were encouraged to put their trust in Christ alone.

All these things have to be considered in any attempt to account for a revival movement that gathered such force and then subsided. Now the further questions arise, Does God repeat Himself?

May we expect a recurrence of this particular type of evangelical revival? Who can say?

There is one thing that must not be forgotten. We are in the midst of a religious revival of another type at the present time. The revival of the past was individualistic, the present revival is social, but God's work still goes on. We have had in recent years great gatherings of Christians such as at "The Stockholm Conference" on life and work; "The Copec Conference," on Christian politics, economics, and citizenship; "The Lausanne Conference" of 1927 on faith and order, and "The Jerusalem Missionary Conference" of 1928. In these conferences members of almost all the Churches gathered, moved by one great common impulse to seek the glory of God in the advancement and extension of His kingdom in the world.

We have also the "Student Christian Movement," which for more than 40 years has been gaining strength and influence in the colleges and universities of the world. More recently we have the group movements in Oxford and Cambridge, and also in the universities of America, that are causing such widespread interest in religion among all classes.

Never perhaps in the history of Christendom has there ever been such a widespread desire for unity in worship and service. It is a revival of religion upon a magnificent scale. It is God's way of meeting the challenge of the present age; it is God's way of leading His Church towards the great consummation. The methods may differ, the end is the same.

It may be well, however, for us to consider whether a return to the old style of preaching, with its urgent appeal to the unconverted, may not be made with profit.

Greatheart at Wesley.

"Men die in darkness at your side,
Without a hope to cheer the tomb;
Take up the torch and wave it wide,
The torch that lights time's thickest gloom."
—Dr. Bonar.

CHAPTER IX.

GREATHEART AT WESLEY.

The story of the Central Mission could not be written apart from A. R. Edgar. It was part of his life, and owes its existence mainly to him. He was now forty-three years of age, and had reached the very zenith of his powers. He had done the ordinary work of a Methodist minister for nineteen years, and had proved his worth in every circuit to which he had been appointed.

From Geelong, in the ordinary course of events, he would have passed on to another important circuit, but at that time Wesley Church, Melbourne, was giving grave concern to all. It had passed the meridian of its prosperity, and the congregation that filled the church in former days had either passed away or had removed to the outer suburbs. The neighbourhood had become one of the most unsavoury in Melbourne, a slum area, and the inhabitants were among the drunken and the fallen. Only about twenty families were connected with the church, and these, with visitors, made up the congregation. Some of the ablest ministers had been appointed to the church, among them being Rev. Henry Bath, a prince of preachers, and Rev. E. I. Watkin, D.D., one of the most effective pulpit and platform orators in the land. The Rev. E. H. Sugden, B.A., B.Sc., who had recently come from England as Master of Queen's College at the University of Melbourne, was frequently the evening preacher. Nothing was left undone to make Wesley Church attractive to the people, but notwithstanding all these efforts, the congregation declined.

What could be done for Wesley Church was the great question for the Conference?

It was evident that the ordinary circuit system, with a three years' term of ministry, would not meet the situation; something special must be attempted.

At that time the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M.A., was trying experiments along the lines of Central Mission work in London, with the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse as his colleague, and those experiments were meeting with much success. The Rev. W. H. Taylor had also established such a mission in Sydney, and this was successful, too.

The thoughts of the Conference were therefore turned towards the idea of a mission as the solution of the problem of Wesley Church. The first suggestion came from the Home Missions Committee, which intended to build a mission hall at the rear of Wesley Church, facing Little Lonsdale Street, which was at that time one of the plague spots of the city. Nothing, however, came of the scheme.

The Conference of 1890 appointed a committee to consider the practicability of establishing a Central Mission at Wesley Church, and the committee brought up its report to the Conference of 1891. It recommended that Wesley Church be separated from the rest of the circuit, with a view to its being made the head of the mission, with the proviso that "Any Central Mission must be independent of existing circuit arrangements," which meant that the ordinary system of circuit management should not apply to the new mission.

During 1892 the scheme was carefully considered, and the names of three ministers were sent up to the Conference of 1893. This was to conform to the Conference regulations. The selection was, however, a foregone conclusion, and A. R. Edgar was unanimously elected as the superintendent. Mr. Edgar was

greatly moved by the vote, and said that he was prepared to put everything he had into the venture, which he did.

The appointment was a most popular one, and in the next issue of the "Spectator" the editor wrote: "The appointment of the Rev. A. R. Edgar as superintendent of this mission will be received with widespread satisfaction. His noble presence, magnificent voice, tender feeling, broad sympathies, intense earnestness, and undaunted courage mark him as the man having special adaptation for this work." The one fear that found expression in the Conference was that his zeal would carry him beyond his strength.

In April A. R. Edgar took up his great work of founding the Central Mission, that work which was only to end with the close of his life. Almost the first thing that was done was to appoint a secretary to the mission, and the superintendent's choice fell upon an architect residing in Geelong, Mr. A. J. Derrick. The committee gladly accepted the choice, and appointed Mr. Derrick, who for twenty-one years was the confidential secretary of the mission. He was indeed a "Fidus Achates," and a very strong affection sprang up between Mr. Edgar and his secretary, which lasted through life.

Mr. Derrick was in his own sphere a very remarkable man, and his knowledge of things in general was wide and accurate. He was businesslike in his methods, prompt in attending to matters as they came before him, of sound judgment, and then, with his experience as an architect, he was able to render invaluable assistance in connection with all building arrangements of the mission. The appointment proved to be a most satisfactory one, and Mr. Derrick became known as A. J. Derrick of the Central Mission.

In taking up the work of the mission, Mr. Edgar had no defined plan, but waited for Divine leading. Writing in the "Spectator," he said: "In answer to, 'When do we begin?' the answer is, 'Not until we are

ready, I hope and pray.' We are not beginning a winter series of special services merely, we are about to lay the foundations of a permanent work.'' How permanent it was to be the years have disclosed.

For the first three Sundays he preached morning and evening in Wesley Church, and these congregations were not very encouraging. After the first morning service he went into the parsonage an almost despairing man, for he felt that the prospects were far from being bright, and he was much depressed. This depression was only temporary. Soon there were signs of improvement, and interest began to be taken in the new enterprise. Arrangements were also made for assistance to be given him at the morning services, and the Revs. E. H. Sugden, B.A., B.Sc., and James Harcourt, B.A., were appointed morning preachers. Thus A. R. Edgar was free to take services in other parts of Melbourne.

After a few weeks an innovation was made which took the form of afternoon conferences, at which matters affecting the social and moral interests of the community were discussed. These developed into what has been since known as the ''Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Service.''

An event occurred at this time that had far-reaching effects upon the mission. Sweating in various trades was rife, and the amounts paid by certain employers, especially for piece work, were scandalous. The faces of the poor were being ground, workers were toiling for a pittance hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together. The evil had become so acute that a deputation of the bootmakers' and tailors' trades waited upon the Premier to urge an amendment of the Factories' Act to remedy the horrors of the sweating evil, and Dr. Watkin and Mr. Edgar joined the deputation. A. R. Edgar was one who spoke, and he told the Premier that ''This was a moral and social question which lies at the very root of public welfare.'' Others spoke from certain knowledge of the

condition of things, and when the deputation withdrew the speakers were asked if they would say the same things at Wesley Church on Sunday afternoon. They agreed to do so, and a handbill was issued headed, ''The Sweating Evil. Hear what the Workers have to Say about this Dreadful Evil.'' An audience gathered that filled the spacious church.

In his opening remarks A. R. Edgar said: ''A deputation to the Premier a few days since roused me, and I, without hesitation, determined to open the doors of Wesley Church to the people in order that public attention might be called to this great evil.'' In a report given in the ''Spectator'' he says: ''The audience was enthusiastic, the speakers moderate and convincing, the moral tone throughout elevating. In this way a beginning has been made, and we are not going to look back. Surely we must succeed, for everybody I meet is praying for the mission. Friends are rallying round us, and subscriptions have begun to flow.'' The speakers that afternoon were Mr. S. Mauger, Mr. Stephen Barker, of the Trades Hall; Mrs. Muir, with Messrs. William Trenwith, S. V. Winter, and Dr. Maloney, M's.L.A.

A second meeting was held on the following Sunday afternoon, when addresses were given by Rev. Charles Strong, D.D.; Rev. E. I. Watkin, D.D.; Mr. W. J. Lormer, Mr. John Graham (president of the Trades Hall), and Mrs. Cresswell.

The result of this effort was that a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate this great evil, and the report of the commission fully justified all that had been said upon the platform. As a result, wages boards were appointed for the various trades, to regulate wages and working conditions.

A great compliment was paid Mr. Edgar, in that he was appointed chairman of the White Workers' Board, which was the first of the wages boards. He carried out his duties as arbitrator between employer and employee to the thorough satisfaction of both

parties, and he was later appointed chairman of the coopers' and jam makers' boards.

The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon became a settled institution, and various subjects were discussed on succeeding Sundays, such as "Out of Work, and Why," "The Unemployed Difficulty," "The Drink Curse," "Village Settlements," "The Opium Evil," and "The Gambling Evil."

Among the most effective speakers was Mr. W. H. Judkins, a brilliant orator, whose soul burned with indignation at the great evils that were ruining men. His addresses were powerful, and wonderful things were accomplished. Among these was the exposure of certain public men whose properties were being let for immoral purposes, and who were drawing their revenues from the proceeds of vice. In order to be sure of his ground, he went to the Titles Office and paid the usual search fee. He was thus enabled to ascertain the names of those who were owners of such property, and he had the courage to declare these names in public. It was a social bombshell, but it had the effect of purifying public life to some considerable degree.

There were many other social evils that were attacked, the Collingwood totalisator being a notable example. These attacks aroused all the opposition of the powers of evil in the city, and for a time Mr. Judkins had to be attended by a bodyguard to protect him from violence.

The brilliant career of this orator and champion for righteousness was cut short by a malignant disease. When it was known that he could not recover, a testimonial was presented to him in the shape of a monetary gift, the sum of £1813 being subscribed for this purpose. When he passed away a further sum was subscribed to place a headstone over his grave, while a beautiful memorial window can be seen in Wesley Church.

Other champions of national righteousness and social purity appeared from time to time upon the P.S.A. platform, including the Revs. Henry Worrall, T. S. B. Woodfull, R. Ditterich, and S. J. Hoban. The plea for social and civic and political righteousness was powerfully made, and the cause of the poor and unprivileged was strongly advocated.

Victoria is justly proud of its advanced labour legislation, much of which has been copied by other countries of the world. The enactment of these laws has been the task of Parliament, but the inspiration of them came largely from the platform of Wesley Church.

The P.S.A. did not escape adverse criticism. Bitter letters were written, and many of them were of that cowardly sort known as anonymous. On the other hand, there were many letters received expressing approval and admiration, and these counterbalanced those of the other kind.

The climax of criticism was reached, however, when a member of the Conference rose in his place and launched a vigorous attack upon the P.S.A. He pointed out the dangers and perils to the Church caused by these gatherings and speakers. A. R. Edgar sat in the Conference and listened in silence, but his face showed how deeply his heart was wounded. He attempted no defence, and rebutted no argument. He simply told a story, and this was the story:—"A few Sundays ago a man came into the P.S.A. and sat down in the far corner of the gallery. (He indicated the particular corner.) This was the first time that he had entered a church for many years, and he felt strange. The first hymn that afternoon was one that he had sung in his boyhood, and it brought back memories of the past. He could not restrain the tears. He wept through the hymn and through the service. In the evening he returned to the church, and when penitents were invited to come forward and

kneel at the communion rail, he was among the number who came. He sought and found the Saviour, and left the church a converted man.'' A. R. Edgar sat down amid subdued expressions of praise to God. No other criticism was offered that day.

The P.S.A. appealed to a section of the community that could not be reached by the ordinary church services, not even evangelistic services on Sunday evenings would attract them. It was for such principally that the Pleasant Sunday Afternoons were inaugurated. As the years have passed, all ranks of society have been drawn to these gatherings, and there is no diminution of the interest taken in them. The addresses delivered are of the highest order, and the tone of the gatherings is deeply spiritual.

The P.S.A. has held on its way without a break for forty years, and is wielding a great power in the land. The advent of the wireless broadcast has greatly extended its usefulness, as tens of thousands now listen-in to the addresses, instead of hundreds, as at the beginning. Speakers are gathered from all classes, and from all shades of political belief, for the platform knows no party. Judges, members of Parliament, labour leaders, journalists, leaders of commerce and industry, doctors and many others have given of their best. It is impossible to estimate the influence of the P.S.A. throughout the land.

Speaking at a P.S.A. meeting in 1911, Mr. Samuel Mauger stated that when the Royal Commission on ''sweating'' gave its report the Premier, Mr. J. B. Patterson, said that it was exaggerated. He was invited to see for himself, and when he had made an inspection of the condition of things, lasting until two o'clock in the morning, he declared that it was all too true.

The Anti-Sweating League, that has done more to alleviate the condition of the workers than any other organisation had been the outcome of the P.S.A. conferences, and the old-age pensions, women's suffrage,

and anti-gambling and liquor reform bills had all gained impetus there.

Early in the history of the mission A. R. Edgar was compelled to engage a theatre building for the Sunday evening services, as the plastered ceiling of Wesley Church began to fall, and a new ceiling had to be put in the building. The Alexandra Theatre was therefore taken, and the afternoon and evening services were held there until the church was renovated. It was during this period that a subject was discussed at one of the Sunday afternoon gatherings that caused quite a storm of adverse criticism, and meetings of protest were even held in the city.

There was before Parliament a bill for the altering of the act for the protection of young girls, and the meeting, attended by 3000, was held to protest against the amendment. The speakers were Madame Antoinette Sterling and Dr. D. Ergyn Jones. This was a most serious matter, as it concerned girls below a certain age, and some very plain things were said concerning facts that are not often spoken of in public. The ''Argus'' newspaper questioned the propriety of the speeches, but right-thinking men and women, who had the welfare of the young at heart, were in no doubt about the matter. It required courage, but A. R. Edgar was equal to the occasion, and defended his action in the matter.

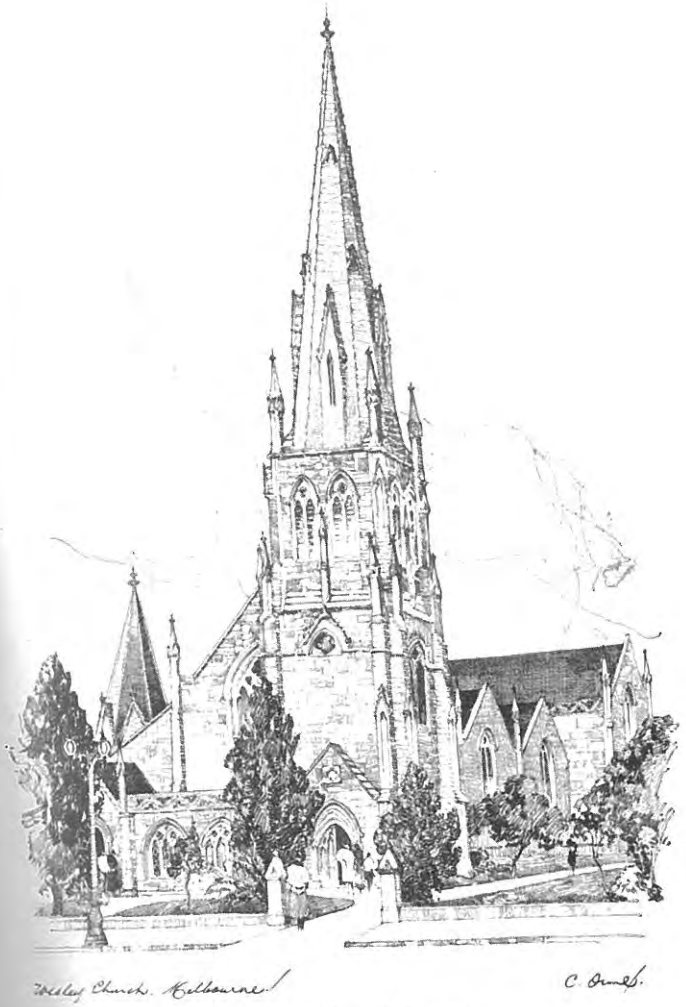
The experiment of holding services in a public hall showed that it was possible to gather great congregations together in other than church buildings; indeed, that this method had its advantages. Other attempts were afterwards made with even greater results. For thirteen months services were carried on in the Victoria Hall, Bourke Street, when the Gaiety Theatre, being more commodious, was taken, and services were held there for twelve years. In 1900 the work had grown to such an extent that services were held concurrently in Wesley Church and the Gaiety Theatre, while the Victoria Hall had to be taken again.

By this time A. R. Edgar had been joined by colleagues, otherwise such an extensive evangelism could not have been carried on.

There were many social questions upon which Mr. Edgar held very decided views, and to him they were moral and religious questions, for they affected the well-being of individuals, and sometimes of the community. It often required great courage to deal with these matters, as public opinion and public conscience had not been educated regarding them.

One of these was the employment of women as barmaids, which he regarded as neither beneficial to the women nor to the customers. He therefore launched an attack upon this usage in an address. The result was that a representative of the liquor trade took the Oxford Hall, in Bourke Street, in defence of the barmaids. In full evening dress he had mounted the platform, and was delivering a fierce indictment of A. R. Edgar, when something happened—the side door of the theatre opened, and the tall, dignified figure of A. R. Edgar was seen approaching the platform. He was recognised at once by the audience, and a great burst of cheering arose, for the crowd loved him. The speaker also saw the substantial apparition, and sat down. In vain the audience called to him to go on with his address; but the chairman excused him by saying that he was ill. The crowd then called for A. R. Edgar, and in response he mounted the stage and gave them an answer upon the barmaid question from his standpoint. He carried the audience with him, and it was one of the most extraordinary happenings of his life; indeed, it was almost unique.

All the services at Wesley Church are in the broad sense evangelical. The constant aim is to bring men into touch with Jesus Christ, and to win them to loyalty to Him. The form of the services, however, are varied, for A. R. Edgar was brought up in the Anglican Church, and always retained a love for the ritual of that Church. Hence the morning service at Wesley



Central Mission, Melbourne.

was more stately and ordered than either the afternoon P.S.A. or evening meeting. A friendly critic on one occasion described the services at Wesley as ritualistic in the morning, socialistic in the afternoon, and evangelistic at night.

Whatever truth there may be in the first two of these statements, the third is most certainly true, and the wonderful fact is that through all the history of the mission there have been few Sunday evening services held when some burdened penitent sinner has not found peace. There has ever been the mark of Divine approval.

A. R. Edgar had a wonderful gift for discovering men, and one discovery that he made proved of great blessing to the church and the community for many years. There lived in Melbourne a man named Christopher Mudd, generally known as Professor Mudd. He was a botanist, and, as one of the staff, had accompanied the late King Edward on his world tour when he was Prince of Wales. Mr. Edgar recognised his ability as a speaker, and invited him to address the P.S.A. gathering. He chose as his subject a most extraordinary theme, "Why Did God Make the Mosquito?" His address made a great impression, and he was invited from time to time to speak on similar occasions. Mr. Edgar recommended this man to the Rev. E. S. Bickford, who was General Secretary of Home Missions, and for years Christopher Mudd went through the length and breadth of Victoria, preaching and delivering lectures on various subjects in aid of the Home Missions Fund. The Church owed a great debt to Mr. Edgar for his wisdom in finding Mr. Mudd.

His Colleagues.

When A. R. Edgar began his work he was alone, and for five years he carried the whole burden of ministerial duties with whatever occasional help he could obtain. He was, however, feeling the strain too great, as the work had so developed that help was

needed. His choice of a colleague was the Rev. Charles Tregear, who had been twelve years in the ministry, and was full of energy and enterprise. The Conference of 1898 appointed him to the mission, and a more loyal colleague could not have been found. His first words to his new superintendent after the appointment had been made were, "Mr. Edgar, we will go in for a big revival." For five years they laboured together, until Mr. Tregear was again appointed to circuit work. During the first year very great responsibility fell upon the junior minister. Mr. Edgar, on account of failing eyesight, was compelled to visit London, but Mr. Tregear proved himself equal to his task, and did not allow the work to suffer.

In 1903 the Rev. Samuel J. Hoban succeeded Mr. Tregear. He had been associated with Mr. Edgar in the early days of his conversion. He was a brilliant preacher, and possessed other gifts that made him a most valuable helper in the mission. He had wonderful success in winning outcasts back to Christ, while his genius for raising funds for various objects was phenomenal. He continued to work with A. R. Edgar until 1909, when he was appointed to the superintendency of Lydiard Street Church, in Ballarat.

In 1906 the Rev. A. E. Albiston, M.A., was added to the staff, with a view of holding special midday services in the city for business men. These services were held in the Athenaeum each Thursday, and made a deep impression upon the audiences who gathered week by week. In addition to this, Mr. Albiston became the morning preacher at Wesley Church. He was, and is, a preacher of outstanding gifts, and for many years has held the position of Professor of Theology at the Theological Institution.

In 1908 the Rev. J. H. Cain was appointed to the mission, and this proved an eminently suitable appointment. Mr. Cain had the gift of organising, and was also very wise in counsel. He was able, therefore, to take a great deal of the burden of detail from the

shoulders of Mr. Edgar. Mr. Cain continued as one of the ministerial staff, and afterwards as superintendent until 1933, when he retired from the full work of the ministry.

There was always a bond of love and deep regard between the superintendent and Mr. Cain, and it enveloped them with a rare friendship as the years went by.

In 1910 A. R. Edgar's health was giving much concern. He himself felt that he was not able to bear the strain, and wished to retire. The committee of the mission did not wish that, but asked the Conference, as an alternative, to appoint the Rev. Alexander McCallum to the staff of the mission. This was done, to the great relief of the man who was feeling that his strength was giving way. They had been former colleagues, so that the friendship between the two men was very strong. Mr. McCallum remained in association with A. R. Edgar until he died, and then took up the superintendency.

Others who for shorter periods shared in the work were the Revs. T. B. Reed and Norman Higgs, and all found the "Bishop," as he was lovingly called, a great human and a great Christian.

Social Activities.

"There are lonely hearts to cherish
While the days are going by;
There are weary souls who perish
While the days are going by;
If a smile we can renew,
As our journey we pursue,
Oh, the good we all may do,
While the days are going by."

CHAPTER X.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.

A. R. Edgar was a philanthropist, he was a great lover of mankind, and he belonged to that order of Christian Socialists, of which Charles Kingsley and Frederick Denison Maurice were the outstanding representatives three-quarters of a century ago. He saw that in the city there were not only great vices that needed to be attacked, but great human needs that required to be met.

Village Settlements.

The times were very difficult. The "land boom" had burst a few years previously, and had caused widespread misery and destitution. Thousands were out of work, and poverty had invaded many homes. Something practical had to be done, and so at one of the Sunday Afternoon Conferences the subject of "Back to the Land" was discussed. The result of that discussion was the formation of the first village settlement in Victoria. The Government granted 1280 acres of land at Kardella, in South Gippsland, and made a grant of £500. This amount, with other donations, made it possible to start the project. Twelve men were sent to clear the site, and it was arranged that some 120 families were to follow. A great thanksgiving service was held to celebrate the founding of the settlement. At a P.S.A. A. R. Edgar told of a visit that he had paid to the settlement, when he had seen 130 healthy children who had been taken out of the squalor of the city and transferred to the fresh country surroundings.

Relief Works.

The winter was a hard one, and various schemes to help the workless were set on foot. The Government gave free railway passes to men who wanted to go to the country in search of work, and hundreds of men and boys were thus enabled to secure the employment that was not available in the city.

A Free Labour Bureau was instituted at the mission, where men could register for employment, and in this way many obtained work. There were many other ways in which the poor were helped, and the ground at the rear of Wesley Church became the scene of busy activities. Friends from the country, in response to the appeals, sent truck loads of firewood, and men were employed to chop this up, while women brought perambulators and men hand trucks to take the wood away. In this way warmth and cheer were brought to many a poor home during that winter.

In addition to this, quantities of rabbits, hares, potatoes and other products were sent by kindly hearts in the country, and these were distributed to the needy.

Committees of unemployed were formed, and these held their meetings in Wesley Church schoolroom, where they found warmth and comfort. All these efforts bore their rich fruits, as some of these men became active workers in the mission. One of them wrote thus to Mr. Edgar: "For years I have been divorced from the churches, but the bold step you have taken has won me back to the Church, and many others also."

The Sisterhood.

One of the most successful agencies connected with the mission was the "Sisterhood." A good work was being carried on by a devoted Roumanian, Mrs. Lennard, among foreigners in the city. A. R. Edgar spoke about this work at a Home Missions meeting held in the Auburn Church. He called his subject

"Foreign Mission Work at Home." There was present the daughter of the minister, Miss Clara Bath, who was so influenced by the address that she offered herself for mission work.

At a committee meeting held a short time afterwards, Miss Bath was received as a sister, and at the same meeting Miss Anthoness, afterwards known as Sister Hannah, was also accepted. Sister Clara continued in the work until 1894, when she took up missionary work in India. A house was taken in Mackenzie Street, and a Sisters' Home was established, with Mrs. Edgar as Home mother.

Sister Hannah continued in the mission for many years. She was a most capable worker, whose efforts for the fallen and outcast women and for little children is beyond praise. Her sister afterwards joined the sisterhood as Sister Emilie. There were also Sisters Lucy and Elinor, and since the early days of the mission many other devoted women have aided in the work. What that work has meant to the community it is impossible to say.

The South Yarra Home.

The South Yarra Home for unfortunate women was taken over by the mission in 1895. This Home had been in existence since 1882 under other management, but, being hampered by heavy debts, the trustees offered it, with the debts, to the mission. The committee decided to accept the responsibility, and the Home was formally opened on 17th July by Lady Snowden. It was a great undertaking, but God, Who had led the mission in other enterprises, led them in this also, with the result that hundreds of women, chiefly young women, have been befriended and helped back to a better life.

It is one of the sad features of our civilisation that such refuges should be necessary, but, until society is regenerated, such institutions will be needed. They not only shelter our unfortunate sisters in their days

of trouble, but furnish a stairway by which they may rise again.

The Hospice for Men.

If the South Yarra Home provided a refuge for women that was so needful, it was equally necessary that some place should be provided for men who were in circumstances of distress. There were no old-age pensions in those days, so a Hospice was established. Relief work was first started in premises that were rented in Lonsdale Street, where there was a soup kitchen and a night shelter for from 30 to 35 men. This was vacated during the following year for more suitable premises in George's Lane. The Government gave small grants for relief work and the purchase of blankets, but, in addition to this, Mr. E. L. Zox, M.L.A., took Mr. Edgar to the various warehouses in the city, from which he obtained in one day gifts of forty-two pairs of blankets.

The opening of this new Hospice was the occasion of great rejoicing, and addresses were delivered by the Acting Governor of Victoria, Sir John Madden, Chief Justice Way, of South Australia, who was Lieutenant-Governor of that State; the Hon. H. Foster, Sir Arthur Snowden, and Rev. W. H. Fitchett, B.A. The lease of this property was only for three years, and at the end of that time the Hospice was removed to Latrobe Street, near Spencer Street. This was a much more commodious building or group of buildings, for some of them had been used as a military barracks in the early days of the colony. A section was used for women also. The industrial part of this institution was chiefly in connection with matmaking, and quite a large number of homeless men found comfort and shelter and employment there. After twelve years the buildings were required by the Government, and a new site was secured in Arden Street, North Melbourne.

It is impossible to estimate the value of this part of the social work of the mission, as thousands of

hungry people were fed, and provided with clean, comfortable beds.

The Boys' Farm.

Yet another class needed help—the difficult boys. There were many boys in the city who had made a poor start in life. Too often they had not had a fair chance, their upbringing and environment had been bad. Some of them had come under the hand of the law as first offenders, and some were wayward and incorrigible, having got beyond the control of their parents. These form a problem in any community, and certainly they were a great problem in Melbourne.

The State had its reformatories, but in them the influences of religion, that were most essential for reformation, were to a great extent absent. Had the Church a mission to such? Surely it had, and now the question arose as to the best means of meeting this need. But God has wonderful ways of working, and so, in 1898, a tentative arrangement was made with the Primitive Methodist Church to work Lygon Street, Carlton, Church, in connection with the Central Mission. The Rev. George Cole had been appointed to Lygon Street that year, and began a work among the boys in the worst portion of Carlton, known as "Irish Town." A Boys' Brigade was formed, and a Gospel Tent Mission successfully carried on. This arrangement continued until 1902, when Methodist Union took place, and Mr. Cole became one of the ministers of the United Church.

In 1903 Mr. Cole paid a visit to New Zealand, and, during his absence, it was decided to establish a Boys' Training Farm on a large orchard at Burwood East. The owner, Mr. A. Hoadley, had refused £1500 for it, but when he knew that A. R. Edgar wanted it for work among boys, he transferred it to the mission for £1000, the other £500 being regarded as his personal gift. The farm was named "Tally Ho."

Mr. and Mrs. Max Brown were placed in charge for a short time, and then Mr. Cole and his good wife were transferred from Lygon Street to the farm. Mr. Cole possessed all the qualifications needful for this work, as he had been brought up on a farm, while Mrs. Cole, with her big, motherly heart, filled the position of house mother with great success. The farm was enlarged from time to time by the purchase of additional land as the work grew, suitable buildings were erected, and altogether the farm has fully justified its establishment. An incident in connection with one of the land purchases is of interest as showing Mr. Edgar's influence over men, and his power to enlist their sympathy and help. A piece of land adjoining the farm was owned by a Mr. S——, and A. R. Edgar waited upon him, with his secretary, to negotiate for the purchase of this property. The price asked was £1300, but the mission could only see its way to pay £1000.

"But," said the gentleman, "the property is fully worth the price I am asking."

"Yes," said Mr. Edgar, "I do not doubt it, but we can only afford £1000, and we want it for work among boys whom we are trying to reclaim, and you must help us in this work."

After some little thought Mr. S—— said, "Well, I suppose I must. The price is £1300, but if you pay me £1000 you will regard the £300 as my contribution to your mission."

"Thank you," said Mr. Edgar.

Then, turning to his secretary, he said, "Give Mr. S—— a cheque for £25 as a deposit." The agreement was closed, and within a fortnight the balance of the money was paid. Mr. Edgar received an acknowledgment from Mr. S——, who expressed his satisfaction at the prompt and businesslike way in which the matter had been completed, and then added, "This is the first time that I have been brought into contact with your work, but if in future I can help you in any way, do not fail to call upon me."

It was one of the great secrets of his success that he could make men see as he saw, that the work was worthy and urgent. At Tally Ho hundreds of boys have received training that has fitted them for life as good citizens, while characters have been formed under the spiritual influences of the Home that have been of the best and highest kind.

In all this work Mr. Edgar was deeply interested. His visits to the farm were always looked forward to by the boys, while his talks to them were listened to with greatest attention. The management of the farm was in the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Cole, but they worked in loyal harmony with the superintendent, whom they loved to call the "Bishop."

Bichloride of Gold Institute.

Another successful institution was the Bichloride of Gold Institute. No one could be engaged in mission work for any length of time without coming into contact with the victims of alcohol and drugs. The mission was continually meeting with such victims, who are among the most difficult persons to deal with.

In 1900 the bichloride of gold treatment of inebriety, the effects of morphia, cocaine and tobacco were brought under the superintendent's notice. Dr. Wolfenden had introduced this treatment into Australia, and had used it with great success. He, however, decided to return to England, and offered the formulae to the mission for the sum of £500. The offer was accepted, and the work begun. An institute was established at Jolimont, near the centre of the city, where patients who were cursed with the drink and drug habits were received and treated. The effect of the treatment was that it destroyed the craving for drink or drugs, and put the patient right back to where he was before he had begun their use. The institute was under the supervision of qualified medical practitioners, who had the welfare of the slaves of vice at heart, and who felt that this was part of their service for their Lord and Master. Hundreds

of men and women will bless God for the help afforded by the Bichloride of Gold Institute to themselves and their loved ones.

In all these social activities Mr. Edgar took the keenest interest. He had started his work without any definite plan, yet God had led him on step by step until the mission activities were widespread.

"The Old Folks' At Home."

Perhaps the most popular of all the social activities of the mission is the "Old Folks' At Home," and this was an idea which A. R. Edgar brought with him from Geelong. The plan was to gather the old folk together for a function that was to be entirely their own. Tea was provided for them, and after the tea had been partaken of an entertainment was arranged. It was a time of happy fellowship, and was greatly enjoyed by those who had passed the meridian of their days.

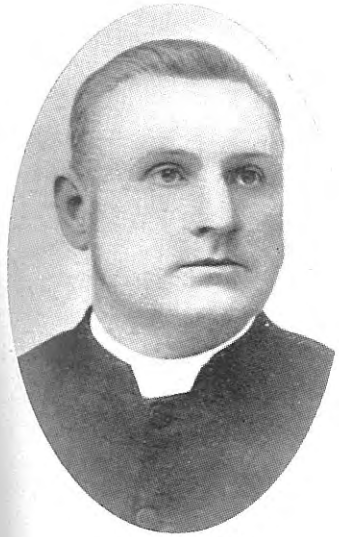
The first of these gatherings in connection with the mission was held in Wesley Church, but it was not quite a success, as there were some who looked upon it as a form of charity. This feeling was soon got over, and the function had to be held in the Melbourne Town Hall; eventually the Exhibition Building had to be secured. "The Old Folks' At Home" has been for many years a social fixture, and the sight of upwards of two thousand elderly people sitting down to tea is one to gladden the heart. Many of them look forward to it for the whole year. It involves the assistance of over two hundred helpers, and these are always forthcoming. The cost is generously met by friends of the mission. The interest taken in this yearly function is deep, and from time to time visits have been paid by Vice-Royalty, while ladies of social standing, such as the Lady Mayoress, Mrs. Justice Hodges, Mrs. Alfred Deakin, and Mrs. Gotch, have assisted in dispensing the tea.

Following the tea is the great meeting, when the old folk sing their favourite hymns, and themselves

provide musical and literary items for an hour. After this leading artists provide an excellent programme. During the evening a census is taken, and frequently some dear old soul who has passed the one hundredth milestone stands up and is accorded an ovation.

"The Old Folks' At Home" is one of the happiest functions that could well be imagined, and the happiness was shared during his lifetime both by the big, kindly-faced superintendent and the guests, who had come from far and near. His last visit to this gathering was on 25th March, 1914, only a few weeks before his death. He believed not only in the words of love, but also in the works of love. "That the kingdom of heaven that Jesus Christ came to establish was not in the clouds, but here upon earth."

As to whether the Church is to aim at the regeneration of the individual or of society A. R. Edgar was in no doubt, for he continually laboured for both. With Ian Maclaren, he held that "while the Church must labour to bring heaven here, that heaven is long in coming, and meanwhile the Church must comfort the oppressed, the suffering, the beaten, with the vision of the city of God."



Rev. A. R. Edgar



Mrs. Edgar



Mr. A. J. Derrick

The First Staff at Central Mission

Open-Air Preaching.

"Toil on, faint not, keep watch, and pray;
Be wise, the erring soul to win;
Go forth into the world's highway,
Compel the wanderer to come in."

—Dr. Bonar.

CHAPTER XI.

OPEN-AIR PREACHING.

A brief chapter must be devoted to work in the open air, for throughout his ministry A. R. Edgar was a great believer in open-air preaching. There are always multitudes whom it is almost impossible to gather into the churches to hear the Word of God; they have either no desire to hear, or they have remained so long outside that they are shy of entering a place of worship. If these are to be reached and won, the message of the Gospel must be taken to them.

"Go out in the by-ways and search them all:
The wheat may be there, tho' the weeds are tall;
Then search in the highway, and pass none by,
But gather from all for the home on high."

It was the Master's method, and has been followed again and again during the Christian centuries with amazing results. The work of the Preaching Friars in England, of George Whitefield, John Wesley, and General Booth, shows what an opportunity is afforded the preacher of proclaiming the message of God's saving grace to the people. Within a short radius of Wesley Church multitudes of people were to be found, and open-air work was organised.

It was not easy work, for there were many difficulties in the way. The civic by-laws forbade gatherings within certain distances of the main streets, and objections came from those who thought that the Gospel might injure their trade. However, the work was carried on, first in one place and then in another, chiefly on Saturday evenings.

For a long time meetings were held in front of a timber yard in Russell Street, with the firm's permission, and many were influenced for good. Opposition, however, was raised by a neighbouring publican, who objected to the gatherings, with the result that the permission was withdrawn.

A. R. Edgar was naturally indignant at this, and determined to preach in the streets in spite of opposition. He chose a most novel method, for, accompanied by Revs. G. H. Cole and T. S. B. Woodfull, he walked down Bourke Street preaching as he went. This caused a great sensation. It is very doubtful whether the authorities had power to prevent it, but strong representations were made to him, and he consented to desist from the use of this method. The work, however, did not cease, and for a long time services were held on a vacant allotment in Russell Street until the ground was built upon.

The crowds gathered from time to time, and while the meetings were in progress, good work was done among the people by the Sisters of the Mission and other workers. In this way many a wanderer was sought and won. Meetings were also held on Eastern Hill prior to the Sunday evening services, and at their close the mission party would march to the church led by the brass band. A transparency inviting people to the evening service was carried in front, and how many weary souls responded to the invitation and found rest and peace only eternity will reveal.

In addition to these organised efforts other workers carried on this form of real mission effort in the back streets and lanes of the city. In all his open-air work music formed an important element. Sometimes the brass band was used to attract attention, but the singing of the Gospel message was the principal means used.

There is an appeal in song. People will stop to listen to the choruses, and often some line will linger in their memories.

This method was used by A. R. Edgar in all his circuits, and, possessing a good voice himself, he sometimes sang a solo to convey his message.

One who heard him more than fifty years ago in the little town of Buninyong remembers the effect produced upon him. Standing at the cross roads of the town with a band of workers, they sang the Gospel hymns, and gave short exhortations to the people. On that particular evening A. R. Edgar sang alone, and the words of the song were these:

"The mistakes of my life have been many,
The sins of my heart have been more;
And I scarce can see for weeping,
But I'll knock at the open door.
I know I am weak and sinful,
It comes to me more and more;
But when the dear Saviour shall bid me come in,
I'll enter the open door."

In this kind of work he had a great advantage over the ordinary man, for his great stature enabled him to command his audience without any platform upon which to stand. He used to regard it as most healthful, too, from the preacher's standpoint. There were some who were afraid that their voices might be injured by speaking in the open air, but his contention was that if the voice is properly managed the preaching in God's pure, fresh air will strengthen rather than impair it.

A. R. Edgar adopted the open-air work as a part of his ministry, with most blessed results.

Before the Rulers.

Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued;
But take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God.

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE THE RULERS.

A. R. Edgar was the soul of human kindness; trouble or sorrow or distress never appealed to him in vain. He had also a great tenderness for the erring, and frailty and failure could always be sure of his sympathy. But whenever he was confronted with wrong, wherever he felt that there was injustice being done or wickedness committed, he blazed with indignation, and spoke with vehemency and courage. So there came to him one of the most trying experiences of his life, when in August, 1894, he was called to the Bar of Parliament to answer to the charge of a breach of privilege.

This was in connection with an address which he had delivered at the P.S.A. in Wesley Church on Sunday afternoon, 19th August, 1894, in which he made certain severe criticisms of Parliamentary life.

The report of the address appeared in the Melbourne "Age" newspaper on Monday morning, and was as follows:—"Yesterday afternoon the Rev. A. R. Edgar lectured in Wesley Church at the usual P.S.A. service on 'The need of good Government to extricate the country from its present state of depression, and the responsibilities of electors in this direction. . .' 'You have,' said the speaker, 'individuals in Parliament who are a disgrace to the community, men who are known to be liars and profligates, men who are prepared to tread under foot everything that is noble to attain their ends.' "

The House was in session at the time, and the matter was brought under the notice of the Speaker. The Premier, Sir James Patterson, was asked by a member "to take such steps as may be necessary

to protect this House from such slanderous statements."

After some discussion the member moved: "That the foregoing statement read by the Clerk, as reported in the 'Age' newspaper of 20th August, is a slanderous breach of privilege."

The debate which followed was lengthy, and some strong opinions were expressed concerning his utterances. But the remarkable fact was that among those who spoke strongly against the motion and defended A. R. Edgar most emphatically were a Roman Catholic and a Jew—Dr. Maloney and Mr. Zox. It is only fair to say that the Premier entirely disagreed with the whole procedure.

Dr. Maloney, in speaking, said: "It would ill become me as one who has worked shoulder to shoulder with the Rev. A. R. Edgar to remain silent on this occasion. As Mr. Edgar also belongs to a different religion from myself, I can speak plainly and straight with regard to him. Now I may say that I do not believe that Mr. Edgar would use those words—if he said them—unless he had some foundation for so doing. I will say for Mr. Edgar that there is no better man in the House than he—no man who has a more keen desire to do good to the workers of the colony. Indeed, he has done more than any member of this House." "Question?" "It is a fact. If the Hon. Member had worked side by side with him as I have done"—here the Speaker intervened, and the sentence remained unfinished.

The speech, however, indicates the esteem in which Mr. Edgar was held by those outside his own religious communion who had been associated with him in the work of social and moral reform. Dr. Maloney was a prominent Labour representative. The motion, however, was agreed to.

A member then moved: "That the Rev. A. R. Edgar attend this House to-morrow at half past four o'clock."

This gave rise to a further debate in which members strongly urged that nothing should be done in the matter. Indeed the Premier went so far as to move that "the House proceed with the order of the day." The motion was, however, agreed to, and among those who voted for it were some of A. R. Edgar's best friends, who stated that he would welcome the opportunity of clearing himself.

He was accordingly called to the Bar of the House, brought there by the Sergeant-at-Arms. It is not often that such an experience falls to the lot of a Methodist minister. Only on one other occasion has this happened in Victoria, when in 1906 the Rev. Henry Worrall was summoned to the Bar of Parliament on account of some remarks that he had made concerning the responsibility of a Minister of the Crown for the murder of a man who had been kicked to death on a racecourse.

The feeling in the House was tense as the Speaker asked Mr. Edgar if the report in the "Age" newspaper was correct. Mr. Edgar replied that "it was not quite correct." The Speaker then said: "If the report is not correct, of course we do not require to deal any further with the matter."

Several members, however, thought that the Speaker had not heard the answer correctly, and Mr. Edgar was asked to retire. After considerable discussion, he was recalled to the Bar, and was asked again, "Is the report correct or not?" Mr. Edgar replied, "It is not a correct report, Mr. Speaker." The Speaker did not regard this as a sufficient answer, and asked him to kindly state in what way it was not correct.

A. R. Edgar then asked permission to read an explanation that he had written, and after some

hesitation on the part of the Speaker this was allowed. Mr. Edgar then read the following statement:—

"I beg to state at the Bar of this House that I have said nothing in my address to my audience on Sunday last which I can withdraw. The newspaper reports are not quite accurate, and I have not been fully reported, but I deny that I said anything which can by any fair-minded man be construed into contempt of Parliament. I have the greatest respect for Parliament, and I have at all times endeavoured to get the people to trust to Parliament to do them justice, and to assist social reforms.. But I intended to tell my people on Sunday last, and I did tell them, that many of the Members of the Parliaments of the people were a disgrace to the community, and I told them that the people themselves were to blame for sending men into Parliament who ought not to be there. I cannot withdraw these my conscientious convictions as a Christian minister, and with the highest respect for the Parliament of this colony, and because I respect it, I must affirm that in the interests of Parliament and of the people it is very necessary that none but men of the highest moral character be admitted into Parliament. I desire to expressly point out that the general character of my address was in connection with all Parliaments, and not the Parliament of Victoria alone. I was thinking at the time, I may say, of such instances as Jabez Balfour, and cases like that, and of the financial frauds disclosed amongst Members of Parliament in Canada, and in the Panama scandals. With such instances as these impressed upon my mind I said, 'That scoundrels and blacklegs were too often returned to Parliament,' not 'liars and profligates' as reported. This is all I have to say."

After the reading of the statement several Members desired to ask other questions, which the Speaker disallowed.

Mr. Edgar then withdrew from the Bar. The Premier, Sir James Patterson, had at the commencement of the proceedings moved "That the House having heard the statement of the Rev. A. R. Edgar that he was not accurately reported in the 'Age' newspaper, do now proceed with the next order of the day." This now became the motion before the chair, and was carried.

So ended this exciting episode, and A. R. Edgar left the House without any censure being passed upon him.

The incident, however, caused quite a stir in the Parliamentary dovecote, and many Members were made to feel that their private as well as their public life must be above suspicion. That the Victorian Parliament has for the past forty years been free from grave political scandal may be due in a measure to the strong and fearless opinions publicly expressed by A. R. Edgar on this occasion.

The Presidential Year.

"Me, if Thy grace vouchsafe to use,
Meanest of all Thy creatures, me,
The deed, the time, the manner choose,
Let all my fruit be found in Thee;
Let all my works in Thee be wrought,
By Thee to full perfection brought."

—*C. Wesley.*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRESIDENTIAL YEAR.

The highest honour in the power of the Methodist Conference to bestow upon one of its ministers is to elect him to the Presidential chair, and this honour was conferred upon A. R. Edgar in 1901. He was the last of the line of Presidents of the Wesleyan section of the Methodist Church, for the union of all the branches of Methodism in Victoria had been agreed upon, and was to be consummated in 1902.

His election was a most popular one. It was the expression of the esteem of his brethren for one who was greatly beloved by them, and also their mark of appreciation of the splendid work that he had done for God and the Church during the twenty-seven years of his ministry. A. R. Edgar regarded it as among the greatest honours of his life, and expressed his warmest appreciation of it.

His presidential robes were the gift of the ladies of the Church, and were presented to him by Mrs. A. Hoadley.

It is needless to say that he filled the position with dignity and ability, and at the end of the sessions it was resolved, "That the thanks of the Conference be presented to the Rev. A. R. Edgar for the able and courteous manner with which he had presided over the sessions of this Conference."

His defective sight made it difficult at times for him to see who was standing upon his feet to speak, but he was assisted in this and in other matters by those who had more perfect vision.

His year of office was a memorable one both for the Church and for Australia, as the Commonwealth

was inaugurated amid great rejoicings and festivities. To celebrate the event, a member of the Royal family, in the person of Prince George, Duke of Cornwall and York, together with the Duchess, visited Australia. The Duke opened the first Federal Parliament in the Exhibition Building, in Melbourne, with appropriate ceremonial.

As President of the Conference, Mr. Edgar took part in these celebrations, and officially represented the Wesleyan Church. The Conference had resolved "That the President of the Conference be authorised to adopt as his official dress a costume similar to that prescribed by the Lord Chamberlain as the official dress of the President of the British Conference." Mr. Edgar wore the dress at the official functions, and upon no Church dignitary were they more becoming.

An incident of unusual interest occurred at one of the celebrations. Mr. Edgar was standing with a group of ministers and others, when the Duke passed them in the Exhibition Building. His Royal Highness turned to his gentleman-in-waiting and said, "I would like that tall clergyman to be presented to me." It was a mark of distinction, and Mr. Edgar was duly presented.

Another incident occurring at the same time showed the esteem in which he was held by those of other religious persuasions. As the various representatives of the Churches were walking up the Exhibition Building towards the dais, the Roman Catholic Archbishop, Dr. Carr, put his arm through Mr. Edgar's, and said, "I want to walk with you to-day, Mr. Edgar."

In connection with the Church there were important happenings. Preparations were being made for the consummation of Methodist Union, and the Union committees were hard at work, the President

being called upon to devote much time and attention to these matters. The boundaries of circuits had to be adjusted, places had to be taken from one circuit and attached to another, the number of ministers to be appointed had to be decided upon, and altogether it was a busy year.

There was an increase in membership of two hundred and fifty reported to the Conference, and the following resolutions were passed:—

> "That this Conference recognises gratefully the blessing of God upon the varied Christian labours of our ministers, the other agents, and the members of our Church during the past year, of which the visible evidence is the increase of 250 members in the year."

And—

> "Recognising the great source and secret of spiritual success is the grace of our Father, God, in the mediatorship of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, we give up ourselves in renewed devotion to God's cause, praying and striving that a Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit may be granted to our churches in the year upon which we have entered, and the new century which has begun."

The year's activities were many, and included the completion of Queen's College Debt Extinction Fund, so ably managed by the Rev. John G. Wheen, which had considerably reduced the burden of debt upon the College.

During the previous year a Royal Commission had been appointed to prepare a scheme of Scripture lessons to be read in the State schools, and the Conference expressed its profound gratification that the scheme had been unanimously agreed to. It affirmed the conviction that Bible instruction should

form part of the school curriculum, and pledged itself to use every effort to gain this object."

The Twentieth Century Debt Extinction and Thanksgiving Fund had been inaugurated in the previous year, and the Rev. W. Williams, F.L.S., had been appointed secretary. The report was presented to the Conference, showing that promises amounting to 51,063 guineas had been received.

The death of Queen Victoria had occurred during the year, and the Conference expressed its profound sense of the loss sustained by the subjects of the British Empire through the death of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The Conference also expressed its loyalty to the person and throne of His Majesty King Edward VII.

The South African War was taking place, and a suitable resolution of sympathy with the sick and wounded, as well as the widows and fatherless, and all others who had been bereaved, was passed.

One of the most terrible massacres of missionaries and native Christians had taken place in China during the Boxer rising, and the Conference "expressed its profound grief at the loss by violent death which missionary societies having their operations in China have sustained."

A very pleasing function took place at the Conference. Two of the ministers, Revs. John Watsford and William A. Quick, attained the diamond jubilee of their ministry, and "the Conference offered its congratulations, and placed on record its gratitude to Almighty God for the long life vouchsafed to these venerable fathers, and for their abundant labours."

The minutes of the Conference were read at the close of the sessions, and signed by the President and Secretary as usual. These were the minutes of the last Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Victoria, and there was a pathetic interest attaching itself to this final act.



Sister Hannah



Sister Lucy



Sister Elinor



Sister Emilie

The First Sisters at Central Mission

The writer was one of the assistant secretaries, and has in his possession the pen with which the minutes were signed.

Not the least important of the duties of the President during his year of office is to visit the various circuits and address words of encouragement and inspiration to the congregations. Wherever possible Mr. Edgar did this, and his visits were accompanied by rich results. These gatherings were called "the President's conventions," and were of a deeply spiritual character. One such convention, held at Portland during the ministry of the Rev. Thomas Collins, is typical of the many that were held throughout the State. The President had concluded a convention at Hamilton, and had come on to Portland, where a banquet was prepared that was attended by a large number of persons from his own and from the sister Churches. People had also come in from the surrounding district for miles. An "address" was presented to Mr. Edgar expressing the "appreciation of the people of Portland and district of his great work in the city and for the Church at large."

After the banquet a meeting was held in the church, which was completely filled, and he gave an address on "The Higher Christian Life," when many felt drawn to holier living. Tea was provided in the drill hall, and was attended by the general public, who were attracted by the visit of this great man.

After the tea another meeting was held in the church, when Mr. Edgar gave an address on "Some Aspects of Evangelistic and Social Work in the City" that stirred the hearts of the hearers mightily. The impression made was very deep, and Portland felt the influence of the President's convention for many days.

The Presidential visits to the circuits are a part of the duties of all the occupants of the chair of Conference, but it is doubtful whether any President

ever made such a profound impression as A. R. Edgar, and the Church throughout the State received a great impetus.

Methodist Union.

The Conference of 1902 was one that will for all time be memorable in the history of Victorian Methodism, for it was its first Conference of "The Methodist Church of Australasia." All the various branches of Methodism had united, and the ministers and lay representatives of the uniting Churches had gathered in Wesley Church.

The Rev. W. H. Fitchett, B.D., LL.D., was elected to the chair as the first President, and it was in every respect a great Conference. The sessions were characterised by brotherliness of spirit, and the public gatherings were very largely attended.

At an appointed time the retiring President gave the following address, which is taken from the daily press, but, prior to his doing so, Rev. Samuel Knight, in a happy speech, moved the usual vote of thanks to the retiring President, Rev. A. R. Edgar.

Rev. S. T. Withington seconded the motion, which was supported by Mr. J. W. Eggleston, and carried with acclamation.

The President then presented Rev. A. R. Edgar with the usual Conference Bible and Hymn Book.

> "Rev. A. R. Edgar, in rising to respond, was received with enthusiastic applause. In the course of a stirring address, he said he occupied a unique position, as he was the last of a long line of Wesleyan Presidents. In him the race became extinct, and already he was a disembodied spirit, having joined the ranks of the ex-Presidents, described as people who had seen better days. As the final representative of a worthy ancestral line, he asked the Conference to gratefully remember with him the men of God who had laid broad, and deep, and strong, the foundations of Methodism in this fair land.

"Forty-eight years ago this city first entertained a Wesleyan Methodist Conference, and since that time many gifted leaders had occupied the Presidential chair, and had all passed beyond the vale, leaving behind them the testimony that they had pleased God. After referring to the death of Queen Victoria, the accession of Edward VII, and the Royal visit to Australia last year, he said he greatly rejoiced that in the opening of the Federal Parliament with prayer the Commonwealth made public recognition of its religious obligations.

"Another event of international importance last year was the assassination of President McKinley, a great and good man, and, as Methodists, they were touched more closely than others by the death of one who had proved himself a notable Methodist layman.

"A memorable event in the history of worldwide Methodism last year was the assembly in London of the Methodist Ecumenical Conference, with its 500 delegates, drawn from the five continents of the globe. It was significant of the worldwide mission of Methodism, and proved a common meeting ground for the interchange of opinion, the manifestation of brotherly sentiment, the crystallisation of tendencies towards progress, and the collation of the statistics of the people of Methodism throughout the world. The record of that great Conference was that during the past decade Methodism had advanced all along the line. Its membership was larger, its churches and buildings were more numerous, and its hold on the people greater than ever before.

"When John Wesley was called home in 1791 Methodism counted 120,000 members and half a million adherents. When Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 it had embraced a membership of a million, with four million

adherents. In 1901 they claimed a membership of six and a half millions, with about 30 millions of adherents. In such figures they found a visible seal and sign of the presence of the living God in the Church, and an incentive to them in Australia to renewed effort and sacrifice in the interests of Christ's kingdom.

"Among very pleasant recollections of his year of office, the President's conventions occupied a prominent place, and if continued he believed they might be made distinctly valuable to the Church, enabling her chief officer to come into personal contact with the masses of their people, and forming a valuable instance and extension of that connexional principle of which they were all so proud.

"One of the pleasantest hours of his official year was spent at the gathering of friends of Fathers Quick and Watsford, assembled to celebrate the diamond jubilee of their ministry. But the great, the outstanding, event of his year of office was that Methodist Union—so long hoped for, prayed for, worked for—had come at last. To-day they met as a united Church, brought together by the good hand of God, and Methodism had, at last, become what it was in the days of Wesley, a unit. They were once again the people called Methodists, and he thought their venerable founder, now with God and the Church triumphant in the skies, who had been saved through the ministry of Methodism, rejoiced with them to-day, at being able to sing together—

"'One family, we dwell in Him;
One Church, above, beneath.'

"Forgetting the things that were behind, and pressing forward to the things that were before, they should now press toward the mark for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus, which was that they should go back to the

old line of consecrated enthusiasm, vigorous initiative, persistent effort, and confident testimony. The first need of the hour was a permeating, irresistible spirit of unity in their own hearts, and their union should manifest itself in more zealous efforts for the land in which God had placed them.

"Unity within ought to ensure concerted and aggressive effort to touch those outside the churches, and he hoped the United Church would show the reality of its religious profession to the point of generous giving in support of Church enterprises. The sooner they got rid of the crippling fetters of debt the better would it be for the progress of their real work. And while hoping that the Church would never be without its rich men, he trusted it would be the Church of the common people. God loved the common people, or he would not have made so many of them.

"If Methodism were to increasingly win the regard and confidence of men, it would be because of its consecrated ministry. He feared the presence of some perfunctory preachers in their ranks, men who had lost their energy, missed their vocation, but continued to demand appointments and cripple circuits. What they wanted was a more effective ministry, the abandonment of much that was stereotyped in their methods, and less trust in the business side of appointments."

It is also the duty of the retiring President to deliver the charge to the newly-ordained ministers. That year there were but two—Abraham Hambly and James Lloyd Haslam, and it fell to the lot of Mr. Edgar to address to these young men words of counsel and instruction and warning. The charge was based upon the text in St. Matthew's Gospel, chapter 7, and verses 28 and 29—"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the

people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Only the following newspaper report of the sermon has been preserved, but it is sufficiently full to give an outline of the thought pursued, though not enough to give an adequate idea of the effect produced:—

"The preacher set forth the fact that this great declaration followed the Sermon on the Mount, and in that light it must be interpreted. Jesus was making a proclamation concerning His kingdom. In the Sermon on the Mount He laid down the constitution of the kingdom of heaven. That constitution was to continue through all time. The constitutions of earthly kingdoms were always passing through amendments. For instance, in the formation of the Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth it was urged that it must not be made too rigid, because changing circumstances would probably necessitate amendment. But Jesus Christ had laid down the constitution of His kingdom nearly two thousand years ago, and, though the white light of criticism had beaten upon it throughout that long period, yet no man to-day can suggest any amendment of it.

"In Christ's declaration we find the hidden meaning of the Ten Commandments. The Voice that uttered these memorable commandments is the Voice that uttered the Sermon on the Mount. The Voice that uttered the Ten Commandments spoke amid the thunder and terror of Sinai to an affrighted people, but the same Voice uttering the Sermon on the Mount drew people to Him Who spoke. The people of Israel requested Moses that 'the Voice should not speak to them any more,' but those who listened to His Voice on the mount were astonished. They were charmed and attracted.

"The teaching of Jesus may be epitomised in that newer and greater commandment, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Such a declaration made the people astonished at His doctrine.

"Then we must notice that the manner of Jesus, as well as the matter of His teaching, filled the people with astonishment. He did not speak as the scribes, but as one having authority. These scribes boasted of their antiquity as a class, and based their authority on that ground, and there are in many places men who strive to base their authority on ecclesiastical antiquity. These scribes traced their succession back through the ages to the days of Moses, but this availed them nothing, for their day was gone, and the common people turned away and left them to their wrangling controversies.

"And to you also, my young brethren, men will come who will deny the validity of your orders, but by the power of the Holy Spirit you will so preach Christ that the people will be attracted by your teaching, and will receive it with gladness of heart.

"Notice, too, that Jesus came with a living Voice to speak to living men. He spoke as one having authority. He uttered truths that were bold and dogmatic, and set them forth in terms that were striking and original. And yet, He did not repel men. Instead of driving them away, He drew them to Him. They gathered about Him with eagerness and astonishment.

"One of the most striking features of the present day—so the press is reiterating—is the drifting away from dogmatic preaching. It is argued that if you preach dogmatic theology the people will turn from you. I assure you that I do not believe this, for I am convinced that the heart of humanity wants something definite. We must not misunderstand the boldness and directness of that firm declaration of Christ, 'He that

believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him.' Surely that is dogmatic enough! The world does not want your opinions or theories; it wants the clear, direct, dogmatic teaching of your Divine Master.

"I urge you to lay hold of Jesus as a personal Saviour, and let Him grip your inner being. He will speak the message through you to the people, and the message will be with authority. In the spiritual experience uttered by you to-night you have declared that you were moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you the office of this ministry. I implore you to hold fast to that.

"In order that you may speak like Christ, you must keep company with Him, and you must also know much of men. I am inclined to think that the average preacher knows more about books than about men. Dr. Parker, when interviewed as to the secret of his power in keeping thousands of men around him in the very heart of modern London, declared that he made a study of the men he met on trams and trains, and so got at the very heart of humanity. Valuable as your 'study' must ever be, with its shelves of books, you must remember constantly that if you would speak with authority you must become students of men, you must understand their needs. Christ drew forth the love of men because He revealed a perfect knowledge of their deepest needs.

"Permit me to remind you that as Methodist preachers you have, in regard to this knowledge of human needs, a glorious heritage. Your spiritual ancestors were men in whose very bones there burned an intense passion for the souls of men, because they knew how great were their needs.

"I would have you to observe also that our Lord was not satisfied with simply proclaiming

the Sermon on the Mount, for He went to the multitude and set a noble example of how to practise His own principles. Coming down from the mountain, He was met by a leper. Who knows how the sufferer was attracted to Jesus? It may be that hanging upon the outskirts of the multitude, he, too, heard Christ's words of tenderness and authority, and thus he intercepts the Master with the pathetic cry, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' And He stretched forth His hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be thou clean.'

"Now in the healing of the leper we have the authority of our Lord in action. Leprosy is a type of sin. It means corruption, it means pain and separation from society. It is a blood disease, and it permeates the whole body. And oh, my brethren, sin is a blood disease, but, thank God, 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.'

"In this city there are many corrupt and corrupting men and women, who bear honoured names, and yet who are sinking deeper and deeper into sin. Acts of Parliament cannot reform such, but there stands One in your midst Who is the Son of God and the Son of Man, and He speaks to you with authority concerning them, and yet with great tenderness. You are to go forth in His name, and with His authority, and take to them the only Gospel that can cleanse from sin. We remember that on one occasion there came to Jesus a Roman centurion, a man having authority over a hundred soldiers. This man was in great trouble. His servant was under the power of disease, and death threatened. But with his keen vision he recognised in Jesus the Captain of the armies of men, possessing supreme authority, and so he cried, 'But speak the word

only, and my servant shall be healed.' And Jesus said unto the centurion, 'Go thy way, as thou hast believed so be it done unto thee,' and the servant was healed that very hour. He spake with authority. You have not to go very far to-day to find men in trouble, but you may speak to them with the authority of Him Who is able to meet their deepest need.

"My young brethren, you can make your life comfortable. You can go into your study and so close the door that you will never hear the bitter cries of men and the sobs of the children. You can so train your minds as to have no personal knowledge of God's most stricken ones, but I urge you to go forth with the beautiful and authoritative message of your Master, for then the multitudes will hear you with gladness.

"In this Gospel we have also the case of Peter's wife's mother, who was stricken with fever. Her life was burning away, and she, perhaps, was tossing in delirium. Here is a case in which Jesus comes into personal contact. He grasps the sufferer with Divine pity and authority, and healing power goes forth from Him. We, too, must come into close touch with suffering humanity if we would illustrate the authority of the Master.

"He then related some telling facts that had come under his own observation that illustrated how the contagion of evil blasts human life and character. Then, with a voice that thrilled the vast audience, the preacher cried, 'God forbid that we should rest while sin thus continues to ruin this city. Go, think of the broken-hearted. Go, minister to mothers and fathers who are crushed because their boys and girls have been carried away in the delirium of sin.'

"After bearing testimony to the power of Christ in sustaining him in his own personal

sorrows, for he had been bereaved of two sons, he very tenderly besought all present to carry away from the old church the consciousness of the Living Christ, so that the new year of Methodist history might be the greatest year of all."

The reporter that night confessed his inability to convey the power of the message. It was beyond the power of pen and ink to reproduce the wonderful magnetism that drew every listener's heart not only to the preacher, but to the great Divine but invisible Personality who sat kinglike within the preacher's soul.

It was a blessed service that recalled the best traditions of powerful preaching, and a weary woman, as she slowly walked out of Wesley Church into the glare and rush of the big city, said, "I am not sorry that I came miles to hear Mr. Edgar to-night." Her feeling was shared by all present.

Thus ended the Presidential year, in some respects the greatest year of his life, and he handed on the office to his successor, having worthily maintained all the highest traditions of the chair.

Voyaging.

"Lord, Whom winds and seas obey,
Guide us through the watery way;
In the hollow of Thy hand
Hide, and bring us safe to land."

—C. Wesley.

CHAPTER XIV.

VOYAGING.

Three voyages were made by A. R. Edgar to the other side of the world, the first being in 1891, during his ministry at Yarra Street, Geelong. The heavy strain of the work had told upon his health, which at last gave way, and under medical advice he took a trip to England. It was purely a rest trip, and consequently he was not brought into prominence in any of the churches of the Old Land. The rest had the desired effect, and he came back reinvigorated to continue his ministry.

His welcome home was most enthusiastic, and a great surprise had been prepared for him. During his absence one of the elect ladies of Yarra Street Church—Mrs. G. M. Hitchcock—had conceived the idea of a new parsonage, and it was largely by her efforts that funds were raised to build the new home for the minister. It was one of the many ways in which the people showed their kindness to him and their warm appreciation of his work.

He gave of his best, and the words of Christ were fulfilled in him. "Give and it shall be given you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom."

Next to the joy of meeting his wife and children again was the joy of returning to his work among such a warm-hearted and appreciative people.

His second visit to England was taken on account of eye trouble, from which he had suffered for many years. This was made possible by the generosity of a gentleman who had noticed the difficulty that Mr. Edgar had in reading the Scriptures. A Bible of handy size with large, clear type was used by him,

and even then he had to hold the book very close to his face in order to read.

The friend, who wished to be anonymous, presented him with £400 to enable him to go to London, and consult the specialist, Dr. Nettleship. It was arranged that his eldest daughter, Katie, should accompany him, as he would require attention while his eyes were undergoing treatment.

He left by the R.M.S. "Victoria" with the good wishes of thousands who gathered on the pier to wish him "bon voyage." His period of absence was extended so as to allow time for the treatment, and though he did not receive all the benefit that was desired, he did receive sufficient to make the visit worth while.

Though his eyes were giving him trouble, he was otherwise well in health, and was able to preach and lecture in various parts of the United Kingdom. In London he preached in the West End Mission, which was then in charge of that prince of Welsh preachers, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M.A. In Manchester he preached in the great Mission Hall for Rev. Samuel Collier, and also at the Leeds Mission. He met with many of the leading ministers of England, such as the Rev. Dr. Agar Beet and Rev. Samuel Chadwick.

A rather remarkable experience happened to him in Manchester. While he was sitting in a restaurant one foggy morning, the door opened and three men entered. One of them darted across the room, saying, "My precious friend." He then threw his arms around Mr. Edgar's neck and kissed him affectionately. It was Gipsy Smith. The Gipsy had visited Australia in 1894 with the Rev. Thomas Cook, the great evangelist, and had told the story of his life in Wesley Church. It was in Melbourne he had first met A. R. Edgar, and had learned to love him, and now in Manchester he met

him again. It is needless to say the affection was mutual.

He took the opportunity of gathering all the information possible regarding the spiritual and social sides of mission work in great cities, and for this purpose visited as many of their institutions as he was able to in the time at his disposal.

He paid several visits to Dr. Stephenson's Homes for Children, and spoke to the boys and girls. He also met the staff, and discussed with them the problems of the work. He was shown through all the factories and workshops of that vast institution, and came away greatly impressed with the scale of that magnificent social work.

He also paid a brief visit to Scotland, and went far north to the Highlands to see the mother of one of the members of the Central Mission in Melbourne. This man, a professional man, had gone astray in Victoria, and had wandered far into sin and vice, but under the ministry of A. R. Edgar had been led back to God and a life of usefulness. It was his wish that Mr. Edgar should visit his mother, and his desire was complied with at some cost of time and money. The visitor was fully repaid by the gratitude of that Scotch mother.

There was one part of the Old Land that could not be missed, and that was Ireland. He went from north to south of the green isle, and was deeply interested in all that he saw. He conducted special services in the Belfast Mission, and preached in other parts of Ireland. The thrilling moment, however, was reserved for his visit to his native Tipperary, which he had left forty-four years before. Yes! there was the old home, the house in which he was born, and it was with the deepest satisfaction that he visited it again.

During this second visit he rendered valuable service to Victoria, for the Government had

requested him to deliver a series of lectures on Victoria in various parts of England. The Agent-General provided him with photographic slides, and with these he illustrated the products of the State, the city, and scenery of the land.

Needless to say, the interests and reputation of Victoria did not suffer at his hands, and the audiences were delighted with his descriptions. He received the thanks of the Government on his return for this service.

In addition to his lectures on Victoria, he also lectured on his own work at Wesley. The title of this lecture was "Music, Song, and Story of the Central Mission," and the friends of the Church overseas rejoiced to hear of the progress of the Kingdom of God in Australia.

In 1906 his health was giving great concern to the committee of the Central Mission as well as to his family. It was therefore arranged that he should pay a visit to New Zealand. This visit lasted for some months, and he returned much refreshed.

In the following year his health broke down again, and it was found necessary for him to have a prolonged rest. For this purpose he decided to pay a third visit to England, and to go to America also. His daughter Maud accompanied him, and nothing eventful happened until the "Suevic" was within sight of the coast of Cornwall, when in a thick fog and a heavy sea she went aground. The ship was wrecked, but a terrible disaster was averted because "the speed of the vessel helped by the scud of the waves piled her up on the top of a reef where she lay comfortably enough as in a cradle." This was the account of the wreck given in the "Times" newspaper.

There were five hundred and sixty souls on board, and it took twelve hours to get all safely ashore at Falmouth, fifteen miles away. It was feared that the shock would have been prejudicial to his

health, but he stood the exposure well, and suffered no ill effects. He spent a very quiet time in England, taking little part in public affairs except to attend the Imperial Conference.

He then crossed to America, and as this was the first time that he had seen anything of "Uncle Sam" in his own land, he took full advantage of all that he saw and heard while in America. A rather amusing incident occurred one Sunday morning as he set out with his daughter to go to one of the churches. They passed one of the largest Presbyterian Churches in New York, but somehow were not attracted to it. At that moment, however, they saw a negro gentleman walking in front of them, and they decided to follow him, and it turned out that he was the minister of a large negro church, a Dr. Ransome. They went to the service, which lasted two hours, and were much impressed, especially by the singing, than which A. R. Edgar said he had never heard better in his life.

There was a spice of humour introduced into the service when the offering was taken up, for Dr. Ransome looked into the plate and said, "Not enough, brethren, put the plate round again," and a second offering was received.

The preacher then looked towards Mr. Edgar and said, "I would like that white brother to come up here." The white brother obeyed the call of his black brother, and went forward and addressed the congregation. It was the first time that he had preached to a coloured congregation, but he suited them. His warm, generous words captured them, and they responded enthusiastically. It was with him as the negro said to the celebrated American preacher "Sam Jones." "O Brother Jones, you are the black man's preacher; you have got a white face but you have got a black heart." They were quite sure that Mr. Edgar had a "black heart."

From the United States he journeyed to Canada to visit relatives who had settled there many years before, and who had become prosperous in the lumber trade. Melbourne was reached towards the end of 1907, and a great welcome meeting was arranged for him in the Town Hall, at which addresses of welcome were spoken by the Hon. Thomas Bent (Premier), the Lord Mayor, Mr. S. Mauger, who brought an apology from the Hon. Alfred Deakin (Prime Minister), Sir Alex. Peacock, Hon. George Swinburne, Revs. J. G. Wheen and S. Pearce Carey (Baptist minister of Collins Street). It was a welcome fit for a king.

He was greatly moved as he told the gathering of the shipwreck. "Women first," ordered the captain, and as one of the boats was being lowered containing women passengers, the officers called out that there was room for one more. A. R. Edgar said to his daughter, "You get in, Maud." "No," said she, "I will stand by you, father." His emotions overcame him as he told of his daughter's devotion.

A. R. Edgar was home again among his own folk, and was glad to be able to take up the work that lay so near his heart. Words failed him to express his gratitude to all for their kind welcome, as well as to those who had so splendidly sustained the work during his absence.

These voyages, taken for health reasons, certainly enabled him to continue his great work for a longer period.

Preacher and Lecturer.

"My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord,
Into Thy blessed hands receive,
And let me live to preach Thy Word,
And let me to Thy glory live;
My every sacred moment spend
In publishing the Sinner's Friend."

CHAPTER XV.

PREACHER AND LECTURER.

Judged by the standard of effectivenes and success in winning men from sin to God, there are few preachers who have wielded such an influence in the Australian pulpit as A. R. Edgar. He stands in the foremost ranks of preachers. He had a commanding presence. Tall, broad-shouldered, well-proportioned, with a face that betokened earnestness and sincerity, as well as a great kindliness of heart, his whole soul looked through his eyes, which were full of sympathy. His deportment in the pulpit was always reverent. There was no lightness in speech or manner, for the pulpit was no place for jokes; it was his throne, from which the message of God's saving grace and love was to be proclaimed.

He had a voice of peculiar richness, round and full, with a distinctness of utterance that made him a most effective speaker. There was music in his speech, pathos and tenderness, and even winsomeness. Yet at times there was thunder in his words, that shook men's hearts, and made them tremble before the Word of God.

He was a magnetic preacher, who arrested attention and held it. His gestures in the pulpit were his own. At times of intense earnestness he would raise his great arms above his head, and plead with men and women to be reconciled to God; and he knew how to plead so as to secure a verdict for his Lord and Master. He was pre-eminently evangelical and Scriptural. His use of illustration was remarkable, and most of his illustrations were drawn from real life, thus he was able to make the incident live.

On one occasion he was invited by the ministers of the various churches of Daylesford to preach at a united service held on a Monday evening. These services were arranged by the Ministers' Fraternal Association, and were held monthly in the different churches. Preachers from the city were asked to preach, among whom were Dr. Bevan, Rev. S. Pearce Carey, Rev. J. Balfour, and others. The service on this occasion was held in the large Salvation Army Barracks, which was crowded to the doors. In the course of the sermon he wished to illustrate the persistency of the love of God, so he told the story of a girl who had left her home and had gone into sin, for whose return her mother had waited and prayed for years. Every night a lighted lamp was placed in the window, that the daughter, on her return, would see the welcome light. The years passed, and at last the girl, tired of her life of sin, decided to return. It was night when she entered the village, for she had chosen the night so that no one might see her. When she came within sight of the house, she saw the light shining through the window, and her first thought was that her mother might be ill. She went quietly to the door, and found that it was on the latch, and she entered and crept into her mother's bedroom. There was the dear soul sleeping, but as the poor girl bent over her to kiss her, a great tear of penitence fell upon her mother's face, and awoke her. The meeting was described with all its love and pathos. The feelings of both mother and daughter were too deep for words, but when the girl was able to speak she asked the mother how it was that the light was burning when it was so late. The mother's reply was, "My girl, that light has burned in the window for you every night since you left your home."

There were not a few moist eyes in the congregation, while to the ministers present it was a revelation of the way in which the truth could be presented to the heart. After all, if the heart is not moved, the

life will not be won. He could tell a story, and he could use an illustration that illustrated.

He was emotional. Yes, in this respect that he put his soul into his preaching. He believed in the reality of his message, and he spoke from deep conviction. The criticism of the great actor was not true in his case, for when asked why it was that the actor could attract the crowd and move them as the preacher could not, the answer was, "We actors represent fiction as fact, you preachers represent fact as fiction." A. R. Edgar did not do that. The great truths of the Gospel were eternal facts, and this he endeavoured to make people believe. They were not fictions, but certainties.

His theology was definite; it even included the doctrine of hell; and his theology influenced his preaching. He does not seem to have been moved by the currents of thought in his time, for neither Darwin nor Huxley nor Tyndall affected him, and even R. J. Campbell's new theology did not terrify him. There were certain great basic truths of Christianity that could not be altered, however human thought might change, and to these he clung, these he proclaimed.

If there was a wooing note in his preaching there was also the note of warning. The doom of sin was a dreadful one, and there was no hope held out for the finally impenitent sinner beyond. The writer has heard him dwell with terrible emphasis on the thought of eternity, and the infinite loss of the soul.

Dr. John Watson said upon one occasion, "What is wanted above everything else is positive preaching by men who believe with all their heart and mind in Jesus Christ."

Such was an apt description of A. R. Edgar. If the consequences of sin were terrible, the work of Jesus Christ was sufficient to counteract all those consequences, and to save to the uttermost. He was a persuasive preacher. He "besought men and women

to be reconciled to God." "Knowing the terror of the Lord, he persuaded men."

Garrick, the actor, is said to have declared, "I'd give a hundred guineas if I could say, 'Oh!' like Mr. Whitefield," and he protested that Mr. Whitefield could make people cry by the moving way in which he pronounced the single word Mesopotamia.

It was much the same with Mr. Edgar. No one who ever heard him say, "Oh, my dear friends," could ever forget the yearning persuasiveness of his tones.

How he encouraged the timid ones, how he helped the undecided, holding up before them the blessedness of yielding the heart to God! Who will ever forget the earnestness amounting almost to agony that was depicted on his face as he pleaded with men and women to come to Jesus! Yet he did not win his victories without blood. His sermons were thoughtful and his preparation had to be thorough, as he could not make use of notes in the pulpit owing to defective sight.

Behind everything else there was the Divine unction. He preached the Gospel "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." This may all seem to be very exaggerated, but it is all true. He was in every sense a great preacher, and he was a man of God. All through his ministry, from first to last, God gave him as his hire the souls of men and women and little children. There were revivals among the young, for were they not the lambs of Christ's flock, and as such he claimed them for the Good Shepherd. His message was equally effective when addressed to those who were living the Christian life, for he knew how to encourage and sustain those who were meeting temptation and enduring trial in their lives.

A distinguished scholar said on one occasion to his minister, "Your best work in the pulpit has been to put heart into men for the coming week," and A. R. Edgar could do that. His words had a tonic

effect, and men felt that they were braced up for the work of the week.

Before the members of the church he also held up the ideals of Christian service. "The Church," as someone has said, "is not a dormitory for sleepers, but a hive for workers," and wherever he laboured he succeeded in provoking the members of the church to love and good works.

The note of censoriousness was markedly absent from his preaching. He did not blame men nor scold them. He encouraged them, he led them. Like the village parson in Goldsmith, he

> "Allured to brighter worlds,
> And led the way."

Yet he was intolerant of wrong. He smote evil wherever he found it, and consequently was for ever "hitting the devil in a new place." And so his ministry was an all-round ministry.

It is quite needless to say that he was very popular. He was much sought after by the congregations of his own Church, but he was equally in demand by the sister Churches. The fact is he belonged to all the Churches, and his help on anniversary and other occasions was frequently sought. It was enough that A. R. Edgar's name appeared upon the notice board of the church, or that he was announced to preach, to secure a full congregation.

An instance of his popularity which is almost past credence occurred in one of the country towns of Victoria. He had preached in the Wesleyan Church on the Monday night, and the congregation desired another service on the Tuesday evening. It was impossible for him to stay, but he said he would be willing to preach on Tuesday morning at ten o'clock if the people would gather. This under ordinary circumstances might have been easy, but the agricultural show was to be held on Tuesday, and everyone would be busy. "Will anyone," asked the preacher,

"stand by me to-morrow morning?" One man said that he would. "Well," said the preacher, "there will be two of us, and we will have the service." When ten o'clock came next morning the church was full, and he preached again before leaving by train for his home.

When in Ballarat he often exchanged pulpits with the ministers of the different churches. At one time it was with the Rev. William Henderson, of "St. Andrew's"; at another with Rev. W. Lockhart Morton, of "Ebenezer"; at another with Rev. Joseph Walker, of the Congregational Church, and yet at another with Rev. J. W. Inglis, of St. John's Presbyterian, with all of whom he was on terms of most intimate friendship. These neighbourly exchanges continued throughout the whole of his ministry, and he was greatly beloved by all. Still his great popularity did not spoil him; he always remained the same modest, unassuming A. R. Edgar.

And yet, things did not always go as he desired. Just occasionally someone, by an indiscretion, spoiled things. Let one instance suffice—

An evangelistic meeting was in progress in a little country village, and he was desirous of drawing in the net. He closed the service, asking God's people to remain for prayer, and also any who might be anxious about their souls. Among those who remained was a seat full of girls, who by their behaviour did not manifest anxiety, but frivolity. Seated behind them was a woman who prided herself on being outspoken, and she spoke out, "Mr. Edgar, didn't you say that those who were not anxious were to go out?"

"Well," said Mr. Edgar, "I did not ask those who were not anxious to go out, but those who were anxious to remain."

"Well, then," said the lady, "there are some who ought to go out."

The girls made a rush for the door, which closed with a bang. It is needless to say that the meeting



A. R. Edgar Memorial Window, Wesley Church.

was brought to an immediate close, and A. R. Edgar was distressed. The woman's intentions might have been good, but her methods were bad.

On another occasion, at Sebastopol, a very different occurrence took place. The meeting was a very hard one; there was some sinister influence present. A. R. Edgar was always quick to gauge things, and he therefore closed the meeting, but asked God's people to remain for prayer. A goodly company remained, and after two or three had led in prayer he himself raised his voice in supplication. The power of God descended upon him, and he prayed as men seldom pray, until those who remained with him and witnessed his agony of soul as he pleaded with God feared lest the soul would rend the body. It was prevailing prayer, for there were three persons who had remained who were unconverted. They rose voluntarily, came forward to the communion rail, and sought and found Christ. He was what the older generation used to call "a wrestling Jacob, and a prevailing Israel."

What was said of John Brown Paton may be said of A. R. Edgar. "The man himself was his sermon. What drew all classes round him, from the highest to the humblest, was the feeling that they were listening to one who had entered into the real life of the people as he had entered into the real presence of God. In the themes he selected, and the manner of his handling them, there was an intensity of human feeling which vitalised them, and no one listening could help believing that the man who was addressing them was not only a man of God, but a man of large heart overflowing with human brotherliness, and burning with a passion for saving human souls."

On the Platform.

Successful as he was as a preacher, he was equally effective upon the platform. Reference has been made already to his work in this direction in connection with Wesley Church, and it is not needful to say

more except to refer to his efforts for temperance reform.

During his ministry in Ballarat a great temperance campaign was carried on, led by William Glover, who, with Richard Booth, visited Australia in the early eighties. The campaign was called the "Blue Ribbon Campaign," because each total abstainer wore a piece of blue ribbon in the coat or dress as an outward token of total abstinence from strong drink. It was a great work, and thousands were induced to take the pledge. The campaign continued after the visitor had gone, and A. R. Edgar was frequently the speaker at large Blue Ribbon meetings. At one of these, held in the Dana Street Lecture Hall, he gave a remarkable speech upon the subject, "The Brewer's Dray Blocked Up the Way."

The story was this: "In one of the large cities in England a narrow street became blocked with the traffic. As more and more vehicles came from each direction, those at the far ends could not see what was causing the trouble. At last one lad, standing in a cart, called to another who was nearer the centre of things, 'Say, Bill, what's the matter?' 'Oh,' said Bill, 'only the brewer's dray blocked up the way.' The axle of the brewer's dray had broken, and this mishap had held up the traffic and interfered with everyone's business."

It is easy to see the use that the speaker made of his story, and he carried his audience with him as he spoke of the brewer's dray, the terrible drink traffic blocking up the way of prosperity, peace, happiness and godliness in the world.

The Lecturer.

He occasionally assumed the role of lecturer, and there were two subjects upon which he lectured. The one was "William Haslam, Ritualist and Evangelist," and he was probably drawn to this subject because Mrs. Edgar's maiden name was Haslam. The Rev. William Haslam was a minister of the Anglican

Church, in the parish of Baldu, Cornwall. He was engaged in building a new church, and the church was to have a spire. One day he was discussing his plans with one of his parishioners, an old lady, who asked him whether he intended to build the spire from the top. He was surprised at the question, and answered, Certainly not. The woman said no more, but left Mr. Haslam to his own thoughts. He did think, and came at last to see the woman's meaning. He was building his own life from the top, and he had never experienced conversion. The result of it all was that he sought and found Christ, and became an ardent evangelist. Mr. Edgar revelled in the story, and told it with great effect to his audiences.

The other lecture was on "Peter Cartwright, the Backwoods Preacher of America." An incident in connection with the delivery of this lecture in the Rubicon Street Church, Ballarat, is worth recording. The lecture was to be delivered on the Thursday evening, in aid of the trust funds of the church, and a charge of one shilling was to be made. But on Sunday evening the extraordinary thing happened, a gracious revival of religion broke out among the congregation. A band of young men from Lydiard Street Church had conducted the service, and a number of people, young and old, had sought the Saviour. A meeting was accordingly announced for Monday night, another for Tuesday, and another for Wednesday, and at each of them there were more conversions. But now, what about Thursday night? Would the trustees postpone the lecture? That was difficult, and they could not see their way to do so. The lecture, therefore, was given, but the revival spirit was in the lecture, and as soon as A. R. Edgar had finished, a man in the audience raised the chorus—

"Hallelujah, 'tis done, I believe on the Son,
I am saved by the blood of the Crucified One."

A prayer meeting followed, when eight more persons were converted to God. The revival was continued for weeks, and a great ingathering was the result. Among those who were converted at the Rubicon Street revival were the late Revs. Charles Mason and Dr. Samuel J. Hoban.

A. R. Edgar preached the Gospel for nearly forty years, and during all those years God blessed his efforts by the conversion of thousands of men and women.

He had been called, chosen, and qualified by God for this great task, and he was faithful to Him Who had put him into the ministry. If his passion for preaching could be put into words, there are perhaps no lines that would more fully express his great desire than these:

"His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below
To cry, Behold the Lamb."

The Man.

"Behold the servant of the Lord!
I wait Thy guiding eye to feel,
To hear and keep Thy every word,
To prove and do Thy perfect will.
Joyful from my own works to cease,
Glad to fulfil all righteousness."

—C. Wesley.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAN.

And now it may be wondered what manner of man this could be who could wield such a mighty influence over his fellows. In the first place, he was a man of God. Old Scotch folk used to speak of their minister as the "man of God," and he was God's man—he belonged to God. He had consecrated himself to God, Who had accepted the consecration, and from that hour "he was the Lord's."

"His heart was at the secret source
Of every precious thing."

He was a man of prayer, and the writer remembers very distinctly a remark made by him at an evangelistic meeting. He had been praying earnestly for the Divine blessing upon the work, and he told the gathering how he had risen that morning "a great while before day." It was only a small thing to say, but it was a window, and a window lets in a lot of light. It revealed the great secret of his success in winning men—he prevailed with men because he had first prevailed with God. He knew that prevailing prayer must precede prevailing preaching, and "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working."

Coupled with his prayer life was a very simple and yet courageous faith, for he trusted God implicitly and unquestioningly. All the great undertakings of his life were the result of this unwavering trust in God, and his dependence was childlike in its simplicity. He used sometimes to say, "Make a bold venture, and in nine times out ten you will succeed."

There was also in him the spirit of adventure, and he took great risks. Like the apostle of India, William Carey, he "expected great things from God and attempted great things for God," and very few of his ventures failed.

There was also another side to his faith. He trusted men; not every man, for he had an extraordinary power of discernment, and he could "try the spirits," and was not often deceived. But he believed in men, and this was another of the secrets of his success. There were certain things required to be done in connection with some scheme in hand which he could not possibly do himself. There were others who could do some things as well as he could, and perhaps better, so he singled these persons out and gave them their tasks. He trusted them, and the strange thing was he was seldom disappointed. It was a wonderful quality that he possessed, and men seemed unconsciously to recognise it. They felt that they were trusted, and must live up to the trust that was reposed in them.

It was said of Oliver Cromwell that "of the many proofs of astonishing sagacity that he displayed, none was more striking than his happy selection of public functionaries. In nothing was his good understanding better discovered than in seeking out able and worthy men for all employments." In this also A. R. Edgar had a remarkable gift. It was with him as was said of Bishop Moule, "He has an insight which takes the place of worldly wisdom in those whose minds are for ever fixed on the highest things."

Then there was his great personality. In whatever company he might be, he was the outstanding figure, not because of his giant proportions, but because of something indefinable in him that attracted people to him. When Lord Brassey was ending his term of office as Governor of Victoria, numerous valedictory addresses were presented to him, and among these was one from the Wesleyan Church of Victoria. The Rev. Henry Greenwood was President of the Conference for

that year, and A. R. Edgar was among those who were invited to accompany the President to Government House to represent the Church. After the addresses of various bodies had been presented, the representatives were entertained by Lady Brassey. A. R. Edgar was standing with a group of others, when Lady Brassey came and shook hands with each one. Turning to Mr. Edgar, she said, "I have never had the pleasure of meeting you before, Mr. Edgar, but I have heard a great deal about your work, and I have admired it very much. I wish you all success in your undertakings."

There are some who profess to read character in the face, but A. R. Edgar's character could be read in his walk. There was something very deliberate and arresting in the way that he put his foot upon the ground.

When the American General Ulysses Simpson Grant reviewed the British troops at Gibraltar, he said they had "victory in their tread." There was victory in A. R. Edgar's tread; he always seemed as though he were going somewhere, and going with a purpose.

His love for the people was wonderful. Pestalozzi said, "No one should be able to mix more unrestrainedly with the common people, no one with a heart so open and so warm as a minister. They ought to be men of the people, and to be trained as such." He was a man of the people. His sympathies were with the masses, he had a deep desire for their welfare, and the result was that the masses loved him.

An incident occurred in Melbourne during a time of labour trouble which shows the influence that he had over men. A crowd had gathered, and many of them were in an ugly mood; there was mischief brewing. The Commissioner of Police went to him and said, "Will you come down and have a talk to these men?" He accepted the invitation, spoke to the crowd,

which listened to his words of reason and common sense, and dispersed. Another evidence of the esteem in which A. R. Edgar was held by all classes was given when one of the great Melbourne dailies took a plebiscite to decide who were the twelve most highly esteemed citizens in Melbourne. It is noteworthy that Mr. Edgar gained a place among the selected twelve.

Another trait in the character of Mr. Edgar was his unfailing courtesy. He was never in too much hurry to listen to what anyone had to say, being brotherly and kindly in his manner to all. Yet there was that wisdom to which reference has been made, and that insight into character that often preserved him from imposition—they called it his sixth sense. During his ministry at Wesley Church a man called upon him and professed a deep interest in him and his work. He invited him to dinner, brought a hansom cab and took him for drives, and in other ways showered kindness upon him. One day, however, he called upon A. R. Edgar and said he was in just a little difficulty. He was expecting a remittance from England that had not arrived. Would Mr. Edgar be good enough to endorse this bill?

"But," said Mr. Edgar, "I do not know you."

"Not know me, Mr. Edgar! Why, I have been your friend for some time."

"Yes," said A. R. Edgar, "but I do not know anything of your business affairs, and I cannot put my name to a document like that." The man showed much disappointment, but, as events turned out, A. R. Edgar was not deceived.

Perhaps we might sum up the character of this truly great man by some sentences. "His highest and happiest achievement, his richest gift to the world, was himself." "He believed that good was stronger than evil." "To him the golden year was always at the door." He adopted the motto of Socrates—"Work and make music." His success lay in "Persuasive preaching added to persuasive example." "If you

can say a man never lifted a stone against his neighbour, it is a fine thing, but it is finer far if you can also say he took out of the path the stones that have caught his neighbour's feet." That was his life's work, to make the pathway plainer and easier for his fellows, and in this he succeeded well.

It would have been strange if, coming from the Emerald Isle, he had not a keen sense of humour and some Irish wit. He was a real Irishman in the best sense of the word. Warm in temperament, with a genius for friendship, he was greatly beloved by all classes. He loved a good story, and could tell a good story. If the story were pathetic, he could bring tears, and if it were humorous he could provoke laughter. It was in the pulpit and on the platform that the serious and earnest side of his character was seen, but it was in his own home, and by his own fireside, when the labours of the day were over, that he unbent, and his merry laugh and joke were heard.

Mr. Edgar was a fearless man, and yet there was an element in his nature which, though it could not be called fear, was something akin to it. He had an aversion to passing a cemetery at night. To him there was something creepy about it. He did not care to drive alone at night if he could have company, and there was an incident in this connection that is still remembered by the one concerned, although it happened fifty years ago. Revival meetings were in progress in the little town of Buninyong, and a young man who had just begun to preach had gone from Ballarat to assist. As there was a holiday next day, the young man had arranged to stay with friends for the night, and remain for the following evening's meeting.

A. R. Edgar, however, would have him go home to Sebastopol with him. They started to drive along the road in the buggy, and had proceeded for about half a mile when he got out and felt the harness all round to see that everything was safe, for he had

not harnessed the horse himself. When he was satisfied that all was right, he got into the buggy, tucked the rugs round them both, then, turning to his companion, he said, "I wanted a chum to-night; it is awfully lonely driving over these roads in the dark."

That drive was a memorable one for the young preacher, for they had not driven far when he turned to him, and, calling him by his Christian name, said, "Well, Will, what are your thoughts about the ministry?" The young preacher's thoughts had been very deep, but he had not felt that he could tell them to anyone. But here was one who had asked him, and now the whole story of his longing was told. The rich counsel and advice given on that night were never forgotten.

Some time after this, when Mr. Edgar had left Ballarat for Port Melbourne, the same young man had been received as a fully accredited local preacher, and was wondering what his next step should be, so he wrote A. R. Edgar upon the subject and sought his further counsel. The reply to the letter was characteristic. After general greetings, he wrote: "Regarding your future, you need have no concern. 'Show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,' and the Church will not be slow to recognise it. Superintendents are always on the look-out for suitable candidates for the ministry."

During one of his visits to England one of his children died, and a cable message was sent to him telling him of the sad event. On his return he told his friends, "I knew before the cable reached me that Willie was dead."

He had the same strange premonition when he himself was nearing the end. As he lay in a private hospital in East Melbourne, a very gentle daughter, aged twenty-four years, passed to rest after much suffering. The message was sent to the hospital, but the sister feared to break the sad news until Dr. Mackeddie had seen him. As the sister was moving about the sickroom at break of day, Mr. Edgar said, "Why are you so quiet, Sister, this morning? Do not fear to tell me, as I know my precious little Effie passed on to join the children during the night."

There is also another incident that one almost hesitates to record but for the fact that it came from his own lips. When Mr. W. H. Judkins, who had been so closely associated with him in the work of social reform, died, Mr. Edgar was in one of the streets of Melbourne. All at once he was surrounded with a blaze of light, and the air was thronged with angels. "I knew," said he, "that Mr. Judkins had passed away."

. . . . .

He was a great man, with great natural gifts that were diligently cultivated, and with great spiritual gifts, which he also received from God.

To sum up, he was indeed a "Greatheart."

Home Life.

"O happy home, where Thou art loved the dearest,
Thou loving Friend, and Saviour of our race;
And where among the guests there never cometh
One who can hold such high and honoured place."

—Spitta.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOME LIFE.

A. R. Edgar was very happy in his home life, his domestic relations were sweet and tender. On 3rd April, 1878, he married Catherine Haslam, of Geelong, who came of a fine old Methodist stock. Her father was connected with Wesley Church as far back as the anniversary of the Sunday School, in December, 1839. The following reference is made to this by Dr. Watkin in his jubilee history of Wesley Church: "A Sabbath school was established of which Mr. Forster was the superintendent, and Mr. Dredge secretary. Among the teachers was Miss Howell, afterwards Mrs. Silas Harding. Another teacher was Mr. Haslam, who was the father of Mrs. Edgar, wife of the Rev. A. R. Edgar." Mrs. Edgar was for thirty-six years his true helpmeet, and survived him by sixteen years.

In the early years of their wedded life Mrs. Edgar was often in indifferent health, but as the years went by her health improved, and she lived to the ripe old age of eighty-one years.

She was a very gracious lady, in every way the complement of her husband. All his interests were her interests, she entered into all his plans and projects, and her counsel was wise and just.

The parsonage was the house of hospitality, and friends and visitors felt the warmth of the welcome that was sure to be theirs. It was in the home that A. R. Edgar found shelter from the storms of public life, and it was there that the over-strained nerves were soothed. After a very strenuous day

he would gather with his wife and children, when a bowl of bread and milk with an hour of happy fellowship would bring him refreshment and strength.

Sometimes a public man finds it difficult to devote much time to his home, and A. R. Edgar realised this very clearly. There were so many calls upon his time that there was little left for those who were within the circle of his own family. He overcame the difficulty as far as possible, for he was anxious that the spiritual and intellectual needs of his own children should not be neglected while he cared for others. He therefore entered into the interests of his family, and shared them as far as possible.

The family altar was a marked feature of the home. Day by day they gathered at the Throne of Grace, and his prayers for his wife and children, and for all the interests of the Kingdom of God are still a very precious memory. One who lived in the home for years, and who saw the Edgar family under almost every circumstance of joy and grief, bears witness to the sweetness and light of the home.

Mrs. Edgar was never very much in the public eye. She did a great deal, however, especially among the young people, and her influence upon those of both sexes was remarkable. She was a skilful teacher of the Bible Class, and in all their circuits she had either young men or young women in her charge, and this work she continued until near the close of her life at Ringwood.

Now an Englishman's house is his castle, and no one has the right to enter uninvited. There was, however, one visitor that could not be kept out, and that visitor was "death." There was one period that can only be called the period of domestic sorrow. Eight children had been born to them, and of these only two survive. The others, like delicate plants, faded away, or to

be more correct were transplanted into the garden above. This was a great grief to A. R. Edgar and his devoted wife, for they loved their children very dearly. Indeed, if one were asked what was the greatest grief that ever came to their lives, the answer would be the loss of their children. And yet they bore their grief with great fortitude. They seem to have entered into the spirit of Samuel Rutherford's letter to Lady Earlston in her time of bereavement: "Let your children be so many flowers borrowed from God: if the flowers die or wither, thank God for a summer loan of them, and keep good neighbourhood to be on good terms with Him."

Once A. R. Edgar came near to the breaking point of grief. He had preached for a young minister and had baptised one of his children. After dinner, as they were driving into Wesley Church for the P.S.A., he opened his heart to his companion on the subject of his bereavements. There was a great sob in his voice, for he was feeling that the load was almost too heavy to bear. It was not often that he revealed his thoughts on such matters to others, but that day the pent-up grief of his heart had to find vent. There was, however, no complaint. He accepted the will of God for himself and his loved ones, for they were all "bound up together in the bundle of life." He also retained a great affection for his brothers and sisters, and in after years all his thought for their welfare was amply repaid. He had four brothers—Mr. Henry S. Edgar, who occupied an important position in the Post and Telegraphic Department, and is now Deputy Administrator at Norfolk Island; Mr. F. J. Edgar, who was Governor of Pentridge Prison; Mr. E. A. Edgar, who was a mercantile agent; and the Hon. W. H. Edgar, M.L.C., who was for some years a Minister of the Crown, and now occupies the position of Chairman of Committees in the Victorian Parliament. The latter is one of Melbourne's

most valued citizens, and one of the Church's most active workers. When the war broke out in 1914 he, with a number of other godly men, organised a weekly citizens' prayer meeting in Melbourne. The mayor of the city granted the use of the Town Hall for this purpose, and for years the prayer meeting was held in the civic centre. It still continues in the Assembly Hall, Collins Street. W. H. Edgar is younger by several years than was his great brother, but it was to him that A. R. Edgar turned for help and sympathy in his days of trial and difficulty during his ministry in Wesley Church. One of his sisters, who was unmarried, lived for years in his home.

Mr. Edgar was deeply attached to his four sisters, the two eldest pre-deceasing him by several years. Mrs. Jennings, wife of Mr. Charles Jennings, stipendiary magistrate, of Sydney, New South Wales, was indeed a sister beloved, as in her peaceful home there dwelt his precious mother, enjoying the quiet of a beautiful eventide, after a long life of self-sacrifice for her children.

Oft-times the big son and brother would journey across the border to enjoy for a brief while the companionship around the fireside, where gathered those to whom he clung in sacred ties of kinship.

Rebecca, the youngest sister, remained unmarried, and was constantly watched over and cared for by him during his lifetime.

When A. R. Edgar took up his work at Wesley Church the old bluestone parsonage adjoining was their home. It was the perfection of dinginess, and was neither cheerful nor healthful. It was right in the midst of the city, with its smoke and dust. A home was later found at Armadale for a while, but afterwards they removed to Rathdown Street, Carlton. The health of the family was causing anxiety as well as Mr. Edgar's. In 1902, therefore, a proposal was made for the securing of a home in

the country, and his faithful secretary, Mr. A. J. Derrick, set about raising funds for the purchase of a suitable residence. A house was purchased at Ringwood, fifteen miles from Melbourne, and the family removed to that delightful place.

On Sundays Mr. Edgar would drive into Wesley Church in a phaeton drawn by a pair of fine ponies. It was a somewhat risky thing for him, with his short-sightedness, to drive over the White Horse Road at night, but he managed to do this without accident for years. On one occasion a young local preacher had been conducting service at Blackburn, a village between Melbourne and Ringwood. He was walking along the White Horse Road with a companion, when a phaeton drew up and a cheery voice said, "Would you care for a lift along the road, young men?" It was A. R. Edgar's voice, and the young men wondered how he was able to see them. Mr. Edgar had had a full day in the Mission, and was tired, and it might therefore be thought that he would get home at the earliest possible moment. But tired or not, here was an opportunity of doing a little kindness, and he could not let it pass. The incident is still remembered by one of the young men, who has been for years in the ministry, and it still influences his life, as he endeavours to pass on to others the kindness shown him by A. R. Edgar, and so it is true "that men may erect a monument of virtue that the storms of life will not destroy." The house at Ringwood was a great boon to Mr. Edgar, as he was away from the rush of the city. He could spend a whole day when he so desired in quiet retreat, and so the great strain of his work was somewhat lessened.

The Ringwood home was left for a short time for another in Auburn, but it again became his home until his death in 1914. The family circle has been broken for a little while, to be united in the home

that is eternal. There are only two that remain—Mrs. Frank Swan (Katie) and Miss Edgar (Maud), and they wait

"Until at last, when earth's day's work is ended,
All meet Thee in the blessed home above,
From whence Thou camest, where Thou hast ascended,
Thy everlasting home of peace and love."

Greatheart Passes.

"The radiant morn hath passed away,
And spent too soon her golden store;
The shadows of departing day
Creep on once more."

—Dr. Thring.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GREATHEART PASSES.

A life as strenuous as that of A. R. Edgar could hardly be expected to be a long one. A man with such an ardent temperament must soon burn out. Outwardly he appeared calm and placid, but within his soul there stirred the fires of strong emotion that must sooner or later consume him. His expenditure of nervous energy in the pulpit was simply enormous, and his Sunday services often left him a prostrate man. But what mattered it to this Greatheart? Was he not there

"To spend and to be spent for them
Who had not yet his Saviour known"?

Had he not in early life consecrated all his powers to this great service? Was it not with him as Charles Wesley sang—

"Happy if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His name;
Preach Him to all, and cry in death
Behold, behold the Lamb."

Reference has already been made to his repeated breakdowns. Each recurring attack diminished his power of resistance, and rendered him less able to regain his energy.

There came at last a breakdown from which there was to be no recovery. For some years he had been conscious of declining strength, and he felt that he did not recuperate as quickly; he was more easily exhausted. There was another cause of weakness besides hard work. It was sorrow of heart, for his heart was broken through successive bereavements in his family. It was grief that had sapped his

strength more than anything else. As far back as 1909 he had written a most tender letter to the committee of the Central Mission, asking to be allowed to retire.

In the letter he stated "that he had felt for six months the growing conviction that his work was completed, that his full message had been delivered, and that, despite the prosperity of his work, he should stand aside." The letter was sent to the press, so that the public would understand just how matters stood. The committee of the Mission gave long and careful consideration to his request, but it was felt that his ministry was too vital to the success of the Mission, and that he should be urged to remain. The final decision was with the Conference, but much prayer was made for guidance.

The decision of the Conference of 1910 was that the Rev. Alexander McCallum should be appointed as Mr. Edgar's colleague. This appointment gave the utmost satisfaction to the Mission, and was received with unbounded joy by A. R. Edgar. Mr. McCallum had been a former colleague, and they had been the closest friends for eighteen years. His coming into the Mission relieved Mr. Edgar of a considerable amount of the strain, and for a time he recovered his strength considerably. It was, however, only for a time. Alexander Robert Edgar preached for the last time in Wesley Church on 26th January, 1912, and from that date, although able to take an interest in the affairs of the Mission, he was unable to continue his pulpit ministry.

In letters that he wrote three months before the end he made the following special reference to this service:—

> "The past year has been to me one of stern discipline. My collapse, now nearly a year ago, was to many a sudden breakdown, but I knew it to be the culmination of years of weakness and suffering. I might easily have passed away at the conclusion of the last sermon that

I preached in dear old 'Wesley.' My head dropped, the rapture of dying stole on me, but the thought of my dear ones and their multiplied sorrows roused me, and by a determined act of will I shook off the death grip. Since then I have walked much on the border land

> 'O'er moor and fen,
> O'er crag and torrent,'

and even now at times I think I hear the 'call of the children,' and must go to them. I have a great wish to see you all at Wesley once more. To stand upon the old rostrum and get your blessing, the blessing of my long-tried and faithful people. Memories twine about my last service. Throughout the week my mind dwelt upon the Atonement of the Lord Jesus as the only hope of sinful, despairing men. I was led to the selection of an old-fashioned text, 'Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord' (Acts 3: 19), that voiced the one theme of my long ministry in Wesley Church. When I stood up to deliver my message I felt as if a great power had got hold of me. Conviction grew upon me that this was my last service, and oh, how I longed to put all I had into it.

> 'With groans, entreaties, tears to save,
> And snatch men from a gaping grave.'

A coincidence, perhaps (but to me an illustration of the presence of Jesus in the midst of the seven Golden Candlesticks, a fulfilment of assurance given). At the close of my first service in the Central Mission my attention was called to a lady evidently in trouble. She was led into the minister's vestry, and when I entered later I found her weeping aloud, pleading for mercy. After my last service I passed into the same hallowed room to find another

lady kneeling at the same table pleading for the same mercy. Good-bye, my beloved brethren in Christ, continue the work you have so nobly begun. If it is merely man's work, let it perish, but the evidences are beyond question that the Central Mission is of God. Hold fast and work together."

Such was the pastoral letter sent by the God-honoured superintendent of the Mission to his flock, composed of all ranks and conditions, and gathered from all parts of the great city and suburbs. It was received with deepest interest by all who were privileged to hear it read. Many in the congregation were greatly moved, and many more thanked God for such a gracious ministry as A. R. Edgar had been able to carry on among them for twenty years.

Before this letter was sent to the congregation Mr. Edgar had written another to the committee of the Mission, asking them to definitely accept his resignation at the next Conference. The committee felt that there was nothing else to be done, and the request was sorrowfully agreed to. A suitable record was placed upon the minute book of the Mission, of which the following is an extract:—

"Mr. Edgar has given his best strength and service to this cause. His earnest evangelism, and the efforts he has made for social reform have made Wesley Church an important factor in the life of the city of Melbourne. The spiritual side of the Mission has been promoted and strengthened by his faithful ministry. There has grown up around the Mission a group of institutions that have been created to meet the urgent needs that the Mission work revealed. These institutions and the results obtained will stand as an abiding testimony to the greatness of Mr. Edgar's work. His consecrated personality has impressed itself upon every aspect of the Mission."

That resolution fitly sums up the life and labours of Mr. Edgar during this the most fruitful period of his ministry.

At the Conference of 1914, begun in the month of February, he requested to be made a supernumerary minister, which meant that he retired from the active work of the ministry. This is always a sad occasion for the minister. To face the fact that his work is done, that he is unable longer to bear the strain, that he has to sever the pastoral relationships that exist between himself and his people, is an experience that is mixed with pain. His supernumeraryship was not prolonged, however, for on 23rd April he entered into rest.

His sufferings increased towards the end, an affection of the heart causing him at times great agony, and all that medical skill and careful nursing could do to relieve the pain was done. He had many friends in the medical profession, and every one of them was prepared to use all his skill and knowledge to bring ease to this man so greatly beloved. Dr. J. R. McKeddie was especially kind, for he had a great affection for him. The utmost that could be done was to give a degree of temporary relief, and he still had to endure much. But he did endure to the last supported by the prayers and sympathy of multitudes of men and women, not only within his own circle, but in the world outside, for was he not everybody's minister? That his death was a triumph over death is seen by his last message to his people. He said:—

"I am entering life, commonly called death. I feel that I am in the presence of the King. I am leaving the world without a sorrow save that of an earthly sorrow for those whom I love so deeply."

Those who looked upon his face in death "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." "There

had been administered unto him abundantly an entrance into the everlasting kingdom."

It was as John Bunyan wrote of his other great character, "Christian": "Then the heavenly host gave a great shout, saying, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. Then there came out also at this time to meet them several of the king's trumpeters, clothed in white and shining raiment, who, with melodious noises, and loud, made even the heavens echo with their sound. These trumpeters saluted Christian and his fellow with ten thousand welcomes from the world; and this they did with shouting and sound of trumpet."

Or as Charles Wesley wrote a century later:

"Jesus smiles, and says, Well done,
Good and faithful servant thou;
Enter, and receive thy crown,
Reign with Me triumphant now."

So ended the life of a great man in his sixty-fifth year and the fortieth year of his ministry.

In the next issue of the Methodist "Spectator" the editor wrote as follows:—

> "It is doubtful whether the death of any other clergyman in Victoria would have called forth more widespread tokens of grief and respect than those which on Thursday last were accorded to the Rev. A. R. Edgar. It was his supreme glory that he was a Methodist preacher. Faithful, fluent, forcible in his preaching, he had yet a wooing note. He had a genius for sympathy, and to him as a great brother people of all sorts turned with all sorts of trouble, and found consolation. He knew Christ. That was the secret of the power he exercised. He had a definite experience of personal salvation. That made him an evangelist at heart. He had the gift of persuasive speech, and that made him an evangelist in fact. He relied on the power of the Holy Spirit, and that made him a soul winner. We glorify God for such a gift to the Methodist Church."

The daily press also paid its tributes. The Melbourne "Age" wrote:—

> "By the death of the Rev. A. R. Edgar there is removed from the public life of this State one of its most interesting personalities. Within the past twenty years there has been hardly a social or religious movement in this city concerned with the moral or material uplifting of the workers in which he was not associated, or in which he did not play a leading part."

The "Argus" said:—

> "'I love the people as God loves me.' The words may be taken as an epitome of his life, which was devoted to the service of others. From the day when he refused an offer on the literary staff of a country paper with the remark that he had 'a higher mission,' Mr. Edgar worked for the uplifting and welfare of his fellow men and women for the only reward that such love can bring, namely, love in return. It was once said of a famous man that 'His goodness was such as to amount to a genius,' and the saying might be taken as an epitaph on the life of Mr. Edgar."

The evening "Herald" also gave a glowing eulogy:—

> "Not only Methodism, but the whole of Victoria is poorer by the death of Mr. Edgar, whose outlook was in no wise bound by denominational ties. He impressed his strong personality on the life of Melbourne in many ways, and left behind him enduring monuments to his memory."

At the meeting of the Independent Workers' Association reference was made to the death of the

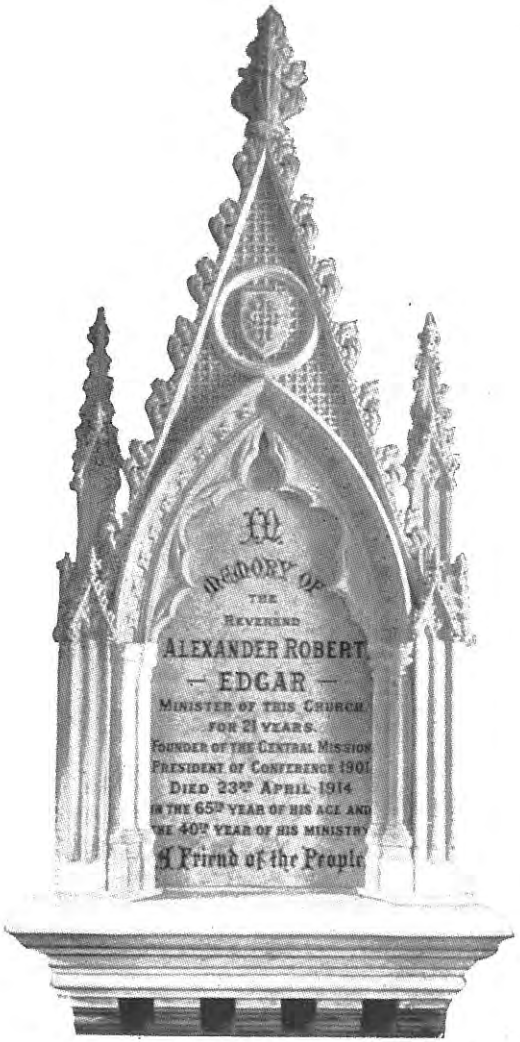
Rev. A. R. Edgar. Several speakers referred to the good work done by Mr. Edgar in the Anti-Sweating League, and at the early stages of the wages board system. A resolution expressing deep regret at the loss the workers and the general public had sustained was passed.

These wonderful tributes, coming as they did from the secular press and Workers' Association, are all the more striking.

Yes! he left behind him enduring monuments in lives that he blessed and in institutions that he founded, and these are his greatest. And yet there are others that have been erected to his memory as the expression of the affection in which he was held by those who knew him best and loved him most. In November, 1914, a gothic mural tablet was placed in the transept of Wesley Church bearing this inscription: "In memory of the Reverend Alexander Robert Edgar, minister of this church for twenty-one years, founder of the Central Mission, President of Conference, 1901. Died 23rd April, 1914, in the 65th year of his age, and the 40th year of his ministry. A friend of the people." In 1915 his relatives placed in the south end of Wesley Church a magnificent stained glass window in his memory.

Last Rites.

The first burial that we have any knowledge of in the Christian Church is that of Stephen, and the record of it is: "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentations over him." This was true also of Mr. Edgar. As might have been expected, his funeral was attended by a vast concourse of people who mourned him as a brother. As was fitting, his remains were first taken to Wesley Church. Scores of floral tokens had been sent by friends as expressions of their love for their great leader and friend. The Jewish Rabbi of Melbourne sent a message of kindly sympathy, as also did the Premier of the State, the Hon. William A.



A. R. Edgar Memorial Tablet in Wesley Church

Watt. The church was crowded with a congregation of sorrowing folk composed of all ranks and grades of society. The Rev. A. McCallum conducted the service, and two of his oldest friends in the ministry—Revs. R. Philp and S. Adamson—offered prayer and read the Scriptures respectively. Hymns of faith and hope were sung, and the Rev. Dr. W. H. Fitchett, LL.D., addressed the congregation as follows:—

"If ever there was a time when we needed to grasp the great certainties of the faith, and the fact that by the grace of Jesus Christ death was a vanquished foe, it was now. Christians did not sorrow as those that are without hope. Let that message ring out from the coffin of their beloved dead. The fact of death remained, but the penal element was gone, and so was the power to break the tie of love, for the very thing that makes the world poorer in that respect makes heaven richer.

"We read that Christ became man, and suffered death in order that through death He might deliver those who were in bondage to it. Only they realise this who have learned it through the Gospel Alexander R. Edgar preached. I saw Mr. Edgar on Wednesday morning. He was not lying down, but sitting in a chair. A more arresting, pathetic, and tragical figure I never saw. There he sat, his head fallen on his chest, the strong hands that had helped multitudes listless on his knees. Relatives were there. The tenderest human love was there. He sat speechless. The great voice that had rung for twenty years in this church with the hopes of the Gospel was silent. I looked at him and thought, Now is the stately column broken—it was a stately column—that noble figure, that face at which no man could look without reading in it honour and love. His face when dead was the face of a king. And

he belonged to that realm of which St. John said that 'they were kings and priests unto God.'

"Many writers in prose and poetry had told of death's bitterness, of man's humiliation before the last enemy, but Mr. Edgar had 'fought the good fight, he had kept the faith, and for him there was laid up a crown of life.'

"He had been forty years a minister, and for over half that time he had been the pastor of Wesley Church. It might be doubted whether any man had influenced so many lives for good in this State, and there was a sense in which it could be said that he belonged to the whole country. He had fine gifts for his work. That face, that figure, that voice, that indefinable magnetic touch—who had not felt it all? He held in his hands the key to men's hearts, and his own heart was a big one, burning with the flame of a Divine pity.

"It was characteristic of him that when asked why he kept on helping men who kept proving themselves undeserving, he replied, 'I spend my life in giving men another chance.' He held, too, that religion, if good for anything, was good for everything, and he helped to make life easier and safer for many people. He did much to improve their temporal condition; at the same time he emphasised the supreme importance of the spiritual, realising that 'the soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul.'

"It must be remembered, too, that while carrying the sorrows of others, he bore a heavy load himself. He had buried six children, and often after spending the day in comforting others he went to a home stricken with sorrow. All this, too, helped to enlarge and sweeten his own soul as he learned by the things he suffered. Of him it could be said, as it was

said of Job, 'that when the ear heard him it blessed him, when the eye saw him it gave witness unto him, because he delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless also and him that had none to help him; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.'

"There was printed that day in the 'Argus' his last message to his people, and thank God that such a message had thus been conveyed throughout the land. It was this:—

"I am entering into life commonly called death. I feel that I am in the presence of the King, and I am happy in His presence, for His promise is, 'Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.' I am leaving the world without a sorrow save that of an earthly sorrow for those I love so deeply. I love the people, as God loves me. 'My heart is full, thank God, of Christ, and longs its matter to declare.' If this be death, I shall soon be in the presence of the King. 'Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?' 'Lend me thy wings, I mount, I fly.' 'Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.' What a joyful uplift."

"He was a great man, and we must pray that God will maintain the succession of such men to feed His Church and proclaim His Gospel."

He was laid to rest in the Melbourne General Cemetery on 24th April, 1914. The Rev. A. McCallum conducted the service at the grave, assisted by Revs. C. Tregear, S. J. Hoban and J. H. Cain, his former colleagues. Letters of sympathy were received from all the sister Churches conveying high tributes to his character and work.

It was recognised everywhere that "a prince and a great man had fallen in Israel." A gap was left in the ranks of the champions for truth and righteousness in the land. The grand work, however,

commenced by him, is still carried on. Mr. Wesley's saying that "God buries His workmen, but He carries on His work," is true. A. R. Edgar has been followed by a succession of faithful men. The Rev. Alexander McCallum, the Rev. S. J. Hoban, the Rev. J. H. Cain, and now his mantle has fallen upon the Rev. C. Irving Benson, who is proving himself equal to the great task committed to him.

In Memoriam.

On the following Sunday In Memoriam services were held in Wesley Church. In the afternoon there were on the rostrum the Prime Minister of Australia (Hon. Joseph Cook), Hon. Alfred Deakin, Sir Robert Best, M.H.R., Senator Barker, Hon. Josiah Thomas, M.H.R., Hon. Samuel Mauger, and Colonel Hoskin, of the Salvation Army. Addresses were delivered by Senator Barker, Sir Robert Best, and Hon. Samuel Mauger, who bore testimony to the greatness of Mr. Edgar's work. As was fitting, the evening service was opened by Mr. A. J. Derrick, who had been associated with Mr. Edgar from the very inception of the Mission. The Rev. J. H. Cain conducted the remainder of the service, while the Rev. Alexander McCallum preached the sermon.

"The saints of God! their conflict past,
And life's long battle won at last;
No more they need the shield or sword,
They cast them down before the Lord:
O happy saints! for ever blest,
At Jesu's feet how safe their rest."

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