

*THE STORY OF
AN OLD MEETING HOUSE*



J. M. CONNELL

(Westgate Chapel, Lewes)

THE STORY OF AN OLD MEETING HOUSE

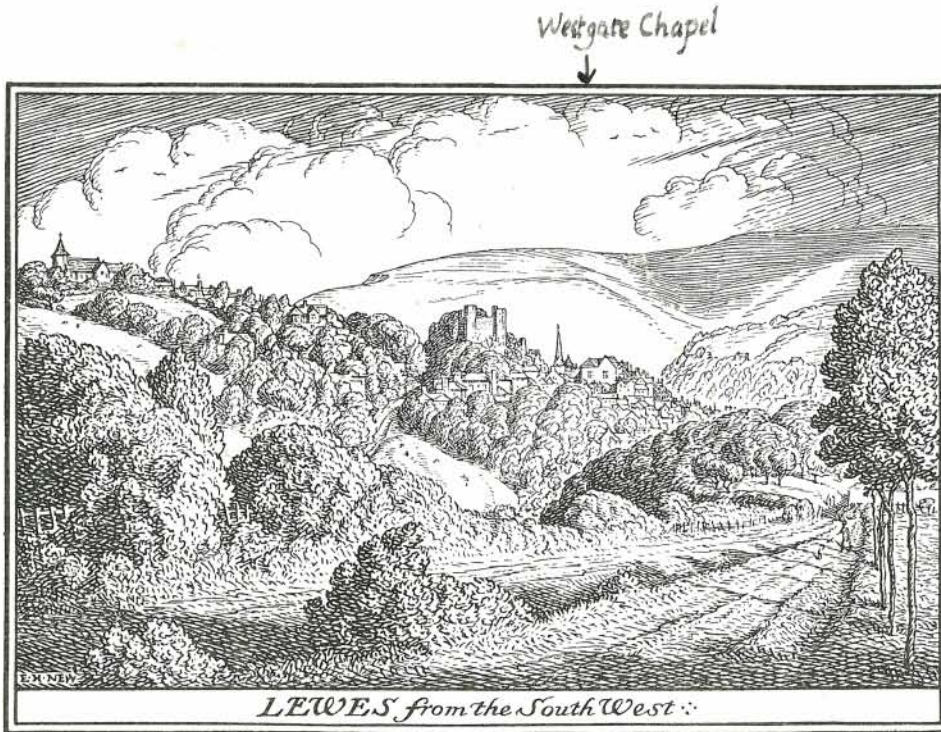
BY

J. M. CONNELL

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TO MY FRIENDS
AT WESTGATE CHAPEL, LEWES,
AND ESPECIALLY TO
MR. J. H. EVERY, J.P., AND MRS. C. SEVERS,
WHO HAVE BEEN FOR MANY YEARS
ITS TREASURER AND SECRETARY
RESPECTIVELY



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NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

IN this edition I have revised the original text, and have added a Supplement which continues the "Story" for upwards of twenty eventful years. Another new feature is the Index.

I am grateful to Mr. J. L. Garvin for allowing me to quote the passage from his *Life of Joseph Chamberlain* relating to the statesman's ancestor, Thomas Harben of Lewes; and to the Editor of *The Countryman*, Idbury, Kingham, for permitting me to make use of the Rev. Ebenezer Johnston's account of his ride into Kent in 1744.

I deeply regret that since the first edition was published Mr. Edmund H. New has passed away. I welcome, however, the opportunity of honouring the memory of a great artist and of an old and dear friend. I recall with pleasure that it was as my guest at Oxford, during my student days, that he first visited the city with which his name will chiefly be associated because of his wonderful series of drawings of the colleges. This little book is indeed fortunate in having some examples of his beautiful work.

J.M.C.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE story which is told in this volume will, I hope, be of more than local interest; for it is typical of the history of nearly two hundred old Meeting Houses in the United Kingdom. To those who worship in these sanctuaries I trust the book will be of use in helping them to a more intimate knowledge of their spiritual ancestry, and to a clearer understanding of the causes which brought about the change of doctrine from the Calvinism of their forefathers to the Unitarianism or Liberal Christianity that is now preached in their pulpits. Most of the ministers named in the story served in other places before and after they settled in Lewes: and this fact is but an illustration of the way in which the history of one congregation is intertwined with that of others throughout the country.

The story, too, has its parallels, so far as doctrinal development is concerned, in the history of many churches on the other side of the Atlantic. The life of Comfort Star, one of the early ministers at Lewes, forms an historical link with New Eng-

land Puritanism; while, as regards the Arian and Unitarian movement in this country and in America, it is to be noted that a constant interchange of teaching and inspiration has been going on, through the works of such men as Taylor, Priestley, and Martineau on the one hand, and Channing and Theodore Parker on the other.

To those who are not of the opinions and company represented in these old Meeting Houses, but to whom nothing human and Christian is alien or uninteresting, the story may show how men have fared in following a different way in religion from that with which they are themselves familiar. For all devout souls the goal of Christian aspiration is the same, but they seek it and reach it by a wide variety of ways, according as it was said by One who spoke with authority long ago, "They shall come from the east and the west and the north and the south and sit down in the kingdom of God."

My thanks are due to friends and correspondents for referring me to sources of information, and for other kindly help. More especially am I indebted to the Rev. J. E. Odgers, M.A., D.D., formerly Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Manchester College, Oxford. I wish also to express my grateful appreciation of Mr. New's drawings.

J. M. C.

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THE STORY OF AN OLD MEETING HOUSE

I

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

BACK in the seventeenth century, the fishermen of Brighton, which was then known as Brighthelmston and was little more than a seaside village, used to bring their fish to market at Lewes, coming by way of the Kingston Hills. As they approached the old county town of Sussex and looked at it across the Winterbourne valley, they must often, I think, have been struck by its romantic beauty. It had then lost almost nothing of its mediæval character: its encircling wall and its various gates were still fairly intact, and its Norman castle—built by William de Warren, son-in-law of the Conqueror—showed less of the ravages of time than it does to-day. One of the most prominent features of the town, as it came within the fishermen's observation, was a

large gabled house standing close to the West Gate. This house had been erected towards the end of the preceding century as the town residence of a county family, but it became in course of time a Meeting House for Nonconformist worship. It is of this Meeting House, and of the congregation that has worshipped within its walls from generation to generation, that we have now to recall the history.

Our story begins with the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662. That Act required all clergymen of the Church of England to accept the episcopal form of church government, to use the Book of Common Prayer, and to declare their assent and consent to everything contained therein. It became law on the 5th of May, but ministers were allowed a few months longer to consider whether they could conform to it or not. On August 24th, St. Bartholomew's Day — known afterwards in Dissenting circles as "Black Bartholomew"—all who could not conform were ejected from their livings. They numbered about 2,000, mostly Presbyterians and Independents, and included many of the most able, learned, and saintly ministers in the land. Of the total number about seventy were ejected in Sussex, and

among them were two Lewes clergymen—the Rev. Edward Newton of St. Anne's (then called St. Mary's West-out) and of St. John's, South-over, and the Rev. Gwalter Postlethwaite of St. Michael's.¹ These two men, therefore,—the first a Presbyterian, the second an Independent,—are the fathers of Lewes Nonconformity. Ten or twelve of the other clergymen ejected in Sussex came and took up their abode in the county town, and this makes Calamy speak of Lewes as "a town that was blessed with more than an equal share of these good ministers." To some of them I shall have occasion to refer in the course of this history.

Our chief source of information about the ejected clergy is Calamy's *Account*, which was published in 1713. This work may be described as the Acts of the Apostles of Nonconformity. Happily it contains notices of Mr. Newton and Mr. Postlethwaite, and of two other ejected ministers who succeeded the latter, and who are also, therefore, in the direct line of local Nonconformist ancestry. I cannot do better than reproduce, as I go along, what the old historian says in regard to each of them. His *Account* takes the form of memorials arranged according

¹ Our *Frontispiece* shows St. Anne's Church on the left, and the spire of St. Michael's between the Castle and the Old Meeting House (Westgate Chapel).

to the places where the ministers were ejected. Thus his memorial of Mr. Newton is as follows :—

“LEWES: St. Ann’s. Mr. Edward Newton, M.A., was educated in Baliol College in Oxon, of which he was afterwards Fellow. He was ordained by the Presbitery of Sarum in St. Thomas’s Church in that city Anno, 1652. He first stately exercised his ministry at Kingston by the Sea in this County [Sussex]; and there he continued four or five years. His parish had but three houses, and he could have but few hearers from thence: but so many attended his ministry from neighbouring parishes that he had a good auditory. Afterwards he succeeded his father-in-law, Mr. Benjamin Pickering (who was one of the Assembly of Divines), at St. Ann’s in Lewes and Southover, and he preached one part of the day in one, and the other part of the day in the other, with general acceptance, till after the Restauration; and was attended on even by Royalists. When the Act of Uniformity silenced him, he with a great deal of sorrow took his leave of his people in a sermon on 2 Tim. 2. 7. He preached afterwards privately; and had a number adhering to him among whom he did his endeavour to promote practical religion. He many ways shared in the hardships which Protestant Dissenters were afterwards exposed to. After

the Five Mile Act he was forced to be a stranger to his own house and family, and could not have the satisfaction of conversing with them, but by stealth and in disguise. Warrants were frequently out against him, but Providence so far hid him that he was never taken, though his own house and the houses of his friends were often searched for him. Once he was cited into the Spiritual Courts for not coming to Church; and, not appearing, he was excommunicated; and the Excommunication was ordered to be published against him in the Church, at the very same time as two infamous women had the same sentence passed upon them; and so the congregation was ordered to avoid his company and theirs. This was provoking; but his Saviour before him was numbered with transgressors, and crucified between two thieves. A writ was afterwards out against him, *de excommunicato capiendo*; but he kept out of the way till means were found to supersede it. He had a licence for a private House in 1672; and upon King James’s Indulgence, he publicly exercised his ministry in a house fitted up for the purpose, and continued to officiate alone till 1696, when Mr. Thomas Barnard was chosen joint pastor with him. A difference afterwards unhappily arising about a new place of worship, they parted asunder in 1707 [should be 1701], and

had two distinct congregations. However, he continued his ministerial service till 1709; when age and infirmities being far advanced upon him, he resigned; and lived till Jan. 1711/12 when it pleased God to release him. Aet. 84 or 85.

“The congregation at Maidstone (which was his native place) would willingly have had him after his ejection at Lewes; but he chose rather to continue in a place where he had already found his ministry acceptable and useful. He continued his ministry there four or five years in private, and forty-seven in public; in all, fifty-one or fifty-two. He was a plain, serious, practical preacher. He studied to be as inoffensive as he could with a good conscience, and he had the general good opinion both of the ministers and people of the Established Church.”

To Calamy's record of Mr. Newton's early life we are able to add a few details derived from other sources. Thus we learn that he studied not only at Oxford, but at Cambridge. He took his B.A. degree from Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1648. He became a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, in 1650, and graduated as Master of Arts there in the same year. Two years later he was again incorporated at Cambridge. Such a prolonged academic career seems to indicate a more than usual keenness for learning, for which, at the time, there was plenty

of encouragement. It was the time of the Commonwealth, the zenith of Puritan power, and at both universities a vigorous intellectual life was developing, fostered, more especially in the case of Oxford, by Cromwell himself, who had become Chancellor of that University at the beginning of the year in which Mr. Newton took his M.A. degree. As another link with the Protector, it is interesting to find that the Lewes and Southover livings in which Mr. Newton succeeded his father-in-law, Mr. Pickering (“a godlie, learned and orthodox divine”), were presented to him on Cromwell's nomination.

Of Mr. Postlethwaite, who was a Cambridge man—having graduated as B.A. there in 1646, the year before he came to Lewes,—Calamy has the following memorial:—

“Mr. Gualter Postlethwaite was congregational in his judgment. He was a sound preacher, holy liver, and strict governor of the flock that was his charge. He was in the Fifth Monarchy notion, as appeared by something he printed; but his private opinions affected not his ordinary preaching. He had many seals to his ministry, and extraordinary Christians of his Society; the fruits of whose strict and pious family government appeared in many of those who descended from them. Upon

the return of King Charles the II some attempted to ensnare him with the oaths to the Government, which he took without scruple. He died Anno 1671, and was succeeded by Mr. Joseph Whiston."

The Act of Uniformity not only ejected the ministers of St. Anne's and St. Michael's, but many of the laity of those churches as well. For it is given to the laity, as to the clergy, to have consciences; and the members of the congregations did not leave the churches merely out of sympathy with their ejected pastors, but because they felt that a wrong was being done to themselves by the attempt to make them worship God in a way they did not approve, and because they resented the Act as an interference with the liberty they had hitherto enjoyed in their religious affairs. Indeed, the love of liberty, as much as any objection to episcopacy and the Prayer Book, was the motive and ground of their Nonconformity. But many years had to pass, and many hardships to be endured, before the ejected ministers and people were permitted by the law to worship publicly in their own way. Various measures were taken to prevent them from meeting together. The First Conventicle Act was passed in 1664, and by it any person who should be present at a religious service other "than is allowed by the liturgy and practice of the

Church of England," was made liable to fine and imprisonment, and, on a third conviction, to transportation. The Five Mile Act, which was passed in 1665, forbade the ministers "to come or be" within five miles of any town where they had exercised their ministry as clergymen of the established Church; and, as we have seen, it bore very hardly on Mr. Newton, forcing him for a while "to be a stranger to his own house and family." In spite, however, of these persecuting Acts, the preachers and people managed to meet for worship; and in the *Episcopal Returns* for 1669 it is stated that there were three Conventicles in and about Lewes. One of them was in South Malling and consisted of Presbyterians, numbering "at least 500," and having as their ministers—heads or teachers as they were called—Mr. Newton and Mr. Earle (who had been ejected from the living of East Terring, near Newhaven). Another was in the parish of All Saints and was composed of Independents. It is described as "numerous," and had Mr. Postlethwaite as teacher. The third conventicle was in the Cliffe; it numbered sixty, but we are not told what denomination they were of, or who conducted the meetings. The worshippers in each of these conventicles are represented as belonging to the "middle sort."

In 1670, after the first Conventicle Act expired,

a second and, in some respects, a severer one was passed. According to it any person above the age of sixteen convicted of attending a conventicle (and a conventicle might mean a gathering of five people in a house besides the family) would be fined five shillings; the preacher would be fined £20, and if he could not be found, or, being found, was unable to pay, the fine was to be levied on others who were present at the meeting. Conviction could take place on the evidence of two informers, and the informers were to receive a third of the fines. In Bunyan's *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, we are told how that notorious person had a great aversion to the conventicle which his pious and long-suffering wife attended, and how he threatened to turn informer. "Truly," says Bunyan, "he had malice and envy enough in his heart to do it, only he was a tradesman; also he knew he must live by his neighbours, and so he had that little wit in his anger, that he refrained himself, and did it not." There were, however, two of his kind in Lewes, for whom the prospect of a third of the fines was a sufficient offset to any possible loss of the favour or custom of their neighbours. On the afternoon of Sunday, the 29th of May, 1670, King Charles II's birthday, they contrived to be present at the South Malling Conventicle. The meeting was

an open-air one and took place in a by-lane. The preacher on the occasion was neither Mr. Newton nor Mr. Earle, but the Rev. Henry Godman, who, since his ejection from the church at Rodmell, had lived in London, and happened now to be on a visit to Lewes, his native town. His text was in Ephesians v. 16, "Redeeming the time," but the informers seized on the second part of the verse, "because the days are evil." That fitted their purpose. The Justices of the Peace, on being told of the text, would at once infer the seditious nature of the sermon, and its unsuitability, to say the least of it, for His Majesty's birthday! But whatever the informers may have said to the Justices, one of them confessed in private that it was the best sermon he had ever heard. This is all we are told about the sermon, but it proved a costly one for some who listened to it: in more senses than one "the Word of the Lord was precious in those days." On the information of the two men, forty of those who attended the meeting were fined five shillings each. Sixteen were adjudged too poor to pay, and their fines became an additional charge on several of their more well-to-do fellow-worshippers, who had besides to bear among them the preacher's fine of £20. Thus the liability in some cases mounted up to something quite considerable.

Walter Bret, grocer in Lewes, was fined altogether £6 5s. ; Thomas Barnard—of whom more will be said in the course of this history—was ordered to pay a similar sum ; his brother Richard, draper, was made liable for £5 5s. ; Richard White, brazier, for £3 15s. ; Thomas Ridge, of the Cliffe, draper, for 30s. We learn all this, and much more, from a very racily written tract called *A Narrative of the Late Proceedings of some Justices and Others, pretending to put in Execution the Late Act against Conventicles, against several Peaceable People in and about the Town of Lewes in Sussex, only for their being quietly met to worship God*,¹ which was printed in 1670,—that is, in the very year in which the prosecutions took place. The *Narrative* is most valuable, since it acquaints us with the names of some of the laymen who took part in the struggle for religious liberty in Lewes, and who are to be reckoned among the founders of the Nonconformist churches into which the conventicles afterwards developed.² And besides, the *Narrative* is important as giving us a most lively illustration of the working of the Conventicle Act, and showing the spirit of

¹ This tract is reprinted as an appendix in Horsfield's *History of Lewes*.

² Some of the names mentioned in the *Narrative* occur in the earliest extant church membership roll (dated 1695), belonging to Westgate Chapel.

the men against whom the Act was directed. Hardly any of them seem to have paid their fines in cash, and warrants had therefore to be issued for the distraint of their goods and chattels. Indeed the only fine that seems to have been paid in money was that of Benjamin Wood, a mason ; and Benjamin himself had refused to pay, but his wife, when she saw the bailiffs taking " a pair of sheets out of the bed, and four new shifts," considered, not unnaturally, that the matter was becoming too serious and paid the 5s. demanded. Thomas Ridge, the draper, had stuff taken out of his shop worth 50s., though, as we have seen, his fine was only 30s. ; yet he said " he parted with it as willingly as with any goods he ever sold." Richard White, the brazier, was relieved of brass kettles, etc., of the value of £10 13s., though he was only liable for £3 15s. ; upon which the narrator remarks, with a thrust at the effrontery of the official responsible for the extortion, " Indeed he needeth good store of brass that shall take such a piece of work in hand." From Thomas and Richard Barnard's farm (or rather their mother's) at Northease, six cows were taken, though the sale of three of them would realise more than the actual fines. It was said that by this transaction the distrainers would make more than £10 each. " No wonder," is the comment, " the

wheels run fast when all of them must be so well greased." Not inappropriately did the *Narrative* bear on its title page the motto from Seneca: *Cui plus licet quam par est, plus vult quam licet*,—he who is permitted to take more than is just will take more than he is permitted.

It is impossible not to admire the cheerful courage with which the Dissenters bore the hardships of their lot. They were sustained by their strong faith in the justice of their cause, and by their hope of its final triumph. Many of them, Presbyterians especially, cherished the belief that the Act of Uniformity would be repealed, and that the National Church would become again comprehensive enough to find room for ministers and congregations of differing opinions and ways of worship and forms of government. Such had their chief spokesman in Richard Baxter, the author of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, who declared that he was not "for narrowing the Church of Christ more than Christ Himself alloweth us," and thought it monstrous that men should be persecuted on account of their opinions, or, as he bluntly expressed it, that "their brains should be knocked out to kill a fly on their forehead." There were others, however, who were opposed to the very idea of a national Church, believing that the religious life of the people was likely

to thrive best where there was nothing of the nature of state support and control. Yet whether the Nonconformists dreamed of a comprehensive State Church or of a Church entirely separate from the State, they were all one in the wish for some alleviation of their present sufferings and anxieties. So there was general satisfaction amongst them when King Charles II published his Declaration of Indulgence, on March 15th, 1672. According to this Declaration Protestant Dissenters were permitted to worship in public, on condition that their ministers and meeting-places were licensed. The Lewes Nonconformists made application to the authorities in London for the necessary licences. There is extant a letter, dated April 30th, 1672, signed by Mr. Newton and six others, and addressed to a Mr. Althorne, asking this gentleman to use his endeavour "to obtayne a Licence for the house of Mr. William Harrise in the parish of Alsaints in Lewes; to bee usste and bee employed in the worship of God on all occasions for us of the presbyterian judgment"; to obtain also a licence "for Mr. Newton to bee teacher to the same congregation," and to get for him liberty to use besides the house of Miss Frances Vickering in the parish of St. Michael for the purpose of public worship. They beg Mr. Althorne to do his best

to obtain these licences "this week that if possible we may receive them, and what charges you are at we shall thankfully repay." But "this week" and then another passed without the licences coming to hand. Mr. Newton, therefore, seems to have decided,—no doubt after consultation with his friends—that he ought to go up to London and get the licences himself. So, probably on Monday morning, May 13th, he mounted the stage coach at the Star Inn. He was a man of about forty-five, and was dressed no doubt in the clerical garb of the time; that is, he wore a gown and knee breeches and buckled shoes. From beneath his round cap his long hair fell on his shoulders (unless he had adopted the wig that was then coming into fashion!); and his face had the look of one who is setting out on important business. But as the coach drove on, his preoccupation with business must have given way to a perfect enjoyment of the sweet May morning and of the charming and interesting country through which he passed on his way to the great city. The London at which he at last alighted had hardly recovered from the great fire of six years before: the new St. Paul's had not yet begun to rise out of the ashes of the old one. It was the London of Pepys, who had been writing up his Diary for the past dozen years. It was the

London of Dryden, the poet of the Restoration and of the Anglican ascendancy. It was the London, too, of a spirit more congenial to our divine—that of the old, blind poet Milton, who had only the year before given to the world his *Paradise Regained* and his *Samson Agonistes*, the dirge of a despised and captive, but still strong and unconquerable, Puritanism. It was the London, moreover, of the Cabal, the group of ministers through whom King Charles was attempting to conduct the affairs of the realm instead of through Parliament. To the office of one of these ministers, Lord Arlington, Secretary of State, who was issuing most of the licences, Mr. Newton went on the day after his arrival; and he received a number of licences for Lewes and places near—but not those he was specially in search of. There were two for Brightelmston and two for Hove and two for Lewes, but the Lewes licences were for the Independents there—one for the house of Thomas Fissenden, in which they were to worship, and the other for their teacher, Mr. John Crouch,¹—their old pastor, Mr.

¹ Mr. Crouch seems to have been a native of Lewes. He was M.A. of Oxford. In 1669 the Bishop of Sarum reports him as a Teacher at two conventicles in the Sarum diocese. A few days after receiving the Lewes licence he applied for another to enable him to minister in Cripplegate, London.

Postlethwaite, having died the year before. Whether Mr. Newton had been deputed to call for these licences, we are not told, but anyhow he undertook to deliver them. Next day he went to the office of Sir John Trevor, "the other Secretary," by whom some of the licences were being issued, and there he obtained one for himself "to be a Teacher of the Congregation allowed in the house of . . . Swan, widow, in the town of Lewes, county Sussex, Presbyterian persuasion," and another for the house. It will be noticed that this is not quite in accordance with the application which had been sent to Mr. Althorne, and in which licences had been asked for William Harrise's house and Miss Frances Vickering's, but nothing said of Widow Swan's. We do not know why this change was made, but perhaps as Prof. G. Lyon Turner suggests, Mr. Newton and his friends had on further consideration "agreed that they would have a better chance of getting a licence for one house than for two, and that as it would now be invidious to choose, it would be better to ask for another, that of Mrs. Swan."¹ We may be sure that Mr. Newton returned to Lewes without unnecessary delay, bringing the precious documents with him. What a relief it

¹ *Original Documents of Early Nonconformity*, Vol. III, p. 399.

must have been to him, and to all whom the licences concerned, to know that they now had liberty to worship God publicly in their own way! But this liberty was destined to be very short-lived. King Charles had published the Declaration of Indulgence without the consent of Parliament, and within a year Parliament forced him to withdraw it.

How Mr. Newton fared between the lapse of this Indulgence and the issue of King James' Declaration for Liberty of Conscience in 1687, we can only conjecture; but no doubt he and his people kept in close touch and held meetings as opportunity occurred—perhaps, indeed, with fair regularity. The same may be said of the Independent minister, now the Rev. Joseph Whiston, and his congregation. Mr. Whiston had been ejected from a living at Maidstone, and he proved a worthy successor to Mr. Postlethwaite. Calamy gives the following interesting memorial of him:—

"MAIDSTONE, Mr. Joseph Whiston. After his ejection, he continued some years in this county [Kent], till he was called to a pastoral charge at Lewes in Sussex, where he continued till the time of his death, which was for nearly twenty years. He was congregational in his judgment, but managed both himself and his affairs with great wisdom and moderation, and he was a great

practiser of self-denial. Upon King James' Liberty, he declared that where there was a congregational minister, he was for the people that were presbyterians to acquiesce in him ; and where there was a presbyterian minister, he was for having the people who were congregational to acquiesce in him. He had a considerable hand in promoting an association of ministers of both sorts, which died with him. Though he had no children of his own, yet he wrote much, and to good purpose, in defence of the covenant privileges of the infant seed of believers. Mr. Baxter said that hardly any man had written with more judgment upon that subject. Mr. Whiston also much commended what Mr. Baxter had written on the same. When he drew near his end, being asked what his dying thoughts were as to that subject upon which he had written so much in his lifetime, he freely said ' he was not conscious to himself that he had discoursed or written anything on that subject but what was according to the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, the consideration of which was a great consolation to him in a dying hour.' He frequently also said that he feared the sword was to pass through the land. He died in January, 1690, in the 63rd year of his age, and lieth interred in the churchyard of St. Michael in Lewes, where are deposited the

remains of many ministers who were ejected for Nonconformity, as of Mr. Jones, Mr. Staninough, Mr. Earle, Mr. Postlethwaite, Mr. Beecher, Mr. Crouch, etc., besides Mr. Bunyard and Mr. Osborn, who, though they died before, were of the very same spirit and way. His printed works are : *Infant Baptism from Heaven*. Part I. *Infant Baptism from Heaven*. Part II. *An Essay to revive the Primitive Doctrine and Practice of Infant Baptism ; Infant Baptism plainly proved ; A brief Discourse of Man's natural Proneness to, and Tenaciousness of, Error ; The Right Method of proving Infant Baptism.*"

Of Mr. Whiston we obtain some further information in the *Memoirs* of his nephew, William Whiston, who was the successor of Sir Isaac Newton in the Lucasian professorship of mathematics at Cambridge, and is famous also as the translator of Josephus. Writing in his seventy-ninth year, William Whiston tells us that in his youth he acted as amanuensis to his blind father, the Rector of Norton in Leicestershire, whose brother, " Mr. Joseph Whiston of Lewes in Sussex, a very pious Dissenter, that wrote several books for infant baptism (an account of whose religious death I have now by me) had been Chaplain to Col. Harrison, one of the Regicides. To whom my father made me write long letters to convince

him of the unlawfulness of that war (a copy of one of which letters I have still by me) but all in vain. Their differences of opinion, however, did not break their brotherly friendship, as appeared by his leaving what he had amongst us, his brothers' children, when he died. All this I attest, April 25th, 1746."¹

A new era for Nonconformity began in 1687, with King James' Declaration for Liberty of Conscience; and Calamy has informed us that Mr. Newton then "publicly exercised his ministry in a house fitted up for the purpose."² Until that time the meetings had been held in any convenient or inconvenient place, indoor or out, and the worshippers had to be content with such accommodation in the way of seats, etc., as happened to be available; but now the meeting-place assumed the dignity and comfort of pews (in so far as those old Puritans understood comfort!), and had a pulpit with a communion table in front of it. By thus fitting up their place of worship they showed the confidence they had that the liberty now allowed to them would be lasting; and the passing of the Toleration Act two years later justified their faith and expectation.

¹ *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Whiston, Written by Himself*, Vol. I, p. 4.

² The house was probably in Crown Lane (now Market Lane).

We have seen that Mr. Whiston died in 1690. He was succeeded in the ministry of those who were of the Congregational way of thinking by a man of large and varied experience of life and the world. This was the Rev. Comfort Star, who had been ejected at Carlisle. He is the last of the Ejected to whom Lewes Nonconformity traces its descent, and, as in the other cases, I give the summary of his career which we find in Calamy. It read as follows:—

"CARLISLE, Comfort Star, M.A. Born at Ashford in Kent, where his father was a physician. He was educated in New England, where, in 1647, he took the M.A. degree, and was sometime Fellow of Harvard College. In a list which Mr. Cotton Mather has given, of above three hundred and fifty students educated in that College, from the year 1642 to 1698, we find his name thus mentioned: 1647. Consolantius Star, Socius. B. iv., p. 136. After he was ejected from Carlisle, he performed laborious service in various places in the county of Kent, and at last became pastor of a church at Lewes in Sussex, where he died, Oct. 30th, 1711, in the 87th year of his age."

This brief notice of Mr. Star stimulates our interest in him; and happily we are able to supple-

ment it from other sources.¹ We find that he was born in 1624; that his father, the Ashford physician, "with three children and three servants," was among those who sailed from Sandwich for New England in the good ship *Hercules*, in March, 1635—that is, just about fifteen years after the Pilgrim Fathers sailed from Plymouth. Comfort would thus be about eleven years old when he crossed the Atlantic. A year later, Harvard College was founded, and Comfort's father is described as one of its earliest benefactors. There, as we have seen, Comfort was himself educated. What made him afterwards return to England and led to his settlement in Carlisle as one of the two ministers of the Churches of St. Cuthbert and St. Mary (the latter forming part of the Cathedral) we do not know. At the time of his appointment there he was about thirty-one. In September, 1658, he was summoned to attend "a general meeting of the churches in England of the Congregational way at the Savoy in London, the 29th of ye same month, to draw up a confession of faith, and declaration of their order, &c." But he did not go, and thus he missed the opportunity of helping to frame the Savoy Confession,

¹ See B. Nightingale's *The Ejected of 1662 in Cumberland and Westmorland*, Vol. I, pp. 159-173; and Lyon Turner's *Original Documents of Early Nonconformity*, Vol. III, p. 467.

which came to take among churches of the Congregational order the place which the Westminster Confession had taken among those of the Presbyterian body, and was as strictly Calvinistic in its doctrine. After his ejection, as Calamy tells us, Mr. Star returned to his native county of Kent. In 1669 he appears as a preacher at a conventicle at Cranbrook; in 1672 he applied for a preaching licence at Sandwich, and for another licence for his house there as a Congregational meeting-place. Under date August 12th, 1687, there is the following quaint entry in the Church Book of the Guildhall Street Church, Canterbury:—

"The Church kept a day, To Begg direction in ye great affayer of a pastor . . . at which time our Church Elected Mr. Comfort Starre To be our Pastour."

He remained at Canterbury till his coming to Lewes in 1691.

Throughout the changes we have noted in the ministry of the Independents—Mr. Postlethwaite being succeeded by Mr. Whiston and the latter by Mr. Star—there had been no change in that of the Presbyterians. In 1695, however, Mr. Newton, then in the sixty-eighth year of his age, had his labours lightened by the appointment of a colleague, and the colleague was no other than

the Rev. Thomas Barnard, of whom we have already heard as being among those fined for attending the South Malling conventicle in 1670. In a manuscript volume that has been handed down to us, Mr. Barnard writes thus of the event :—

“God having been sought unto not only in secret and private but publicly, and His providence wonderfully removing impediments, and clearing up my way—on Wednesday, the 21 of August, 1695, which was solemnly observed as a day of fasting and prayer, with laying aside of ornaments, the Reverend Mr. George Porter assisting in the work of the day, I had the unanimous election of the Church (with the declared consent and desire of their Reverend Pastor, Mr. Edward Newton) unto the joint-pastorship. And believing the thing proceeded from the Lord, I declared my consent and entered that sacred office. Nor is it strange to antiquity, or present practice, that a particular Church should have more than one Bishop or Pastor set over it ; which also hath the suffrage of the Holy Scriptures themselves, and particularly these following : Titus i. 5, 6, 7 ; Philip. i. 1 ; Acts xx. 17, 28.”

The Rev. George Porter, B.D., who is here referred to as “assisting in the work of the day,” was a man of much distinction. Before the ejection

of 1662 he had occupied a prominent place at Oxford, having been a Canon of Christ Church, Proctor of the University, and a Fellow of Magdalen College. Calamy speaks of him as “a man of good learning, great gravity, integrity, and charity,” and tells us, moreover, that he was a “great enemy to high flown expressions in sermons,” and would say to ministers who used such expressions to show off their knowledge, that “learning did not consist in hard words, but in depth of matter.” But he could also say a word in season to the laity, for we are told that being himself “a very devout man, and having a due respect both to the substance and circumstances of worship, he used to speak of common sleepers at sermons with great severity as equally criminal with swearers and drunkards.” No doubt, therefore, at Mr. Barnard’s induction he proved himself the man for the occasion and addressed both minister and people with memorable point and felicity. “In church government,” says Calamy, “he was what might be called a sort of *Interdependent*.” Mr. Barnard may also have the same designation applied to him, for he tells us that his coming back to Lewes, his native town, was on hopeful prospect of a union between the two congregations there—the Independent one, of which Mr. Star was now minister, and the Presby-

terian one, in the ministry of which he was himself to be associated with Mr. Newton. The Lewes Dissenters, like those in other parts of the country, had no doubt accepted the "Heads of Agreement" which were drawn up by the Presbyterian and Independent ministers of London in 1691, and which tended to promote unions of this kind. But much was to happen before the union could be brought about; how and when it was realised, we shall see later.

Of Thomas Barnard's career since the conventicle proceedings of 1670, all that we are able to learn is contained in the MS. volume from which I have already quoted. This is a calf-bound folio with parchment leaves. It was begun as a Register of Baptisms performed by the writer from the time of his ordination in 1687, but, on his settlement in the ministry at Lewes, it became also a Roll Book in which he entered the names of the members of the congregation. On the first page, however, (as if foreseeing the interest that posterity would now be taking in him!) he sets forth a genealogical table, which shows, among other things, that he was born in 1643, his father being Richard Barnard, draper, Lewes, who died in 1666; and here and there throughout the volume he inserts notes of his doings and reflections at various stages of his career. He had

evidently received a good education for his life work; in what manner he obtained it, he does not say; but in lieu of a University, which did not then exist for Nonconformists like him, there were among the ejected ministers in Lewes and neighbourhood, men of University training who were both able and willing to assist him in his studies. In the course of a statement which forms a kind of introduction to the baptismal register, he says:—

"I entered upon my public ministry anno 1673, being the 30th year of my age, having from the first an eye to that solemn ordination which I intended in due time to receive. On the twenty-fourth day of February, 1687, I was ordained a minister of the Gospel at Glynd-Bourn in Sussex, with praying and fasting and the laying on of the hands of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Goldham of Burwash, Mr. Edward Newton, of Lewes, and Mr. Thomas Hallet of Streat. Being ordained, I looked on myself authorised for the performance of all ministerial acts as God in His providence should administer occasion, and particularly to baptize, as meet subjects should present themselves, or be presented to me."

The question of baptism was very much to the fore in Lewes, as we have already seen by the

number of books which Mr. Whiston wrote about it; and it is interesting to learn what were Mr. Barnard's convictions in regard to it.

"I am satisfied," he says, "that not only adult and grown persons who have not been baptized in their infancy, are to be baptized upon their solemn profession of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but that the Covenant of Grace is made with the believing parent and his infant seed, and that the initial Seal of the Covenant ought to be applied unto their seed as well as themselves (Gen. 17. 7; 1 Cor. 7. 14; Acts 16. 14, 15, 33). Baptism in the general signifieth washing, how diversly soever it be performed as to the manner of it (Heb. 9. 10). We read not in the Scripture of the total immersion or dipping of any, yea there is only probable conjecture (if so much) that any one was partially dipt, and since that way of administration is most obnoxious to exception upon the account of the sixth and seventh commandment, yea cannot be used to all persons that are meet subjects of that ordinance, and at all places and times, it is in my judgment not only equally valid, but much more convenient, if the water in baptism be applied in some other way, and this as a sign by divine institution doth both signify and seal all covenant blessings and privileges. But where

any, through extreme though groundless scruples, cannot submit to this holy ordinance any other way than by immersion, how far I not only can but have condescended to such a weak brother, will appear in the sequel. Some of the reasons why I have so strictly registered the persons whom I have baptized are, that upon recollecting what I have done in this kind I may the better (as I have opportunity) admonish both parents and children of their solemn engagements, and rejoice in the Lord if he shall give me to see them walk in the truth as it is in Jesus. Amen."

Mr. Barnard's condescension to a "weak brother" who insisted on immersion as the only proper method of baptism, does indeed appear in the sequel—but it is apparent only to those who are able to read Latin! The case is that of Jeffery Austen, a man of thirty years of age, whom he baptized at Hastings on the 2nd of May, 1691. To the entry of this baptism he appends the following note:—

"Amico huic et in Christo fratri Baptismatis Sacramentum mersione applicavi in mare quatuor forsitan stadia ad orientem oppidi maritimi quod Hastings nominatur, in agro Sussexensi. Hoc feci ut conscientiae ejus in hac re melius satisfacerem: secreto, tamen, et uno tantum, praeter nosmet ipsos, praesente teste, ne, dum unius

scrupulosity remedium concederem, pluribus essem offendiculo. Hoc tamen animitus opto, ut paulo majori libertate uterentur Divini verbi et sacramentorum dispensatores, quodcumque occasio talis acciderit, ne in tantilla circumstantia infirmorum conscientis minus quam par est videremur consulere. Hoc tamen semper judico, mersionem in se non magis valere, imo ut plurimum multo minus convenire. T. B."

It is evident that in committing this note to Latin Mr. Barnard did not wish its contents to be known to everybody; but I do not think that any injustice will be done to his memory, or any harm be done to my readers, by translating it now into English:—

"I administered the sacrament of baptism to this friend and brother in Christ in the sea about half a mile to the east of the seaside town which is called Hastings, in the county of Sussex. I did this in order that I might better satisfy his conscience in this matter; but in secret and with only one witness present besides ourselves, lest in yielding a remedy to the scrupulousness of one I should be a stumbling block to many. Yet this I desire heartily that the dispensers of the word of the Lord and of the sacraments may use a little more freedom whenever such an occasion

shall arise; lest in so small a matter we should seem to have less regard than is fitting for the consciences of the weak. But my judgment always is that immersion is not in itself more valid and that it is most certainly much less convenient."

The picture which is thus brought before our minds, of Mr. Barnard standing waist deep in the sea and solemnly dipping his "weak brother" while the one witness watches the proceeding from the beach, is somewhat droll; but the catholicity of spirit shown by the good minister in respecting scruples which he did not share is noteworthy and wholly admirable.

Another interesting note occurs in the Register of Baptisms, and although it belongs to a later date than we have yet reached in our history, it may most fittingly be introduced here. It refers to the baptism of Frances Charman of Warnham, near Horsham, a young woman of twenty-two, which took place in the Cliffe on November 7th, 1705. It reads:—

"The person last mentioned had parents who were Anabaptists. She had been sometime a hearer among that people, and sometime at publick [the Church of England], but with satisfaction as to neither. Visits to a sister of hers in

communion with us were an occasion of her hearing, and sometime seeing, the sacrament of the Supper administered among us. She lately renewed her visit to her sister, and was there providentially visited of that sickness whereof she died. In the evening of the day above mentioned, I was sent for to her, not like then to live till the morning. I found her under convictions of neglect as to the Lord's Supper. I acquainted her it was a Church ordinance, and I saw no reason from the Word of God for more private communions; if she had sinned in omitting it she should humbly apply for herself to God in Christ for pardon, and if God gave her recovery she should then apply herself to do her duty. But finding she had not been baptized, and being confirmed by Scripture instances that ordinance had been administered privately as well as publicly, I acquainted her that Baptism was a Seal of the same Covenant. Upon her desire to be baptized, among other things I interrogated her whether she did believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be God, and did believe in him with all her heart, in which I was the more particular because I feared the Anabaptists she had been conversant with were Socinian. I further asked her whether she were satisfied to receive baptism by a more gentle way of application of water than by dipping; to all which answering

in the affirmative I baptized her by pouring water on her face as she lay in bed. She survived that night, and lived about a week after, in which time she owned her faith in the Covenant strengthened by the seal. She constantly desired death, not so much (as she said) to be delivered from the troubles of life, as to be with God.

“There was this also extraordinary in her case. She said that about eight in the evening, two hours before her baptism, the candle being out, and nobody at that instant in her chamber, an angel appeared to her in human shape, in white and very illustrious, who told her she should die that night, or in a little time after. She replied, she feared God was offended with her. He said he would assure her He was not, but that she should go with him to the Land of Desire. She said she desired nothing more. When she first related this, and afterwards, she was, in the judgment of all about her, as composed as any person whatever, nor was she at all terrified, but much comforted hereby. On the Monday evening following I gave her a visit, and prayed with her. She said the angel had appeared again that evening, speaking nothing, but, upon her lights coming in, disappeared. On Wednesday the 14th of November, she said she should after that night trouble watchers no more, for she should go with the angel. She

retained the use of reason to the last moment and died that evening about 8 o'clock.

"There were some in the ancient Church called Clinici, because baptized in their beds; this is the first I have had a call to baptize so, and in this have an experimental argument against the imposition of the severer way of baptism by dipping, which could not in this case be performed. As to the supposed apparition, though she with great seriousness asserted it, and took great comfort from it, I told her it might be a deception, and exhorted her to rely upon the surer word of prophecy, which I hope she did."

Mr. Barnard's reference to Socinians at Horsham, with whom this young woman had been associated, is interesting in itself, and in view of the change of doctrine which his congregation was to undergo in the course of the century which had then begun. At a time when the famous and learned Dr. South was denouncing Socinians as "impious blasphemers, whose infamous pedigree runs back from wretch to wretch in a direct line to the Devil himself, and who are fitter to be crushed by the civil magistrate as destructive to government and society, than confuted as merely heretics in religion,"¹ it is not surprising that our

¹ Quoted in a note in Abbey and Overton's *English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. I, p. 487.

Mr. Barnard should regard them with suspicion and exercise a careful scrutiny of the opinions of any one in whom he was interested and who might be tainted with their heresy. But there was at the time at least one Sussex minister who boldly preached Arian doctrine, the Rev. Matthew Caffyn of Horsham; and the young woman's friends evidently belonged to his general Baptist congregation there. Matthew Caffyn was a remarkable man. Born in 1628, he studied at Oxford, but, on expressing his disbelief in the doctrine of the Trinity, he was expelled from the University. This was a fit beginning to a career of quite Apostolic hardship—including imprisonment in Newgate—borne with dauntless courage for the sake of the truth as he conceived it. From his power in controversy he became known as "the Battle Axe of Sussex," and his influence extended far beyond the county, and is to be reckoned as an important factor in the history of liberal Nonconformity down to the present time. His favourite saying was that "a wicked life is the worst heresy"—a saying which the lapse of more than two centuries since his death (in 1714) has not robbed of its truth.¹

When in 1695 Mr. Barnard joined Mr. Newton in the pastorate of the Presbyterian congregation

¹ See Lower's *The Worthies of Sussex*, pp. 342-3.

there were about fifty names on the Roll of Members. The attendance at the services no doubt often exceeded that number, since it would include young people and others who were not communicants; and we may suppose that the little Meeting House was somewhat overcrowded. After Mr. Barnard's appointment, the question of better accommodation was raised, and on this question, as we have already learnt from Calamy, there was an unhappy difference of opinion between the two pastors, a difference which ended in their separation and in a division of their flock. Mr. Newton was apparently satisfied with things as they were, and was perhaps too deeply attached to the Meeting House with the sacred associations which more than twenty years of use had given to it, to welcome the idea of a change to another though larger place. Mr. Barnard, on the other hand, was convinced that this step had to be taken both on account of present needs and in view of future developments should his hope of the union of the two Dissenting congregations be realised. In a note which he inserts in the Membership Roll, after recording the additions made thereto in the year 1699, he tells the story of the dispute and its issue, thus :—

“ Upon the unreasonably obstinate opposition made and persisted in by Mr. Newton, my brother

pastor, unto that necessary and most inoffensive enlargement which was a matter of conscience with me, for enlarging the Gospel interest of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church stood like a tottering house ready to drop on our heads ; for a year and a quarter many stood looking on, but not one offered to enter into our communion. But large additions were made afterwards when we were separate.

“ The obtaining suitable enlargement for our greatly increased and increasing auditory lay on my conscience as a duty to God and souls, which Mr. Newton unhappily and obstinately opposing ; after seeking dismissal which was universally denied me, I proceeded with a vast majority on proper enlargement, which when we had, under unspeakable difficulties and hardships, obtained, we passed by all injuries, and made a free tender of our useful place to Mr. Newton and his few adherents, which he not only disdainfully rejected, but first invaded my turn of preaching on the 30th of March, 1701, and (which with sorrow I write) sealed the schism with an opposite Sacrament on Lord's Day the sixth of April following.

“ From that time I thought it my duty to take particular care of those that remained under my charge, as also to receive new members, as those

I judged meet should offer themselves for Communion.

“The Lord hath graciously beheld our great affliction, and been speedily and considerably adding to us, yea in a degree superior to what he had done before, which hath brought to my thoughts the following Scripture, Isai. 49. 20, 21, ‘The children which thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other shall say in thine ears, The place is too strait for me, give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart: Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold! I was left alone; these, where had they been?’”

The “useful place” to which Mr. Barnard and the majority of the congregation removed, and which they invited Mr. Newton and his adherents to share with them, was the building now known as Westgate Chapel. It had been erected in Queen Elizabeth’s time, probably about 1583, as the town house of Sir Henry Goring, of Burton, Sussex,¹ whose son Edward sold it to Mr. Edward Claggett, Portslade. In 1615 it came into the possession of

¹ See *At the Sign of the Bull, Lewes*, by W. H. Godfrey, F.S.A., pp. 5, 6.

Mr. Thomas Oliver, of Lewes. The next owner was Mr. Thomas Adams, from whom Mr. Barnard bought it.¹ The estate as purchased by the latter included the Bull Inn; and it would appear that for some time the building which now forms the Chapel had been used for the purposes of the inn. An old but undated document among the Chapel records tells us that “about the year 1699, the Lower Meeting being too small for the decent accommodation of the people meeting there, the Rev. Mr. Barnard purchased the Bull Inn and gave liberty to fit up a part of it (now the Meeting House) for a more commodious place of Divine worship.” But the Chapel Trust Deed, which was drawn up in 1721, and is certainly of earlier date than the document just cited, describes the Meeting House as “adjoining a tenement that was formerly an inn and then called or known by the name of the Bull.” The statements, however, are easily reconciled, for the front part of the estate seems to have remained an inn for some time after the back part had been transformed into the Meeting House.

This transformation was no small undertaking. The interior masonry and woodwork had to be demolished, wooden pillars set up for the support of the roof, a new ceiling and floor made, and other

¹ See *Sussex Archæological Collections*, Vol. XIII, pp. 13-4.

alterations and additions effected ; and, besides, the place had to be furnished with pulpit, pews, and other necessaries. Some of the old cellars were filled up, probably with the debris, but one was left and long used as a stable for the horses of members of the congregation who drove in from the country. The outside of the east wall still bears traces of some of the original Tudor windows, and a certain patchiness here and there in the flint work shows where others have been. In that wall, too, there is extant one of the original doors,—the side or Bull Lane door of the mansion—made strongly of oak and set with iron studs, its sandstone posts hollowed away by immemorial knife grinding. In the middle of the southern wall, immediately behind the pulpit, there was another door (originally the back door of the mansion) which led on to a stair descending into a yard or garden. The pulpit, which had a clerk's desk in front of it, was of oak, and had a finely inlaid sounding-board ; and, placed significantly on the wall opposite the pulpit, was the clock, the winding of which could only be accomplished from the inside of the adjoining house or inn. The Meeting House, thus completely furnished in a manner suitable for Puritan worship, had little that was artistic or beautiful about it, but its spaciousness and loftiness gave it a certain

dignity. It was opened on the 5th of November, 1700.

Mr. Newton, as we have seen, did not " seal the schism " between him and Mr. Barnard till the following April, but it is doubtful whether he was present at the opening of the Bull Meeting. In any case his disapproval of the movement must have robbed the occasion of much of its happiness. According to a good authority, " he continued after Mr. Barnard's separation from him, to preach at his old place to a considerable congregation." That congregation survived as a separate entity till 1759, when, as we shall see, it became merged in the Westgate one.

Thus in 1701 there were three Dissenting congregations in Lewes—Mr. Newton's, Mr. Star's, and Mr. Barnard's. Ten years later the number was reduced to two ; this reduction being brought about through the realisation of Mr. Barnard's hope of the union of the Independent Church with his own. In the meantime—probably in 1708—Mr. Star had retired from the ministry of the Independent congregation and been succeeded by the Rev. John Olive,—the son perhaps of a minister of the same name who had been ejected in 1662 from the chapelry of Gisford, Sussex. When the two congregations united, their ministers became joint pastors ; the total membership

being about 170, of whom about 60 had come with Mr. Olive. Mr. Barnard tells us that "upon most mature deliberation this union was effected on the 6th of November, 1711, which was observed a day of solemn prayer and fasting with laying aside of ornaments."

Mr. Newton, according to Calamy, resigned his charge owing to old age and infirmity in 1709. He died in 1712—exactly fifty years after his ejection from St. Anne's. Those years were momentous in the struggle for civil and religious liberty throughout the country; and enough, I trust, has been said in this chapter to show how that struggle was carried on in Lewes, and what manner of men they were who bore the brunt of it.



II

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

MR. BARNARD seems to have practically retired in 1715, thus completing twenty years' ministry in Lewes. It was in every way a memorable ministry. If Mr. Newton was the Moses of the congregation, leading it out of bondage and through many trials in the wilderness, Mr. Barnard was its Joshua, for it was he who, "under unspeakable difficulties and hardships," achieved its settlement at Westgate, and it was largely through him that the union of the Independents with his own people had been brought about. All that we learn of him gives us the impression that he was a man of more than ordinary strength and decision of character, and of deep and earnest piety. His place in the joint ministry of the Upper Meeting (or Bull or Westgate Meeting as it was variously called) was taken by the Rev. Joseph Beach ; and by this time the Rev. Thomas Force had been for several years minister of the Lower Meeting, having succeeded Mr. Newton there on July 20th, 1709.

We have seen that the Westgate building had been purchased by Mr. Barnard and fitted up at the expense of members of the congregation. There is nothing to show what was the cost in either case. The management and disposal of the Meeting had, however, been left in Mr. Barnard's hands, in the expectation that he would take the steps necessary to secure it for the permanent use of the congregation. As time went on, and these steps were not being taken, some uneasiness was naturally felt; so we learn that:— "In the year 1719 it was thought necessary by some persons principally concerned in the fitting up of the Meeting to put the Rev. Mr. Barnard in mind that he had done nothing for the security of it to the people for the use it was fitted up for, and that, considering his age, and infirmities, it would be improper to neglect it any longer. He approved of the motion, and consented to it on condition that Mr. Swane and Mr. Olive would purchase the whole estate of him, and settle the Meeting House part in trust for the use designed; which they, as advised by others concerned, agreed to." The balance sheet in connection with this purchase has been handed down. It shows that the whole estate was bought from Mr. Barnard for £180, and that the dwelling-house (formerly the Bull Inn) and two gardens

were then disposed of for £132. The sum actually paid for the Meeting House and the garden behind, after deducting expenses, was a modest £40. When these financial matters had been arranged, the Meeting House was formally conveyed to thirteen trustees, of whom five had been members of Mr. Barnard's congregation and five of Mr. Olive's before their union, and the remaining three had become members after the two congregations united. Those who drew up the Trust Deed did not fail to stipulate that there shall be "a free way and passage at all seasonable times by and through a chamber" of the adjoining house to wind up the Meeting House clock!

It is interesting to learn that Mr. Olive was at the famous conference of the Three Denominations—Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist—held at Salters' Hall, London, in 1719, and that, like most of the Independents there, he sided with the Subscribers; that is, with those who wished to insist that ministers should make a declaration of their belief in the Trinity. The meeting had been summoned to consider what action should be taken in regard to certain brethren at Exeter, and notably the Rev. James Peirce, who had been accused of denying that doctrine. The Presbyterian members of the synod, although for the most part quite orthodox themselves, were, with a few

exceptions, strongly opposed to the idea of fettering the liberty of the pulpit and of excluding anyone from their fellowship on account of his opinions about the Trinity. To insist on subscription to particular doctrines seemed to them to be repeating the injustice that had been done by the Act of Uniformity. The Salters' Hall conference is an important landmark in the history of English Dissent; it was the beginning of that cleavage between the Presbyterian and the other Non-conformist bodies which widened as time went on and as the Presbyterian churches, availing themselves of their liberty, gradually emerged from their original Calvinism into Unitarianism. In congregations like the Lewes one, composed of Presbyterians and Independents, the question of subscription was no doubt discussed with more than ordinary warmth; and we may assume that when Mr. Olive returned from the Salters' Hall synod he found not a few of the Westgate people at variance with him on the matter that had been under debate; and probably his colleague, Mr. Beach, was of their mind. Anyhow, whether originating in this way or not, dissension arose in the congregation and threatened to end in disruption. For we find that a few years later, in 1723, Mr. Olive and those in sympathy with him were discussing the advisability of separating

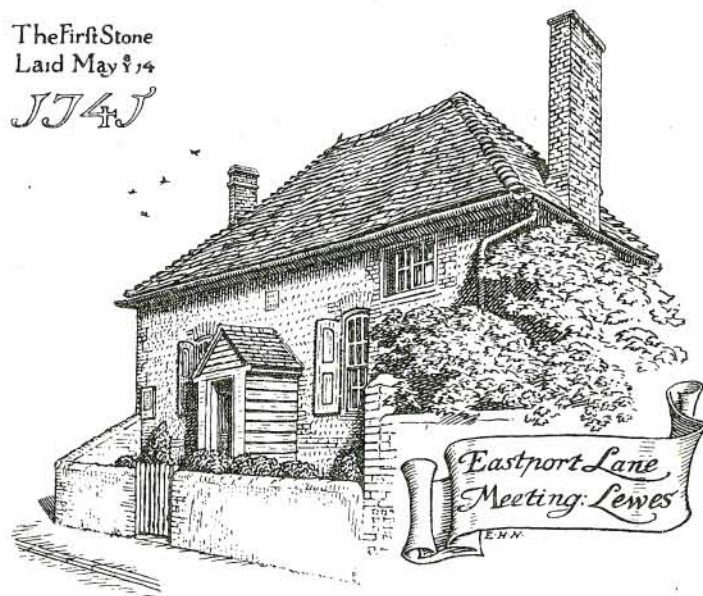
themselves from Mr. Beach and his party and uniting with the Lower Meeting. In a document, written by some one on Mr. Olive's side, the course of the discussion is summarised with much care.¹ First it was proposed that Mr. Olive and his followers should worship for a time at the Lower Meeting, and that he and Mr. Force should preach in turn at the Sunday morning and afternoon services there. But this, it was objected, "might cause grief to Mr. Barnard and give disgust to Madam Spence." Besides, it was thought rather risky to leave the Upper Meeting even for a brief period, as there might be legal difficulties in the way of getting back. Then it was asked, Why should we not remain at Westgate and lock the pulpit door against Mr. Beach? But it was wisely doubted whether such a method of settling the matter was agreeable to the Apostles' rule as set forth in 1 Timothy ii. 8, etc. Finally, it was proposed that the best plan for preserving mutual charity and following after things that make for peace, would be "to lay aside carnal reasonings, to spread ye case before ye Lord in prayer, and to leave events to ye ordering of Him who walketh in ye midst of ye golden candlesticks (Rev. ii. 1)." This counsel seems to have prevailed, and so far as we can learn, the result was satisfactory.

¹ *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. LI, pp. 183-6.

At any rate, we find that seventeen years later the two ministers of the Upper Meeting were still working together. The following record of a Fast Service in which they officiated, and in which the minister of the Lower Meeting also took part, was written by Mr. William Ridge, who was at the time one of the young men of the Westgate congregation :—

“ January ye 9, 1739/40. A Fast kept on Account of War with Spain, kept at Lewis in the uper Meeting House in following manner: Mr. Beach prayed a short prayer, then he read a Psalm and Chapter and then prayed again, then he preached a sermon on Revelation 3. 2, then sung a Psalm, and then Mr. Olive prayed and then he preach a sermon on Jeremiah 14. 8, and then Mr. Force went up and preach a sermon on the 3 chapter of Jonah, and then he prayed, and then sung another Psalm, and then made a short exhortation for a collection for the poor. The Service began about eleven a clock and continued till about 3.”

The war which occasioned this Fast arose from the effort of Spain to prevent the British from trading with her South American colonies, and is known as “the war of Jenkins’ ear.” It was a somewhat inglorious war, but happily it did not last long.



In 1741 there occurred an event which was of much significance for the future of Westgate Meeting—a significance, however, that was probably unsuspected by any one at the time. This was the erection of a little General Baptist chapel in Eastport Lane, Southover. It will be remembered that the General Baptists have already come into our story through Mr. Barnard's reference to a congregation of theirs at Horsham which had adopted Arian views during the ministry of the Rev. Matthew Caffyn. Those views had in the interval obtained wide currency among the General Baptists; and no doubt, therefore, the more orthodox members of the congregation at Westgate looked with little favour on the new movement at Southover, and on the "Caffynites" there. But through a gradual approximation of their views the two congregations were destined to be brought into close sympathy with one another and at last to be united.

In the same year, 1741, Mr. Olive died, and Mr. Beach's ministry also came to an end. It was decided to appoint a minister who should have sole charge of the Meeting, and the choice fell on a young Scotsman, the Rev. Ebenezer Johnston, who had studied at the Northampton Academy, under Dr. Doddridge. His ordination took place in 1742, and the occasion was rendered illustrious

by the presence of Dr. Doddridge himself. It is matter for congratulation that the voice of this great and good man has been heard within the Westgate Chapel walls. Often since then have these walls resounded to the immortal hymns he wrote, hymns such as those beginning "Shine on our souls, eternal God, with rays of beauty shine," "O God of Bethel by whose hand Thy people still are fed," and that other, without which no Christmas service seems complete, "Hark the glad sound! the Saviour comes." At the time of the visit to Lewes he had not written that once popular work, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, but he had begun to publish his *Family Expositor*, and his name was honoured in all the churches, both Anglican and Nonconformist. He was great not only as an author and preacher but also as a trainer of young men for the ministry. The large variety of subjects included in the curriculum at his academy, even though few of them could be treated by him or by any single teacher otherwise than superficially, showed that he wanted his men not only to be well grounded in sacred learning but to have besides the foundation of a good general culture. He encouraged them to discuss theological and philosophical questions freely with him, and in this way he stimulated their interest and widened

their mental horizon. His chief care, however, was for their spiritual welfare, for the cultivation of devotional habits, and the setting up of a high standard of character and conduct.

The ordination excited much interest, and in preparation for it certain improvements were made in the Meeting House.¹ Fortunately there has been preserved to us an eye-witness's account of the proceedings; it is from the same hand as that to which we are already indebted for the record of the Fast service of 1740, and it reads as follows:—

"Something of the way and manner that Mr. Ebenezer Johnston was Ordained at Lewes July y^e 21, 1742, viz. Mr. Mason of Darking began with a short prayer and read the 34th of Ezekiel, the 10 first vearses of the third Chap. of y^e first of Timothy, and 2th of Titus and then said something in a way of Preface, then read the Churches invitation which was signed by Richard Ridge, Tho. Barret, William Attersol, Tho. Davy, Crutt. Weller and, I believe, William English and after reading he asked them, for they with some others of the Church sat together, wether they did not

¹ The Chapel Account Book of the time has this item: "New making ye Table and other jobs in order to ye Ordination—15/6."

allow of the Invitation? If they did they should make some Sign as by holding up their hands, the which they did. And then he asked Mr. Johnston wether he excepted of the invitation, the which he declared he did. Then we sung the roth hymn of the 1th Book. And then Mr. Johnston of Wisbich, Brother to the ordained, went in the pulpit and prayed and then Mr. Jinnings of London preached a Sermon on the 2. Corinthians 4:5, and then Mr. Sammuel Snashal of Newington went in the pulpit and asked Mr. Johnston to read his beleif and after he ask him his Resolutions to keep his beleif the which also Mr. Johnston read and then Mr. Snashal came down to the Seat where the following Ministers were, to wit, Mr. Jinnings, Docter Dodridge, Mr. Johnston of Wisbich, Mr. Dear of Burwash, Mr. Duke of Brighthelmstone, Mr. Whatkins of Lewes, Mr. Mason of Darking, Mr. Wittle of Battle, Mr. Chantler of Turners Hill and there Mr. Snashal with most of the rest layed there hands on the head of Mr. Johnston as he kneeled and Mr. Snashal prayed over him. And then Docter Dodridge of Northampton went in the pulpit and gave the charge and then sung the 1th and two Last Verses of the 128 hymn of ye 1th Book and then Mr. Dear went in pulpit and concluded with a prayer. Whole service was about four hours and

a half, began about Quarter before Eeleven and ended about a Quarter after three.

“The Aforewriting is as near as I could call to mind after I came home the same day at Night.

“WILLIAM RIDGE.”

To this there is a postscript :—

“After the Ordination was over there was a Dinner provided for the Ministers at Crutenden Wellars by the joynt Charge of several and Dyned the 11 Ministers before mentioned and Mr. Butten of Rye, Mr. Beach of Lewes, Mr. Marshall who came with Dr. Dodridge and Docter Avery and Thomas Davy Apothecary.”

In his “Meditations at the Lord’s Table” at Northampton a few weeks later (August 15) Dr. Doddrige refers to the “long journey” which he had made through the southern and western counties, and to his presence at this and two other ordinations, and he goes on to say, “There was a remarkable hand of Providence upon me for good during the whole journey.” And certainly the long and useful ministry which he helped to inaugurate at Lewes, as we now look back upon it, fully justifies his feeling that the hand of Providence had been directing him. That ministry

lasted for forty years, and although, as we shall see, those were years of much theological change and controversy throughout the land, the life of the Westgate congregation went on harmoniously and prosperously—perhaps because the minister had learned from his tutor a large tolerance of opinions different from his own, and in his preaching dwelt mainly on the deeper things of God and the soul upon which all were agreed. Like many of Dr. Doddridge's students, Mr. Johnston probably, as time passed and new points of view presented themselves, moved farther and farther away from his old teacher's Calvinism, and became Arian, if not Unitarian, in doctrine.

When Mr. Johnston began his ministry, the congregation was of the "middle sort," like the conventicle of seventy years before. Thus, of the members named in the account of the ordination, Richard Ridge (whose daughter Mary Mr. Johnston married sixteen months afterwards) was a yeoman farmer; Thomas Barrett was a clock-maker; William Attersoll, a carpenter; Thomas Davy, a surgeon and apothecary; Cruttenden Weller, a tallow chandler; and William English, a cutler.¹ Later on an aristocratic element seems to have come in, as we are reminded by the hatch-

¹ Most of the names are to be found in the list of High Constables of the town.

ment that still hangs on the Chapel walls—a thing rarely seen in a Nonconformist place of worship. The hatchment bears the arms of Francis, 5th Lord Napier, and those of his two wives—the first being Henrietta, daughter of Charles, Earl of Hopetown, and the second, Henrietta Maria, daughter of George Johnston, Esq., of Dublin (who was perhaps a relative of the Westgate minister). His lordship resided at Corsica Hall, Ringmer, near Lewes, and died in 1773.

Before taking leave of the ordination, we must notice that Watts' hymns were used at it. As there is no mention of hymns in the account of the Fast Service of 1740, but only of Psalms (probably in William Barton's metrical version), we may perhaps assume that hymns were a recent introduction, or that they were used indeed for the first time at the ordination. If this was so, the fact would be appreciated by none more than by Dr. Doddridge, who, besides being a hymn writer, was a friend of Watts and a strong advocate for the use of hymns in public worship. There were some, perhaps, in the congregation, as there undoubtedly were in other congregations at the time and for long after, who felt scruples about the fitness of "human hymns" for the public services of religion; but it was generally recognized that the innovation greatly added to the interest

and spiritual helpfulness of the services.¹ As there was no organ, the singing was either unaccompanied, or, as later on, accompanied by stringed and other instruments. The people sat to sing and, for the sake of those who could not read, the minister or clerk, read out each verse of the psalm or hymn before it was sung. It will be understood that under such conditions, and with the general lack of musical taste and training, congregational singing in the eighteenth century seldom reached a high standard of excellence.

¹ There is, however, an account of another and later Fast from the pen of William Ridge, and as again there is no mention of hymns, it may be that only Psalms were sung on such sad and solemn occasions, though hymns may for some time have been in use at the ordinary services. The account is as follows:—

“A Fast at Lewes at uper place, November ye 10, 1742. Mr. Beach prayed a short prayer and read a Chapter, a Psalm and Chapter, and then sung a Psalm and prayed, and Mr. Watkins preach on Jonah 3. 7, 8, 9, and prayed and then sung a Psalm and Mr. Johnston prayed and preach on Exodus 15. 3, and then sung a Psalm and then prayed and made a short exhortation for a collection for the poor; began about a quarter of an hour after eleven and ended about three.”

William Ridge's MS. Commonplace Book, from which this and the other extracts are taken, was kindly lent to me by Mr. J. J. Green, of Hastings. See “Notes on the Ridge Family,” by Mr. John Sawyer, *Sussex Archæological Collections*, Vol. XXXVII, pp. 122-4; and articles by the Rev. W. H. Burgess, B.A., in *The Christian Life*, October 4 and November 15, 1913.

Year by year Mr. Johnston's ministry went on without interruption, save for occasional holidays when he visited his friends in far-off Dumfries, his native place, or in Northampton, endeared to him by the associations of college days. From a little book of accounts we gather that the subscriptions towards his stipend amounted to about £40 a year. The Sunday services were held morning and afternoon, with sometimes a course of evening “Lectures,” at which candles, set in brass sconces, shed forth a dim religious light. For more than half a century the Meeting House seems to have been without any heating arrangements, but in 1756 the “great summ” of £63 12s. 4d. was subscribed, and the want was made good, probably in the shape of a stove or stoves. Among those who helped to subscribe the “great summ” was the Rev. James Watkins, who had succeeded Mr. Force at the Lower Meeting in March, 1742.¹

¹ According to Horsfield, “Mr. Watkins was fellow-student with Mr., afterwards Archbishop, Secker at a dissenting academy in Gloucester, conducted by the amiable and truly learned Rev. Samuel Jones. In a letter written by Mr. Secker, whilst he was at the academy, to Dr. Watts, with whom he was on terms of great intimacy, and who had requested from him an account of the academy, he mentions as one of his fellow-students, Mr. Watkins, as being diligent in study and truly religious” (*History and Antiquities of Lewes*, p. 304). Another student at this dissenting academy about the same time was Joseph Butler, afterwards Bishop and author of the famous *Analogy of Religion*.

Mr. Watkins' relations with Mr. Johnston were very friendly. It was he who baptized the latter's children, including the first of them, a son, William, who was born in 1744, and who became like his father a minister of Westgate Meeting. The friendly feeling between the ministers was typical of that which existed between their congregations; and as time passed it became more and more apparent that there was no longer any good reason why these congregations should remain separate. On January 7, 1759, therefore, after the retirement of Mr. Watkins from the ministry, he and his people joined the Westgate Meeting, and thus the "schism" of 1701 came to an end. Some of the woodwork of the Lower Meeting was used, in 1761, in the construction of a vestry at Westgate; the remainder, including the pulpit, was sold. How the Westgate ministers managed so long to do without a vestry, we do not know, but possibly a room in the adjoining house had been placed at their disposal.

In that adjoining house Thomas Paine, then a young man of thirty-two, took up his lodgment in the year 1768, having been appointed exciseman at Lewes. The house, including the shop in front, was owned and occupied by Mr. Samuel Ollive, who carried on business as a tobacconist. On Mr. Ollive's death, in 1769, Thomas Paine removed to

other lodgings, but two years later he returned as the husband of Mr. Ollive's daughter Elizabeth, and took over the management of the tobacco shop, though continuing to carry on his work in the excise. Samuel Ollive had been a member of the Westgate Meeting, and his children had been baptized there;¹ and no doubt Thomas Paine attended sometimes, but rather as an outsider than as belonging to the congregation, his heresies having already, we may suppose, begun to alienate him from all organized religion. But though it cannot be said that he was a member of the congregation, he became, in a way, a contributor to the Meeting House funds. He had an outhouse across the Chapel yard, and it is to the drip from the roof of this outhouse that the following document in his handwriting, preserved among the Chapel papers, has reference:—

"I hereby confess myself under an obligation of paying the sum of one shilling yearly to the Trustees of the dissenters' Meeting House, situated in the Parish of St. Michael, Lewes, as an acknowledgment for their suffering the droppings

¹ Elizabeth's baptism is thus recorded by Mr. Johnston: "Elizabeth Ollive Daughter to Samuel Ollive, Tobacconist, born Decemb. 16, 1749, and baptised by me Dec. 27, 1749."

of rain which fall from a new building lately erected by me, to fall into a yard belonging and adjoining to the north side of the said Meeting House.

“ Witness my hand
 this 18th day of July 1772,
 “ THOS. PAINE.”

Paine's literary labours at this period consisted in the preparation of some pamphlets pleading with Parliament for an increase in the salaries of excisemen. But in the midst of this pleading he was deprived of his own excisemanship, the tobacco business failed, and his goods had to be sold to pay his creditors. Separating by mutual consent from his wife, with whom he had not been happy, he left the town, and at length the country, to play the great part for which his extraordinary character and abilities fitted him in the revolutionary dramas of America and France, and to become the author of *The Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason*.

Mr. Johnston retired in 1782 and removed to Brighton, where he died in 1791. His son William, who had been educated at Hoxton Academy and was now minister at Brighton, took charge of the Westgate pulpit till another appointment was

made. The next four ministries—those of the Revs. Richard Shiells (1783-1787), W. Evans Bishop (1788-1790), John Langdon (1790-1794), and Evan Davies¹ (1794-1803), fill up the remainder of the eighteenth century. The last quarter of that century witnessed the establishment of various Dissenting places of worship in or about the town. The Cliffe Chapel, now defunct, was founded in 1775. Its congregation was originally described as “ the Independent Church of Christ, in the Cliff near Lewes.” From it sprang the Baptist Church (1784), Jireh Calvinistic Chapel (1805), and the Congregational Tabernacle (1816). The Friends built their present Meeting House in 1784, and the Wesleyans began to hold services in St. Mary's Lane (now Station Street) in 1807. It is to be assumed that this multiplication of Nonconformist places of worship, each with its special appeal to different spiritual needs and ways of thought, was not without effect in lessening the attendance at the Westgate Meeting, especially as the doctrine taught in it had begun to be suspect as heterodox and to lose it the favour of many.

The last remark naturally leads us to consider how it was that the theology of the Westgate Meeting, although strongly Calvinistic at the

¹ Previously minister at Poole (1782-1794).

beginning of the century, became Unitarian towards its close, and how this change took place without any break in the continuity of the life of the congregation. As a governing condition of the change, it is important to notice the nature of the Meeting House Trust Deed, which simply states that the building is to be used by Protestant Dissenters "for the worshipping of Almighty God"—a broad provision consistent with the profession of a great variety of religious views, Calvinist and Arminian, Arian and Unitarian. This "open trust," as it is called, gave the ministers full liberty to preach the truth according to their convictions, and allowed the members of the congregation equal liberty to accept whatever teaching "commended itself to their consciences in the sight of God." Thus it was never necessary that a minister should hold the same views as his predecessor, or that all the members of the congregation should conform to one type of doctrine or to the opinions held by the generation before them. If Unitarianism gradually became the prevailing doctrine, it was not because any undue influence was brought to bear for the promotion of this and the elimination of every other type of religious teaching; and no worldly ends were to be served by the adoption of what seemed to most people an odious and

dangerous heresy. The Toleration Act of 1689 had given liberty of worship to all Dissenters except those who denied the doctrine of the Trinity. Not till 1813 was this exception erased from the statute book, and Unitarian worship legalised; and it was to be long yet before the *odium theologicum* would be removed from Unitarians. The quiet heroism with which they held on their way in spite of diminished numbers and every kind of difficulty and discouragement is surely worthy of all praise.

We may best, I think, realise how the change in doctrine was brought about in the Westgate Meeting during the eighteenth century, by entering the little vestry and looking round on the books and portraits there. Among the portraits is that of Thomas Emlyn, "V. D. M." The Latin inscription underneath tells us that he was born in 1663 and died in 1741, and it contains some lines from Virgil which may be translated thus: "Sooner shall the light deer graze in the sky, and the fish forsake the sea, than shall his face fade from our remembrance." And it is certainly a face worth remembering—that of a strong, brave, and honest man. Before he began his Dublin ministry, he had been studying certain works written in defence of the Trinity,—and had been converted by them to the opposite opinion.

His change of views found expression in his *Humble Enquiry into the Deity of Jesus Christ*, in which he pointed out that Jesus had disclaimed omniscience, in declaring that there were things which no man knew, "not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." For drawing attention to this and other neglected Scriptures implying the subordination of Jesus to the Father, Emlyn was arrested in Dublin in 1702, and, on being tried, was sentenced to pay a thousand pounds, and to lie in gaol till the fine was paid. The judge in passing the sentence told Emlyn that it was too good for him, and that if he had been in Spain or Portugal he would have been burned. William Whiston, who was removed from his professorship of mathematics at Cambridge in 1710, for publishing views similar to Emlyn's, refers in his autobiography to his "great friend Emlyn" as that "real confessor"; and no doubt his association with Emlyn, and his own example, helped to stimulate local interest in the cause for which both had sacrificed so much, and to prepare the way for doctrinal change at Westgate.

Another of the vestry portraits shows the handsome features of John Taylor, D.D., of Norwich. ("Johannes Taylor, Lancastria oriundus, et nunc apud Norvicenses rerum laetarum preco—anno

1754,"¹ is the legend round it.) He was born in 1694 and died in 1761. His chief work, *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, which he published in 1740, became the great text-book of the revolt against Calvinism in the latter half of the eighteenth century. It was one of the causes of the "New Licht" controversy in Scotland, immortalised in the satires of Burns. The poet himself had read the book, a copy of it having found its way into his father's small library, and he agreed with it heartily. Once or twice in his poems he mentions Dr. Taylor. Thus in his *Epistle to John Goudie*, he says in reference to the controversy:

"'Tis you and Taylor are the chief,
Wha are to blame for this mischief."

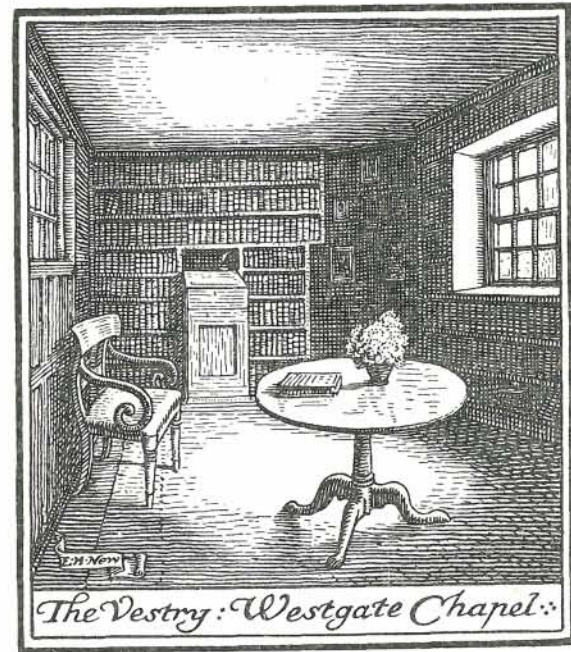
A minister in the north of Ireland is said to have denounced the book in these terms: "I must warn you, my brethren, against a book called *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, written by one John Taylor of Norwich, and which has lately been printed at Belfast and sent round the country to pervert the people from their good old faith. I desire that none of you will read it, for it is a bad book and a dangerous book, and a heretical book, and, what is worse, the book is unanswerable." According to Jonathan

¹ John Taylor, born at Lancaster, and now preacher of the Gospel at Norwich—in the year 1754.

Edwards no one volume did so much to root out Calvinism in New England. A book which in those times marked the parting of the ways for so many ministers and congregations on both sides of the Atlantic, and led to new and worthier conceptions of God and man, deserves to be treasured, and its author to be remembered with respect and gratitude.

From another engraving on the vestry walls Micaiah Towgood (1700-1792) looks at us with quiet penetration. He was eighty-three when the original portrait by Opie was painted. A West of England divine, he exercised his ministry successively at Moreton Hampstead, Crediton, and Exeter. His distinctive work lay rather in the direction of church politics than of doctrine, and was of epoch-making importance. For it was his *Dissenting Gentleman's Letters*, published in 1745, that first argued with adequate learning and ability the case for a Free Church as against a State one. No man of his time did more to consolidate Dissent than he did, and for several generations his *Letters* and other writings on the subject were recognised everywhere as the standard defence of Free Church principles.

The vestry library abounds in the writings of Joseph Priestley, LL.D. (1733-1804). This great and good man won undying fame in science as



the discoverer of oxygen, but it is his work and influence as a religious teacher that concern us here. He ministered at Needham Market in Suffolk, then at Nantwich, then (after being for some years a tutor at Warrington Academy) at Leeds, and then at Birmingham. At the latter place the mob destroyed his church and home because of his sympathy with the French Revolution, and he was compelled to flee for safety to London, where he preached for some time at the Gravel Pit Chapel, Hackney. He finally left the country for America, and there he died. It was mainly due to him that many of the old Meeting Houses became definitely Unitarian in their doctrine, thus emerging from the Arianism of men like John Taylor and Micaiah Towgood. In his famous controversy with Bishop Horsley he maintained that the Christian Church was originally Unitarian, and that the subsequent change of doctrine, during the first three centuries, in the direction of Arianism and then of Athanasianism or Trinitarianism, was of the nature of a corruption of the pure teaching of the Gospels. It was his aim to restore Christianity to what he conceived to be its primitive purity and simplicity. In opposition to Deism, he held that Christianity was a Divine revelation, authenticated by prophecies and miracles and set forth in an infallible

Bible, and that the light of nature alone could yield no satisfying religion, no assurance of the love of God or of man's immortality.

There are none of Thomas Paine's works in the vestry library, though there are criticisms of his teaching by Priestley and others. Still we should be much mistaken were we to suppose that his *Age of Reason* merely repelled thoughtful minds among the members of the Westgate Meeting. "This masculine treatise," says a first-rate authority,¹ "exercised a deeper influence on the Unitarian laity than is generally recognised." There must have been some belonging to the Lewes congregation who read the book with an initial interest and sympathy because they remembered the author as their neighbour and fellow-citizen and knew the essential piety and nobility of his nature. To them such a passage as the following would appeal:—

"The creation we behold is the real and ever-existing word of God, in which we cannot be deceived. It proclaimeth His power, it demonstrates His wisdom, it manifests His goodness and beneficence. The moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God manifested in the creation towards all His creatures.

¹ Alexander Gordon, M.A., *Heads of English Unitarian History*, p. 46.

Seeing, as we do daily, the goodness of God to all men, it is an example calling on all men to practise the same towards each other; and consequently everything of persecution and revenge between man and man, and everything of cruelty to animals is a violation of moral duty."

With the political side of Thomas Paine's thought and work there seems to have been more general sympathy than with his religious views; and this, no doubt, was why the portraits of his friends Benjamin Franklin and George Washington were hung on the vestry walls.

NOTE ON THE CHAPEL DEEDS

Mr. R. M. Montgomery, K.C., made a careful examination of the Trust Deeds of Westgate Chapel. In regard to the original one, dated August 26th, 1721, he says:

"This trust deed is a perfect example of what is commonly known among Protestant Dissenters as an 'Open Trust,' that is to say, it does not require from members of the congregation or from the minister subscription to any doctrinal article of belief. In the trust deed there is not even, as happens in many cases of chapel deeds drawn during the early part of the eighteenth century, a description of the congregation by a denominational name." *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, May 1918.

III

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
AND AFTER

THE type of Unitarianism now associated with the name of Priestley adhered, as we have seen, to the generally received conception of Christianity as a religion divinely accredited by prophecy and miracle, and of the Bible as the supreme and infallible authority in all matters of faith and practice. It differed from orthodoxy only where, as it believed, orthodoxy differed from the Bible. This type of Unitarianism is admirably illustrated in the writings of the Rev. Samuel Parker, who was minister of Westgate Meeting from 1803 to 1811. After being educated at Northampton Academy, under the Rev. John Horsey, Mr. Parker was ordained at Coseley in 1796, when he was twenty-one, and in the following year he became minister of Nicholas Street Chapel (now called Friars' Street Chapel), Ipswich, where he remained until his removal to Lewes. His *Three Discourses on the Lord's Supper*, a small

volume published in 1799, was meant to overcome the scruples and objections of those who "either leave the meeting when the institution is to be celebrated, or satisfy themselves with being merely spectators of the scene." While seeking to clear away misunderstandings as to the nature and purpose of the rite, the author insists on gratitude to Christ as the chief motive for its observance. His next work, published in 1805, is called, *The Old Testament Illustrated: being Explications of Remarkable Facts and Passages in the Jewish Scriptures which have been objected to by Unbelievers*. It is dedicated to the Rev. John Evans, A.M., and "also to those young persons who belong to the religious Society meeting in Nicholas Street, Ipswich . . . as well as to the young people stately attending at the Meeting House near the Westgate, Lewes." This essay in Old Testament apologetics consists largely of quotations from many writers who were then regarded as authorities, such as Doddridge, Wakefield, and Priestley; and in reading it one not only gains a high opinion of the author's learning and ability, but also of the intelligence of those "young persons" to whom the contents of the book were originally addressed in the form of lectures. Mr. Parker's defence of the Old Testament against the Deists is on the whole very

reasonable and just, but our modern apologists would hardly agree with him in dismissing Thomas Paine's suggestion that there are two, and somewhat discordant, accounts of the Creation in Genesis, or in maintaining that the universality of the Deluge is proved by the animal and vegetable fossils that are dug up in all parts of the world, or in asserting the credibility of the story of Balaam's ass. The story of Jonah caused him much perplexity, "Yet," he concluded, "I think we may allow that Jonah was in some way miraculously preserved either in the belly of a great fish, or in a subterranean river, or in the cavity of a ship providentially appointed for his security." The now generally accepted view that the story is an allegory does not appear among these alternatives. The volume had a good circulation, as is shown by the long list of subscribers given at the end. Another work, entitled *Primitive Christianity*, was published by Mr. Parker in 1813, after his removal to Stockport, where he spent the remainder of his ministry and of his life. The title may be taken as indicating the aim of Unitarian writers and preachers generally during the nineteenth century; and if Unitarianism has seemed at times a rather negative teaching, it must be remembered that its negations were in the interest of something very positive

and constructive—the restoration of Christianity to its original and most simple form.

The Rev. William Johnston, who, as we have seen, had taken charge of the Westgate pulpit for a few months after his father's retirement in 1782, seems to have closed his ministry at Brighton in 1797. In that year he removed to London, and lived there without any ministerial charge till 1811, when he was called to succeed Mr. Parker at Lewes, his native town. Here he ministered till 1817, and continued to reside till his death in 1831. From communications of his to the *Monthly Repository*, mostly of an obituary character, we get the impression of a man of thoughtful and affectionate nature, and it is evident that he was much loved and respected by the Westgate people.¹ His successor was the Rev. Thomas Walker Horsfield, F.S.A.

Mr. Horsfield's settlement was an event of much consequence not only to the Westgate congregation, but to the town, and to the whole of Sussex, whose historian he was destined to become. A native of Sheffield, where he was born on

¹ His altar tomb in St. Michael's churchyard bears the lines:—

"Green be the grass around thee,
Friend of our early days;
None knew thee but to love thee,
None named thee but to praise."

November 6th, 1792, he had in his youth been connected in business with the poet Montgomery (best known now, perhaps, as the author of some excellent hymns) who entertained a great regard for him, but lamented his inclination towards the Unitarian ministry. He entered the Unitarian Academy at Hackney in 1814, and it was at the conclusion of his studies there under the Rev. Robert Aspland, that he came to Lewes. The circumstances of his coming may best be learnt from the correspondence on the occasion. Here is the letter in which he announces his acceptance of the invitation that had been sent to him :—

“ To the Members of the Westgate Meeting.

“ DEAR FRIENDS,—

“ As I wish not to delay longer than is necessary my reply to your unanimous invitation to take upon myself the charge of your Congregation, I feel it my duty to relieve your anxiety by making known to you my intentions. The kindness that I received from you whilst I had the pleasure of being at Lewes, did, I must acknowledge, make a favourable impression on my mind, and has induced me to believe that your exertions would not be wanting to render comfortable the position of any individual who might settle amongst you. In addition to this, the earnest

desire which pervades many of you to extend that system of religion which you believe to be best calculated to promote the glory of God and the good of mankind, leads me to think that something may still be done towards spreading the knowledge of the one true God, and establishing His undivided worship. In accepting the proposal made to me, you will easily believe that some sacrifices must be made. The smallness of your present Congregation, the still further reduction that is likely to take place, with the effect resulting from it on the slender income of the place, present to a young man rather a forbidding aspect. Convinced, however, that my exertions will be met by a corresponding activity on the part of your Society, I am encouraged to look forward with hope, and to anticipate a period when the difficulties which now obstruct your progress will be overcome, and when success will crown our united labours.

“ When the project of settling amongst you was first proposed to me, I felt desirous as a preliminary step to state some conditions which I wished to be acceded to by the Congregation before any further advance was made. In the invitation which your chairman communicated to me, no mention of any condition is made ; but as this might probably be owing to the haste in which it was written, I

would now beg leave to say that I shall consider myself to have accepted the invitation of the Congregation for one year, at the annual income of £80, provided the following conditions be accepted by the Society :—

“ 1st. That I be at liberty to exercise my own sense of propriety as to the introduction of doctrinal and other subjects, in preaching.

“ 2nd. That during the year I be allowed three weeks to myself, for the purpose of visiting my friends, and that the supplies be provided at the charge of the Congregation.

“ If these terms be acceded to, I shall endeavour to be with you on the last Sunday in June or the first in July, 1817.

“ With every wish for your prosperity,

“ I remain, Your faithful Servant,

“ THOS. W. HORSFIELD.

“ Jany. 15th, '17.”

Along with the foregoing letter, Mr. Horsfield sent one to Mr. Fisher, the chairman of the congregation :—

“ *Durham House, Hackney Road,*

[*London*] *Jany. 14th, '17.*

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ Enclosed I send you an answer to the invitation from your Congregation, which you

will have the goodness to communicate to them as early as may be convenient. I should have written sooner to you, had I not on my return found letters addressed to me from Edinbro' and Glasgow, containing an unanimous invitation from the society at the former place for me to settle amongst them. The number of the members belonging to the Congregation is but small, though larger than that at Lewes, and the income, which has hitherto been only £75, they have raised by a little exertion to £100. As, however, I flatter myself there is a probability of doing much more good at Lewes than in the capital of Scotland, I have this day replied in the negative to their invitation, whilst I have accepted that made to me by you. I am fully aware that the anticipations of a young man are apt to be too sanguine; probably the expectations of success that I have formed will never be realised; if, however, the influence of the individuals composing the Congregation be called into action, and exerted in seconding the efforts which I may have it in my power to make towards spreading the knowledge of the one true God, and of Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, I cannot but believe that our exertions will be productive of considerable benefit. There is perhaps no part of religious worship that is so pleasing and attractive as is that of *singing*: I doubt not that

your exertions will be employed in improving the Psalmody at your Meeting. The means by which this will best be effected, it is not with me to determine. I cannot, however, desist from suggesting to you the absolute necessity of banishing from the Congregation the Collection of Dr. Watts' Hymns and Psalms. There are doubtless many excellent and sublime compositions to be found among the productions of this great man ; but where is the advantage of confining the Congregation to the sacred songs of the Doctor whilst there are innumerable other writers who have produced compositions certainly equal, perhaps superior, to the finest which are to be found in his works. Besides, the best Psalms or Hymns of Dr. Watts are to be found in almost every collection which has been made since his time. Differing so widely as we do in sentiment from Dr. Watts, it is certainly limiting the range of devotional sentiment to be compelled to confine ourselves to a few Psalms in order to avoid the unpleasantness of encountering sentiments which in our opinion are derogatory to the Deity and unworthy the minds and hearts of rational and feeling beings. I must stop myself : I feel I am dilating too far on the subject. I am confident you will see the necessity of a change and will endeavour to accomplish it. Pray is it the intention of your

Society to do anything towards rendering the Meeting more comfortable? Its appearance at present is certainly forbidding, and until something be done in this respect I scarcely hope for any considerable increase in our numbers. I shall be happy in receiving from you a letter as soon as may be convenient. Give my best respects to Mrs. Fisher and family, as also to the Messrs. Johnston.

“ With every wish for your health and happiness

“ I remain yours sincerely

“ THOS. W. HORSFIELD.

“ Mr. Thos. Fisher,
Grocer,
Lewes, Sussex.”

Mr. Fisher's reply reads thus :—

“ *Lewes, Jany. 19, 1817.*

“ DEAR AND REVD. SIR,—

“ I have this day laid your letter addressed to ‘ the Members of the Westgate Meeting ’ before them, and now proceed in giving you the result. I was, as before, in the Chair. A motion was made by Mr. Eb. Johnston and seconded by Mr. Ashdowne that ‘ Mr. Horsfield is accepted by this Congregation on the terms proposed by him,’—which was carried quite unanimously. Mr. E. Johnston also moved ‘ that the selection of hymns

by Kippis, Rees and others be introduced and used in this Congregation,' which motion was seconded by his brother, Mr. Thomas Johnston. On my putting the question, there was one dissentient, and one who did not hold up a hand either way. The first was Mr. Timothy Ridge, and the latter Mr. Joseph Ridge of Iford, with whom you dined at Mr. E. Johnston's on the first Sunday. This latter gentleman also took some exception to the first condition you proposed, apprehending that you meant to be more violent in your efforts to promote Unitarianism than might be agreeable to your Congregation; but I believe his fears on that head are fully satisfied.

"In my introduction to the business of the meeting, I took occasion to remark that the sacrifices which you have made are not of a trivial nature, and, as a proof of it, read your private letter to me, which certainly had its weight, and led to the motion respecting the hymn book. I am well aware that good singing is highly attractive as well as delightful in a place of worship; to me it is peculiarly so, and my endeavour will not be wanting to promote it in our place, but you will readily agree with me that it is one of the most difficult things that any man can undertake, to make those sing who really cannot, which is certainly the case with the larger part of our

people. If our good neighbours in Southover should join us, I should have no difficulty, as there are more young persons amongst them than with us.

"With respect to the repairs of our Meeting, it is intended on Sunday next to have a quarterly collection, when we also meet for the purpose of forming a committee for repairing the place generally if our funds will afford it. Thus I think I have attended to all that was hinted at in your letter. It will afford me pleasure to continue our correspondence until the time comes when it will be no longer necessary through this medium.

"Mrs. F. and family join in kind regards to you.

"I am, dear and Revd. Sir,

"Yours very sincerely,

"THOS. FISHER."

We have seen that Mr. Horsfield only engaged himself for a year. In the following letter he is asked to continue his ministry:—

"*Lewes, Feb. 18, 1818.*

"DEAR SIR,—

"I was requested by the congregation who met the last Lord's Day after the morning service, in consequence of a notice given by you from the

pulpit, to inform you that it was moved by the Revd. Wm. Johnston, your much respected predecessor, and seconded by Mr. Wm. Ridge of Alceston, that you be invited at the expiration of your present engagement which ends at Midsummer next, to continue to be our Minister at the Westgate Meeting, without any limitation of time, and to receive for your salary the clear amount of the subscriptions; the expense of repairs, etc., to be discharged by collections to be made for that purpose. This motion was carried unanimously. It was also agreed that if you absented yourself for three Sundays in the year, the expense of supply should devolve on the congregation. Give me leave, dear Sir, as I was the person who introduced you to our Society, to say that I have much pleasure in making this communication. If you accept of the invitation, may it be for the mutual benefit of you and your hearers; may you experience much happiness from their friendship and personal attachment, and may their attendance on your ministry advance them in the knowledge of Christian truth, and in the Christian temper and practice. May you find encouragement fearlessly to preach what you believe to be the doctrines of the New Testament, and zealously to insist on holiness in heart and life.

“ I will thank you for a reply that I may com-

municate it to the Congregation the next Lord's Day.

“ I remain, dear Sir, for myself and as Chairman of the late meeting,

“ Your faithful friend and obedient servant,

“ EBEN. JOHNSTON.”

To this Mr. Horsfield replied :—

“ *Lewes, Feby. 28th, '18.*

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ Allow me to express to you my sincerest thanks for the very kind and handsome manner in which you (as Chairman at a Congregational meeting held on Sunday, Feby. 15th) have conveyed to me the wishes of the members constituting the Westgate Society.

“ After having discharged the pastoral duties of the Congregation for the last 8 months, it gives me particular pleasure to learn that my humble exertions have met with the approbation of the Members, and that they have unanimously resolved to renew the invitation for my becoming stated Minister. I am fully conscious of the importance of the ministerial duties, and on looking back upon the months that have elapsed since I had the honour of being settled amongst them, I cannot but feel that the pastoral duties might have been more beneficially discharged by one

possessing more experience and more knowledge than myself. Having, however, acted up to the best of my abilities, I confess that I am gratified by the proof which the Congregation have given of their candour in accepting my will for the deed to serve them. After the kindness and attention that I have received from almost every member of the Congregation, since I have had the honour of being amongst them, added to the favourable opportunity that there appears to me to be in Lewes of extending widely the Glad Tidings of Salvation, I cannot for a moment hesitate to accept the invitation which they have given me to continue their Minister after the expiration of my present engagement, on the terms proposed in your letter. Should I be so fortunate as to preserve the good opinion of the Congregation, I flatter myself that my exertions to serve them will not be in any way diminished, but, on the contrary, that they will increase with increasing years and opportunities.

“With my best wishes for the prosperity of the Congregation, and the welfare and happiness of every individual member, I beg to subscribe myself

“Your very sincere and obliged Servant,

“THOS. W. HORSFIELD.

“Eb. Johnston, Esq.,
Lewes.”

“Our good friends in Southover,” to whom Mr. Fisher looked for the musical salvation of the Westgate Meeting, were of course the members of the General Baptist Chapel in Eastport Lane, to which reference has already been made. For a long time past the two congregations had been gradually drawing together in their religious ideas and sympathies, and shortly after Mr. Horsfield’s settlement in Lewes a Fellowship Fund was established by them for the promotion of Unitarianism. The Fund was worked by a committee representative of both congregations and meeting on Sunday afternoons every six weeks at Westgate and Southover alternately.¹ These gatherings, which were open to all subscribers to the Fund, no doubt prepared the way for the actual union of the congregations which took place later on. At Eastport Lane there were also monthly conferences for the discussion of religious questions. The conferences are especially memorable for having brought to notice the remarkable powers of thought and speech possessed by a young man who was then serving his apprenticeship to Mr. Baxter, the Lewes printer, but who in 1818 began to study for the ministry under Dr. Morell of Brighton. This was Mr. Henry Acton. While carrying on his studies, he and his friend, Mr.

¹ *Monthly Repository*, XII, pp. 556-7.

William Browne (who was also a pupil of Dr. Morell and who afterwards, giving up thoughts of the ministry, went to America and became a physician), supplied the pulpits at Southover and at another little General Baptist Meeting at Ditchling. This arrangement came to an end in 1821 on Mr. Acton's appointment as minister at Walthamstow, whence, two years later, he removed to Exeter, the sphere of his greatest activity and influence. The last regular minister at Eastport Lane was the Rev. James Taplin, who was there in 1822 and subsequently exercised his ministry at Battle in Sussex, and at various places in Devonshire and elsewhere.¹ When in 1825, or 1826, the Southover friends joined the Westgate Meeting, the singing no doubt improved, as Mr. Fisher had anticipated. But more than the music at Westgate was benefited by the union, for the congregational life generally was enriched by the addition of some excellent people. The collection of books which had been formed at Eastport Lane was transferred to Westgate, whose library, increased in this way and by later gifts

¹ Of the early ministers at Eastport Lane we have no information; but, according to Horsfield, "about 1790 — Drowley was minister; in 1808, R. Snelgrove; in 1809, W. Davies; in 1810, J. H. Morris; in 1814, W. Dobell; in 1816, R. Martin" (*History and Antiquities of Lewes*, pp. 304-5).

and purchases, became a flourishing institution. Many of the volumes have lost a good deal of their interest now, but they still look well in their calf bindings, which testify to the value once placed upon them.

The following communication from Mr. Horsfield to the *Monthly Repository* of September, 1820, records a meeting of the Sussex Unitarian Association at Lewes, and the visit, in connection therewith, of the Rev. W. J. Fox, the famous preacher and political orator.

"On Wednesday, 23rd August, was held at Lewes the First Anniversary of the Sussex Unitarian Association. The service was introduced by the Rev. W. Stevens, Isle of Wight, and Dr. Morell, of Brighton; when the Rev. W. J. Fox, of London, delivered an eloquent and excellent discourse to the very respectable congregation assembled. At the conclusion of the business of the Society, the members and friends of the Association adjourned to the Crown Inn, where an economical dinner had been provided. Sixty ladies and gentlemen sat down to dinner. In the course of the afternoon many valuable remarks were offered to the company by the chairman, Eb. Johnston, Esq., and the following gentlemen severally addressed the meeting: Dr. T. Rees, Dr. Morell, Rev. W. J. Fox, T. W. Horsfield,

W. Stevens, H. Acton, and Mr. Ashdowne. Mr. Fox enlightened and animated the company by the information that he communicated and the eloquence that he displayed. Everyone, indeed, endeavoured to give pleasure to the meeting, and the endeavour was crowned with success. Never was more rational delight felt, or more satisfaction expressed, at a social religious meeting than on the present occasion. One and all seemed to enter into the spirit of the Society, each anxious for its prosperity and all determined to support it. Upwards of twenty new subscribers enrolled their names on its list."

The reader of the above report may have stumbled a little at the word "economical" as applied to the dinner, but it is evident that the dinner, like every other feature of the gathering, was just as it should be. The chairman, Mr. Ebenezer Johnston, was noted for the geniality and ability with which he presided on such occasions. He was a son of the Rev. Ebenezer Johnston, and had spent most of his life in London, where he had been a member of the Rev. Robert Aspland's church at Hackney, Treasurer of the Unitarian Book Society,¹ and a man much honoured and trusted

¹ One of the societies which afterwards united to form the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.

in other ways. It was probably through Mr. Aspland that he had become acquainted with Mr. Horsfield, and so had been able to introduce him to the Lewes congregation. We have seen that Mr. Horsfield, on first coming to Westgate, appeared to be inspired with more zeal for the spread of Unitarian doctrine than was to the liking of some of his hearers, and this zeal may have been kindled during his academic course by Mr. Aspland, who was then the foremost of Unitarian propagandists and organisers.

Mr. Acton, writing many years after, says that Mr. Horsfield "entered on the duties of his ministry at Lewes with a degree of zeal and energy that produced quite a sensation, not only amongst his flock, but in the town generally. For successive winters he delivered a course of doctrinal lectures which were attended by crowds of hearers, and had the effect of considerably increasing his congregation, especially from the class of inquiring young men." But besides giving himself to his ministry, he also established and conducted a very successful boarding school. From the warmly appreciative notice of his life in the *Monthly Repository*, we learn, moreover, of the leading part which he took in founding the Mechanics' Institute in the town, and of the courses of lectures

which he gave there on such subjects as chemistry, electricity, and galvanism. During the greater part of his ten years' ministry at Westgate, he was engaged, too, in writing his *History and Antiquities of Lewes and its Vicinity*. This comprehensive work, the first volume of which was published in 1824, and the second in 1827, is a monument to his industry, and was evidently a labour of love. "The hours that have been devoted to it," he says in his preface, "have been hours of pleasantness." It procured for him, Mr. Acton tells us, the respect and friendship of many eminent persons, and it led the Society of Antiquaries to bestow upon him their Fellowship. In 1827 he accepted an invitation to Mary Street Chapel, Taunton, and during the eight years he spent there he compiled his chief work, *The History of Sussex*. This was published in two large quarto volumes in 1835, being dedicated by permission to King William the Fourth. Just before its publication, however, he had again changed the scene of his ministry; this time to Chowbent Chapel, Atherton, Lancashire. Two years later his career, with its many interests and activities, came to a sudden end. Having gone to preach a charity sermon at Lower Mosley Street Chapel, Manchester, he was brought home

ill, and died soon afterwards, August 26th, 1837, at the early age of forty-five.¹ He left a widow and seven children. It is gratifying to learn that his widow received "a special mark of kind benevolence" from Queen Victoria.

Mr. Horsfield's successor at Lewes was the Rev. Charles Porteous Valentine. During his course of study at the General Baptist Academy, Mr. Valentine had preached at the Eastport Lane Chapel, and it was probably due to the acquaintance thus begun that he came to be invited in 1828 to take charge of the Westgate Meeting. In the meantime he had been minister at Palgrave, Norfolk, a place rendered memorable by its associations with Mrs. Barbauld, the poet, whose husband was one of Mr. Valentine's predecessors there. Following the Barbauld tradition, he had kept a school at Palgrave, and he continued his school-keeping after his removal to Lewes, at first in the town itself, and later at Chailey, a village four miles away, where he combined the occupation of farmer as well as schoolmaster with his duties as minister at Westgate. Among his pupils at Chailey there was a boy who afterwards became the Rev. Henry William Crosskey, LL.D., F.G.S., an eminent Unitarian preacher, who exercised his

¹Obituary Notice by H. Acton, in *Christian Reformer*, 1838, pp. 66-7.

ministry at Derby, Glasgow, and at the Church of the Messiah, Birmingham, where Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and other distinguished people were members of his congregation. Dr. Crosskey left, among his "Personal Memoranda," some reminiscences of the school and of its master. "At Chailey," he says, "we boys (there were only three or four of us) had the run of the farm, and thoroughly enjoyed all the incidents of a farmer's life: the sowing, mowing, reaping, harvesting, hop-picking, and the care of the cattle. . . . Mr. Valentine was a very kindly and gentle man, with considerable culture; any knowledge I have acquired when under his charge has not held its own in my memory, in comparison with the delight I had in country life: that delight indeed has proved a happy possession for all my years." He tells us, too, of the religious atmosphere of his own home in Lewes. "The desire to devote myself to religious work quite naturally sprang up when I saw that my mother—and evidently my father also—paid more respect to religion than to anything else in the world. This respect was shown in extremely quiet and silent ways: it was a secret awe revealed in a hushed tone, a shrinking from anything irreverent, the absence of familiar discussions on divine sanctities, unflinching regularity of attendance on public worship, lively interest in

any movement for the advance of the Unitarian faith in which they believed. I do not think, however, that any more obtrusive manifestations of faith could have made an equally profound impression upon me."

Public service has been commonly looked upon by Unitarians as part of their religion, and many members of the Westgate congregation have been active in the affairs of the town and honoured in its councils.¹ Some of them, too, were men of keen scientific interests. Such especially was Mr. Henry Browne, who was Mr. Crosskey's partner in business. He was, says the writer of the Memoranda already quoted, "a highly cultivated man; he had a private chemical laboratory, and also a private printing press. He was one of the chief supporters of the Mechanics' Institute of the town, and gave regular courses of lectures to its members, at a time when scientific lectures to the people were very seldom delivered, and indeed when few believed that the people generally ought to be scientifically educated at all."² He also

¹ Among Unitarians who occupied the position of High Constable, as the chief officer of the town was called in pre-municipal times, were Mr. Henry Brown, Mr. Thomas Fisher, Mr. Benjamin Ridge, Mr. Thomas Johnston, Mr. William Crosskey, Mr. William Duplock, and Mr. Joseph Shelley.

² *Henry William Crosskey, LL.D., F.G.S., His Life and Work*, by Richard Acland Armstrong, B.A., pp. 10, 14.

acted for many years as Librarian of the Westgate Chapel Library.

Mr. Valentine's farm gradually absorbed his attention, and he resigned his ministry in 1840. His successor was the Rev. Joseph Church Meeke, who had been one of Mr. Aspland's students at Hackney, and had already ministered at a number of places, including Stockton-on-Tees and Northampton. He only stayed in Lewes about two years, and it was perhaps just after he left that certain repairs and alterations were made in the Meeting House. We remember that on accepting the invitation to Westgate, Mr. Horsfield had complained that the place appeared "forbidding," and no doubt something had been done to make it more attractive and comfortable in his time. But by 1843 the south wall was in a very bad condition, as the result of exposure to the south-west winds and rains, and the rebuilding of the greater part of it became necessary. This was done, and then the pulpit was reconstructed and set on strong oak brackets against the restored wall. By a curious transformation, what had been the sounding-board over the preacher's head became the floor under his feet—the inlaid side, happily, being turned downwards, and thus preserved from damage. The names Ridge, Crosskey, Browne, Cooke, and Duplock are conspicuous

in the list of subscribers to the fund for paying the cost of the work, which amounted to about £200.

The next ministry at Westgate Meeting was that of the Rev. Samuel Wood, B.A. Born at Manchester on January 1st, 1797, he took his degree at Glasgow in 1815, and proceeded thence to Manchester New College, York, where he completed his theological course in 1818. Before coming to Lewes, in 1843, he had ministered at Kenilworth, Stoke Newington (London), and at Bridport. He was a much-travelled, active-minded, and public-spirited man. In the *Christian Reformer* for 1838, there is a series of interesting letters in which he tells of his visit to the United States; and the same volume also contains articles by him on "The Structure of Chapels," and on "The Improvement of Preaching,"—which are still worthy of attention. No doubt some of his recommendations as to the structure of chapels were carried out at Westgate during the alterations of 1843; but the high square pews still remained to remind him how much had yet to be done; and indeed the place must have seemed to him in most respects an excellent illustration of things as they ought not to be.

About this time an effort was made to disinherit

congregations such as the Westgate one of their old Meeting Houses, on the ground that these Meeting Houses had been established by Trinitarians and ought, therefore, to be used only for Trinitarian worship. The congregations, however, claimed that they were in rightful possession, basing their claim on such considerations as these : that from the beginning of their history they had enjoyed a large liberty of doctrine, that the trust deeds of the Meeting Houses permitted this liberty, that the change from Calvinism to Unitarianism had taken place gradually and almost imperceptibly, that since the change much money had been spent on the repair of the buildings, and that many of the present members belonged to families which had been connected with the Meeting Houses from their foundation. This last point could have been well illustrated in the case of the Westgate congregation by the example of the Ridge family, whose name has appeared repeatedly in our story from the time of the Conventicle of 1670.¹

A Bill was introduced in Parliament in 1844 for the purpose of securing the congregations in

¹ As late as the last quarter of the nineteenth century members of the family were still connected with the congregation, and one of them, Miss Mary Ridge, left an endowment to the Chapel, amounting to £374 10s.

the use of the Meeting Houses, and owing largely to the powerful advocacy of Mr. Gladstone it became law as the Dissenters' Chapels Act.

In a note in Mr. Wood's handwriting among the Chapel papers, the Treasurer is asked to pay Mr. Marshall a fee and travelling expenses for conducting the services for six Sundays during the summer of 1845. This Mr. Marshall afterwards became the Rev. T. L. Marshall, who as editor of the *Inquirer*, and in many other ways, has rendered most valuable service to the group of churches with which the Westgate one is associated. In a letter, dated February 11th, 1915, he has kindly recorded for us his impressions of his visit to Lewes seventy years ago. "I have always," he says, "been interested in the old chapel and picturesque town ever since I spent six or seven weeks there in my last vacation at Manchester New College in charge of the congregation. It was in the summer of 1845 when I was little more than a boy of twenty. The Rev. Samuel Wood was then minister, and I was selected because I was supposed to be more in sympathy with what was called the 'Old School' of Unitarianism than any of my fellow-students. The world has changed since with me and many others. . . . As my old friend and fellow-student H. W. Crosskey was with me and we had long excursions together,

I enjoyed myself very much." He goes on to say that he got to know all the congregation, and mentions especially the Brownes and Crosskeys, Mrs. Ridge, the Duplocks, and the Shelleys. A Sunday School had been recently established by Mr. Wood at Westgate, and Mr. Marshall mentions one of the scholars who, on growing up to manhood, studied at the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, and afterwards did good work as minister at Newbury, Cranbrook, and Great Yarmouth. This was the Rev. Richard Shelley, who died in 1873, and who was father of the Rev. A. H. Shelley of Cradley. Of Mr. Wood our veteran correspondent says that he was "an excellent man of rather peculiar manner, and what we should now consider limited theological views, of what was then styled the 'Old School.' He was elder brother of Mr. John Wood, who was Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue at Somerset House, a position almost equal to that of a Cabinet Minister. They were sons of Mr. Ottiwell Wood, a wealthy merchant of Liverpool." The old school of Unitarianism which Mr. Wood represented was that which still regarded the miracles of Jesus as all-important evidences of his divine mission, and the denial of them as equivalent to a denial of Christianity. But already the Rev. James Martineau, then of Liverpool, had begun to question

whether a belief in the miracles was so essential to Christian faith as had been supposed; and it is interesting to find that the first intimation of this change of view was communicated in a letter, dated 1840, to the Rev. A. F. Macdonald, M.A., then of Royston, but afterwards a minister of Westgate Chapel, Lewes. In the course of this letter Mr. Martineau said: "Let me, before I conclude, recall the opinion to which you allude as expressed in the preface to the *Rationale*,¹ that the name Christian is improperly given to those who exclude the preternatural from Christianity. Though I have personally the same strong conviction which I then had, that miracles in general are perfectly and rationally credible, and that it is impossible to explain away the Christian miracles in particular, yet I can no longer deny the name Christian to those who differ from me on either or both these points, provided on any other grounds they attain to *discipleship to Christ*, and the recognition of *the divine and authoritative in him*. Sometime or other I will publicly state and argue the point."²

Much of Martineau's life work indeed was de-

¹ *Rationale of Religious Inquiry*, by James Martineau, 1836.

² See *James Martineau*, by J. Estlin Carpenter, M.A., p. 232.

voted to stating and arguing the point here raised, that one may be a Christian without believing in the miracles, and it was by his abandonment of the traditional reliance on such external evidences and by his insistence on the "internal or self-evidence of Christianity" that he helped to create a new and more spiritual school of Unitarianism. Others, of course, had prepared the way; notably the great American preacher, William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), who, although retaining belief in the miracles, dwelt passionately on the moral and spiritual excellence of Christianity as the chief ground of faith. It is evident that our Mr. Wood, who, during his visit to the States, breathed the atmosphere which, as he says, had "fostered the manly genius of Channing,"¹ is to be reckoned as belonging to the transitional school of Channing rather than to the older school of Priestley. At the time of which we are speaking, the teaching of Emerson in his *Divinity School Address* (1838), and of Theodore Parker in his *Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion* (1842)—both of whom had broken more completely with the Priestleyan school than Channing had done, or than Martineau was as yet prepared to do—caused a good deal of controversy among English, as among

¹ *Christian Reformer*, 1838, p. 225.

American, Unitarians; but gradually the opposition to it died away.

The Rev. Arthur Lupton, B.A., became minister of Westgate Chapel on Mr. Wood's retirement in 1848. He belonged to a well-known Unitarian family at Leeds, but had been born in New York, and used, on that account, to say that he was "a possible President of the United States!" He received his theological training at Manchester New College, and took his degree with first-class honours at London University in 1841. He was a man of private fortune but of very precarious health, and was in the ranks of the active ministry only about four years, two of which were spent at Whitby before he came to Lewes. His place at Westgate was taken in 1850 by the Rev. William Smith, F.L.S., an Irishman, born at Ballymoney in 1808, and educated at the Belfast Royal Academical Institution. Before coming to Lewes, Mr. Smith had ministered at various places, including Stockport and Wareham. "He was a cultivated man," says Mr. Marshall, "and a good botanist," and he resigned the Westgate ministry in 1854, on being appointed Professor of Natural History at Queen's College, Cork. For some months after he left Lewes the Westgate pulpit was occupied by the Rev. Henry Hunt Piper, who for thirty-seven years had been

chaplain to the Shore family. The Rev. John Robertson, of whom Mr. Marshall speaks as "an able and thoughtful man and a fair self-trained scholar," became minister of the Meeting House in 1855, but accepted an invitation to Halstead about a year after.

The next minister of the Westgate congregation was the Rev. Thomas Carter. He was born in 1830. In his youth he went to sea, making adventurous voyages to South America and Calcutta, as well as to Malta and other Mediterranean ports. Coming, however, under the influence of the Rev. H. Solly, the Unitarian minister at Cheltenham, his native town, he decided to study for the Unitarian ministry. He did so first at Carmarthen College, and then, in 1853, he entered Manchester New College, which had just been transferred to London and had the Rev. J. J. Tayler as its Principal, and, a few months later, the Rev. James Martineau as its Professor of Philosophy. Mr. Carter settled to his work at Lewes in 1856. Owing to his initiative, and largely at his own expense, the Chapel was renovated in 1863. This made a marked improvement in the comfort and appearance of the place, though, judged by later standards, the new seats, with their severely upright backs, still left much to be desired. In 1865 a local curate challenged

Mr. Carter to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity. The challenge was taken up, and a newspaper correspondence went on for some months and was afterwards issued by Mr. Carter in pamphlet form. The controversy derived some piquancy from the fact that the orthodox protagonist had been born and brought up a Jew, and therefore a believer in the Divine unity, whereas his opponent had been born and brought up an Anglican Churchman, and therefore a Trinitarian. When the alterations of 1913 were being carried out in the Chapel, Dr. Courtney Kenny, the Master of Downing College, Cambridge, sent a donation towards the cost of them, and in doing so he said that he "well remembered admiring the courteous and Christian spirit" in which the Westgate minister had conducted the controversy. In 1867 Mr. Carter removed to Rochdale, taking as his bride Miss Charlotte Every, daughter of a leading member of the Lewes Congregation. In his new sphere he carried on a successful ministry of twenty-three years, and died in 1902.

During the last five years of his ministry at Lewes Mr. Carter had taken the service on alternate Sunday afternoons in the picturesque little Meeting House at Ditchling. Since Mr. Acton occupied the pulpit there it had had a succession of ministers. One of them was the Rev. W. Hale White,

better known to fame as "Mark Rutherford," who ministered during the years 1856 and 1857. If, as seems to be the case, this is the Meeting House referred to in his *Autobiography*, his experience there was not at all happy. The circumstances of the congregation at the time were doubtless not such as offered much encouragement or comfort to a minister, but Mr. White was hardly the man to make the best of things, and so we may assume that the picture he has drawn is rather gloomier than it might have been. He did not reside at Ditchling, but only came down from London for the Sundays; and there is no evidence that he ever preached in the Lewes Chapel.

The Rev. William Saltmarshe Smith, who had previously held pastorates at Rochdale, Canterbury, and Moreton Hampstead, assumed the ministry at Lewes in the year that Mr. Carter left. Those were days when the spirit of many a good Unitarian minister was stirred within him as he contemplated the orthodox doctrines of eternal punishment and substitutionary atonement, which had then lost nothing of their vitality, and Mr. Smith is remembered for the vigour with which he denounced them. Leaving Lewes in 1875, he went to Cullompton in Devonshire, and after seven years' further service there he retired

to Bristol, where he lived to the good old age of ninety-six.

For more than a year after Mr. Smith's departure, the Westgate pulpit was without a settled minister, but in 1877 the Rev. Archibald Forbes Macdonald, M.A., was appointed. He was an Aberdonian and had taken his degree at the University of his native place. He has already come into our story in connection with Martineau's changing attitude towards miracles; and we find that in 1844, while he was still at Royston, his first charge, he contributed a series of seven articles to the *Christian Reformer*, defending Martineau's *Endeavours after the Christian Life* (which had been published the year before) against the "strictures" that were being passed upon it in the same magazine by another Unitarian minister. The articles are very ably written, and they show that Mr. Macdonald, who was then a man of thirty-six, was in keen sympathy with the new ideas and tendencies of religious thought which were finding expression in the writings of Carlyle and Emerson, as well as Martineau. The new note in Unitarianism is struck by Mr. Macdonald in such a passage as this: "Instead of saying with some 'It is naught,' let us rather see the element of truth that runs through all the orthodoxies and heterodoxies. The grand fundamental

principles of the Christian faith have never been lost from the world, or from any section of the Church universal, however much they may have been obscured, overclouded, distorted, corrupted. Still God has been felt to be venerable, and our Father, and duty sacred, and man our brother, and the Christ holy, and the bright leader of all who fear God and work righteousness. . . . Textual controversy has run its race, perhaps without doing its work. The mission of our age is constructive, not destructive. We have long enough dealt in negation and destruction. Let us be reformers. Truth is truth, whether found with ourselves or others, and should be honourably confessed before men. We can never convert people to what we deem true, but by pointing to the germs of truth already in themselves, and helping them to develop *that*; so that, like the chrysalis rising into the perfect insect and mounting to air and sunshine, the spiritual which was embedded in the old faith may burst its cements, and leave behind it all that was untrue, unbeautiful, and mortal.”¹ Between the time when this was written and the close of the century various new factors helped to further the development of doctrine at Westgate, notably the theory of evolution and the movement of Biblical criticism; and thus it may truly be said that the

¹ *Christian Reformer*, 1844, p. 844.

nineteenth century witnessed as profound a change in the theology of the congregation as the eighteenth had done. The new knowledge removed many religious difficulties, and tended to deepen the conviction that Christianity consists not in the belief in miracles and the infallibility of the Bible, but in the sense of sonship to God and in a life of Christlike devotion to His will and to the good of mankind.

Mr. Macdonald's last pulpit before coming to Lewes was that of Wellington Street Chapel (now Narborough Road Free Christian Church), Leicester. At Lewes, where he ministered for five years, and where he died in 1886, he is remembered affectionately for his kindness and humour. His successor was the Rev. William Mason, a native of Edinburgh, who had studied at the Unitarian Home Missionary Board, and Owens College, Manchester. He remained at Lewes two years. During that time repairs were done to the roof and other parts of the Chapel and cost over £310—the money being subscribed by members of the congregation and by friends far and near. In the list of the subscribers it is interesting to find the name of Dr. Martineau. On leaving Lewes, Mr. Mason settled at Croft in Lancashire.

The next minister of Westgate Chapel—and the last whose career it will be necessary to summarise

in these pages—was the Rev. Charles Davis Badland, M.A. He was born at Kidderminster in 1847. After passing through Manchester New College, where he proved an excellent student, he went to Heidelberg for a year's further study, and on his return to England in 1874, he took his degree at London University. His first pulpit was at Derby, whence he removed to Hale in Cheshire, and it was from Hale that he came to Lewes in 1886. Here he ministered faithfully about nine years. He became minister of Oakfield Road Church, Clifton, in 1896, and remained there till 1898. After two other short pastorates elsewhere, he retired to Kidderminster, where he died in 1910. Dr. James Drummond, the revered Ex-Principal of Manchester College, who has frequently visited Lewes in recent years and preached in the Westgate pulpit, writes of his old student, Mr. Badland, as "a most kindly man" whom he "always remembers with affection and respect." It is thus his friends in Lewes also remember him.

During Mr. Badland's ministry, Mr. Theodore Parker Broadbent, a son of much respected members of the congregation, gained the Scholarship that had just been founded in honour of Thomas Hughes (author of *Tom Brown's School Days*) at Oriel College, Oxford, in connection with

the Co-operative movement. He went there in 1885, and after taking his B.A. degree, he studied for the ministry at Manchester New College, which by this time had been removed to Oxford. On completing his theological course in 1893, he settled as minister of the Bayshill Unitarian Church at Cheltenham; but within a year of his settlement the bright hopes which his friends and College tutors had formed of his future sustained a sad eclipse through his sudden death. Some of his sermons and other writings were afterwards gathered into a volume for private circulation; and in a beautiful Prefatory Note Prof. J. Estlin Carpenter says: "They are printed as they were written, that some of those who knew him may by their help cherish the remembrance of what he was, and that some perhaps who did not know him may discern through them what manner of man he might have become."

The Provincial Assembly of Non-subscribing Churches in London and the South-Eastern Counties was constituted at Hampstead in 1889; and it is interesting to remember that its second meeting took place at Lewes on October 15th, 1890. Sixteen years later Lewes had again the privilege of welcoming the Assembly, which has proved a bond of union for the Churches belonging

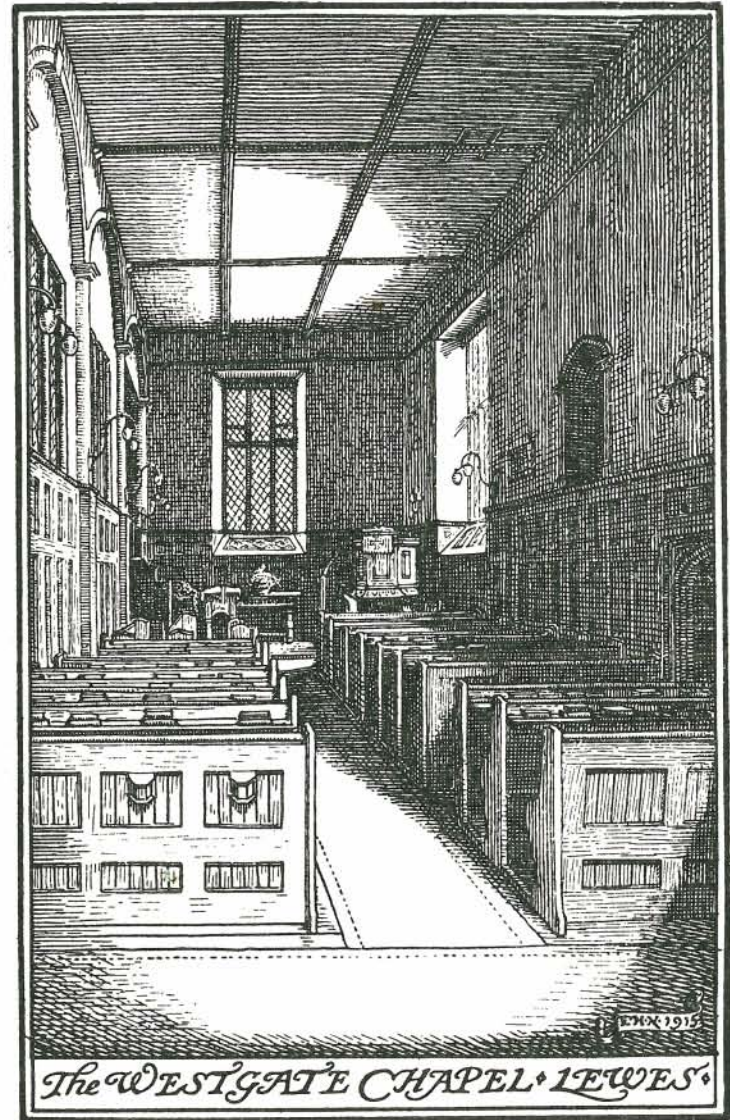
to it, and a means of help and encouragement to the weaker ones among them.

Since Mr. Badland left Lewes the Westgate ministry has been carried on by the Rev. T. A. Gorton (1896-1901); the Rev. J. Felstead (1901-1910); and by the writer of this history, who entered upon its duties in 1911.

In 1913 the interior of the Old Meeting House underwent a complete transformation, which was carried out with great skill and admirable taste by Mr. Ronald P. Jones, M.A., architect, London. As the place was far too large, it was divided; and the division not only gave the congregation a Chapel with accommodation sufficient for its present needs and for any future ones that are likely to arise, but also a Vestibule and an excellent Hall, affording better scope for the work of the Sunday School, the Literary Society, and the other institutions of the Church than was the case under the previous conditions.¹

The renovated building was opened on Wednesday, December 17. In the afternoon a service was held, the devotional part being conducted by the Rev. W. H. Drummond, B.A., minister of the Provincial Assembly, and by the

¹ The little schoolroom at the back of the Chapel, built in 1843, had hitherto offered the only accommodation of the kind.



minister of the Chapel. The preacher was the Rev. Joseph Wood, Ex-President of the National Conference of Unitarian and other Liberal Christian Churches, who spoke of the permanent function of a Church as being the promotion of goodness, the life of God in the souls of men. There was a large congregation, which included the Mayor and Mayoress of Lewes (Councillor and Mrs. T. G. Roberts), nearly all the Nonconformist ministers of the town, Dr. W. F. Crosskey, J.P., Mr. J. H. Every, J.P., Mr. Wm. B. Funnell (Hon. Secretary of the Chapel), and ministerial and other friends from London, Brighton, Hastings, Hove, Ditchling, and elsewhere. After tea a public meeting was held at which addresses were delivered by the Chairman (Mr. Alderman Every, J.P.), by the ministers who had taken part in the religious service, and by the Revs. Henry Gow, B.A., Priestley Prime, and B. Wilkinson (Congregationalist), and Mr. Ronald P. Jones, M.A.

The cost of the alterations and repairs was defrayed by the contributions of members of the congregation and donations from friends of Liberal Christianity in various parts of the country. In addition, some valuable gifts were received, including the handsome carved wooden brackets supporting the roof of the new porch, which were presented by Mr. Ronald P. Jones. Two

beautiful communion cups of old Sheffield plate were given by the Rev. Dr. Stopford A. Brooke. The congregation will treasure these sacred vessels, and in using them in remembrance of the Master will be reminded also of one of the best modern interpreters of his mind and spirit.

At the next meeting of the Provincial Assembly, held at Essex Church, London, the Minister of the Assembly said in the course of his Report:—

“One of the most significant events among the country Churches of the Assembly during the past year has been the renovation of the ancient Meeting House at Lewes. No scheme of restoration could have been carried through with more generosity and loving care and genuine refinement of taste. I need not go into the details here, but I should like to call special attention to the beauty of the chapel. It is a place rich in devotional feeling. Everyone upon entering it must feel at once that it is dedicated to the spirit of worship, and no one who has had the pleasure of officiating in it since the restoration can have failed to notice a new richness of tone in the service.”

The congregation in seeking the aid of beauty in its place of worship may be said to have broken in this respect with its Puritan tradition, but the

ideal of a free faith and a catholic fellowship, which has been handed down from such men as Baxter and Calamy, still claims its loyal and enthusiastic devotion. In the course of its long history, this Church has, as we have seen, passed through various phases of Christian doctrine, and if its thought continues to be living and growing, it will pass through others yet. It demands no uniformity of opinion in its members, as though it had already attained to a knowledge of the whole truth of God, but it expects them to judge reverently for themselves what is true and right, to love and follow that when they see it, and to look for an ever fuller revelation of the Divine will and wisdom and goodness. Its bond of union is not a creed but a covenant—an old Puritan form: “We covenant with God and one another to walk in all His ways made known or to be made known unto us according to our best endeavours.” With a prayer from the liturgy used in its services this chapter may fitly conclude: “O God, who art and wast and art to come, before whose face the generations rise and pass away, age after age the living seek Thee and find that of Thy faithfulness there is no end. Our fathers in their pilgrimage walked by Thy guidance and rested on Thy compassion; still to their children be thou the cloud by day, the fire by night.”

IV

SUPPLEMENT

IN the autumn of 1914 eleven thousand recruits belonging to "Kitchener's Army" came to Lewes for training in what were for them the unwonted arts of war. On each evening during the fortnight of their stay, a concert was arranged for as many of them as could be crowded into the Westgate Chapel Hall. Among them were some excellent singers and professional entertainers, so that there was never any difficulty in filling up the programmes. By and by, when the sick and wounded were brought to the temporary hospitals in the town, a weekly entertainment was provided for them, sometimes at the hospitals but usually in the Chapel Hall where, under the direction of Mr. C. Severs, many delightful evenings were spent—the "boys in blue," despite their crutches and bandages, contributing most of the fun. One night, as they were about to leave the Hall, a big sergeant minus an arm shouted "Fall in, the fragments!" and off they marched amid loud laughter. After a concert at one of the hospitals,

the matron wrote: "What a heavenly time you gave the men last night!"

For the men of the congregation, serving on land and sea, there was anxious thought and prayer. Happily, when the War was over, they returned safe, and at the New Year's Party on January 12th, 1920, they were welcomed home.

In the years immediately succeeding the War the idea of rebuilding the structure of society on a new and securer basis was everywhere being earnestly discussed. To this discussion the Westgate Chapel Literary Society contributed by arranging a series of lectures which were afterwards published in a little volume entitled *Problems of Reconstruction*.

Those post-war years also saw much reconstructive work both outside and inside the Chapel itself. First there was the erection of the new gate, the opening of which was celebrated on Sunday, December 11th, 1921. The stonework on either side of it, as an inscription indicates, is composed of blocks which once formed part of the ancient and massive West Gate of the town, and which fortunately had been dug up from beneath the street close by just in time to be placed in their present position.

A stained-glass window, erected by Mr. J. H. Every to the memory of his father and mother,

who worshipped in the Chapel for fifty years, was dedicated at the morning service on Sunday, November 19th, 1923. It was designed and executed by Messrs. Clayton and Bell, the creators of the great west window of King's College Chapel, Cambridge. Its upper panels contain the symbols of the four Evangelists, and the lower ones, on either side of the figure of the Good Shepherd, those of St. Peter and St. Paul. Its lustrous colours, its spiritual significance, and its association with two such devout and loyal members, add much to the enrichment and interest of the Chapel interior.

Reconstruction of another kind was accomplished through the adoption of a new liturgy, *Common Prayer in Nine Services*, compiled and edited by the minister. It is indebted to the old book, *Common Prayer for Christian Worship* (which had long been out of print) for prayers beautiful in themselves and endeared by familiarity, and is enriched by others drawn from a wide variety of sources of Christian devotion. It was first used in the Chapel on January 10th, 1926.

March 22nd, 1926, was a memorable day for the minister and his wife who then began their occupancy of Westgate Manse, the generous gift to the church of Mr. J. H. Every. It is a strongly built and well designed house, fitted with central

heating and all the other features of a modern dwelling; it has a sunny verandah, a pleasant garden, and from its eastern windows it commands a fine view of Lewes Castle and the Downs. Mr. E. H. Fuller was the architect. Future occupants, like the first ones, will bless the donor.

The Sussex Archaeological Society has paid two official visits to the Chapel. The first, which took place on June 18th, 1926, may be said to mark the Society's recognition of the Chapel as one of the historic buildings of the town. The second occurred on March 23rd of the following year, when there was a large assembly to honour the memory of the Rev. T. W. Horsfield, F.S.A., by the unveiling of a tablet designed by Mr. W. H. Godfrey, F.S.A., and formed of Hopton Wood stone, mounted on Purbeck marble. The occasion also commemorated the hundredth anniversary of his leaving Lewes, on completing his ten years' ministry at Westgate Chapel. After a service of thanksgiving for the treasures we inherit from the past and for the "writers of faithful histories," the minister spoke of the circumstances which decided Horsfield to come to Lewes, and the conditions under which his laborious historical researches were carried on. Alderman Every then asked Lord Monkbretton, Vice-President of the Society, to unveil the tablet. This his lordship

did, after delivering a graceful speech in appreciation of the historian's work.

In 1927 a tablet was erected to the memory of the two thousand clergy who surrendered their livings at the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, and especially of the Revs: Edward Newton, Gwalter Postlethwaite, Joseph Whiston and Comfort Star, "all of whom became ministers of Nonconformist Churches that afterwards united at Westgate Chapel." A photograph of the tablet has been reproduced in an admirable article entitled "Intruders and Informers: a Sketch of 'Black Bartholomew' in Sussex," by Mrs. K. B. Bamfield, in *The Sussex County Magazine* for December 1934.

The quaint little organ, one and a half manual, which was long in use at Westgate Chapel, had originally done duty at Norton Chapel, Derbyshire.¹ That Chapel was a private one, on the estate of Mr. Offley Shore. When, however, his banking business came to grief, the Chapel was sold with the rest of the property, and the congregation was dispersed. The Rev. Henry H. Piper had been minister for nearly forty years, and his daughter Octavia, afterwards Mrs. Cobb,

¹ See article, "The Old Nonconformity at Norton," by C. J. Street, in the *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, May 1918, pp. 149, 153.

had played the organ from the time she was twelve. At the sale of the Chapel the organ was purchased by her husband, and was brought to Banbury, whither she had removed on her marriage, and it was lent to Christchurch Chapel there. Ten years later it came with her and her father to Lewes, was installed at Westgate Chapel, and, on her departure from the town, was sold to the congregation. Under a succession of players including Miss C. Every (afterwards Mrs. Carter), Mrs. W. B. Funnell and Miss A. Hopper, it continued to assist in the music of the services until it was superseded by the new instrument. Though it was then over a hundred years old it was still fit for further use, and was bought by the Free Christian Church, Hastings, where its sweet tones may now be heard.

The new double-manual organ was obtained from Messrs. Mills and Sons, organ builders, Cambridge. It was dedicated at a special service on the afternoon of Sunday, March 16th, 1930, in the presence of a congregation which completely filled the Chapel, and which included his Worship the Mayor (Councillor T. J. F. Carter), the Aldermen and Councillors in their official robes, and the Clergy and Ministers of the town, as well as others from a distance. The service was conducted by the Rev. J. Worthington, B.A., the Rev. H.

Maguire, B.Sc., and the Minister of the Chapel, and the preacher was the Rev. R. H. U. Bloor, B.A. Mr. Norman Richards, A.R.C.O., presided at the organ, and by a varied selection from the great composers revealed its fine quality and the full extent of its range. The instrument was the first in the town to be fitted with an electric blower; and thus the long succession of boys who had discharged that important function at Westgate Chapel came to an end.

Reference has been made on page 63 to the Rev. Ebenezer Johnston's holidays. *The Countryman* for July 1933 reproduces a passage from a journal kept by him, in which he tells of a six days' holiday spent by him and two young men of his congregation on a ride into Kent in July 1744. Setting out from Stoneham they mounted their horses early on a Monday morning and rode to Sevenoaks, which was their first stop. The next night found them at Rochester, and the following ones at Canterbury, Dover, Hastings, and so they were home in time for the minister to fulfil his Sunday duties. The writer makes careful note of things that interested them, such as the deer in Knowle Park, and "a squirrel with a white tail that mightily took us, and occasioned some mirth," and "ye curious and ingenious works" at a silk-mill at Sevenoaks. He tells of their going on

board the *Royal George* at Chatham, of a new Meeting House that had been built at Margate, and of their seeing a boatload of French prisoners of war at Dover. There was much good-humoured banter of one another throughout the journey, and in the Swan at Hastings, on the last night, "there was a great noise, occasioned by a Scotchman's imprudent zeal for his country and an Englishman's foolish contempt for it." Perhaps we are right in guessing that the Scotchman was Mr. Johnston himself!

An interesting association with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain is due to the discovery that his ancestors on his mother's side were members of Westgate Chapel congregation. Their name was Harben. The first mention of it is in the Register of Baptisms kept by the Rev. Thomas Barnard, and is dated June 8th, 1705, when Mary, the daughter of Charles Harben of Southover and Mary, his wife, was baptized. On October 29th, 1709, there occurs the baptism of a son Joseph, and, on January 7th, 1712, that of another son, Thomas. This Thomas, thirty-two years later, when the record of the baptism of his own children begins, is described by the Rev. Ebenezer Johnston, who baptized them, as a clockmaker. Mr. J. L. Garvin, in his *Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, speaks of Thomas Harben as "evidently a clock-

maker who knows something beyond mechanism," and he substantiates the remark by going on to say:

"All Sussex talked of him when he made a picaresque stroke of speculation. It throws light on a whole period of seafaring and related activities in the seaboard counties. Towards the end of the Austrian War of Succession, an enemy vessel, the *Nympha Americana*, was taken by a British privateer. The Spanish ship had a precious cargo—she was freighted with quicksilver as well as goods in bale. During a winter storm in December 1747, the prize was blown ashore on the Sussex coast between Birling Gap and Cuckmere. The quicksilver sank in the sands, dry at low tide. All Sussex for miles about swarmed to the wreck. The scenes were like the wildest tales of Cornwall. . . .

"Thomas Harben, of Lewes, like his neighbours rode to the wreck, but did more. He purchased the salvaging rights. It was a sure bid. In the week after Christmas more than thirty wagon-loads of quicksilver, each valued at near £800, were recovered from the sands or from water farther out. The happy Harben built out of his profits a country seat called Corsica Hall near Seaford, not many miles from the spot where his boldness had wrested fortune from a disaster long remembered in those parts." (Vol. I, pp. 16, 17.)

The Rev. Ebenezer Johnston records the baptism

of seven children of Thomas Harben, but his son Thomas is not among them.¹ Henry, the son of this second Thomas, and the grandfather of the great statesman, married a grand-daughter of the Rev. Robert Austen, who had been master of the Lewes Grammar School, and from whom Sir Austen Chamberlain derives his name.

In preparation for the Mission which took place from October 11th to 20th, 1935, united services were held in the Churches of the town. At the one in St. Anne's Church, the minister of Westgate Chapel read the Lesson. The last was at Westgate, and, as reported in the *East Sussex News*, the Chapel "was filled to overflowing with one of the most representative gatherings within its walls since its opening in 1700." It was conducted by the Minister. The Lessons were read by the Rev. A. H. Atkins, of Providence Baptist Chapel, and the Rev. J. T. Goodchild, M.A., Vicar of South Malling; the prayers by the Rev. H. Gow, M.A., D.D. The preacher was the Rev. D. W. Langridge, M.A., of Union Church, Brighton, who spoke of the Church as a club and a crusade. During the Mission two week-night meetings took place in the Chapel Hall. The first was on October 15th,

¹ In Eastgate Baptist Church, Lewes, there is a clock bearing on its pendulum the inscription "Presented by Thos. Harben, 1789."

when Sir George M. Boughey, Bart., presided, and Dr. Gow was the speaker, his subject being "The reality of God"; and the second was on October 18th, when the Rev. Gordon Stuart, of Christ Church, New Road, Brighton, spoke on "The religiousness of man." As a result of these meetings the Lewes Society for the Study of Religion was formed a few weeks later.

The Wayside Pulpit was established at Westgate Chapel gate in 1925, following the example set at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, on the initiative of the Rev. Harrold Johnson, B.A., who introduced it into this country, and whose definition of it as "A Thought for the Week" has been almost universally adopted by the Churches using it. By means of this Pulpit many wise sayings have become familiar as household words in the town and neighbourhood. Here are a few of them:

"Think and thank."

"The man who is wrapt up in himself makes a very small parcel."

"Don't worry; it may never happen."

"Don't despise the day of small things; the clock that won't strike one will never strike twelve."

"Any fish can drift or float, but it takes a real live one to swim against the stream."

"When I cannot sleep, I count my blessings."

"Make yourselves nests of pleasant thoughts for your souls to dwell in."

"God never shuts one door but he opens another."

"God uses us to help each other."

"Blessed are they who have time to spare for God."

Once a month the minister preached a sermon on the sayings, and many of the sermons were published in the *East Sussex News*.

Since 1917 Westgate Chapel has been open daily, and hundreds of people from many parts of the world have entered it for prayer and quiet thought, as well as to see one of the historic places of the town. Amid the increasing noise and rush of life the need for such a peaceful sanctuary is not likely to grow less.

LIST OF MINISTERS

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AN OLD MEETING HOUSE

PRESBYTERIAN

- EDWARD NEWTON, M.A.,
1662-1709.
(Calamy, *Account, in loco.*
Turner, *Original Records of*
Early Nonconformity, III, pp.
397-400. *Christian Reformer*,
1863, pp. 739 ff. *Sussex Ar-*
chæological Collections, XXXVI,
p. 146.)
- THOS. BARNARD, 1695-1700.
(MSS. in Westgate Chapel
archives. *Monthly Repository*,
1824, p. 282. *Christian Re-*
former, 1863, p. 744. Hors-
field, *Lewes*, p. 303. *Sussex*
Archæological Collections, XIII,
pp. 13-14.)
- THOMAS FORCE, 1709-42.
(*Christian Reformer*, 1863,
p. 744.)
- JAMES WATKINS, 1742-59.
(Horsfield, *Lewes*, p. 304.
Christian Reformer, 1863,
p. 744. Josiah Thompson,
MS. volume in Dr. Williams's
Library, p. 153.)

Westgate Meeting

- THOMAS BARNARD, 1700-15.
JOHN OLIVE, 1711-41.
(*Christian Reformer*, 1863, p.
744. Horsfield, *Lewes*, p. 303.)
- JOSEPH BEACH, 1716-41.
(*Christian Reformer*, 1863,
p. 744.)
- EBEN. JOHNSTON, 1742-82.
(Horsfield, *Lewes*, pp. 303-4.
Monthly Repository, 1824,
p. 282; 1826, pp. 297, 370.
Christian Reformer, 1831, p.
232; 1863, p. 745.)
- RICHARD SHIELLS, 1783-87.
(Horsfield's *Lewes*, p. 304.)
- WM. EVANS BISHOP, 1788-90.
(Horsfield's *Lewes*, p. 304.)

INDEPENDENT

- GWALTER POSTLETHWAITE,
B.A., 1662-71.
(Calamy, *Account, in loco.*
Turner, *Original Records of*
Early Nonconformity, I, 33;
II, 1028. *Christian Reformer*,
1863, pp. 738 ff.)
- JOHN CROUCH, 1672.
(Calamy, *Account, in loco.*
Turner, *Original Records of*
Early Nonconformity, III, 389-
90, 512-15.)
- JOSEPH WHISTON, 1672-90.
(Calamy, *Account, in loco.*
Memoirs of the Life and
Writings of William Whiston,
written by himself, I, p. 4.)
- COMFORT STAR, M.A., 1691-
1708.
(Calamy, *Account, in loco.*
Turner, *Original Records of*
Early Nonconformity, III, p.
467. Nightingale, *Ejected of*
1662 in Cumberland and West-
moreland, I, pp. 159-73. *Chris-*
tian Reformer, 1863, p. 744.)

JOHN LANGDON, 1790-94.
(Horsfield's *Lewes*, p. 304.)

EVAN DAVIES, 1794-1803.
(Horsfield's *Lewes*, p. 304.
Murch's *History of Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England*, p. 294.)

SAMUEL PARKER, 1803-11.
(*Christian Reformer*, 1838,
p. 207.)

WM. JOHNSTON, 1811-17.
(*Christian Reformer*, 1831, p.
232; 1832, p. 39.)

THOMAS WALKER HORS-
FIELD, F.S.A., 1817-27.
(*Christian Reformer*, 1838, p.
66; 1863, p. 745. G. Eyre
Evans, *Record of Provincial
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Cheshire*, p. 13. *Dictionary of
National Biography, in loco.
Chowbent*, by T. H. Hope.)

C. PORTEOUS VALENTINE,
1828-40.
(*Christian Reformer*, 1861, pp.
316-19. R. A. Armstrong,
Henry William Crosskey, pp.
15-16.)

JOHN OLIVE, 1709-11.
(See previous column.)

*General Baptist Meeting
Eastport Lane, Southover*

— DROWLEY, about 1790.

R. SNELGROVE, 1808.

W. DAVIES, 1809.

J. H. MORRIS, 1810.

W. DOBELL, 1814.

R. MARTIN, 1816.

JAMES TAPLIN, 1822.
(Horsfield's *Lewes*, pp. 304-5.
Christian Reformer, 1863, p.
745.)

Westgate Meeting

- JOSEPH CHURCH MEEKE, 1841-43.
(*Inquirer*, 1865, p. 407. G. Eyre Evans, *Record of Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire*, p. 110.)
- SAMUEL WOOD, B.A., 1843-48.
(*Christian Reformer*, 1849, p. 698. G. Eyre Evans, *Midland Churches*, p. 141.)
- ARTHUR LUPTON, B.A., 1848-50.
(*Inquirer*, 1867, p. 156.)
- WILLIAM SMITH, F.L.S., 1850-54.
(*Inquirer*, 1857, p. 667. G. Eyre Evans, *Record of Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire*, p. 175.)
- JOHN ROBERTSON, 1855-56.
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- THOMAS CARTER, 1856-67.
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- WILLIAM SALTMARSHE SMITH, 1867-75.
(G. Eyre Evans, *Record of Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire*, p. 463.)
- ARCHIBALD FORBES MACDONALD, M.A., 1877-82.
(*Inquirer*, 1886, p. 649. G. Eyre Evans, *Midland Churches*, p. 68.)
- WILLIAM MASON, 1883-85.
(G. Eyre Evans, *Record of Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire*, p. 45.)
- CHARLES DAVIS BADLAND, M.A., 1886-95.
(*Inquirer*, 1910, p. 476. G. Eyre Evans, *Record of Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire*, p. 67.)
- THOMAS ALPHONSUS GORTON, 1896-1901.
- JOHN FELSTEAD, 1901-10.
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