


HISTORY OF LANEHEAD SUNDAY SCHOOL.

BY JOHN HANDLEY.

N giving an account of the rise and progress of the Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School and Church at Catley, Lanehead, we must first take a retrospective view of the village and its surroundings in the year of our Lord, 1845. In doing this we must embrace Smallshaw, Prickshaw, and Fernhill, with its famous upper room, dear to many that are now living, and some of whom have carried with them the seed of the everlasting Gospel into various parts of the globe. The upper room at Fernhill will be referred to further on. The population of Lanehead and Smallshaw consisted of miners, quarrymen, and factory operatives employed principally at a new mill built at the latter place by Messrs. John Tweeddale & Sons, for the manufacture of cotton; others were employed in the woollen mills of Messrs. Jacob Tweeddale & Sons, of Healey Hall Bottoms. At this time two coal pits were in work, one in the village behind a public house, known by the name of the Black Dog, and the other about half a mile up the moor. During the summer of this year, a few devoted and pious young men, anxious to do something for their Lord and Master, who had done so much for them, visited the village and commenced their work by holding cottage prayer-meetings. We give the names of the first pioneers and promoters of this great and good work. The first is Mr. Arundel, then a solicitor's clerk, who did not remain long in connection with the school after it was opened, having to leave the town. Then Messrs. Charles Stott, Joseph Handley (now Mr. Councillor Handley), and George Halkyard, better known as George Bamford. These would often come into the village together, and conduct the services in prayer-

meetings, each praying in turn ; and sometimes one of the number would give a short but effective exhortation in the cottage houses. The heads of some seriously-disposed families, seeing that good was resulting from these services, gladly opened their doors. These were Messrs. Andrew Hoyle, Peter Handley, and Peter Warburton. The services were so well attended that seats could not be provided for all comers for want of room, and we have seen parties patiently stand the whole of the time of the service. The young men were so anxious to do good, that they got assistance from a few well-known local preachers, prominent amongst these were the late Mr. Henry Ratcliffe, Messrs. Wm. Tweedale and John Kershaw. These were ever ready, when circumstances would permit, to go up to Lanehead, after their day's toil was over, to conduct week-night services, preaching, and often winding up with a prayer-meeting. These services were mostly conducted in the house of Mr. Peter Handley, which was always open to them, and were continued for several years. During this time out-door services were held to reach those who would not come in-doors to hear the Word of Life proclaimed. These were called camp meetings, and were held on a flat at the bottom of the moor called the Green, and sometimes a little lower down, close to a building at the end of the road leading to Smallshaw. This building was then used as a blacksmith's shop, and close to a bridge on which the colliers would resort on Sunday mornings. A number of young women would gather round the waggon, which was used as a platform, and assist in singing ; but the men would stand afar off in their dirt, or sit on the wall near the bridge, or squat down collier style, sitting on their heels. As the summer of the year 1845 was drawing to a close, it became quite evident that something must be done to lay hold of the young men, women, and children who were, as it were, running wild. The young men spending their Sunday mornings in pigeon-flying, wrestling matches, and cock-fighting. Some are now living who took part in these disgraceful scenes, who, in their ignorance, thought these were the right and proper things to indulge in, and policemen were few and far between. In fact, such an amount of ignorance prevailed that few could read, and fewer could write even their own names, and many scarcely knew their own Christian names, for a large number went by nicknames. The following are

samples: there was old Kettle (not very old then, but old now), Old Courage, Old Boss, Old Fudler, Old Tight, Billy-o'-t-Nacks, and Old Sam-o'-Ben's; and those who had families their children were called after them. For instance there was Bob Courage and Ned-o'-Fudlers; there was also Polite, and the sons, as Jim-o'-Polite's and Jack-o'-Sam-o'-Ben's, and some of these children did not really know their own names, such was the state of their education. The nearest Sunday-schools were the Wesleyan Methodist Association schools at Lowerfold, and Spotland-fold, each about a mile distant; and the nearest Church schools were at Whitworth and Spotland Bridge, still further off. To these places parents thought it (with two or three exceptions) too far to send their children; and in most cases did not go themselves, only to weddings, christenings, or funerals. This state of things started the idea in the minds of the before-mentioned young men to commence a Sunday-school, and it was made the subject of special prayer for guidance by the Holy Spirit as to what should be done. The foremost and most indefatigable worker in this cause was the late Mr. Charles Stott, then assistant to Mr. Wrigley, postmaster and stationer; of his labours we shall hear further. Several heads of families were consulted on the subject and promised to render assistance; and a youth who became very much attached to the cause volunteered to go round to every house in the village to ascertain how many children each family would send, providing a school was opened. The names of the parents were carefully written out on a sheet of foolscap paper, with the number of children each family would send, and when finished this formidable roll, containing the promise of one hundred and twenty children to commence a school with, was taken down to Rochdale to the Wesleyan superintendent minister, the Rev. Thos. Rowland, who, when he saw the list, became quite excited, and exclaimed, "Can it be; 120 lambs and no fold for them." He at once commenced to render all the assistance he possibly could; and with the roll in his hand he visited several families in the village and spoke words of kindness to them, conducted a week-night service, and spent half a day with Mr. Arundel and Mr. Charles Stott in looking round the village to find a room suitable for a school; and with the efforts of all concerned a room could not be found in the village of Lanehead or Smallshaw.

Having failed to find a suitable room at Lanehead or Smallshaw, Messrs. Arundel and Stott remained for a further search, whilst the Rev. Thomas Rowland went home to attend to some appointment. As they were having a cup of tea at Mr. Peter Handley's, a party called to say there was a room at Fernhill which would be suitable, if they could get it, and make a road into it. At this news they were greatly cheered, and never had a doubt about getting it or finding a road into it either. It was the Lord's work, and He can make difficulties easy by removing them out of the way. The room was the top storey of a three-storey building, and had been used as a woollen weaving-room. The centre part of the building is a farmhouse, with a portion let off for a cottage at one end, and one room occupied as a dwelling at the other. The ground floor under this room was used as a lumber-room, as the back part of the building is against a hillside. The middle room was on a level with the ground at the back. At this end of the building, it was thought, an entrance might be made to the top room. The farmer and occupier of the buildings (Mr. John Scholes) was seen. Of course he could not allow a road through his house; but the matter was soon settled, and the room or rooms were taken. To get to this end of the building, which was the west end, we had to go along the front of the house and a barn and shuppen adjoining, and as we came to the hillside it was necessary to have two flights of steps, one in the winding-ground to the back, and the other for the entrance. We had no funds to begin with. The door-way was to be made, and the walls and steps erected. To do this we must have material and workmen. Some volunteers soon undertook the work, and stone was near at hand, almost ready for use. Messrs. Peter Handley and Peter Warburton did the building of the steps, &c., assisted by others; but as there were no joiners among us we had to pay for one, although, as I said, we had no funds, Mr. Charles Stott, however, was a very good hand at drawing money out of people's pockets, and whenever he applied to anyone for help was scarcely ever refused.

He applied to the late Edmund Wrigley, Esq. (his employer at that time), and made him acquainted with our position. He readily consented to become our treasurer (of no funds), and was, like a great many more who hold that honourable position in the Wesleyan

Society, oftener out of pocket than holding cash. We don't make these remarks out of any disparagement to the office of treasurer, for we hold that any position or office in connection with God's work is honourable. God was with us, and has raised up men to carry on this good work to this day. Mr. Wrigley found us all the required means, and very soon we were in possession of a room capable of holding 150 to 160 scholars in classes.

The entrance-room was over the room which was used as a dwelling; then we entered into the large room before referred to. As this room had not been in use for some years, and was open to the roof, the top was quite black with dirt, and the dirt had settled on the beams, which supported the roof, to a very considerable thickness. This was all cleared away by volunteers from the young men of the village, two of whom deserve special mention—namely, Messrs. James Southwell and Charles Whitworth—who gave their labour for three or four hours a-day, after their ordinary day's work was done. After all the dirt was cleared, Mr. Joseph Handley sent up some butter tubs and whitewash brushes, and Mr. Scholes, our landlord, brought up some lime. Each young man had a brush and a tub, and night after night we went to work to put on several coats of limewash, until we got both roof and walls fairly white. The room was very light, as the front side was a row of windows, which were required, as many will know, to give good light for weaving. When this was done, and the floor mended, the young women of the village, who intended to become scholars, came to our help, and scrubbed the floor and cleaned the windows; and we can assure our readers the transformation was very great, and we felt very proud of it. Ah! but you may say, where was your furniture? Wait a little, and you shall know all about it. We have already told you it was God's work, and He never leaves His work unfinished.

Whilst all this work had been going on at Fernhill, our friends in Rochdale had been busy, too. Besides running up at night to see how the work was progressing, they were going about begging money and books. Bibles and Testaments were got from subscribers to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and small spelling books and alphabet boards were supplied by Mr. Wrigley. He also was instrumental in procuring for us some old, narrow, worm-eaten

forms, with three legs. Some of them were nine feet long, and some had been broken and spliced. But those old forms had a history. They had been used at the commencement of the Union-street Sunday-school, and in the days of the venerable Rev. John Wesley; and we were very thankful for them. He also got for us the pulpit which Mr. Wesley used to preach in when he came to Rochdale, and it served us many years—in fact, until the enlargement of the present Sunday-school in the year 1872. All these things Mr. Wrigley kindly got for us towards fitting up the school. Aye! and funds were soon forthcoming, too, for Mr. Charles Stott and others waited upon Mr. Bright, our fellow townsman (now the Right Honourable John Bright, M.P.), and he gave us three guineas, and continued with a yearly subscription of one guinea for many years, until after the new school was built at Lanehead. Captain Ainsworth Crook also gave us two guineas, and continued to give yearly one guinea as long as he lived, and this was continued by his widow until her death. Several others also gave very liberally, so that we soon had a nice sum to hand over to our kind and generous treasurer.

Having got everything in readiness to open the school about the middle of October, 1845, it was arranged that we were to go down to Mr. Wrigley's for the books; and, on the Saturday afternoon previous to the day for opening, the youth before-mentioned started off to Rochdale with the intention of carrying the books to Lanehead; but on the way was wondering in his mind how he was to carry them, when, arriving at Spotland-bridge, he accidentally, or providentially, met with another youth, named John Newall. We stopped and saluted each other, and made enquiries where each were going. John Newall (better known as Jack Newall) said he was going home. We told our errand into town, and that we would give him a penny if he would turn back and help to carry the books. To this he gladly consented, as he was a promised scholar. We got the books, and they were as much as both of us could carry. It was late at night when we got home to Lanehead with our burdens, and we arranged to be up early on the Sunday morning. When we met we were joined by others, and started off a little after eight a.m. with the key of the schoolroom in our hand, and a bundle of books under our arms.

When we got to Fernhill we went into the room and kindled two fires—one at each end of the room, and then the scholars began to come in. The forms were arranged in rows across the room; one form, right across, formed a class, and the teacher sat at the end, and had the scholars to come to him, one by one, to be taught a lesson. The four young men—Messrs. Charles Stott, Joseph Handley, George Bamford, and Arundel—and a few others came up. The school was opened by Mr. Arundel with singing and prayer, followed by a prayer meeting, in which all four prayed earnestly for God's blessing to attend the efforts put forth to benefit the children committed to their charge; and God's blessing and presence were manifested to us. There was a very good attendance, as nearly all that had promised came, and were delighted with the singing and teaching, but did not appreciate the kneeling down for prayer, for a little mischief was present in the shape of pulling each other's hair, and various other little tricks which children are guilty of even at the present day. Care was taken that every child had a lesson taught both morning and afternoon, and all the names were entered in a book brought up by Mr. Charles Stott for that purpose, ruled for the names, and the remainder in squares, to be marked for attendance—one mark for the morning and crossed for the afternoon. Mrs. Scholes kindly provided milk or tea for the teachers at noon, as each had brought something with him for dinner.

The afternoon teaching went on from half-past one to three o'clock, when an address was delivered to the children, and they were kindly invited to come in good time on the following Sunday, as the school would be opened at nine o'clock a.m. But this was found to be too early, as winter was setting in. The time was altered to 9-15.

As there was no fixed superintendent, the school was opened in turn by the four young men, who gave themselves willingly to the work every Sunday till the school was fairly established, and a larger staff of teachers joined it.

During the winter, Sunday evening services were conducted in the village, held alternately at the houses of Messrs. Peter Handley, Warburton, and Hoyle, conducted by local preachers before-mentioned, who volunteered for the work.

The prayer-meetings held in the school resulted in quite a revival of religion, and about ten or twelve professed to have found the Saviour, and obtained peace and pardon through His blood, and some are living in the enjoyment of the same to this day. The place was then put on the Union-street plan, and had regular appointments for afternoon and evening service. A society class was formed, and Mr. Abram Healey was appointed the leader.

When Christmas Day, of 1845, was approaching, it was decided to have a tea meeting. The weather, unfortunately, turned out unfavourable. There had been snow, and a severe frost followed, with bitter cold; and, as we had no proper arrangements for a tea meeting, tea had to be carried up from the farm-house in kettles. The tea was not more than just warm when it got through the tea-pots to the cups. Although there was a nice meeting afterwards, the cold weather and almost cold tea, and thin attendance, caused the whole affair to be looked upon as a failure; so that it was resolved to try Good Friday in the following year, which proved as great a success as Christmas Day was a failure. As the day was fine, a large number from Rochdale and surrounding villages came to pay us a visit, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, as the farmer, Mr. John Scholes, gave them permission to ramble in the fields.

Close to the school there was a place called "The Banking." This formerly had been a reservoir belonging to an old mill that had long before gone to ruins. There was very little of it standing except part of the chimney and a small portion of wall. This was a favourite spot for pleasure-seekers, as it had a good-sized flat bottom, and the bank sides were nicely sloped thereto, so that parties could sit and watch all that was going on below. In this place many young people enjoyed themselves till time for the meeting after tea, which was announced to commence at six o'clock.

Our kind treasurer, E. Wrigley, Esq., took the chair, and ministers and other friends were there to address the meeting. The place was full, and many could not even get standing room; but all went away well pleased and profited. Thus Good Friday was established as the day for the annual tea meeting at Fernhill and Lanehead, and has continued a great success—so much so that it scarcely needed advertising; and our worthy treasurer continued as

chairman for a number of years, and we have heard him say that he always looked forward to Good Friday for one of the greatest treats of the year.

In the meantime the school was prospering, and the society was increasing; although, on account of families removing, we sometimes lost several members at once, and it took some time to get up the numbers again. During the summer of 1846, we found it necessary to re-arrange the school, and have some new forms, made of such a length that we could have a passage up the centre of the school, with classes on both sides—the girls on one side and the boys on the other. This we did, and made twelve classes. At that time, writing was taught in Sunday schools, as a desire for learning had sprung up in the minds of the elder scholars, but they had not time to learn except on Sundays. The Ten Hours' Bill had not become universal then. Boys and girls were kept at work till 7-30 p.m. We had fixed desks put up all along the window-side of the room; but Mr. Charles Stott and others were against writing being taught in Sunday schools—especially Mr. Stott, who, as a Sunday school visitor, spoke against it wherever he went, and caused an ill feeling for a time against himself for his efforts in trying to get it given up at Bagslate and at Heywood Wesleyan Sunday schools. But to return to our own school. The desks were so fixed that they let down and formed the back part of the classes on that side of the room; and it was arranged that Mr. Charles Stott and Mr. Joseph Handley should come up on one Wednesday night, and Mr. Arundel and Mr. George Bamford on the alternate Wednesday night, to teach writing for one hour or an hour and a quarter, commencing punctually at eight. The night school was very well attended, and there were always two teachers there.

The night school was continued till we removed to the new school at Lanehead—eventually by a paid teacher, as the arrangement to go up from Rochdale at night proved very inconvenient. But since those days matters have very much altered as regards the education of children. All continued to go on smoothly and satisfactorily; and as we were nearing the end of our first year, we had to arrange for our anniversary sermons, and as we wished to have a good day in every sense of the word, we had to look out for a

preacher that was likely to draw a large congregation. At that time we had two popular local preachers in the circuit—Mr. Adam Mills, of Wardle, and Mr. Richard Whitworth, of Broadlane. But we could not decide which to have, so at last concluded to have both, one for afternoon and the other for evening service. The place was crowded at both services, and the collections were considered very good, amounting to nearly £10, and with subscriptions and donations afterwards collected amounted to over £13; but this did not clear off the debt. The three following years the anniversary sermons were preached alternately by Mr. Adam Mills and Mr. R. Whitworth. During this time the society was rather fluctuating, and several changes took place; Mr. Abram Healey gave up the class, and as a suitable leader could not be got, it was conducted by the local preachers on the Sunday afternoon, from half-past three to half-past four p.m., until a gentleman named Mr. Charles Pendleton came to reside in Spotland, who was appointed leader, which position he held nearly two years. After him, for a short time, we had Mr. James Stewart, who, during the agitation caused by Messrs. Everett, Dunn and Griffith, almost broke up the society, six out of fourteen left the class, and eight remained. The class was then led by Mr. Joseph Handley; he having been appointed by the leaders' meeting at Rochdale. In the year 1850, the society got up to nineteen members, and as the time came round again for the anniversary sermons it was decided at a teachers' meeting to invite our old and esteemed friend, the Rev. Thomas Rowland, then in Leeds, to come and preach for us. When written to, he at once consented to come; and as it was a fine warm day there was a very large congregation. In the afternoon the place was completely packed right to the door. The landlord on going upstairs saw some bits of mortar that had fallen from the ceiling of the bedroom, so he quietly propped up the floor, although it was very strong, having good beams. But he wisely thought prevention was better than calamity. As there had been so many that could not get in to the afternoon service, and there were more people present long before the evening service commenced than would fill the room, it was decided (after consulting Mr. Rowland) to hold the service out of doors in the Banking. The forms were carried out of the school, and a platform pulpit set up. The scholars were arranged on the

bank slope in nice order, with the musicians on the bottom row. The children had been trained to sing the hymns by Mr. Samuel Tweedale, better known as old Sam o'Bens, who was in high glee on that day. There was a good company of players on brass instruments; but old Sam had the children singing at the full pitch of their voices. He stood on a form in front of the players and children, beating time with his hand and stamping with his foot. He became quite excited, and in the midst of a verse of the second hymn, old Sam stamping with his foot, and at the same time calling out quite loud to the players. "Lay on, lads," when down he came on the players, and his form shot from under him, to the no-small amusement of the children and congregation, who were a little time before they could regain their gravity and composure. After this all went well, and we had an impressive sermon, which was the means, no doubt, of several conversions in the prayer-meeting afterwards held in the school-room, and which was continued till late at night. As this was the last time that we saw Mr. Rowland, great sorrow was expressed at parting with him. As all but two were present that had been with us at and previous to the opening of the school, we took leave of him as though we were parting with our dearest friend. He had the love and sympathy of both teachers and scholars. In the year 1851, the Good-Friday tea-meeting was as usual very well attended, and as some of the teachers had to make their first attempt at speech-making, there was quite a lively interest taken in what came on. We had written out our speeches and committed them to memory, and as each was called upon to address the meeting, the others took up a position so that they could be seen by the speaker, and if they could catch his eye would try to cause him to break down. One youth, in speaking, stopped suddenly, having lost from his memory the continuation of his address, and stood calmly for a minute or two to collect the thread of his speech; however, after breathing a silent prayer for Divine help he was enabled to proceed, and so warmed up that he went on speaking beyond what he had written with great liberty, feeling that he had got that help which he prayed for; and we all got through very creditably, and never afterwards indulged in that practice of trying to break one another down. We may say here, to all our young readers, if ever you listen to a young man's earliest

attempt at giving his Sunday-school address, instead of trying to upset him let him have your earnest prayers and sympathy, and they will help him onwards; for many have given up in despair, while others have become ministers of the gospel and missionaries to far-off lands, who have been trained in our Sunday-schools, and we would earnestly pray: "God bless our Sunday-schools." The dialogues and recitations were very good, and all were profited and delighted with the meeting. The school and society continued to prosper during the year, although other interests sprang up. The Church of England friends began to bestir themselves, seeing our prosperity; they commenced a school in a warehouse belonging to Messrs. John and Robert Tweedale, at Broadley, which thinned our school a little, but more afterwards, for a time, when Healey Church was built—but we may have occasion to refer to this further on. During the ensuing year we suffered a great loss in the removal and death of one of our oldest members and most useful teachers, a young woman, named Betty Ormerod, who lived at Fernhill when the school was opened, and who, soon after, came to the school as a scholar, and afterwards became a teacher; she was an anxious enquirer after truth, and gave her heart to God, obtained pardon of her sins through faith in Christ's atonement *for her*, and was enabled to rejoice in His all-sufficient sacrifice for her salvation, she lived the life of a consistent Christian, and was ever ready to speak a word for her Saviour when opportunity occurred. Wherever she was known she appeared to be a terror to evildoers. For some time previous her family had removed to a place called Ending, and in coming to school on a Sunday morning she had to come through Smallshaw and Lanehead, and cross the bridge mentioned, where the young men of the village on summer Sunday mornings used to meet in their dirt, and when she came up to them she would stop and talk to them, and such was the influence of what she said that they were ashamed and crept away one after another, nor could they stand before her powerful reproofs, so that she cleared the bridge on a Sunday morning, as she could be seen coming out of Smallshaw for some distance. The first young man that saw her coming would call out, "Hey, lads, Betty Ormerod is coming," and before she got to the bridge there was not one to be seen. But she had scattered seeds of kindness, and the seed thus sown bore fruit afterwards in

the conversion of several of those young men, and some remain to this day faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the end of 1851, Betty Ormerod removed with her family to Bacup, and there being no Wesleyan school in or near the place where she was located, she joined the Primitive Methodists, and was appointed a class leader, and took appointments as a local preacher, such was her desire to be useful and do good to her fellow creatures. As the spring of 1852 drew near, she sent word to some of her friends that all being well, she should be over on Good Friday for the tea meeting. But this was not to be. She was taken suddenly ill and died before Good Friday came, which caused a deep sorrow to both teachers and scholars, as she was greatly beloved by all for her works' sake; and in the report and all the speeches that were delivered she was referred to. We will just give an extract from one address on this occasion:—"During the year many have been called out of time into eternity; yea, and as you have heard from the report read, one who only a very short time since had a name and a place amongst us, and was on this platform last Good Friday, and only recently fully expected to be here to-day, now is no longer in this vale of tears, deeply lamented both by teachers and scholars in this school. As a scholar and teacher she has left an example worthy of imitation. Her regular attendance at the school and at the means of grace; her anxious desire for the prosperity of the work of God; her diligence as a scholar, and her zeal as a teacher, in endeavouring to instruct those committed to her charge in those paths in which she herself had found that peace which the world cannot give; her boldness in reproving sin; her walk and conduct in the world; her humble disposition to bear and forbear; her clear testimony, from time to time, of her peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, which enabled her to bear, with such Christian fortitude and resignation to the will of God; her last affliction, which ended in her triumphant death—all show to us that, during the last six years, her life was that of a consistent Christian. All who have known her will be led to say like one of old, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like *hers*.' "

It was during this year and the two following years, 1853-54, that we had to go through a time of trial. Healey Church was built, and

the Sunday school opened. The three firms of John Tweedale & Sons, Smallshaw; Jacob Tweedale & Sons, Healey Hall Bottoms; and John & Robert Tweedale, Broadley Mills, requested that the children employed by them would attend Healey Church Sunday school. But we must bear in mind there was no compulsion; yet we all know what the influence of employers was in those days; and some families were very much like the old woman in Rossendale (our readers will perhaps excuse the quotation), when a poll was demanded whether the people should pay Church rates or not. On the polling day, when the old woman went up to the polling booth, it happened that the gentleman who was the employer of her family sat at the table taking the votes, and on the old woman presenting herself to vote, the gentleman thus addressed her: "Well, Betty, what are you for, rate or no rate?" She replied, "Same as yo, Maister George." Well, we felt the influence of "Same as yo, Maister George," in connection with our Sunday school. At the early part of the year, Mr. Joseph Handley gave up the class of which he was leader, and Mr. Work Hartley was appointed leader in his place, and continued as such till the end of the year. The first six months of 1853 the class meeting was without a legally appointed leader, but was conducted by the oldest member (the writer), who, eventually, after undergoing an examination at the leaders' meeting at Union-street Chapel, was duly appointed, and held the office for several years. The above-named circumstances for a time greatly reduced our number of scholars, and several teachers removing to other places, we were brought very low. At this time Mr. Ellis Lord joined us as a teacher, and for over six months attended every Sunday. The cloud that hung over us was now at the darkest period.

We were reduced in number to fifty scholars and three teachers that went up from Rochdale. But as it often happens that the darkest hour is before the dawn of day, so it was in our case. Mr. Ellis Lord worked very hard to get teachers. He was especially desirous to lay hold on a certain young man who for a time eluded him; but God was helping us, and through the influence of his now sainted mother's prayers, and the perseverance of Mr. Ellis Lord, he was at last caught, and joined us as a teacher, and has continued as such, and superintendent and class leader to the present. We need

hardly say to whom we refer, to parties living in the village, but for other readers we venture to give his name—it is our highly esteemed friend, Councillor W. T. Heap. At this time, the Rev. William B. Thorneloe and the Rev. Henry Pollinger were in the circuit, and laboured hard for the conversion of young men, and we had a great accession of teachers, and great good was done during the spring of 1885, and continued through this and following years. The scholars who left us to go to Healey Church School gradually came back, as it was found very inconvenient for them to go so far, especially in winter, and there was plenty of room for the prosperity of both parties, and we were left in peace. The staff of teachers was abundant. Those who joined us were Messrs. Jeremiah Stockdale, Leonard Kaberry, Charles Thorpe, Francis Wellock, Richard Geldart, Alfred Walker, James Greenwood, Abraham Pilling, and Thomas Nicholson. These were divided and attended on alternate Sundays. The society class had met for some time at the house of old Widow Roberts. She and her daughter were our oldest members, and had removed from Fernhill to Smallshaw. Both were infirm; the mother from old age, and the daughter from paralysis. At the December quarter-day, 1854, the number of members was returned as nine, and continued so till March, 1855. At the end of February, Betty Roberts, jun., was taken very ill, and after lingering some time, died “Happy in the Lord.” A short memoir of her life was written, and a funeral sermon was preached by Mr. Joseph Handley. This service was the commencement of a great revival of religion, and an increase of members from nine to thirty-three, and at one time the number was thirty-eight, but through removals and other circumstances the numbers varied, but never got below twenty again. To these services one of the teachers (Mr. Jeremiah Stockdale) refers, in a letter we received some years afterwards. He says, “I am very much pleased to hear such a good account of Lanehead. I shall never cease, I hope, to take an interest in that school, but trust I shall have to thank God through all eternity that I was ever connected with it. How distinctly I recollect that Sabbath afternoon spent at Lanehead Sunday School, when I found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The prayer meeting, the earnest wrestling with God for about three hours, and the conversion of fifteen souls, are matters which I hope I shall never

forget to my dying day. May the Lord grant us more of such soul-stirring meetings." The prayer meeting here referred to commenced in the afternoon, and was continued till nine p.m. in the evening, and did not break up for tea; teachers all stayed, and amongst them the preachers, Messrs. Joseph Rushworth and Joseph Handley; teachers, Messrs. Ellis Lord, Charles Scott, the writer, and others, also several female teachers; and truly God's presence was felt, and His power to save was manifested in the sound conversion of the number alluded to above.

Following the revival alluded to the conversions were sound and lasting, and the result was prosperity in the school and society, which was greatly supported by the ministers. As many of the teachers lived in Rochdale, the Rev. W. B. Thorneloe used to meet them on Friday night for a bible lesson and general conversation on various subjects, but principally on the lessons for the coming Sabbath. We had to meet late in a private room, as the young men were engaged late in the shops in which they served; and all were grateful to Mr. Thorneloe for the self-denial he thus exercised in our behalf. Now and then a teacher was obliged to leave us, but there was no difficulty in getting another to take his or her place, and we may say that there was that harmony existing amongst the teachers that none ever left us without deep regret. As we promised other extracts, we give one from another letter received from the same party, Mr. Jeremiah Stockdale, which will give our readers an idea of the good feeling that prevailed at this time amongst the teachers. The time referred to was 1855 to 1857. He says: "My mind often reverts to the old school at Lanehead (Fernhill) with its pleasing associations. I believe some of the happiest moments of my life have been spent in that school, and I can look back on them with more than ordinary feelings of pleasure. The happy hours we have spent in taking sweet counsel together respecting those things which pertain to our spiritual welfare; the blessed seasons that we have spent in social prayer; and, above all, that prayer meeting when God's Holy Spirit convinced me as a sinner, and led me as a humble penitent to the foot of the cross, and there enabled me to believe on that Saviour who was both willing and ready to save me from all my sins—it was indeed a blessed time when fifteen souls were enabled to step into the liberty

wherewith Christ makes His people free. Ah! these are circumstances which are entwined around my heart never to be forgotten as long as memory retains its seat. I have often felt thankful that I am connected with a Sunday school here, though it is very different in many respects to yours. There was something about Lanehead that I never expect to meet anywhere again. There we used to seem almost like the members of one family shut up from the rest of the world; and where there is that union and good feeling amongst the teachers, the school almost invariably prospers." We may just remark here that the same cordiality has continued to exist amongst the teachers, male and female, to the present time. About this time preparations were made towards having a new school in the village of Lanehead. The old upper room at Fernhill was becoming too small and inconvenient, and we began to prepare to leave it, notwithstanding all its pleasing and interesting associations, for more commodious premises. The villages and their surroundings were canvassed for subscriptions, and to the credit of all we may say, there was scarcely a house from which we were sent empty away. In this way over forty pounds was collected, and the highest sum we received (with one exception of ten shillings) was five shillings, and downwards to sixpences and shillings, and all the teachers did what they could. There was some difficulty in getting a suitable piece of ground; at length it was obtained, and all our friends in town and country were waited upon and subscriptions were gathered in. The late Mr. Charles Stott gave us great assistance, although he had removed to Littleborough (and this was his last effort in connection with Lanehead school, as he was taken ill afterwards and died on the 15th June, 1858, the year after the new school was opened); and other parties aided us very much, amongst them our old friends, the Right Honourable John Bright and T. A. Crook, Esq.; and we have often found Mr. Bright ready and willing to help Sunday schools in other parts of our circuit. We made our calculations as to ways and means as well as we could, and commenced building in 1857. Towards the end of the summer, and after the day for opening was fixed, our then superintendent minister, the Rev. Theophilus Pugh, almost at the last moment, would have prevented us opening the school-chapel, as it was intended for both chapel and school, through some informality in

complying with the conditions of the Chapel Building Committee, so Mr. W. T. Heap and the late Mr. R. N. Wrigley went over to Manchester to see the Rev. John Bedford, the then secretary of the Chapel Building Committee, and he gave us consent to open on the day we had fixed upon. The sermons on the opening day were preached by our late esteemed superintendent minister, the Rev. W. B. Thorneloe, to crowded congregations, and the collections amounted to £43, a large sum, considering the size of the place and the population of the village, and this put us in a position to fulfil our engagements with the Chapel Building Committee. The land was purchased freehold, so that we were not burdened with ground rent, and every effort was made to work the school in the most economical manner possible that we might get our school out of debt, which year by year grew less, until at length we were free from debt (and have remained so with slight exceptions to the present time), and were enabled to sing with the poet :

“These walls we to Thy honour raise,
Long may they echo to Thy praise !
And Thou descending, fill the place
With choicest tokens of Thy grace.

And in the great decisive day,
When God the nations shall survey,
May it before the world appear,
That crowds were born to glory here.”

As we were now fairly established in the villages of Lanehead and Smallshaw, with a good staff of earnest, hard-working teachers, both the school and society continued to prosper, and the great secret of our success was the cordiality that existed amongst the teachers ; and as many of them went up from Rochdale and took a lunch with them, the spare time at noon was not wasted, but employed in prayer for God's blessing to attend their efforts. During the summer months several of the young men would go up early and have an hour of visiting, urging the children to be in time for school, and this had a very good effect. It aroused the parents to be up and get their children ready for school. About this time we were joined by Miss Heap and Mrs. Leonard Kaberry, who were very zealous workers, and did much to encourage the young women connected with the school, afterwards also Mr. Charles Heap became a teacher, and along with his brother, Mr. W. T. Heap,

have continued to attend and to take a great interest in the work as teachers, officers, and class leaders. At length we required more room again. We went to see the gentleman from whom we had bought the land, to try if he would sell us a bit more, so that we could enlarge the building by adding another room across the end at the back, but after repeatedly trying him he would not let us have any. We then had a trustee meeting to consider what must be done, as we had not sufficient room for our scholars and congregation. Several plans of enlargement were proposed, when the late Samuel Saxon, who was a trustee, very quaintly remarked, "Go a storey higher; there is no ground rent up above." Then the question arose, Would the walls carry another storey? and it was agreed that this should be done if it could be. We had an architect to examine the building, and he pronounced the walls quite strong enough to carry another storey or two. So this matter was settled, plans were made out, and we went a little higher without any ground rent.

Before the addition of another storey, and during the time the Rev. George Scott was a minister in the circuit, there was a great revival, especially at Bagslate and Lanehead. To the special services many friends came from Bagslate to help. Most of the oldest members now in connection with the place were converted at that time, and a new society class was formed, of which Mr. Samuel Schofield was the first leader. When he removed, Mr. C. Heap was appointed, and afterwards Mr. Lomas Robinshaw, who, with his sisters, Betty and Jane, were most active workers at that time. Shortly after this, Mr. Thomas Taylor came to live in Spotland, and came up to Lanehead to teach, and for some years rendered very valuable service. Another worthy Christian, Charles Crompton, a farmer, came into the neighbourhood from Cheshire about that time, and joined our society. He was a most happy man, and it was a real treat to be in a meeting where he was present. He did not remain long in the neighbourhood, owing to a peculiar disease which took away the use of his legs, and finally carried him to the grave.

Many of the more prominent teachers of this period can only just be named, such as -William King, Abraham Whatmough, Joseph

Dykes, Ralph Harling, and John Lees, who all, during the time they were connected with the school, were deeply interested in all its concerns, and earnestly endeavoured to promote its best interests. Up to this time nearly all the teachers had come from a distance, but now several living in the village began to assist in the good work, such as—Sarah Ann Rigg, Mary Ann Ashworth, Alice Scholes, Sarah Newall, Fanny Simpson, Alice Harrison, Mary Taylor, William Simpson, and Samuel Southwell. About this time, too, many of the names which had been connected with the school at first, began to disappear through the wide dispersion of the various families, and now such a name as Handley, Warburton, Foster, Cheetham, or Whatmough is not in the books.

It was about this time that pews were put into the school, as some families wished to own a seat of their own in God's house. These did not remain long, however, as the enlargement already spoken of necessitated alterations and improvements. They were succeeded by more modern and comfortable structures.

When the enlargement was decided upon, it was thought that £200 would accomplish our object, but how or where to raise the money we did not know. However, willing workers were soon found, who went far and near in search of contributions. Nor did they go alone, for they sought and obtained the blessing of Him to whose service the building was dedicated; and more than one instance occurred of persons sending contributions who had previously refused to help us. For one of the tea meetings over £35 was raised in trays, in sums chiefly half-crowns, but varying from sixpence to a crown. The enlargement necessitated a new warming apparatus and pipes, and several other things not provided for in the estimate, so that the total cost was about £400. To our great joy and astonishment, the whole of this expenditure was defrayed within about two years. During the time of the alterations, the Sunday school was held in one of the rooms of the Caldershaw New Mill. The re-opening services of the enlarged premises were held on Sunday, February 18th, 1872, by the Rev. W. P. Johns, the collections, &c., being over £100.

These services were very successful, and some of the young men, who are now most active teachers or officers, were converted then or

shortly after ; for these re-opening services were followed by another revival, in which Mr. John Pratt (stationed as a home missionary at Bagslate at that time, and now a minister in Newfoundland), was very active. It was somewhere about this time that Mary Royds, Alice Ashworth, William Royds, Samuel Simpson, William Sutcliffe, and James Buckley, were converted and joined the teachers' ranks. About this time, also, the organisations of the church began to be developed. The Band of Hope was started in May, 1865. The Tract Society took shape about 1871. For some time it had been customary for the teachers to prepare an essay for the Teachers' Meetings, and a discussion sometimes followed. Many very interesting and happy gatherings were thus held, and teachers and scholars seemed united in a bond of love. Soon after Miss Heap's removal, through marriage, her two younger sisters came to our help, and remained connected with the schools until their removal into Shropshire. When we acquired a harmonium they played in turns, and after a time one of our scholars (afterwards a teacher), Mr. Joseph Greeves, became our harmoniumist, which service he still renders. The numerous alterations and additions after a while necessitated the appointment of a chapel-keeper. The Robinshaw family held this post first, having previously performed many of these duties *gratis*. After them Mrs. Southwell, Mr. John Smith, Mr. Samuel Schofield, and Mr. Frank Harrison, served us in this position. Then for a little while a number of scholars and teachers undertook it, and finally Mr. Samuel Simpson.

The day school, which was started in 1872, was first taught by Miss Thornburrow, who was a good teacher and disciplinarian. After she left us we were unsettled for some time, until Miss Alexander came, who also served us well. She was followed by Mr. S. Mainwaring, who also helps in the Sunday school, being one of the superintendents and precentor in the chapel at the present time. But previous to this, from 1858 to 1864, everything went on very well. The same earnest disposition amongst the teachers continued ; members were added to the church and removals were taking place ; and as the scholars grew up they became teachers, and from about 1870 up to the present, the school has become almost entirely independent of foreign aid. Leaders and teachers have grown up, as it were, with the school, whereas many that were connected with

the school at the commencement have been removed. Several local preachers, class leaders, and teachers, have been removed by the hand of death, and have gone to reap their reward in yonder better world, and are now before the throne of God to praise Him for ever and ever, while we are left below endeavouring to follow in their footsteps, and hoping to join them by-and-by, to sing the songs of Zion in the New Jerusalem above. We shall notice a few of these : The first who was taken from us was Mr. George Halkyard (better known as George Bamford), taken from us in the prime of life, which had been spent from being quite a youth in God's service. He was a zealous Sunday school teacher. At the commencement of the school at Fernhill, often-times he went up on week-nights to teach writing. Also, Mr. Abraham Healey, our first class leader, has been removed by death ; as also Mr. Charles Pendleton, a leader of the first society class. He was a leader dearly loved by every member for his uniform kindness, and good counsel in sound doctrine.

We have also lost by death Mr. Henry Ratcliffe, one of our most faithful local preachers, who rendered great assistance to the society at the commencement of the school. We well remember his very pointed questions when he happened to lead the class on a Sunday afternoon, after preaching. He would ask, "Well, brother (or sister), has God pardoned all your sins? Have you the evidence of it in your own soul?" If there was no answer, he would point out the way of salvation, and invite all to come to God and claim it, through Christ's atoning death, thus showing us that we may secure a title to heaven, and have the witness in our own hearts that we are born of God.

A young man, who was a scholar at the commencement of the school, and afterwards a teacher, and married, and brought his children to school, has been taken away by death, after having done what he could for a number of years. We refer to Mr. Frank Harrison, a native of Lanehead.

Also Mr. Joseph Standring, late of Birmingham, who was at one time a scholar and teacher in Fernhill School, and was then living at Lanehead. And we may say here that the ground-work of his education was gained at the night school at Fernhill ; and after-

wards, by his own efforts, he raised himself to a good position in society, and became a member of the Rochdale Town Council. After leaving Lanehead he was a member of the Baptist Church, and died at Bournemouth, where he had gone on account of his health, hoping that the change would restore it.

Also another had been taken away who was for several years a teacher amongst us, and used to come a very rough road, winter and summer, to Fernhill from Bagslate. We need scarcely remind our readers that we refer to our old friend and fellow teacher, Mr. John Bell, a man of great usefulness as a teacher, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord with his whole heart.

We must now notice the death of our respected treasurer, the late Mr. Edmund Wrigley, who, as before-mentioned, rendered us such good service at the commencement of the school, and up to a short time before his death. He was succeeded in the treasurership by Mr. Samuel Saxon, and also in presiding at the Good Friday tea meeting, when we were sure of an interesting and humorous address. In this respect both our treasurers had been very attractive, and both served us well. Mr. Saxon, as a local preacher, whenever he was planned for Lanehead, generally had good congregations, and was the means of doing much good.

Many others have died since the school was opened; but we just mention a few that were more intimately connected with us, as local preachers, class leaders, or teachers. We must not, however, pass on to conclude without mentioning our co-worker and superintendent, Mr. Leonard Kaberry. He came to the Good Friday tea meetings from the commencement. He was a young man of a very lively disposition, but we never remember him forming bad companionships. After a few years he came and joined the school as a teacher, and after his own conversion he became very anxious for the salvation of souls, and laboured very hard to accomplish this purpose. He, like others, went up out of Rochdale, and was always at his post, whether as a teacher or superintendent; and if a prayer meeting was held after the evening service, we believe he would have stayed all night, if necessary, and if he saw there was good being done. A more hard-working Sunday school teacher and superintendent could scarcely be found. He was greatly beloved

by every teacher and scholar in the school, also throughout the villages. Everyone knew Leonard Kaberry, as he was generally called, even by the little children of five or six years of age; and we have seen the little children in the village run after him (if he has not just happened to see them) to catch one of his genial smiles, and receive a kiss or a kind word from him. He was a man whom the children loved in every respect. Whenever he went visiting the parents of the children he always received a hearty welcome. His name will long be remembered in the village, and by the children now growing up. His dear wife was as anxious as himself for the salvation of the scholars, and she still continues to teach a class of young women at the Sunday school connected with Wesley Chapel, Castlemere, as it is now too far for her to go to Lanehead.

An old lady has recently died who was a member of the society there for several years, viz., Mrs. Southwell. She was the mother of the young man of that name who assisted in cleaning out the upper room at Fernhill, mentioned in our first paper. She always made a practice, on the day of the anniversary sermons, to invite strangers to her house. She was an old lady given to hospitality.

We must now bring this paper to a close, by just giving a statement of how the School and Society stand at the present time. Over forty scholars have been obliged to leave the school through removals during the last year, as there is not sufficient employment in the neighbourhood to enable so many families to remain in the villages. The numbers reported last Good Friday were. Scholars—male, 72; female, 82; total, 154. Teachers and officers—male 18; female, 10; total, 28. Members of Society—teachers and officers, 27; scholars, 35; and four on trial. Total number of members, including juniors, is 71. There is a library in connection with the school, containing 418 carefully-selected volumes, for which there are 66 readers. There is also a Band of Hope in connection with the Sunday-school. The number of members is 100. Since the higher storey was built, a day-school has been established, and is doing good service to the village.

We must now leave this short account with you, hoping it may interest some into whose hands it may fall, and that it may live to give the history of Lanehead School to many who are now unable to read it.