

After the completion of his term in Birmingham, he received an invitation for a second term to Cardiff. Here he is exhibiting the same qualities of heart and mind as have made his ministerial career such a splendid success, and although the allotted age of threescore years and ten has been reached, he is still in possession of the same burning enthusiasm, the same passion for souls, the same desire to know nothing among men, save Christ and Him crucified. At the Conference of 1906, should life be spared, he will have reached his Jubilee of ministerial service, having behind him fifty years of unbroken circuit work. Of such a career, it is legitimate to be both grateful and proud.

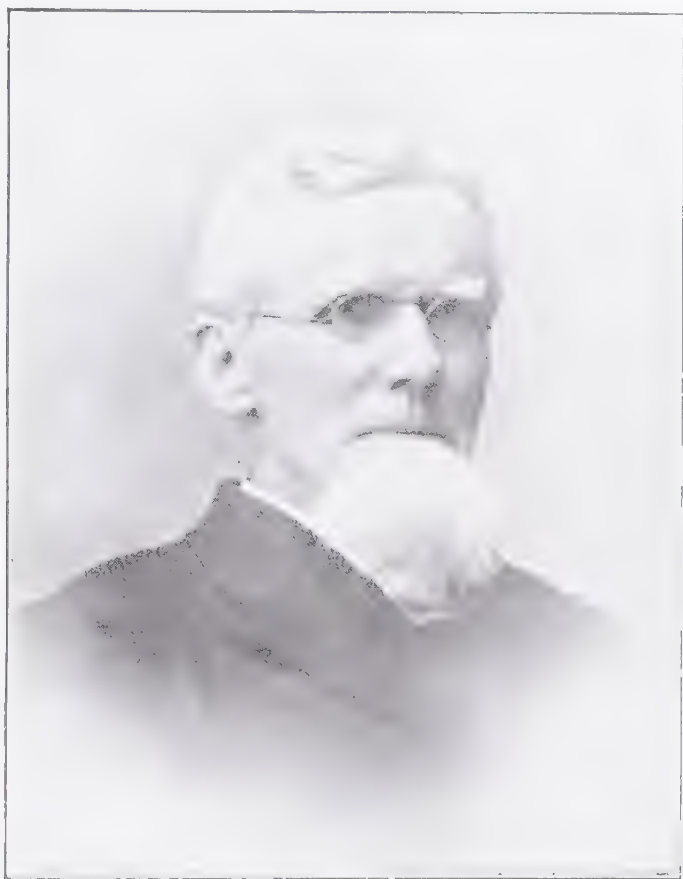
Rev. JOHN DYMOND.

(President of Conference, 1879).

FEW men present a better combination of the best traits of a Bible Christian minister than the Rev. John Dymond. Having himself been won to Christ by the evangelistic labours of Bible Christians in the North of Devon, he early imbibed their spirit, embraced their teaching, and became a successful preacher of those truths which have been verified in his own personal experience.

Mr. Dymond was born, in 1835, in the village of Beaford, near Torrington. It was here, during early manhood, through the ministry of the servants of the denomination, that he was arrested by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the condemnation of sin, and, after a period of spiritual darkness and

struggle, was made conscious of Divine pardon through faith in Jesus Christ, and the surrender of the heart and life to God. This experience, which was remarkably distinct and definite, marked



the crisis in his history. His spiritual nature was quickened, the life of thought and emotion was illumined and elevated, and under the lofty inspiration of new thoughts and motives he entered the sphere of Divine service.

Sedulously he devoted himself to mental culture and the accumulation of knowledge, the educational facilities during his childhood and youth having been of a meagre character. He made the Bible his chief study, possessing the conviction that he was called to the ministry of the Gospel. His ministrations attracted attention by their intensity and power, which culminated in his being engaged as a hired local preacher in the Winkleigh Mission, which is now comprised in the Hatherleigh Circuit. After some months of acceptable service in this mission, he spent a brief term in the Connexional College at Shebbear, and entered the ministry as a probationer in the year 1857. His first appointment was to the Barnstaple Circuit, and from thence he was transferred to Devonport, which at that time included the present Plymouth Circuit. His next station was at Waterloo, London, where he remained three years. He then removed to the Torquay Circuit, where he enjoyed a successful pastorate of four years. During these years Mr. Dymond was an earnest student as well as a faithful preacher. He spared himself no pains, in order that he might be thoroughly equipped for his high vocation. This application, combined with deep fervency of spirit, rapidly developed a style of preaching, which was followed by increasing success. In the year 1869 he was stationed at Jersey, where his ministry of four years was marked by much prosperity. At this period he was pastor of the Royal Crescent Church, a building with a seating capacity for 1,200 persons. On Sunday evenings the church would be crowded. Great blessing

accompanied and followed his ministry in this church, and when the Connexional term expired, necessitating his removal to another sphere, not a few felt the wrench was almost as much as they could bear.

From the Royal Crescent Church, Jersey, he went to undertake the pastorate of the Bristol Circuit. Here it became necessary to have recourse to chapel building to meet the requirements of the developing cause, and it resulted in the erection of the Redcliff Crescent Chapel, Bedminster, in which the Conference of 1894 held its sittings. The erection of this structure, which incurred an outlay of £6,000, occasioned a departure from the four years' limit, and by the special permission of the Conference the Bristol Circuit was permitted to enjoy Mr. Dymond's pastorate for six years. At the end of that period he entered upon the superintendence of the Devonport Circuit, which at that time embraced the Three Towns. During his administration the Bible Christian cause received great stimulus. Mr. Dymond, by his genial spirit, exalted character, large sympathies, and preaching power won the esteem of the churches beyond his own communion, and amongst the Bible Christians there is no memory more fondly cherished than his. At the end of his successful pastorate the circuit was divided into the Devonport and Plymouth circuits, and the Zion Church had so flourished that it became absolutely necessary to extend the borders, which culminated soon after his departure in the erection of the splendid chapel at Greenbank. From Plymouth Mr. Dymond went to Exeter,

where he spent seven years, and during that time the happiest fellowship existed between pastor and people. He was allowed to stay so long because during the last three years his work was divided between the pastorate and the active oversight of the Home Mission stations. Half of his time was spent in visiting these dependent stations, and by words of counsel and encouragement he succeeded in reviving many a flagging interest.

At St. James's Church, Forest Hill—a position of great difficulty and responsibility—he spent five years, the extension of time having been granted for the purpose of completing a scheme for the reduction of financial liabilities. Receiving a cordial invitation from the Plymouth Circuit, he returned to it in 1895, to remain a period of eight years, during which term the commodious premises at Embankment Road, consisting of church and school-room, were built. These premises will stand out as a monument of consecrated ability, faith, and prayer. In 1903 he proceeded to Neath, where he has entered upon his forty ninth year of ministerial service.

Mr. Dymond is well known throughout the Bible Christian Denomination, and is everywhere esteemed and loved. He has filled many positions of honour and responsibility. He was elected as secretary of the Conference in two successive years, in 1875-1876, and he was elevated to the position of President in 1879. He was appointed as one of the Bible Christian representatives at the first Methodist Ecumenical Conference in 1881, and stood upon its platform as one of its chosen speakers to address the Conference on the subject

of "Training young men for the ministry." He held the office of Home Missionary Secretary from 1886 to 1893. In this position his missionary spirit found a congenial sphere and ample scope. He adopted an energetic and progressive policy. He advocated the opening of mission stations in the populous Northern towns, where evangelistic work was much needed. As the outcome of this policy missions were established at Blackburn and Bolton, and in pursuing the same plan a mission was opened at Birmingham. Mr. Dymond's spirit is deeply and thoroughly missionary. During his earlier ministry he had strong inclinations towards devoting his life to foreign missionary work. This desire, which was not to be realised in himself, has been gratified by the fact that his second son, Francis John, dedicated himself in 1886 to the Bible Christian mission in China. He has there proved himself a devoted and heroic missionary.

As an evangelical preacher, Mr. Dymond has been pre-eminently successful. An unknown writer has said of him:—"He has no love for brilliant speech simply for the sake of its brilliancy. He studies to move men by the force of truth and not by the tricks of oratory. He speaks like a man who stands in the light, with deep and strong convictions, with a mind impregnated with Scriptural teaching, with a heart aglow with loving zeal, and with the ring of profound sincerity resounding in every utterance. But his influence is not to be measured simply by his pulpit power. His life is the best commentary on his preaching. He appears as one who, to use the expression of the Apostle, has attained unto the full stature of a

man in Christ Jesus. This sterling Christian manliness gives force to his utterances and dignifies all his actions." His long life of service to his church has been fraught with ineffable blessing, and few men in any Methodist denomination have a nobler record. Spiritual to the very core of his being, he has exercised a ministry which has produced rich and permanent results, and throughout the Connexion no name is held in greater respect than his. There are few men of his exact type now remaining. His face shines with the radiance of a Divine light within, the tones of his voice are tremulous with religious fervour, and the finest instincts of his spiritual nature are ever in tune with the music of the spheres. Without constraint, his brethren acknowledge him one of the saints of the Connexion. He treads firmly the old theological highways, is not influenced by attractive paths, the ends of which are altogether unknown, and demonstrates the relative value of his creed by incarnating it in his life. By some he would be regarded as lacking in theological breadth, but for him the "Old, old story," apart from all criticism, is quite sufficient. The stress and strain of the years have made their mark upon him: his snowy hair is indicative that the summer of life has gone. But he has had his reward, for the highest honours of the Connexion have been his. A more devoted minister the denomination has never produced, and the style and substance of his sermons have contributed to the maintenance of that evangelical fervour and zeal, which are two of the main characteristics of denominational life and history.