

## Rev. Thos. Crosby.

It is readily conceded that from the days of Wesley himself, Yorkshire, England, has been a Methodist stronghold. If it were captured from us, the event would mean to the Church just what the fall of Gibraltar would mean to the British Empire. It is matter for gratitude that neither of these disasters seems imminent.

It must be an antecedent advantage to a Methodist preacher to be born and cradled in such an atmosphere. He will be affected by his environment, and will share in the fervent sturdy elements of the "old" character. This advantage was given to the subject of our sketch. The Rev. Thomas Crosby was born of staunch Methodist parents in the historic county of York, and within the bounds of the famous old Pekinging Circuit, which it is claimed has been more prolific in Methodist preachers than any other.

Mr. Crosby was sixteen years of age when he left his native country, by which time he must have known something of the general principles of Methodist theology, for Methodist preaching in those days abounded with doctrinal definitions, discussions and scripture proofs. The ardent youth had also been much impressed by the self-sacrificing devotion of the Rev. George Piercy, who spent so many useful years in China, and whose early career young Crosby was destined so much to emulate.

In 1856 he came to Canada with his parents, and settled in Oxford county, near the town of Woodstock, Ontario, where he was soon earning his own living by working in a tannery. In his seventeenth year he was converted to God while attending a camp meeting. He at once joined the Church at Woodstock; was shortly made a local preacher, and meanwhile was actively engaged with several other young men (among the number Mr. Alex. Peers, now of New Westminster), holding cottage and young men's prayer meetings and preaching services.

It was apparently in 1860 that Mr. Crosby first heard the divine call to labor in British Columbia. It came to him while reading a published letter of the Rev. Edward White's, who was already in this province. The letter presented no alluring picture, but spoke of isolation, of the difficulties and hardships of the self-sacrifice and courage involved in the Christian service so greatly needed in this country at the time. The appeal caught not only the imagination, but also the conscience and heart of Thomas Crosby; he solemnly offered himself to God for the work, and felt that he was accepted. There were obstacles in the way especially the trial it involved for father and mother; for coming to British Columbia in those days was no small matter; but nothing could change either his conviction or purpose, and he set out entirely on his own responsibility, reaching Victoria April 11th, 1862.

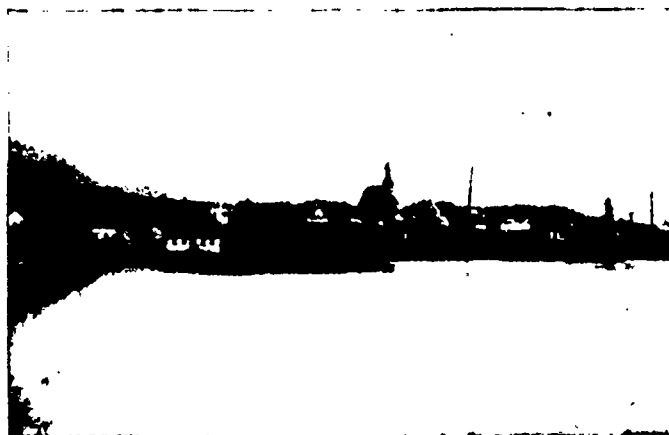
It was in March of the following year that, having declared his convictions to the Rev. Dr. Evans, he was appointed to take charge of our first Indian Mission School, then just established in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island. He threw his whole soul into the work, rapidly gained a knowledge of the Indian language, and eagerly used it not only for teaching school, but also for preaching the Gospel to the natives from village to village, and from hut to hut, as far

distant as Chilliwack, on the Fraser River, "and his word was with power."

While thus engaged he was greatly cheered by a visit from Rev. Dr. Punshon, then President of the Wesleyan Conference of Canada, by whom he was ordained to the ministry at Nanaimo, April 16th, 1871.

Shortly after this, in 1873, Crosby made his first visit to Ontario, where he described the incidents of his recent experiences with surprising eloquence and unsurpassed effect. He travelled 9,000 miles to address missionary meetings, and the income of the society went up \$22,000. In addition \$4,000 was raised special to start the Simpson Mission, a work he had been implored to undertake by Indians from that place, converted under him in Victoria. One church raised for this purpose \$1,000 one night, after they had raised \$1,500 for the General Fund. It was during this visit also, that Thom

readily recognized that the Indian canoe was no fit means of travel in waters which have more than once severely tested even so staunch a little steamer as the Glad Tidings; but few men would have had the wit and courage to overcome the difficulties presented by nature, by which such a suitable contrivance. By means of this boat, hundreds of natives were reached with the Gospel, who, but for her, might still be in heathen darkness. Conditions have somewhat changed since 1882, and for a year or two the Glad Tidings has not been much used; but there are not a few who are of the opinion, that with a little change of policy in our missionary operations on the coast, the steamer might still be found a very valuable and economical instrument. The building of this boat was the special result of Bro. Crosby's second visit East. The general board the same year reported a surplus



PORT SIMPSON, B. C.

as Crosby was happily married to Miss Emma Douse, a cultured young lady, who has proved a loving and worthy helpmeet, sharing in her husband's adventures and hardships, with wonderful devotion through the years that have followed.

Returning from the East Mr. Crosby and his young wife began the work at Port Simpson. It is impossible to trace in detail the abundant labor undertaken in travelling and preaching incessantly over a circuit 300 miles in length. Whole villages were morally and socially transformed. In eight years, Simpson was organized into a district, the second in British Columbia. The Victoria and New Westminster district had at the time only 12 stations. The new district started with thirteen appointments. The development has gone on without intermission, until there are two Indian districts, with eleven ordained ministers, four medical men, thirty-one lay workers and teachers and six native agents—a total of fifty workers, and there is a membership of over two thousand.

In 1882 Mr. Crosby paid a second visit to the East. One result was seen in the building of the missionary steamer Glad Tidings. This little boat must always have a distinct place in the history of missionary labors. It is probably the first instance on record of a steamer being built specially for such a purpose, and it illustrates once more the genius of Methodism in adapting herself to the exigencies of any circumstance in which her responsibility appears. It will be

of \$10,000.

Mr. Crosby has always been conspicuously successful in his appeals to the public for missionary givings. It is more than "a remarkable coincidence" that on each of his visits "home," as he calls it, the general fund has shown large advance. Last winter was no exception; he appealed for an increase of \$30,000. There was a response of \$23,000. In addition to this the Girls' Home and the Boys' Home, at Simpson, and the hospitals on that district have all been built by special donations.

Mr. Crosby is a man of forcible presence and fine physique. He has great command of an audience, is a powerful and most impressive preacher, though not a sermonizer. He has "a passion for souls," and a magnificent voice to express that passion. He could not be long in a camp meeting and no one know of his presence, and somehow his spontaneous shouts of "Amen" and "Hallelujah" remind his younger brethren of that earlier type of Methodism of which their fathers have told them and which the writer has occasionally met in a Cornish revival meeting. It is distinctly refreshing and helpful.

The great respect in which Mr. Crosby is held is seen in the fact that he has been chosen by his brethren to represent them at the General Conference, and at the General Board of Missions, and in his election three years ago to the president's chair. Subsequent to his election he resided two years in Victoria, and last year removed to Chilliwack, his present charge.

J.P.H.