

# THE DAWN OF A NEW DAY IN VENEZUELA

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*“ It Can Be Done ”*

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## Introduction.

WHEN, ten years ago, we wrote *It Can Be Done*, we sent the MS. to the late Mr. William Hoste, B.A., as he had taken a real interest in the work in Venezuela, to ask his opinion. He replied that he was delighted with the account, as it had given him a new vision of that country. He corrected the MS. and put us in touch with the publishers. The book was well received by the Lord's people and very many letters of appreciation, telling of help received, were sent to us. Then the war came, disjoining everything and affecting everybody. The edition was sold out two years ago. Friends and helpers have suggested again and again that we should bring the book up to date, as much interesting data could be given in connection with work done in the Lord's name during the last ten years in Venezuela.

This has led us to state in a free and frank form the following account of the Lord's loving kindnesses and tender mercies towards His servants during the long, weary war years; of the remarkable blessing in the Gospel testimony, the numbers baptized and the new assemblies formed; also of the enforced absence of workers, leading to the new development of four Venezuelan helpers who now give all their time to the Lord's work. The work is "going and growing." We would heartily endorse the master Missionary's message—"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! . . . For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to Whom be glory for ever. Amen." *Rom. 11, 33 and 36.*



Venezuela is a most promising field for evangelical effort. It is, in a sense so far as we are concerned, an experimental field in connection with work done in the Lord's name. For well nigh forty years we have been trying to prove that the great commission in *Matt. 28* can be carried out to-day.

Can the Gospel alone convince and save Roman Catholics without human embellishments?

Can such believers be taught to carry out the two scriptural ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper?

Can they be formed into local churches or assemblies after the Apostolic order seen in the Acts and in the Epistles?

Can we still count on the Risen Head of the Church to raise up suitably gifted men in each local assembly to enable them to carry on without humanly trained and paid helpers?

Can we count on the Lord to raise up Venezuelan evangelists, teachers and pastors, who will be willing to look to Him alone to supply their temporal need?

The following pages answer all these questions in the affirmative. That our blessed Lord Jesus Christ may be pleased to use this account of the labours of His servants for the last ten years in Venezuela, to glorify God, to confirm His people in their most holy faith, and even to reach some dear unsaved soul in these highly favoured homelands, is the sincere and only desire of the author.

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# The Dawn of a New Day in Venezuela.

## CHAPTER I.

### VENEZUELA THEN AND NOW.

IT would be well, perhaps, before relating the progress of the Lord's work, to inform our readers of the notable changes which have taken place in the social, commercial, religious and political customs of the people of the "Republic of Bolivar." Venezuela, like most other South American Republics, is "on the move." Already in a short decade our book, *It Can Be Done*, is in some respects, out of date. Things have changed with remarkable rapidity since President Juan Vicente Gomez died in 1935. There are several factors responsible for this change, among which are the following : The reaction after Gomez' death, the development of the petroleum industry, the multiplication of the radio and picture shows and, last but by no means least, the second war in Europe. Let us look at them in the following order :

#### THE SOCIAL CHANGE.

General Gomez was not an educated man. His enemies affirmed that he did not know even how to read! But he had an uncanny natural intuition, which suited him better than university diplomas. He was also quick to profit by technicians in all branches of his administration, who gave him the data and he looked after the developments. In consequence, at his decease, general education was at a low ebb. Schools there were of a kind, taught by some old dame or broken down politician, where an elementary education could be had. In the larger towns and cities where education was almost entirely in the hands of monks and nuns, a higher

standard was obtainable, though soaked with catechisms, confessions, masses and maltreatment by penitence. This turned the young "señoritas" into *beatas* (praying women) and the youths into fanatics or more often, freethinkers. We knew a family of four sons, educated in the Roman Catholic College La Salle in Valencia, who all came out freethinkers. Two died drunkards and gamblers. Another has just died a murderer. The only one left is a "protestant" in name, but not in deed.

In Gomez' day, we never saw a government-erected building which could be called "a public school." All schools were held in houses ranging from the *choza* (hut) of the poor, to the large roomy residence of the better class. Gomez spent twice as much on espionage as he did on education. His slogan was—*Unión, Paz y Trabajo* (Union, Peace and Work), which his enemies understood as meaning "Union in the dungeons, Peace in the cemetery and forced work on the highways."

The great mass of the people was illiterate, and worse still, content to be so. The dictatorship dispirited them. The old *brujo* (wizard) would never die; why aspire to anything, even an education? If anyone got or gained anything, Gomez or his satellites would commandeer it. But no sooner was he underneath the sod than Venezuela reacted. Democracy was in every mouth, with various meanings. "Soak the rich" was how it was understood by the ignorant, and looting was freely indulged in. Then a more intelligent class thought that it meant to form labour unions, and we had them galore. But another and nobler ideal was liberty, and to obtain this an education was essential. Even in the time of Gomez' successor, General E. Lopez Contreras, much was spent and more misspent to foment education; and government-built schools were soon in evidence.

President Medina followed Lopez Contreras; and again sounder brains allocated fabulous sums for public schools. For lack of technical guidance, much money was squandered in what were called "rural schools"; but much also



was achieved. The fever grew, an education became a necessity and under the present Revolutionary Government, education got a great impulse. Splendid efforts were made to teach the poorer people to read and write. Night schools were opened for working folk, young and old. Millions of bolivares were voted for the erection of "Grupos Escolares," a grade school. But all those schools required teachers.

Little qualification was required for teachers in Gomez' time. But now, things were moving and thousands of qualified teachers were an imperious necessity. To provide for this, normal schools were built in Caracas and other places. Scholarships were freely provided, so that to-day there are hundreds of young women and men dedicated to this work. But the profession has been vulgarized. A "maestro" or "maestra" has usually a very different meaning to what we would have at home of a "teacher."

To the ordinary curriculum, many new subjects have been added. Even Baden Powell's Boy Scouts are now seen. A Scout Master drills the boys, varying in size from mere youngsters to old fellows, always conspicuous by their spindly legs. When the police force is too busy or discredited, as in the revolution on October 18th, 1945, the Boy Scouts take the place of the traffic police. We saw one on Election Day in Puerto Cabello at an important traffic intersection, with his bright coloured kerchief, his skinny legs, a lad of fourteen or fifteen years of age, leaning against a lamp-post eating an ice cream cone, while the traffic could do as it liked, so far as he was concerned.

## CHAPTER II.

### BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS.

SOCIAL conditions have undergone a vast change due to house-building development. Under the Gomez regime, the working class lived very often in dirt and squalor. There were no sanitary arrangements, no domestic comforts. Romanism invariably generates "pigs, priests and potatoes" as they say in Ireland. In Venezuela, the potatoes are substituted by black beans and rice. But "Juan Bimba" (the popular name for the working man) became conscious. He learned that he was a man and not a slave and therefore had the right to share, at least in some of the privileges of the wealthy. The petroleum companies had anticipated this move by many years. They had built suitable homes, in many cases with baths, water taps, gas-cooking, electric light and sufficient accommodation for a small family.

President Lopez Contreras at once began a large-scale housing scheme with more or less success. Those improvements led others to imitate, and to-day Venezuela has an enormous building programme. There are several cement factories producing a fair grade of cement, also immense quantities of cement come from U.S.A. and Sweden.

In Caracas, General Medina left one monument which all attribute to him, some with blessing and others with cursing, as he borrowed the money from U.S.A. There was a district called *El Silencio*, a veritable vanity fair, where gambling, dancing, prostitution and noisy quacks made it a pandemonium, a blot on the fair Capital. He pulled down acres of these buildings and erected in

their place seven beautiful apartment buildings, each one covering a whole block, with modern shops and stores on the ground floors. This project cost millions of dollars and the Venezuelans say that there is nothing like it in all Latin America. In most parts of Caracas, building is in progress. Large modern cement, brick and steel buildings of from five to ten storeys, with up-to-date facilities, are patent signs that Venezuela is "on the move."

Another advance in social conditions is due to medical and sanitary improvements. In the Gomez administration there were a few hospitals, notably the Vargas hospital in Caracas. The other large cities also had hospitals; but in most cases they were auxiliaries of the Roman Catholic Church, managed by nuns, where hearing mass and making confession played an important part. Any evangelical Christians were bullied, maltreated and often told to get out. Food was poor and hygiene at a discount. For the ordinary Venezuelan, sickness meant to be exploited by unscrupulous doctors or ignorant quacks. The doctors charged so much that the poor could not pay, and so they had resource to *brujos* and *curiosos* (witches and quacks). The rich could pay, and the fabulous sums that the doctors charged them in many cases discredited the medical profession. This does not mean that there were no philanthropic physicians. We know some notable exceptions. In the early days in Puerto Cabello, when we worked a good deal among the poor, Dr. Lopez attended them free of charge. He encouraged us to build a hospital and promised his assistance free. He opposed Gomez and died in exile.

With the advent of democracy came a vehement desire for better regulations and hospitals for the sick and suffering. The Government spent money freely in building hospitals, clinics and institutes. To-day, most state capitals have fine hospitals, though these, as yet, are poorly staffed owing to the lack of trained nurses. This is being remedied by a large training programme in

Caracas and on a lesser scale in other places. But as in the case of teachers, so it is with the nurses; young women are taken in for training without sufficient education or social standing, they don a white uniform, white stockings and shoes and—they are nurses!

There are now sanitary institutions where all may go and have their ailments attended to. There has been considerable advance in social security, by which the employee pays one half and the employer the other half, entitling the former to free doctor and medicine for himself and family. However, we hear bitter complaints, in some cases, against the doctors who love the salary but shelve the responsibility.

#### THE COMMERCIAL CHANGE.

Now let us look at the commercial change. While Gomez lived, he and his favourites practically monopolized industry and commerce. At his death, he was one of the world's wealthiest men—a multi-millionaire. Private enterprise was useless, as no matter what the business may have been, if it was giving dividends or competing with some of his monopolies, it had to be ceded or sold to some of his clique. This is the reason for the drastic destruction of much of his property, and of the possessions of his gang, the moment the public knew of his certain death. Lopez Contreras steadied the masses by his proverbial—“*calma y cordura*” (calm and prudence). Business began to prosper in private ownership. Industries were started and helped by Government. Helps and loans were freely given to the agricultural class. The coffee planters received large bonuses, and only the oil companies felt uneasy, as now, *en masse* the workers demanded a share in the millions which had enriched the “Tyrant of the Andes.”

Twenty-five years ago we brought our electric washing machine to Puerto Cabello. The customs officials did not know to what class it belonged. There was no provision for such an outfit. It was a novelty. While we were in

Caracas the other day, we priced a modern electric washer at \$150.00. The same may be said about refrigerators and other domestic facilities, which lighten labour for the housewife.

Business firms and office equipment have changed greatly in recent years. The old high desk and the pushing penman are gone. Now one hears the click of the typewriters; sees modern office equipment with all the latest adding machines, operated by young ladies who have had a commercial school course. Homes and business houses are visited by high pressure salesmen, who deliver the goods if one has the cash.

Banking business has developed and there are now national, farmers' and workers' banks, affording fine facilities at very low rates of interest to the ambitious industrialist. In Caracas there are branches of The Royal Bank of Canada, the London and South American Bank Ltd., American National Bank and the Dutch Bank.



### CHAPTER III.

### RELIGION.

RELIGION too is "on the move" since Gomez died; but, *poco a poco* (little by little) as the Venezuelans say. Gomez was not fanatical, rather inclined to be liberal, but he had a sister who was a bitter Roman Catholic, also his favourite mistress covered her shame by Romish zeal. Those two women in high places, backed by the Romish clergy, did all they could to hinder the free preaching of the Gospel; but when democracy was heralded in 1936, naturally religious freedom was one of the points at issue. This bore fruit; the truth spread rapidly and the number of the disciples increased. The Protestants in general had little to complain of during Lopez Contreras' administration. He was a morally clean man, so far as we know, and was, perhaps, a sincere Roman Catholic who, but for his wife, would have been tolerant to a greater degree.

However, when General Medina came into power, a strong clerical bias soon became evident. The "Church" sanctioned divorce in his marriage and this had to be dearly paid for. The Jesuits' tentacles gripped him and he was slowly and surely drawn to the foul mouth of the giant octopus of Romanism. There were loud protests in the Press that Protestantism had become a menace, and that it was the foul and filthy forerunner of Communism, and all who disagreed with Rome were daubed "Comunistas"; Venezuela is Catholic! Down with the Protestants! The grip tightened. Missionaries who had gone home on furlough could not return. This affected us as Miss Scott, Miss Gulston, Miss Goff and Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield were refused re-entry permits. The Jesuits

planned, with Medina's help, to allow no more Protestant missionaries to come to Venezuela. Those who went home had a fair promise of being able to return, but it was not necessary in the "Church's" interest to keep faith with heretics! Some of our most able Venezuelan Christians wrote articles to the Press, but no editor was bold enough to publish them; Rome had the Press strangled. Influential friends pushed the matter as to how some missionaries were refused re-entrance and in one case we know, the answer was: "Medina does not wish it."

*A cada cochina se le llega su sábado*, says the Venezuelan, this being equivalent to "Every dog has his day." Medina's days were numbered. He betrayed the Andinos (natives of the Andes), and got Lopez Contreras against him. He sanctioned Communism as a political party, which Contreras had outlawed, in a faint hope of being re-elected. Rome had sucked his authority, prestige and power, and she now cast him off, and set her sails to catch the Lopez Contreras breeze. He used to be on the front page of the daily papers alongside the priests and prelates. His "christian" zeal was boosted as he was snapped alongside the black "Virgen de Chinchiquirá," accompanied by all the truck and trade of Romish superstition and idolatry. But those balmy days were gone. He turned to the whisky bottle, and loud were the protests of would-be passengers for Venezuela when they found their seats in the planes occupied by his cartons of whisky. Medina's drunkenness and despotism led to his downfall. Bolivar's blood still flowed in noble veins; the Revolution was born October 18th, 1945.

Mrs. Williams and I went to Caracas a week before to meet Miss Gulston and Miss Goff, who were coming from the North. My wife and Miss Gulston, who had arrived, with myself and Sr. Naranjo were visiting a sick brother in the hospital there, when the matron, who is a Christian in fellowship, told us that there were great doings going on, and we had better return home. We had difficulty

in getting a bus to take us to the centre of the city. When we got there and were leaving the bus, the people began to force their way inside again, and my wife and Sr. Naranjo could not get out. I wondered why they were rushing in at the front door, as this is for exit only; but I heard the shots and saw that the people were scampering for shelter. We got out and could find no bus going in our direction, and walked for blocks till we finally got a bus. We were staying with the Naranjos away up alongside the cemetery. This proved to be the battle ground between the Revolution and the National Guard, which remained faithful to Medina. For three days and nights there was a continual pepper of shots. We saw the first skirmish, but little bloodshed in that part. The heavy fighting took place in the centre of the city near the barracks. In three days the Revolution had most under control. We tried to have meetings, but the Communists had got arms and they terrorized all around the hall with shots, so that we had to run home. Martial law was declared, all guarantees withdrawn. The pilot of the plane in which Miss Goff was coming, heard of the revolution and turned back from Curacao. Sr. Bastidas and I faced the storm, and in his car we reached the Pan-American office, but they gave us no assurance as to when Miss Goff might now arrive, as all communication with Venezuela was cut off. We decided to take advantage of the first bus to Puerto Cabello. Few had courage to travel. After being searched and questioned twenty times, we were glad to reach home. Miss Goff was able to come to Puerto Cabello a few days later.

The new leaders were patriots of the first water; but they had to be careful, on the one hand not to play into the hands of the Communists, and on the other not to offend the sincere Roman Catholic party. They steered, in our conception, an impartial course at first. However, little by little, they earned the disapproval of the bigots and the Jesuits. A decree called No. 321 was promulgated which hit the Roman Catholic schools hard and favoured

the Government schools. This was, perhaps, premature, as it led to many processions and protests. The Minister of Education had to resign to appease the opposition and the matter is in abeyance.

Immediately we made an appeal to the Revolutionary Government for Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield's return, which request was granted. This indicated the trend of the new Government. We have been allowed all facilities for Gospel work. On request by the Government, the Bible Society has presented Bibles for libraries, and thousands of New Testaments for the Army and Navy.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE POLITICAL CHANGE.

THE last in order is the political change. There were neither Constitution, politics nor parties during the Juan Vicente Gomez' regime; it was like Russia to-day. Gomez was the Constitution, Gomez' will the politics and Gomez' friends the only party. All else was taboo. The dungeons in Puerto Cabello, San Carlos, Caracas and Barquisimeto were his Siberia. Underground movements there were, but they never surprised Gomez. He was very like Stalin in features, especially the eyes, but he was a taller and heavier built man.

Ere he died, he named his successor—General Lopez Contreras, who was another *Andino*, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Gomez' brother, Eustoquio, more cruel than Juan Vicente, did his best to occupy the chair, but fortunately for the country he was shot dead as he entered the Capitolio in Caracas. Lopez Contreras had a heavy task to handle, considering the influence of the old *Andinos* on the one hand, and the demands of an uneducated public which thought liberty meant licence, on the other. Lopez Contreras unconsciously paved the way for the Revolution of October, 1945. The masses became conscious through education and labour unions. Political opinions were not confined to one channel. The people began to read, think and demand. Lopez Contreras visited the United States of America where he was well received. There was an interesting account about him in the *Reader's Digest*. He tried to fuse capital and labour but there was dirt in the forge. He could not get a clean fire; they simply would not weld. He was honest



and retired from the presidency at the time he said he would.

Then there was a form of election, which was a mere camouflage, as all know that Lopez Contreras had chosen General Isaias Angarita Medina as his successor. Medina had not the moral backing of Contreras, who was a soldier and had saved Gomez' head by preventing a revolution. He was liked by the soldiers, and was comparatively a clean man; Medina was not. Contreras was a devout Roman Catholic but never allowed himself to be a dupe of the Jesuits. Medina would sell his soul for whisky.

The public began to grumble at the excessive expenditure of money as Medina went from place to place and later visited other republics. There were scandalous cases of "peculado" (robbery of public funds). The delinquents were sent abroad as consuls! Young army officers were sent to the United States for training, where they learned more than military tactics. When they returned it galled them to have to submit to Medina's old officers, who drew large salaries, knew little and did less. It was among those young army officers that the revolution was hatched. Moreover, there were civilians who were real patriots, who had suffered at the hands of the *Andino* dynasty, some of them in political prisons and some of them in exile.

The 18th of October, 1945, marked a new era in Venezuelan politics. The Revolution burst and was over in three eventful days. The citizens in general co-operated with the young officers, as did the greater part of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Lopez Contreras was called to Miraflores (the Venezuelan White House) to take charge, as he thought; but he was disarmed and, along with his colleague Medina and most of the old leaders, was made a prisoner in the Military Academy. We happened to be in the Capital and saw much of the affair. There was remarkably little bloodshed, considering the astounding transition. We lost one brother who was a soldier, Tito Giménez, who was shot while on duty. There was

splendid co-ordination between the armed forces and the civil Government, presided over by a citizen, Sr. Don Rómulo Betancourt.

Another feature which we noticed was the absence of a revengeful spirit on the part of the leaders. No one was shot. Lopez Contreras, Medina and others were exiled to the United States for public safety. A court was set up where all the political delinquents were fairly judged; and those who had unjustly appropriated immense public sums of money had to return such to the State. This meant millions for public benefit.

Lopez Contreras expected to be elected in Medina's place. He was making many speeches and had a good following, especially among the priests and their clan, with most of the *Andinos*, when the Revolution surprised him. This was another active factor in provoking the revolution: one *Andino* stepped out and another stepped in. This was called "continuismo" and was likened to a game of chess, merely shifting the pawns. Contreras was too far away to direct counter revolutionary propaganda from the United States. He contrived to enter Colombia, the neighbouring Republic, and from there he has directed an active opposition. He and the clerical party formed what is called "C.O.P.E.I.," the most influential opposition party.

In the closing days of the Medina Government, when he saw his friends failing him, and Contreras' love grown cold, he sanctioned the Communist group that had been exiled by Contreras, so this gave birth to another party. The Communists were charged with most of the terrorism during the days of the revolution. They have incessantly promulgated trouble in labour circles and, indeed, whenever and wherever they can get in the thin edge of the wedge. All this of course, under the camouflage of "democracy," but as Stalin interprets that elastic word.

The 27th of October, 1946, was fixed for the election for "La Constituyente." It was of course, on a Sunday, in keeping with Venezuelan ideas—the better the day, the

better the deed. Much propaganda was made by all parties. Many fears of bloodshed and disaster were expressed. All meetings were prohibited except religious services. With a few exceptions, most of our Assemblies had no difficulty in holding their usual services. No liquor was sold from 12 o'clock noon on Saturday until 6 p.m. Sunday. All picture shows and theatres were closed. Armed forces paraded the streets and guaranteed fair play at the election tables. Not more than two persons were to be allowed standing together in the streets.

The elections were an immense success for the *Acción Democrática* (Government party). They got an overwhelming majority of votes, except in the Andes. All was done decently and in order, and it was one of the quietest days we have seen in Puerto Cabello. The next election, perhaps early in 1947, will decide who is to be President. The clerical party came in a poor second and the Communists close at their heels.

*La Constituyente* is to meet on the 17th of December, 1946, to make a new constitution—no small task. Already tremendous changes are in the offing, not the least being a move started by thirty-three priests, to be allowed to marry, say mass in Spanish, break away from the Pope and form an independent National Church, as Bishop Carlos Duarte has done in Brazil. To where all this may lead, the Lord only knows; but it is a sure sign that Venezuela is “on the move.”

## CHAPTER V.

### THE OIL COMPANIES.

VENEZUELA is the third oil producing country in the world. The oil companies are very important factors in the "Venezuela on the move" spirit of the past decade. These companies have done much harm to the agricultural life of Venezuela. Before oil was discovered, the wealth of the Republic consisted of cattle, coffee, cocoa and sugar. The wealthy owned the "haciendas" (plantations), and the *peones* (labourers) worked them with the *machete* (cutlass knife) and hoe. Trained men came from abroad to develop the oil industry, but much unskilled labour was required. The *peon* would earn only a pittance on the estate of the wealthy planters, whereas the oil companies offered him a living wage, shorter hours, a house to live in and many other inducements.

More and more oil was discovered, more concessions were given to an increasing number of companies and consequently more *peones* were required. Thousands left the wealthy employers, and the free men their little farms, and migrated to the oil camps. Naturally there was a shortage of farm help, and little country villages dwindled in population. The fruits of the earth became scarce and the prices rose. Help could not be had, as, once a *peon* went and worked at an oil camp, he became vitiated with the easy life and would not go back to work on the land. We heard a large plantation owner say the other day—"Este maldito petroleo es la ruina de Venezuela" (this cursed petroleum is the ruin of Venezuela). From the farmer's standpoint, he was right.

Nevertheless, the oil companies have brought incredible millions to the Government, squandered in great part by the *Andinos*; but now used by the Revolutionary Government. As a whole, they have elevated the tone of living, so that very many men are skilled workers and earning salaries, which they would never have dreamed of had they stayed on the land. Then there is the force of example. The oil companies' employees, more than any other workmen, have formed unions and have got their demands satisfied to an amazing degree. Other workers have profited by their success, so that by threats and strikes, wages have more than doubled for the skilled artisan. The oil syndicates have housed their men with comparative comfort, also given them free medicine, doctors and education. Other industrial groups have been impressed and demands have followed, so that their domestic lot is greatly improved. It is true, then, that while the wealthy *hacendados* curse the petroleum, tens of thousands of Venezuelans bless the "black gold."

#### PICTURE SHOWS.

The cinema has had a very baneful influence in this land as indeed in every land, and has greatly changed the customs of the people. Most films are from Hollywood and the so-called "stars" have become household words. Their immoral lives are laughed at. The most popular films represent the United States at its worst. Gangster films, seen by the children, have led them to mimic crime in their childish plays. Older hands have been apt pupils and increasingly large sums of money are being taken by American methods of robbery. Domestic feuds, sexual infidelity and nude representations by the Hollywood "idols" have ruined many a sane conception of domestic life and honourable marriage, with the inevitable result of increased crime, and divorce made common.

#### RADIO.

The use of the radio has been much abused of late years. There is no law about sound-volume, so that most



people, wishing to hear the programme in all parts of the house, tune in at full volume. When Lopez Contreras used to make his long two-hour speeches one could walk along the street on the way to the hall and, as many radios were turned on, one could hear his monotone voice drawling out *calma y cordura* right up to the hall door. It would have been well if we could have left it there, but as the neighbour had a powerful radio, we had to listen to his droning voice during our meetings, for we were separated from our Roman Catholic neighbour by only a 7-foot high wall. Unfortunately, he was an enemy of the Gospel and took special delight in turning on the "mass" on Lord's Day morning when we were at the Lord's table. There were eight windows and three doors on that side of the hall, so that one can imagine the nuisance the radio was to the Lord's people. At a three-and-a-half-day conference, we decided to put the radio out of commission. We installed a jump spark ventilator in the baptistry with a switch near where the speakers sat. Every time our neighbour would turn on his radio, we turned on the switch. The result was noises like the howling of an Atlantic gale when one is on the bridge! He stormed, raged, threatened, but could not explain the cause, as he knew nothing about electricity. Yet somehow he saw "the hand of Joab" in all this, and said that we had burst his radio! Later, the poor man was laid on his back. We went to see him and until he got better we did not sing in the hall. They seemed to appreciate this and up to the time of his death, shortly after, we were not troubled with his radio.

When meetings are started in a new place, the priest incites the neighbours to turn on their radios full blast, which proves very annoying; but with tact and patience, they are usually persuaded to let us have a quiet hour. Most homes of any standing have a radio. One of the popular makes advertises thus: "Compre un Philco y tendrá el mundo en su casa"—"Buy a Philco and you

will have the world in your home." This is the danger-light to the Christians. They wish to keep the world out of their homes, especially for the sake of their children. We know of only two or three in all the thirty-one assemblies who have radios.

## CHAPTER VI.

### W A R.

**I**T was the 3rd of September, 1939. We were at a conference at Orillia, Ontario, when the news came that Great Britain had declared war on Germany. Among a group of the Lord's people on Lord's Day morning, many and varied opinions were expressed as to how long the war would last, but one thing occupied our mind : how about returning as soon as possible to Venezuela? We had been in Canada only a few months, but we had the feeling that we should return to Venezuela at the earliest possible date. Many of the Christians were of the opinion that we should not risk going South but should stay in Canada until the war was over. It was argued that there was much to be done and that our ministry was enjoyed. Had we chosen the path of comfort and least resistance, we would have stayed. We write this to show that it is not always safe to be guided by the sentiments of the Lord's people, however well meant. "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" asked the beloved Apostle. This is ever the true and real missionary spirit : no thought of settling down, no fear of danger, no ceding to family pleas. We began at once asking information about passages for Venezuela. Had difficulties been an indication of the Lord's will that we should not go, we would soon have been convinced that it was His will that we should not return to the field of our labour. But how dangerous to be guided by difficulties! The Lord was reserving for us the happiest and most fruitful seven years that we have seen in this country.

On the 23rd of January, 1940, we went to the station agent in Collingwood, Ontario. He said : "I have just received a wire for you. You are to leave on the 3 p.m. train to-day, and go right to Halifax. Go aboard the C.N.R. steamer there, sailing for Trinidad. Keep quiet. We shall attend to your baggage. You have just three-and-one-half hours to get ready!" Fortunately, we had our trunks all packed. My dear wife had to leave her family on short notice. Telephones rang and farewells were arranged at Stayner, Allandale, Toronto and Montreal. By the good hand of the Lord, we boarded the 3 p.m. train and waved farewell to our loved ones, little dreaming that it would be seven years ere we saw them again. Personally, we do not like farewells; we have not got used to them in thirty-six years. But if there is any preference in the manner, we would rather have a quick departure than a long, drawn-out farewell.

Three days later at 2 a.m., we pulled into St. John. We were strangers and there was no one to meet us at that early hour. It had snowed all day and the streets were full of slush. We got a man to take us to a small hotel. He carried our grips and walked so fast that, being unused to the deep slush, we could hardly keep up with him. We spent the few hours in a cold bleak room, had breakfast and made our way to the docks, which were full of grey painted steamers and war boats of all kinds. Military guards kept examining our tickets, and at last how glad we were to get aboard what proved to be the *Lady Nelson*! The name was so painted over as to be barely readable.

We had decided to travel second class to avoid extra expense. We found that this meant that my wife was to be in one cabin with coloured women, while I was to occupy another with coloured men. We had lived too long in Venezuela to let mere colour cause trouble, but to be separated was going to be a trial. We were called to the purser's office. How glad we were to hear that he had orders to put us in a special cabin! He told the

steward to carry our baggage to the cabin. When he went out, we kneeled down and thanked our Heavenly Father for His tender care through Mr. John Roberts of Montreal.

We were initiated in the use of lifebelts, blackouts, etc. At 4 p.m. we steamed slowly out of Halifax, past great and small war craft and many cargo boats, all in their grey coats—a sad reminder that the great Dominion of Canada, along with Great Britain, was at war. It was bitterly cold. The convoy left us and then it grew pitch dark. All was blacked out. About 9 p.m. we crept aft carefully and saw three sailors of the Canadian Marine, clothed in their heavy uniforms, manning the big anti-submarine gun.

We had a fine trip, with many exciting times when supposed torpedoes and submarines were sighted. The *Ajax* was also seen and admired, off Bermuda! But who knows? It may have been some unsung destroyer, for all we know. The only real submarine we did see, caused a sigh of relief when it hoisted the French flag. We reached Port of Spain and bade goodbye to the good ship, *Lady Nelson*, never to see her again, as she was sunk some time after. Mr. Henry Spencer met us and we spent ten happy days in his home, waiting for a boat to take us to Puerto Cabello.

There was just one more requisite for our return to Venezuela. We had to get a last visa from the Venezuelan Consul in Trinidad. Would he give it? The Lord answered prayer again. The young lady in the office was from Puerto Cabello, our home town. All was arranged in a short time and she handed us our passports with—"Un feliz viaje."—A happy journey.

## CHAPTER VII.

### VENEZUELA.

WE embarked at Trinidad on the Dutch steamer *Cóttica*, touching at all the small ports on the North coast of Venezuela. A big contraband business was carried on by the crew, selling to the people on the shore. They bought all kinds of dry goods, tobacco, liquor, etc., and smuggled them ashore. It was not the poor but mostly the rich who carried on this illicit trade. We had seven hundred pounds of luggage and expected to pay heavy duty, as we landed at La Guaira instead of Puerto Cabello. Our good brother Bartolomé Nieto, a customs official at once caught sight of us on board. We were glad to see Mr. Saword also on the quay. Sr. Nieto introduced us to the Administrator of Customs. He ordered one of his men to pass our goods. They charged nothing. In about thirty minutes, we had all baggage shipped for Puerto Cabello, a hundred and sixty miles away. A brother called Bastidas from Caracas, who was there with Mr. Saword, took us in his car to that city. As the car pulled up the steep climb towards the capital on the ever-winding road, our hearts went up in real thanksgiving to the Lord. Here we were again in Venezuela, after so many difficulties in getting back! We felt like a hunting dog let off the leash and free to follow the quarry.

When we reached the capital, we treated our brethren to a lunch in a small hotel. Our good friend, Bastidas, thought the best way to honour us was to thoroughly prove (criticise) the menu! It was grand to get Venezuelan food again, especially the roast plátanos (plantain). The

bill was heavy but our heart was light. Were we not again in Venezuela and in the Capital?

We managed to get seats in a car going to Puerto Cabello, arriving there in time to be at the welcome meeting which Mr. Saword had arranged for us. It all looked like a dream, we had gone through so much in one day. If the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, the sleep of the missionary is sweeter. Our own bedroom above the school, the sea breeze, the wash of the waves fifty yards from our home, the objective achieved, nerves on tension for two months, now relaxed, and above all the calm consciousness that God had fulfilled the promise which had buoyed us up for months: *Isaiah* 45, 2—"I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron"—all combined to make the bed "a grand invention."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SAN ESTEBAN.

**M**R. SAWORD had put up our old tent in San Esteban and started nightly meetings some two weeks previously. Souls had been saved and there was a good interest. He got us into harness right away, so the following night we joined in a series of meetings which resulted in much blessing. Almost every night some got saved or professed to. The children of the Lord's people, fine young men and women, were reached, San Esteban was moved. One woman whose two sons had professed, burned the younger man's Bible and hymn book, thinking that the flames would burn up his zeal. The old lady went to the governor of Puerto Cabello and accused us, saying that we had brought from Canada an infernal drug called "marijuana" and that we were drugging the people and getting them to leave the religion of their fathers. She told the Chief of our wonderful power over the people. She said that she could understand women crying, but who ever heard of men crying in a meeting? It was of the evil one and must be stopped. Fortunately, the Governor thought otherwise. He was not ignorant of the Gospel. He told her to go home and wait quietly and she would see that her boys would be better sons and finer men.

Naturally, where there is grain there will be chaff. A number of young boys and girls professed to be saved. They would meet and pray by themselves while we brethren used to pray in a home and the sisters met in another home for prayer. The work was watered by prayer. We were careful not to press the young folk into



mere professions. They professed either among their chums or in their homes. Time has proved that this part of the work among the children was not real, for only one or two of them have gone on to prove their salvation. Some have been saved since. But it was different with the young men and women. We baptized eighteen of them later. They are all in fellowship, except two who have grown cold and one young man who went to be with the Lord, leaving behind a fragrant testimony.

When the meetings ended, we felt that something had to be done to provide a suitable meeting place, now that the numbers had increased. Mr. Saword agreed to make the doors and windows in Puerto Cabello, while my wife and I moved temporarily to San Esteban, and building of a hall was started on a lot, given by one of the Christians there. It proved to be three months of very happy service, as we could work by day and help the young converts by night. Don Francisco Ramos, the leading brother in the meeting, gave us a room and my wife cooked in the corridor. In this way we got very closely attached to the San Esteban Christians. All helped, and we finished a fine hall free of debt, which the Lord's people have continued to use since 1940. Mr. Saword, later, had weekly Bible Classes with a view to leading on the young converts in "the ways that be in Christ." It was a grand sight to see such a group of young men and women, note-book and pencil in hand, eagerly drinking in the word.



SAN ESTEBAN

Some of the young people who got saved. On their way to a conference in a truck.

## CHAPTER IX.

### C A R A C A S.

**D**URING the presidency of Lopez Contreras, the Capital flourished so that thousands went there looking for employment. In the migration, naturally, a number of the Christians from the assemblies went there also. What they saw in Caracas in the various denominations differed very much from what they had seen in a scripturally formed church. Some of the simpler ones settled down, conforming to sectarian methods, so that the light which was in them became darkness. The more spiritual and better taught tried to reform the place that was most in keeping with the Word of God, but the leaders would have no reform and even literally closed the door against them.

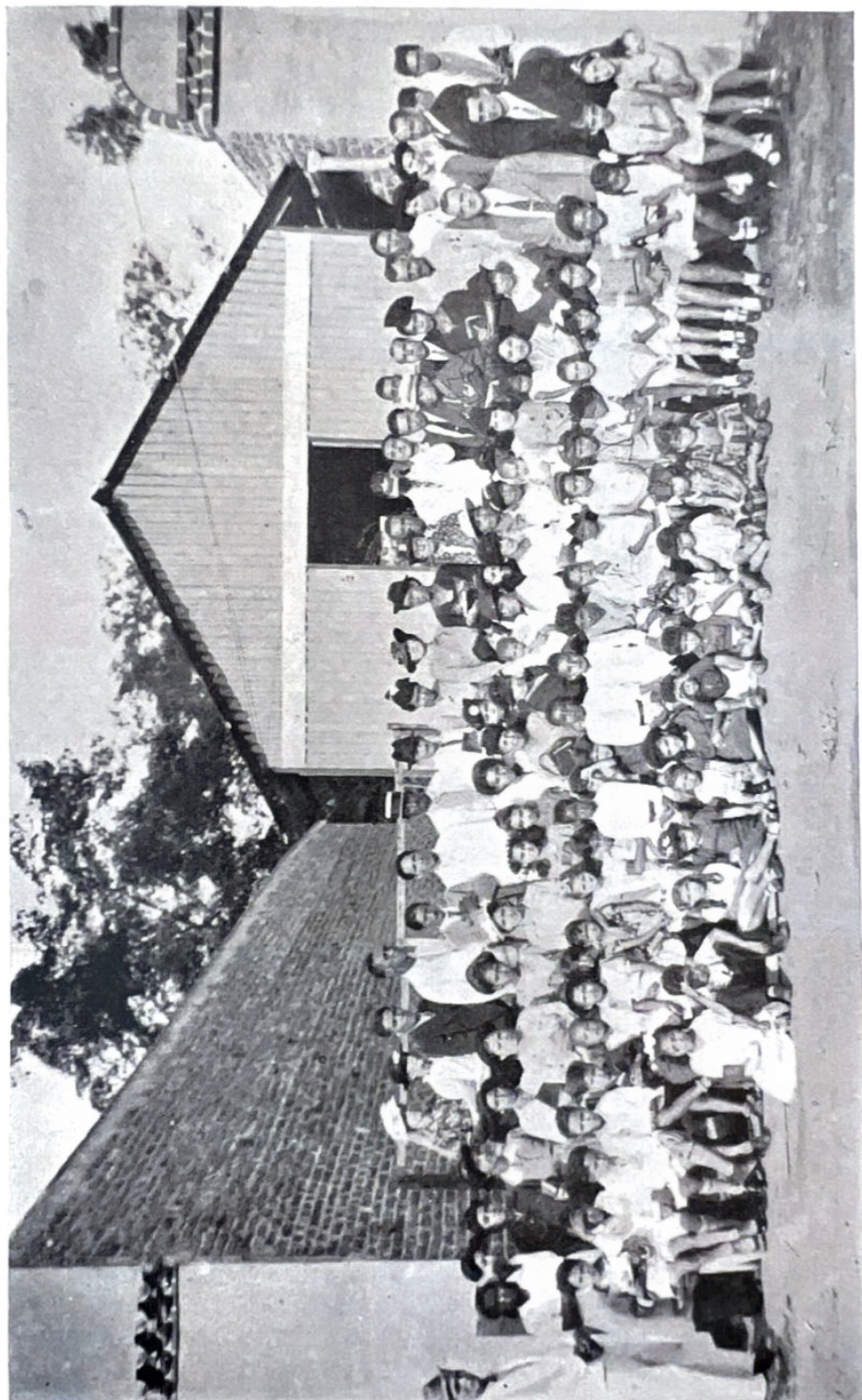
The little handful began to meet for prayer and Bible readings in Sr. Juan Ascanio's home. At first, some of the workers were diffident about helping, but we felt that, so far as we could judge, they were only seeking to carry out the principles they had seen practised in the assemblies from which they had come. At the risk of criticism and misunderstanding, by their hearty invitation we visited them one Tuesday night. The little group had met for a Bible reading. Living in the district was a man called García, and his wife, who had both been invited to the meeting. We spoke on the three days' journey from Egypt in order to worship God in His own appointed way, connecting this with the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Sr. García and his wife were impressed, and later they were both baptized and received into the fellowship. Then his sister got

saved when Mr. Fairfield visited them one night. The father and mother had been in the denominations for years. They, too, saw believers' baptism, were baptized and received into the fellowship. Then one by one all the family got saved and ten of them are in fellowship to-day. Four of the women married brethren in the assemblies.

The little company grew. Some newly saved were added, as well as other Christians. The place got too small for them, so that they had to rent a corner store in Los Zamanes street. There they saw blessing and much persecution. There was an old picture show house in front, which priests rented. One of them used to stand at the door and ridicule us as we spoke from the chart. This provoked some of the university students who also were listening at the door. One of them drew a caricature of Sr. Ascanio with a big Bible in his hand, discussing with a very fat priest with a dove hovering over his head. The picture showed words coming out of Ascanio's mouth directed to the priest—"How much did Peter charge those three thousand that he baptized on the day of Pentecost?" Opposition grew. Excrement was plastered on the doors, and dead animals thrown into the hall. But God continued to bless and the numbers grew, so that we considered we had material to form a local church. With the hearty fellowship of all the Lord's servants, who also went for the formation of the assembly, we began a church testimony in July, 1938.

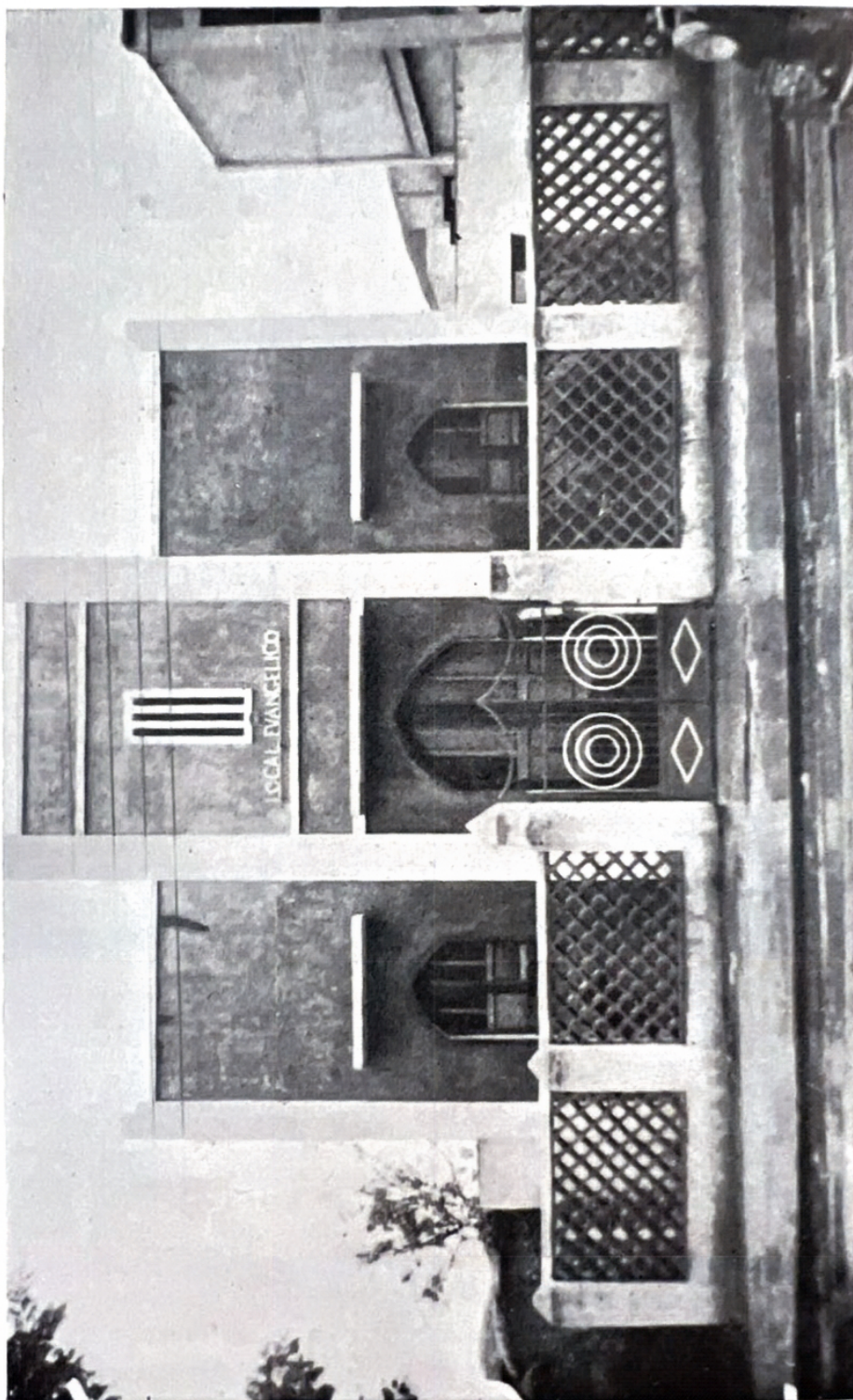
As soon as the assembly was formed, trouble began. We have noted this before; that the enemy will allow a company to meet in comparative quietness from within, until a gathering centre is formed. He hates things done in God's way. He will even allow Gospel preaching with less opposition than in Ephesus, where saints are gathered to His name and Person alone. Unfortunately, Juan Ascanio could not labour with his brethren and he gradually pulled out. Poor brother! He and his wife wandered far from the Lord, but the root of the matter





The Portable Hall in Santa Ana, Caracas.





Front of the New Hall in Caracas.

was still in him, and we shall hear of him later in connection with Mr. and Mrs. Saword's work in Boquerón.

New overseers had to be sought for. This position was too much for some of them and they soon showed the Diotrephes spirit, thinking that their little service was an "office" or "position" and not a "good work." The Venezuelan is accustomed to religious and civil authorities bossing the people. No wonder then that, when they are saved and have some responsibility in the church, this same spirit comes out. Again and again we got the call: "Come and help us." We are glad to say that all the Lord's servants tried to help them to a better understanding of the scriptures. Brethren Saword, Wells, Fairfield and Sr. P. Peña with others, all went and helped. A beautiful factor of the work and workers here in Venezuela is that, with but one exception, workers have not settled in a place called "my corner," having no interest in assemblies not planted by them. This has made all the Lord's servants to be loved by all the Lord's people and has avoided the schismatic evil of favouritism. Four men in this Caracas assembly who did not get their own way left and went to the denominations, but they knew too much truth to stay there, and after a time all came back humbled, and were again received into the fellowship.

Then we encouraged them to pray about buying a lot to build a hall. They prayed and gave heartily. But, alas, we found that the brother who had been entrusted with the funds had misappropriated some Bs. 1,500. This was a great blow, and we began to wonder where that company would end. The dictative spirit, the carnal pride, the dishonest handling of church funds was indeed a dark and black background for an assembly of God.

However, we went again and encouraged two younger men, not long saved, both married, with saved and spiritually minded wives (a great asset for an elder), to feel the responsibility of overseership. This assuredly was of

the Lord, as, for seven years, Sr. Luis Peña and Sr. José Naranjo have proved to be real shepherds. They are a contrast in disposition but have pulled well together, and they have the esteem and respect of all the Lord's people.

They had to begin all over again collecting funds to buy a lot. It was not long till Bs. 1,600 were obtained with which they bought a lot on Santa Ana street. The old store was now too small and would hold only those in fellowship. We decided to lend them our portable hall until they could build, thus saving them the monthly rent, and also this was larger and better ventilated than the store. The memorable day came when they left the old store and moved into the portable hall. Here they multiplied and grew so that we had to take out one side and make an extension, which held about fifty more. They now wished to build, but the lot was only thirty feet wide—far too small for a suitable hall.

We encouraged them to sell this lot and buy a larger and better one on the main avenue of the Cementerio district, which would cost about Bs. 4,200. There was some opposition, some saying that they had prayed to the Lord in the old store to give them a lot and He had answered prayer and given them Santa Ana; that they had seen much blessing there, therefore why move? Then they had no money to buy such a large lot. We reasoned with those who did not agree that they had come from a house on Eduvigez to a store on Zamanes, and to a portable hall on Santa Ana, and that the Lord was just using those places as stepping stones to this larger site where there would be room for expansion and that He would provide the Bs. 4,200 in His own way. Sr. Peña, Sr. Naranjo and most of the influential brethren were like-minded with us from the start and we could have gone ahead, but it is well to tarry a little and convince the opposition, and then there is a united effort.

Finally they all decided to buy the lot, so sold the one on Santa Ana street for Bs. 2,000, and before the end of the week the Lord had provided the balance of Bs. 4,200;



so the new lot was bought and paid for. All were not only unanimous, but now enthusiastic. We laid a large cement base and floor for the portable hall. It was taken down from Santa Ana and rebuilt on Cementerio in a day! Blessing followed, so that it was necessary to take out the other side and raise it up like a right wing. The iron supports were now left bare in the centre and, with the two wings extended, it reminded one of a clucking hen spreading her wings to shelter the little chicks. We feared that it would not stand the storm, but it did. We bought five tons of rafters in Aroa and they had to be piled in on one side to protect them from rain and sun. It was an amusing sight on a Sunday night to see men and boys seated up on the pile of rafters. They were real boys and did not do much listening at times, for when we began to build and take out the rafters we found a lot of pencils and other knick-knacks pertaining to boys which had fallen down between the beams where they could not get them again. The pencils served us all during the building.

The Christians had a meeting every Monday night to pray for funds, and soon collected a considerable sum, but not half of what would be required. They pleaded with us to go and take charge of the building. We really did not wish to go, as we knew that Caracas would require a building in keeping with the Capital; that there would be no end of inspector's requirements; that material was dear, and we had not yet proved the Caracas brethren's building abilities. But we got no peace and, as we managed to get the help of two brethren who were builders and had worked with us before, we finally believed the Lord would have us go. We spent three months with them and had the joy of directing the building. It was a big undertaking as we had to haul some one hundred and fifty loads of earth, in three-ton trucks, to bring the back part of the lot up to the street level. This required deep, cement foundations. We got along splendidly. At times we had five brethren, all builders,

working on the walls. All worked heartily, and we had no trouble with the inspectors. Two sisters prepared the food on the place where we worked, and we all ate together. This saved time and expense, as there were sixteen of us to feed.

Finally the hall was ready for the inauguration. Mr. and Mrs. Saword, Mr. John Wells and many others came for the opening. We inaugurated the new baptistry with the baptism of thirty-eight. There have been a number of baptisms since then. Mr. Fairfield, Mrs. Williams and I spent the Lord's Day, November 24th, 1946, with them. There were one hundred and seventy-five at the Lord's table and there are now about two hundred in fellowship. Sr. José Naranjo, helped by local Christians, has had three weeks' meetings in a district of Caracas called "El Manicomio." They have seen a number saved and we enjoyed three nights helping this brother. As there are about thirty of the Lord's people living in that part, we were encouraging them to rent a larger place and keep following up the work, so that in time another assembly could be formed. Sr. José Naranjo was commended to the Lord's work two years ago and has done very well. Sr. Luis Peña is now the leading man in the assembly. We always make our home with him when in Caracas. We stayed with them for three months during the building of the hall, and we have formed a very high conception of Don Luis and his wife, Misia Corina. Their eldest daughter, who is in final year in normal school, has been two years in fellowship. The next two children are also saved. There are now other elders who are taking hold. Altogether, Caracas fills our hearts with joy, as we think of the blessing of the Lord, how He has borne with their ways in the past and made them, perhaps, the largest congregation of saved people in the Capital. Surely, "little is much if God is in it."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DIARY VIEW.

**A**S we have no exact details of the work from 1940 to 1942, for no one kept a diary, we shall seek to state information in a general way. To some, this method is most interesting; but as we believe a diary gives far more and better opportunities to get a close-up of real missionary work, we shall give first the general, and then the diary view. Those who do not like reading diaries may leave those chapters unread. Personally, we enjoyed Livingstone's Diary far better than a general outline of his journeys. The general outline, usually written long after the happenings are past, touch the high spots. Dark days, dark fears and dark doubts are passed over, as time has erased them, and God's succeeding faithfulness has overcome them, but the diary gives the account of the trials and triumphs as they come and registers them.

The real success of missionary life is in being faithful in little, faithful in the daily routine, steadfast in trial, constant in prayer and reading of the Word. Sometimes, after a missionary report meeting, it has been remarked: "Your life must be wonderfully romantic." Read our diary, and you hear: "What a hard life those missionaries have."

## CHAPTER XI.

### NEW ASSEMBLIES.

#### BELÉN.

**L**ET us look at some of the new assemblies formed. Belén is in the State of Falcón. When the oil camp in El Mene was booming, some men went from Belén to work there. Blas Colina, who was already saved went from there. Then Rosa Arcila went from Aroa, and she made her living washing clothes. With some other professing Christians, they met in Blas' house and were helped by visits from the Lord's servants from time to time. One man, Euraclio Rodríguez, got saved. He had a sister married to a man in Belén called Emeterio Medina. The latter became interested through his brother-in-law, and later was saved. He has gone on well. He has not much gift, but is faithful and more intelligent than most in that country place.

Meetings were commenced in his house, and each year we baptized two or three from Belén in Mirimire or in El Mene. Those Christians were in fellowship in Mirimire, but the way was too long for them to go every Lord's Day, especially in the rainy season. Led by Emeterio, they built a small mud hall with a roof made from rough shingles, split with an axe. The people saw the power of the Gospel. The Christians began visiting a village called La Pastora. Baptisms were held in the creek. Some began to advocate forming an assembly in Belén, as many were unable to walk the eighteen miles to remember the Lord.

There was the other side. Mirimire was a small struggling assembly, and if eighteen left, it would become still weaker. The elders were opposed. With the help of Sr. Pastor Peña, we had a meeting with the leading men in both places. After prayer and talking matters over, all was arranged, and Belén got their assembly. At times they have had a goodly number but when drought and scarcity of work came, many moved away.

For some time they have been interested in building a larger and better hall. Two years ago, with Sr. Peña, we had a meeting with them to arrange the building programme. They were very enthusiastic. The men were going to bring the lumber from the bush, and the women were going to cook the food. They built the hall that night—with good intentions. Eighteen months passed and nothing was done! For the last six months, Sr. Peña has encouraged them. He has donated most of the materials which had to be bought. He has spent weeks with them, working by day and preaching at night, until, at long last, the hall is finished. When we were in Puerto Cumarebo last year, with Sr. Peña and Sr. Linares, we made twelve fine, solid mahogany seats, holding four persons each, for the new hall in Belén, but as they made so little progress there, we left them in Puerto Cumarebo, as those fine seats are not suitable for earthen floors.

## CHAPTER XII.

### NIRGUA.

**N**IRGUA has again seen an assembly formed. There were a scanty few left of the old group, who wished to have the Gospel preached. Mr. Wells and Sr. José Peña, along with others, visited them from time to time. The assembly in Pontezuela also gave them warmth through a brother called Luis Galaratti. Mr. Wells and I rented a house for a month's meetings and had the joy of seeing several confess Christ, among them being two men who are now elders in the assembly, Fermin Gil and Antonio Melendez.

Mrs. Wells took very ill in San Felipe and on medical advice, Mr. Wells took her to Nirgua, where the climate is delightfully cool. They intended staying only a short time but, owing to the war, they were not able to go home to the North of Ireland. What seemed to be a misfortune for the Wells, turned out to be a great blessing for Nirgua. Mr. Wells encouraged them to think of building a hall, and for a long time they had a special prayer meeting once a week to ask the Lord to help them. Sr. Fermin Gil got a free lot from the Municipality, as he is a well-known builder. The Christians began gathering building materials. About seven thousand adobes were cut and paid for. Mr. Wells urged us to go and help them to build. We were very busy, but felt that it was of the Lord that we should go and give them a hand. We managed to get some of our usual Venezuelan builders to go with us. When we landed in Nirgua, we asked Mr. Wells how much they had on hand for the building. He replied: "Nothing! The assembly owes me forty bolívares!"

A Native Hut  
near Nirgua.



Statue of the Liberator Simon  
Bolivar on the Battlefield of  
Carabobo where Venezuela  
won its independence from  
Spain.

What a surprise! No funds, and three men ready to start work! The days of miracles are not past. We began, went on, and finished, owing nothing to any man.

Mr. Wells had things well organised. The Christians away in Pontezuela had been getting ready to send all food stuffs required to feed the crew: beans, rice, bananas, vegetables, coffee, etc. In Carlos Gil's house the sisters prepared food for fourteen workers. A carpenter arrived from Chivacoa, dear old Felipe Oviedo, who has helped us build several halls. A brother in Valencia, Antonio Malpica, gave a present of a door and two windows for the front of the hall, made of splendid mahogany by a master carpenter in Valencia. They came in answer to prayer, without solicitation. Sr. Malpica said that he owed a lot to Nirgua, as it was there he heard the Gospel when we had meetings in 1924 with Brethren Gunn and Douglas.

They had a weekly meeting at which Mr. Wells used to give an account of all the gifts received and the expenses of the work. We remember one week all was paid except forty bolívares for rafters, owed to Sr. Fermin Gil. He said that it was not a debt, that he could wait and so agreed the Christians. Here in Venezuela, as in other parts, some seem to have the idea that money owed to a Christian is not just quite a debt. We wished to teach them that money owed to any of the Lord's people was as much a debt as if owed to an unsaved person. We encouraged them to hand over the last Bs. 40 to Gil. They argued that they would have nothing to give to the volunteer workers on Saturday to buy any small thing and have something for the Lord's offering. Mr. Wells was at one with us, so the money was paid in full. We told them that God would honour them in His own way. The Lord, of a truth, had already been getting ready to answer that prayer.

Away in Chivacoa, on the previous Lord's Day, the Christians had resolved to have forty bolívares fellowship with Nirgua brethren in building their hall. How to send



the money was the problem. One brother volunteered to take it. He walked all day and slept at night in Pontezuela. He walked again the next day and arrived just a day after we had the prayer meeting, with the Bs. 40, so that the Christians had now something to give to the workers on Saturday. But this was not all. Farther away still, in Yaritagua, Don Carlos Rivas had also decided to send forty bolívares to help with the hall. This gift also arrived before Saturday, so that the Lord's people said: "How good that we paid the debt!" The Lord has His servants everywhere.

Most of the assemblies in Venezuela own their own halls. Circular letters or solicitation for funds have never been used. God has never failed to answer the prayers of His believing people. We firmly believe in the three P's, as a formula for building halls: Prayer, Perseverance and Perspiration. Prayer puts us in touch with God, Perseverance teaches us the mind of God, and Perspiration shows us the grace of God.

All worked heartily so that in six weeks and three days the hall was ready for the inauguration. A number of the Lord's servants came. There was a baptism, and the following day the assembly was formed which, under the faithful care of Mr. Wells and the elder brethren, has grown steadily. We are writing from Nirgua, having come here a week ago, after an absence of two years. The meetings have been well attended and on Saturday night we had the joy of baptizing six believers. On Lord's Day, forty-two were at His table, thirty-six of them being in fellowship in Nirgua. They have greatly improved the hall by building a wall and railing in front, also planted trees and flowers, which make it a very attractive building.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### SAN CARLOS.

SAN CARLOS is the capital of the State of Cojedes. It is a very old town, some of the buildings belonging to the colonial era. It is situated on the border of the great "llanos," or prairies, of Venezuela. To-day, it is only a shadow of what it used to be. The houses are built of great thick walls, from twenty to thirty inches thick. They are not made of adobes, but *tapizales*. The Spaniards built a solid stone foundation, then raised stone pillars about every twelve feet. They fastened stout boards to either side of those "rafas," or stone pillars, like boxing for concrete. This they filled with earth, just slightly moistened so that it would adhere. Three or four men would pack it firm with special pounders. This formed a solid mass much firmer than adobes. We used this system on the Aroa hall, years ago when cement was not obtainable, and it has proved strong and satisfactory.

The houses are large with spacious yards, in many cases only four or six homes covering the entire block. There are three large Roman Catholic temples which must have cost millions, testifying to the "good old Spanish days" when peones and slaves were at the beck and call of the priests. Fortunes were spent in the interests of the "Church," with absolute neglect of the welfare of the peones. There they stand to-day, "Santo Domingo," "San Juan," and "El Libertador." They could accommodate thousands of people, but only on feast days can hundreds be seen entering those gloomy walls. There used to be three priests, but a wily Spanish friar sent away the Venezuelan "curas" (parish priests) and he gathers.

the harvest of all three. He uses San Juan only once a year on the 24th of June, the day of John the Baptist.

With Mr. G. Johnston, we worked this place for the first time in 1912. The streets were then paved with cobble-stones in a "V" shape. All the rubbish and dirty water would naturally fall to the bottom of the "V" and each big shower of rain carried the dirt and debris down to the quarters of the poor to lie and rot and cause sickness of all kinds. Now, all is changed. The streets are of concrete and there are several good buildings dedicated to schools, market, and social assistance.

Again some sixteen years ago we made another effort with the help of Brethren Saword and Wells. We were unsuccessful and had to retire with little evident fruit but none of us forgot San Carlos. It was considered impregnable, especially by Mr. Wells, who served there in his early days, and he questioned, "Can any good thing come out of San Carlos?" But Mr. Saword persisted. He took us in his car from Valencia to the State of Cojedes. Mr. Fairfield, only new in the country, also went along. When we reached the boundary line between Carabobo and Cojedes, just on the steel bridge, Mr. Saword suddenly stopped the car and said: "Let us pray." We prayed that the Lord would open up hard Cojedes. Mr. Saword asked Mr. Fairfield if he could visualise the "seven churches of Cojedes." We visited most of the principal towns and gave away a lot of literature. That visit interested Mr. Fairfield so that he, with helpers from Valencia, faithfully worked San Carlos from time to time.

The Fairfields had gone home when we mentioned to Mr. Saword that we were exercised about giving San Carlos another trial. We were delighted to find that he had also been making it a matter of prayer. We soon had things moving, and Sr. Malpica from Valencia, who had often worked San Carlos with Mr. Fairfield, immediately rented a house for us from an old friend, Sr. Francisco Santaella, who became convinced, but never converted,

from the first time we went there. An extract from a letter written at this time may be interesting:—

“We have been exercised for some time about trying to give the State of Cojedes another trial. We had tried three times to get a foothold in that Jericho of a State, but each time we had to give it up. There was not a Gospel testimony in all the State, nor did we know a baptized Christian. Mr. Saword was delighted to go with me, and my good wife was willing to keep house for us. We rented a house and had a long ride over in a truck. It is about one hundred miles from our home in Puerto Cabello. We worked the place with tracts, inviting the people to come to the meetings. Just one inside the first night! It looked like a repetition of the old story. But the interest increased and we got a fair hearing, though never crowds, as in some places. Yet we were encouraged to go on for seven weeks, by which time three men and nine women had confessed faith in the Lord Jesus. A woman called María and her son professed to be saved. She had heard the Gospel when we had the portable hall in Tinaquillo, so that as soon as she knew that we were in town, she came along. One night, at eleven o'clock, she trusted Christ when in her yard. She came on Monday to see us, and as soon as she entered the house, she got down on her knees and asked us the blessing, as they do to the priests. We lifted her up, telling her that we could not bless anybody, but that all blessing came from the Lord and that she must give Him all the glory. She said: ‘I have done that. But you are His servants and I must thank you, too. Where would we have been had you not brought us the Gospel? Sitting in darkness and ignorance.’ The dear soul was right. We have often thought of her question: ‘Where would we have been if you had not come?’ Oh that this would move some of the young men up North to see their responsibility of preaching the Gospel to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death! We just hated to leave the little flock. But we encouraged the brethren in Valencia, the

nearest assembly, to take an interest in them. They are sixty miles away and have a very poor bus service. A married couple who are saved, offered their home to carry on the work, so we had the last meeting in their house and we got a fine hearing. Please pray for this new effort. San Carlos is what military men call a bridge-head. If we could hold it, we could reach out to other towns in the State, all without a single witness, such as Tinaquillo, El Tinaco, and El Baúl."

Sr. Santaella gave the site for a new hall free of charge, just alongside the house we rented from him. With Mr. Saword, we gathered up the volunteer workers in January, 1944, so that with my wife and three sisters, scaffolding, tools, and provisions for fourteen men for six weeks, we had a full load. Mr. Saword had not been able to rent a suitable house, but we procured a better one later. My wife with the sisters, cooked for sixteen of us. The house was not far from the building, so that we walked over three times a day. We put up the old tent for a carpenter's shop and Mr. Saword made the doors, windows and seats there. He also looked after the purchase of materials, etc., while we directed the building, lending a hand where help was most needed. We had some willing volunteers with great conceptions of their ability but sadly lacking in practice.

On the whole we had a happy time. Again the Lord supplied all the need! We arranged for the inauguration and the formation of the assembly. Mrs. Saword and a number came from the Port, San Esteban and Valencia, and another church was planted. They have had some sore trials, but as the Venezuelans say *El golpe enseña* (the blow teaches), so that by failure, they have learned a little more.

With Mrs. Williams and Sr. Chavez, we visited them a few weeks ago. They are reaching out to new places and have already established a Gospel meeting in El Tinaco where we preached the Gospel to a crowded house. They are seeing blessing in Las Vegas where a number of sec-

tarian folk are convinced that they have been wrong and wish to be received into the fellowship. Before a full hall we had the joy of baptizing a dozen believers, five of them from El Tinaco. We have just bidden God speed to a brother from the Port, called A. Carrido, who has taken a keen interest in the work there, and who, with a large bundle of literature, is going to visit the three places for two weeks. This type of man and his service are of great value in such cases. He is a cobbler, who saves all he can and then spends it in helping the Christians in Cojedes and other parts.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### GUACARA.

**G**UACARA has a long history. We began working it with tracts in 1910, but with no visible result. Don Leon Almérida did much for Guacara when he lived in Yagua, only three miles away. There were a few sympathisers but the civil authorities were always at one with the Roman Catholic clergy, so that all effort in the Gospel was soon squashed. One day, while giving away tracts with a brother, we were arrested, but soon released, when we got in touch with Valencia. This fanatical spirit was prevalent some twenty years ago when Mr. Saword and Mr. Gunn made a determined effort of some weeks' duration. They rented a house, cooked their own meals, and both having the energy of their first love for Venezuela, they left no stone unturned to reach the people. They encountered the habitual opposition of the priest, backed by the wealthy class. One man called Wallis, a magnate, threatened all who rented land from him that he would expel from his estates all who would have anything to do with the Gospel. That poor man is now a sot, begging bread on the street of La Victoria.

The meetings dwindled until, as Mr. Saword wrote: "Last night the half of the meeting slept and the other half took notes!" We found out afterwards that there were just two men inside—one a drunk who slept, and the other man scribbled in a notebook.

But their effort was not in vain, for a man called Ramón González, who had a prosperous business, dates his conversion from the visit. He at once began letting his light shine, but the priest excommunicated him, forbade the people to buy from him, and, in a word, ruined him. Such was the power of the priests of Guacara. González, dis-

couraged, had to leave the place and we lost track of him for years, but he turned up again, married the woman with whom he had lived, and got baptized. Guacara then saw the first meetings which bore fruit, held in his home. The persecution was fierce. The enemies threw dirt and stones, and only the Lord saved González from a big stone aimed at his head, which, as he ducked, banged into the wall. Brother Douglas and I had three weeks on the chart in his home, and some more souls were added. The Sawords, who then lived in Valencia, visited them frequently, and saw hopes of an assembly being formed. But bickering and devouring began among the Christians, which only too well accomplished the devil's ends, so that they were reduced to four, as others had moved away.

Long dreary years passed and the Lord had to weed out the troublers. Sr. González moved to Caracas but left his family in Guacara. When we finished with the portable hall in Caracas, he encouraged us to send it to Guacara, for there was a "sound on the tops of the mulberry trees." The Christians were looking for a lot on which to build. We were all of one mind, believing that the time had come to give Guacara another trial.

Early in January, 1946, my wife, Sr. Chavez, and I went with all the outfit to Guacara. We stayed in Sr. González's home with Señora Mercedes, his wife, who was kind and competent, but unfortunately she had a sharp tongue. With the help of the local Christians and Mr. Saword, we soon erected the portable hall. It was the beginning of the dry season and the streets were full of dust and sand, which formed into clouds impelled by the fierce winds. This made the hall-raising a real problem. However, the wind did not start until 9 a.m. each day, lasting until sundown, so we "made hay" when the wind was down. We laid the cement floor, painted the hall inside and outside and by Saturday night, we had all ready to start on Lord's Day.

The priest got wind of our coming early in the year. He at once got busy and organised what he called a plebiscite. He sent his faithful women around to all the houses for



signatures, which they obtained by the hundreds from old and young, to prove that Guacara was totally Roman Catholic and did not want any other religion. His idea was to appeal to the President to hinder the building of a hall for the preaching of the Gospel, as he thought that we were going to erect one on the lot which the Christians had bought. The Governor, his secretary and most of the influential men refused to sign the priest's papers. The priest was greatly chagrined, when within forty-eight hours he saw the portable hall erected and ready for meetings. No one there had seen a portable hall before. On Saturday Sr. Chávez and I went to see the civil chief. We already had met his secretary and the latter introduced us to him. We told him of our purpose to start meetings on Sunday and counted on his co-operation in maintaining order. He received us very well, taking us over to the police station and introducing us to the head of staff. He told him to send two policemen to stand each night at the hall door to see that there were no disturbances.

On Sunday p.m. we had the first meeting. The Governor came in a car with a photographer and asked permission to take a picture of the hall. He sent the picture to the Press in Caracas, where it appeared with a write-up in our favour. How things had changed in Guacara! Venezuela is "on the move" all right, but it is ours to see that she will take the straight turn. We continued holding meetings for five weeks and saw the good hand of the Lord with us. The enemies, incited by the priest, did their best to insult and throw stones, but after two men and one woman spent the night in jail and each fined Bs. 30.00 (about \$9.00) the baser fellows thought they had better leave us alone, so that the last two weeks we did not require the policemen. It seemed that the time had come to form the assembly. We sent an invitation to the five nearest assemblies to come for the occasion. Mr. Saword came over from Boquerón, also other men of responsibility, including Sr. Pastor Peña. We had a fine day and it was a real joy to see, after thirty-six years of sowing,

a little sheaf for the glory of the Lord. They have had the "growing pains" of every new assembly; but they go on well, and are gathering material for their new hall. Now that Mr. Fairfield is in Valencia he will be a real help to them.

We might say that it was a month ere the priest had his protest lists ready, and he gave away only a few in Guacara after we left. The others were distributed in Valencia and Maracay to show his zeal. Poor man! He has now to deal with a worse foe. We saw a bill, the other day, written by the Communists, showing up the immoral nature of his life. This is where Communism thrives amidst a people deprived of the Bible, and lorded over by a licentious Roman Catholic clergy.

## CHAPTER XV.

### LA GUAIRA.

**L**A GUAIRA is the chief seaport of Venezuela, as it is the seaport of the Capital. The port is built at the foot of the high range of mountains which separate it from Caracas. There is no bay and little flat land ere the earth dips into the deep sea. Breakwaters have been built and washed away. An English company owned the docks and railway to Caracas until a few years ago, when the Venezuelan Government bought all the enterprise, as the merchants were loud in their denunciation of the avarice of the company. But the complaints have by no means ceased. The quays and sheds were congested with merchandise which was being robbed or spoiled by rain. However, of late an effort has been made, and there are now some new warehouses and quays, which are certainly a big improvement but there yet remains much to be done.

The old town of La Guaira is a relic of the Spaniards, and is still unchanged in great part; old buildings with immense walls and narrow streets running in every direction. The only level street is the one which runs along the water front; all the others are a continual climb or descent. Some of them are very narrow, with sidewalks only six inches or a foot wide. One hears a truck or a car come roaring up the grade, and runs for the nearest doorway to allow it to pass. The last time we were there we stayed with a Christian whose house was on a narrow part of the street and on a heavy grade. A truck came roaring up one day, and got jammed between the two curbs. The driver thought that it was the hill that was hindering him and in low gear he jammed the tyres still more between

the two sidewalks. After the usual shouting he tried to back out, but this was not easy. Finally he mounted two wheels on the sidewalk and got up. What an advertisement for the maker of the tyres that would stand to be burned and chewed against the adamant curb, yet did not burst!

La Guaira is really made up of three towns—La Guaira, the old town; Maiquetía, the new town, and Pariata, the overflow. Land is cheaper in this latter and therefore the poor people have built all kinds of shacks. The names of the various parts of Pariata are: *Ciudad Carton*, the Card-board City, because the houses are made of cartons; *Infiernito*, little hell, because of the heat and vice. But here again Venezuela is “on the move.” The huts and hovels are being cleared out, sewers are being laid and electric light introduced. There is a three minute bus service all along the water front for a *locha* (a coin worth two and a half cents), but at present rate of exchange, four cents.

We have often mentioned the bolívar, the standard coin of Venezuela, named after the Liberator, Simon Bolívar. For the last five years the rate of the bolívar has been steady at 3.30 to the American dollar. At par, it is 5.20 to the dollar and 25.25 to the British pound, but for years the pound has been worth only Bs. 13.52. This is the buying price, the selling price for dollars or pounds is less. To make this more simple, an American dollar is worth only sixty-five cents and a British pound is worth only ten shillings and eight pence.

About two miles to the East of La Guaira lies Macuta, a bathing resort. There, Gomez built a large hotel for tourists and bathers, which did not yield the dividends he hoped for, so he sold it to the nation at a sacrifice of some millions. Of course when he died everybody was told that he built it with the Nation's money, but during his life no one dared object, so he had the honour of sacrificing to the Nation what was their own! Macuto is not so popular as one might expect, seeing that Caracas is only an hour and a half away by road.

Our connection with La Guaira dates away back to 1923, when Don Antonio B. Suarez was transferred from Puerto Cabello to La Guaira, as head of the office of the Venezuelan Line of Coast Steamers. His righteous soul was vexed by what he saw in a denomination which had a meeting place in La Guaira, but instead of keeping apart and trying to form a church after the New Testament pattern, he went in among the congregation and tried to show them a more perfect way. He did not lift them up; they did drag him down and he has been a poor wanderer for the last twenty years.

Another *Andino*, called Bartolome Nieto, went to La Guaira, after being saved and baptized in Valencia. As there was no assembly, he too, gravitated to this sect. But when Gómez died the pastor was accused of being a communist. He left his "sheep," and to-day is nothing. Those movements disillusioned Nieto, who had never been wholly satisfied with what he saw. He sought to teach the "sound doctrine" wherever he could get an ear. We kept more or less in touch with him through *El Mensajero* and an occasional conference.

He started meetings in his house, and the Lord saved his wife and some of her family. Once when we were in Caracas he sent word for us to go and help them. Sr. Naranjo and I went down and looked over the situation. We encouraged them to rent a store and meet three times in the week at least, promising that one or two Caracas brethren would go down and help them each Lord's Day. The Caracas Christians did well and soon saw blessing. A number got saved and the Christians who had separated were built up on sound doctrine. They had a three-cornered fight, as not only had they the world and Romanism to face but their co-religionists of yesterday branded them as traitors and turncoats. This did them good, as it led them to search the Scriptures to get answers to their opponents, so that they got more firmly established in the truth.

They rented a store near the waterfront for a month.

With Sr. Jose Naranjo we had two weeks of good, if noisy, meetings. Then last week was carnival week. In the plaza right in front of the meeting room, they had a loud speaker, and the people danced and shouted so that we had to shut all the doors but one, to keep out the noise, but unfortunately we kept in the heat. We had to shout to make ourselves heard, yet we got the people. The unsaved entered and filled the seats and others crowded at the door. There were all kinds of hearers—sailors, soldiers, men from the East and from the West, Trinitarians and Dutch Islanders. Hundreds heard the Gospel and souls got saved. The assembly was formed on the last Lord's Day.

The Christians had to move into a house away up the hill, a hard climb for some of the old people and a noisy corner, but it was the best that they could get. With Sr. Naranjo we have just given them a week's meetings. They do require a hall. Sr. Naranjo and I walked about a great deal to see if we could get a suitable lot. Prices ranged from Bs. 132.00 to 25 the square meter. They had only Bs. 2.000 on hand so we did not get anything. However, we saw Sr. Nieto last week in Caracas and he told us that they had bought a lot in Maiguetía for Bs. 5.200 and the owner was giving them a year to pay the balance of Bs. 3.200. They are a company of about forty in fellowship, rich in faith although poor in this world's goods.

The Christians have a flourishing work in Naiguata, a village towards the East, from which there are eight in fellowship in La Guaira. Mr. Saword and Sr. Naranjo and his wife made a determined effort in another village called Carabellera, noted for immorality and drunkenness. Not much fruit was seen but it was a start.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### TUCACAS.

**T**UCACAS is another seaport, in the State of Falcón. It is a contrast in almost every way to La Guaira except for the excessive heat. Tucacas is built on a flat swampy shore, only a few feet above sea level. There are no hills near by. The streets are wide and more regular, but often full of sea water at high tides or heavy rains. The place is infested with mosquitos.

In 1930 Mrs. Williams and I, along with two Venezuelan brethren, went for the first series of Gospel meetings to be held there that we know of. We rented a house and for five weeks sounded out the word of life. There was stiff persecution so that very few continued to attend for more than two or three nights. One woman, called Flora Sanchez, got saved. The boys stoned her as she went to the meeting, others spat on her and did all they could to hinder her. The civil authorities were at one with the priest so that the fruit was not abundant, but a start was made. Flora Sanchez went on, and a few faithful gathered around her. Christians passing through Tucacas gave help from time to time. Along with Mr. Fairfield, we tried another spell of meetings. Unfortunately the house we rented was alongside the house of the official in charge of the political prisoners who were repairing the road. He was a cruel man who maltreated the prisoners in the worst way. He boasted that he would see us working on the road with a big chain on our legs, attached to a fifty pound ball.

The priest was the director of a band. He used to come and peek in between the cracks in the windows and then call out his men to play and beat drums and throw fire-crackers. As if this were not enough, the soldiers from

the barracks threw stones on the iron roof, making preaching impossible. There was no police protection, yet God blessed our effort. Two men from Anguila, in the British West Indies came to Venezuela to work for the oil company. In Caño Leon they heard the Gospel. The first one saved was called Thomas. His friend Freddy, then a Roman Catholic, used to profit when Thomas was giving thanks for the food; he ate as fast as he could, but Thomas took the spoiling of his goods cheerfully. Then Freddy too got saved. When the work ceased in the oil camp those dear brethren went to Tucacas. They have been the mainstay of the little company.

Along with others in Caño León, we baptized them in a swamp, where it was a question of whether it was mud or water. We also had to keep on the outlook for alligators, so hence we could not go too far into the water. Mr. Fairfield, helped by the Christians, made a jetty out into the water. But we did not go too far out as an ugly brute might be under the surface of the water. Whether in mud or water, Thomas and Freddy, together with some others, were buried with Christ by baptism. In their own island, Thomas was Anglican and Freddy a Roman Catholic. As there were then a number baptized in Caño León, with those in Tucacas, we thought of forming an assembly, but the leading man in Caño León fainted under the persecution, so the idea was given up.

For long, lonely years, dear Thomas and Freddy held the fort, and kept the door of their house open for anyone passing through. But no one could stay for more than a night or so. Even Mr. Saword would only stay a night at a time. We sometimes tried to sneak through Tucacas without seeing Thomas and Freddy, as the former sometimes would plead with us or scold us and threaten to go away to their island if we did not give them meetings.

When work closed down in El Mene, a few Christians moved to Tucacas. Two brethren went over from Puerto Cabello one week-end, and Thomas sent us over an S.O.S. He and Freddy had rented a fine house and there was



fresh interest. "Do please come and help." Who could refuse?

In February, 1946, Mrs. Williams, Sr. Chávez and I landed in Tucacas. Thomas, with his big smiling black face, met us. He and Freddy would have carried us in their arms had it been necessary. They were so glad to see what he calls *Los siervos del Señor* (the Lord's servants). What was our surprise when they led us to the very same house we had occupied sixteen years before at the sea side! It had seen no paint nor repairs since then. The salt air had corroded the hinges so that the doors were hanging by leather hinges or were off altogether. The sea came in at high tide and brought blue crabs which were rude and inquisitive. The room allotted to us was so wet that nothing could be left on the floor. Most of the furniture was home-made, but they had a few pieces with a history. Thomas and Freddy had a small cocoanut plantation about three miles along the shore, where they would go early in the morning and sometimes come on a good find. One day they found a stout, well-made mattress washed up on the beach. They did not ask if it might be some mattress thrown overboard because someone died on it of a loathsome disease. Oh no! This did not enter their woolly heads. They took it home and laid it out for days in the broiling sun to dry it out. This was my wife's mattress, but a mattress requires a bed, so Thomas and Freddy had to patiently pick up pieces of driftwood and with no tools except a *machete*, they made a bedstead. We called it *El Porto* (the rack)—a reminder of the inquisition times. Then they had a rare armchair—the kind used in the dining-room of a good passenger steamer. The sea made them a present of this also and many other sundries. Seats were required for the meeting room, so Chávez and I started out to buy boards for the purpose, but no boards could be had in all the place. Again Thomas had to appeal to the sea. He got a fine, real oak board, six inches wide and twelve feet long. This helped some. But the people were coming out well and we required more seats. This need was finally supplied.

We had an intensive campaign and the Lord gave us a few good souls. We prayed, and felt convinced that there was now material for a local church. We arranged a date and informed the nearest assemblies. Mr. Saword, along with a few brethren from the Port and Aroa, came, so that we had a very precious time at His table for the first time in Tucacas. There were few dry eyes as we sat around Himself. His presence was with us of a truth. Dear Thomas and Freddy saw their desire realised at last—an assembly.

When we went out to the kitchen, Thomas threw his big arms around my neck and wept. "Oh the goodness and loving kindness of our God. How long prayed for! The Lord bless His people! The Lord bless you, Don Guillermo and make your years like the years of Abraham." "Thomas," I said to him, "you have blessed us with long years. Will you not give us an Isaac?" "Had you an Isaac, you might not be here," he said very solemnly. His big head rested on my shoulder and I hugged him as if he had been the whitest man on earth.

Thomas Diego is a real man of God. He has almost forgotten his Anguila English, and speaks very bad Spanish. Withal, he and Freddy are respected in Tucacas by saint and sinner. He was telling us how many women had proposed marriage to them, but Thomas chased them from the place. No playing with Thomas Diego! Everybody calls him "Don Thomas."

We had a terrible time with bed-bugs, as Tucacas is cursed with this plague, which explains in great part why few could stay more than a night. Mr. Saword maintains that he lost a kilo in one night! Folks take them to the meeting and the benches are full of the miserable insects. We all suffered more or less and only shortly before leaving did we get peace. Thomas rarely tried to speak in English; but he used to pray alone in English in an audible voice. One night we were praying before going to bed, when we heard Thomas start to pray. As there was only a partition made of flour-bags between us, we could hear him plainly.

We tried to concentrate, but it was impossible. Before we knew, Thomas was leading us in prayer. It surprised us how well and clearly he could pray in English. He repeated *John 3:16* beautifully. We had to smile at some of his requests to the Lord. One was as follows: "Oh blessed Lord Jesus, Thou knowest how those bugs bite Don Guillermo. Do give Thy servant a good night's rest." He often prayed flat on his face on the floor, when we prayed together before the Gospel meeting.

Here again they require a hall on a better ventilated site. This would be an inducement to the unsaved to go inside, as they often stand at the door and windows and one cannot blame them, for the heat inside is stifling.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### PUERTO CUMAREBO.

**W**E began visiting Puerto Cumarebo about 1931-32. The late Mr. Douglas, Mr. Wells and I had the first service of Gospel meetings in 1932, when a number from La Montana got saved, among them, Damas M. Donquis, commonly known as Damita. These formed the nucleus of the assembly which was formed later in La Montana. Damita, her mother and a few others used to go up there six miles to remember the Lord's death.

The work never grew in Puerto Cumarebo, due in part to the bigoted zeal of the priest, who bullied the poor and beguiled the rich who dared to read or listen to the Gospel. Fortunately, Damita was tactful, well liked and courageous. Her father, old General Francisco Donquis Caldera, was a General of the old school, who had no love for priests. He highly esteemed his daughter Damita, and soon became convinced of the soundness of the Gospel teaching. He was a real practical friend up until the last. His wife got saved, but one or two of the family were enemies, not because they were Roman Catholics but because the Gospel had not the social standing they would have wished. But he would never allow them to molest Damita or his wife. His house was always open to us. He defiantly told the Roman Catholics that he considered it an honour to have the preachers of the Gospel in his home. But, dear man, he never got further, and died suddenly, leaving no hope.

Every time we visited La Montana, we used to spend a day or two in Puerto Cumarebo. Generally it was only a visit, when tracts would be given away. Once with Mr. Fairfield, we were giving away tracts in front of the market, when we heard a voice from the other side of the street asking for one. We crossed over and saw what seemed to

be a woman's bust at a small window. When we got nearer we saw that it was the priest, bold Riera Lugo, looking wild. We could not draw back, so we selected an attractive leaflet, entitled "The Prodigal Son," containing the exact words of *Luke* 15, published by the Scripture Gift Mission, London. We thought that he would surely respect God's Word. Vain hope! He took it and one glance sufficed. He ripped it to pieces and threw it on the street. He then gave way to his rage and vomited up all the bile of his intolerance. He called us *un sinvergüenza* (shameless—a biting insult in Venezuela). That made the blood boil in our veins, but we kept cool and did not speak until he had exhausted himself. We turned away and began giving away tracts before him at the front of the market. But we knew that he would accuse us to the chief of going and insulting him and throwing tracts in at his window. We knew the tricks of those degraded men, by bitter experience, so we called at the Government House and explained all to the civil chief. He assured us that he knew him to be a very intolerant, rude man, and that we should go on with our work, which we did.

Time passed and again Damita encouraged us to try another series of meetings. She found a house for us, and finally my wife, Sr. Pena and I went along and had a rousing campaign. What added much to our difficulties was the fact that the Pentecostal people went there at the same time. Their leader, a Swiss in Coro, had written us telling us of their intention of invading Puerto Cumarebo. We wrote him a clear letter stating that he would only cause trouble, and play into the hands of the priests; better to leave the place to us as we had worked it long before he was in Venezuela, and that we were planning a more intensive campaign.

Señorita Damita rented a house on Calle S. Pedro. The Pentecostals went and rented one right in front and began with their trumpet. At our request, Damita managed to rent a house from her brother, away in another part of the town. The Pentecostals gave away tracts, "El Sembrador,"

from Mr. Harris in Mexico, and "Las Buenas Nuevas," from Grant Publishing House in Los Angeles, avoiding giving away their own paper "El Evangelista Pentecosta," as they tried to make out that they were not Pentecostals but were "Evangelicos," as we were. We were in a dilemma to know what we ought to do for some weeks, but we went on quietly. They had two paid "pastors" who dogged our steps, and wherever we got anyone interested, there they were, singing, praying and getting them to hold up their hand or come forward and be prayed for.

Don Pastor and I decided that we must make our positions clear if we were going to see any real work done. We went to see the leaders. It seemed to us that it would not be very difficult to prove to them that they were teaching erroneous doctrine, as they seemed to have little knowledge of God's Word apart from the Scriptures in Joel, speaking tongues, healing, Philip's daughters who prophesied. They knew nothing about prophetic teaching and did not know that they were called "Pentecostals." But they feared the Swiss pastor and his active wife in Coro who might cut off their little salary. We prayed with them and their Swiss leader, and spent hours seeking to show them God's order. At times they admitted they had no Scripture for some of their doings, but they could not change. We write this not in a boasting spirit. On the contrary it caused us many a heartache to see their zeal, and also that they said they were real Christians, yet we had to refuse fellowship with them.

Their Gospel was not full-orbed, little preaching to produce real conviction of sin. Most of their conversions were traced to some healing of the body. Then came the wonderful experience—"the baptism of the Spirit" and then "they spoke in tongues." Those simple people told us innocently that they could change to as many as three languages in one prayer! They could speak Chinese at times so that the Chinese could hear the Gospel through them. We reminded them that there were no Chinese

within many miles. But they said that was our unbelief as we had not the "baptism of the Spirit."

The local pastor was a simple man, who, apart from his wife, might have been differently. They had a son about eighteen and he told Sr. Pena one day that he could convince his father, but his mother, never. "She is a *culebrita*." (A little snake.)

This sad state of affairs did us, them, and the Gospel very much harm. The foxy priest soon recognised that we were two groups, and not all one, as the Pentecostals maintained. He started writing large bills and then began a real discussion by the Press. We answered his publications right away, one after another. It cost money, but Sr. Peña spared no expense and money in seeking to profit by the interest thus created. Most were reading the discussions and Riera Lugo got more than he bargained for, and quit, saying that we were more to be pitied than criticized, and that he would not cease to pray for us. Good man that he is! He thought that he would chase us out as he had done before, but this time he was mistaken. He bought a fine mule and with his attendant, he scoured the country, visiting all the places where he knew that we have given away tracts. He was fanatically pro-Nazi. The death of Mussolini and Hitler were dark clouds in his horizon. On the 9th of May when we heard that the end of the war had come, the horns blew, shots and rockets sounded, the people drank and the school children had a big procession in the street, carrying all the Allied banners, even to the hammer and sickle, but no peal of bells came from the church of Riera Lugo.

Then came the Revolution, and Señorita Damita's brother was named Governor of Puerto Cumarebo. He is a fine, liberal fellow and things became unpleasant for the priest, who threw in his lot with "C.O.P.E.I.," the clerical party and preached politics from the pulpit. His party was defeated by a very large majority and Riera Lugo is leading a martyr's life. On one side of his temple he has the ranting loud speaker of the Pentecostals and on the other, he has the blatant propaganda of the Communists.

We had another campaign the following year, Sr. Peña, Sr. Naranjo, my wife and I. One of the professing Christians had gone with the Pentecostals to give away tracts in a place about three miles from Puerto Cumarebo, called La Cienega. He had the "gift of the gab," but not the gift of the Spirit, as we were to learn at bitter cost. However, sometimes the devil outwits himself, as he was preparing a fine tool in Juancho Blanco, to do his dirty work and discredit the Gospel around Puerto Cumarebo. This Juancho was a reader and professed to be saved through reading the Bible shortly after we began the special meetings. He allowed his hair to grow long, was very studious and seldom let the Bible out of his hand. We used to watch him in the little store, where he would have the Bible on the counter and was always speaking to his customers. We confess we were suspicious of this zeal, but we had no clue to doubt him. But this fellow encouraged us to go and try La Cienega, as he said that the Pentecostals were not giving the people the Gospel. We did go and a house was given to us free and we got a fine hearing for eight nights. But we had to leave as it was time to go to the Aroa Conference at Easter. When my wife, Sr. Peña and I returned, we learned of the terrible harm done in three short weeks. The sanctimonious Juancho had induced another Christian's wife to elope with him. This brother had been his benefactor, had given him a store to run and provided food for him in his home. As the brother was employed in the oil company he was away from home all day. The base fellow used to read and pray with the woman until he had her deceived and then he persuaded her to run away with him, leaving four children.

The news spread like wildfire. The Roman Catholics rejoiced, the long-robed Pharisee glorified, and what shall we say of the Pentecostals? The least said the better, but they thought that we would never go back and that the field would be theirs. But we had God, His Word and a clean conscience. Don Pastor Peña was at one



with us. He, and my wife and I again sailed for Puerto Cumarebo on the old s.s. *Orinoco*. We entered as if nothing had happened. We fearlessly preached the Word, first in Puerto Cumarebo and then we went to La Cienega, to find that the Pentecostals had taken away our house from us. When we asked them their reason, they frankly told us that after what Juancho had done they did not expect us to return. We told them that Juancho was not the Gospel and that was what we were there to preach. Nothing daunted, we went and had a meeting in Señora Juanita's little house. She and her three fine boys had got saved on our first visit. They are a splendid family, and stood by us in that dark hour.

The house was too small for the meetings, so we rented one alongside the Roman Catholic temple, where his "Reverence the Bishop of Coro had slept," but he forgot to pay the rent. The owner was angry so we got the place. We had one or two meetings amidst an uproar. One night Don Pastor and I went alone, as it was a meeting night in Puerto Cumarebo. We had a terrible time, as the lewd fellows and the crazed women wished to rush the place and beat us. We had to close all the doors but one. I stood at it and kept the roughs out while Don Pastor tried to make himself heard. Then he kept watch while I did my best. The policeman stood at the door with a drawn sword and kept them from entering the room. The mob outside danced around a cross in front of the temple to the beating of drums and other instruments. Every now and again a gun was fired and we were in a bad crowd.

We did not wish the mob to wreck the house after we left and we could not but admire the courage of the two sons of Señora Juanita Reyes who offered to stay and sleep in the room all night. Sr. Peña and I went out into the dark. This was the signal for a general onslaught. But now the civil chief appeared and he and the policeman kept the people at bay until Don Pastor and I got away in the darkness. Next night we were back on the job.

We found that the chief, who was very favourable, had eight armed men ready to keep order. But we did not require them, as, strange enough, a crazed woman, who had bawled herself hoarse in front of the house on her way home after we left, affirmed that a fierce black pig attacked her. The harder she ran the more the wild animal tried to overtake her, until she fell fainting. She was convinced that she had done wrong and returned to the plaza where there were still many of the people, and told them that they had done very wrong in disturbing the preaching of the Gospel. This worked wonders. No one seemed to doubt it and from that day until now we have had order.

But we consulted with the chief, who agreed that it would be better not to have the meetings so near the Roman Catholic temple. We moved over to the little house of Srn. Juanita Reyes once more. Sometimes we would have thirty women packed inside and as many men in the space in front of the house seated on benches. The roof was low and made of mud. Sr. Peña and I are both about six feet tall so that we had to keep under the peak to get room for action. The only window was six inches by a foot—just a hole with a face or two always stuck in to see and hear. We had a Coleman gasoline lamp, which did not help matters. By the time we got through we were gasping for breath and wet with honest sweat. Fortunately Don Pastor had brought along two fine mules and we enjoyed the canter home in the sea breeze.

The Pentecostal man could pray, sing and play the trumpet, but he could not preach and after a few weeks he quit, as the people would not go to hear him. We worked often by day making benches for the halls in Puerto Cumarebo, La Montana, Mirimire, Belén and La Ciénega. In all we made fifty benches holding four each. We had thought of forming an assembly but the affair of Juancho had caused such a bad impression that we decided to wait.

Next year we were back again—Sr. Peña, Sr. Linares and my wife. It was the best trip we have had as we went in the coasting steamer s.s. *Bolivar*. We had another go at La Ciénega but as the persecution died down, so did the interest, and we did not get the people out as in the previous year. Yet those who had professed were firm, and at the Conference at La Montana Sr. Pena baptized nine from there. In the meantime, Mr. and Mrs. Saword, Mr. Wells and others had gone over for short visits. The time had come to form the assembly, which we did with the fellowship of all. They go on steadily. The woman who eloped with Juancho did not stay with him long. She confessed her sin to her husband and, as he is a Christian, he forgave her, but the shame was too much for them so they moved away East to Puerto La Cruz, from where they write us, and it would seem that this poor woman is now restored to the Lord.

Damita Donquis has been the soul of the work and has at last reaped the fruit of her steady testimony for fifteen years. There is another good man there called Wilfred Hoyte, a tailor. He was baptized as a baby in an Anglican place in Trinidad. His grandmother had some connection with the Assembly in Woodbrook and when about eighteen, to please her, he made a profession and was immersed. Then his unsaved father brought him to Venezuela, where he soon lost his religion.

He fell in love with a real white girl in Píritu and dared her father's revolver to marry her. But she was a Roman Catholic and he was a *protestante*. He must be baptized. This the obliging bishop of Coro did, and so Hoyte was sprinkled, immersed, and now with holy water on his head, saliva in his ear, and salt in his mouth, was made a member of the "Great Mother of Harlots."

When he went to Puerto Cumarebo the Pentecostals wished to make him a member, but he knew too much for them. He came to our meetings and the simple Word of God got into his darkened heart. One night he went home, but came back later and told us he wished to speak

to us. He told us his life story. He said that he really wished to have the right thing and get saved. We sought to help him and he confessed faith in Christ. The change was not so marked in him as in some others as he was not an immoral man. Along with others he was baptized at La Montana by Sr. Peña, for the fourth time according to man, but for the first time according to God. He has gone on well and is now the best man in the meeting, as the knowledge he got from his old grandmother and in Woodbrook is now bearing fruit. The Lord has prospered him in his business. He is correspondent for the assembly, and they are collecting funds to build a hall. He goes on foot, often alone, each week to preach to the saints in La Ciénega. His wife, Sra. Ada, is convinced, but unfortunately so far not converted. They have a fine sturdy family, mostly of boys, and one a real fighter called Winston!

Puerto Cumarebo makes the fifth port where there is an assembly along the Caribbean coast of Venezuela. In fellowship with La Montana, they have now an annual conference, which has proved to be a season of blessing to saints, and salvation to sinners.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CAPITA.

CAPITA is really a result of the work of the Santa Rosa assembly. Through the active efforts of the Christians, the Gospel was heralded far and near, so that some got saved from Quebrada Bonita and later an assembly was formed there in fellowship with Santa Rosa, as related in *It Can Be Done*. A number of those who were in the Santa Rosa assembly lived in a place called Capita. They found it nearer for them to go to Quebrada Bonita. Later they saw a number saved in Capita through local effort and occasional visits from the Lord's servants, especially Mr. Saword. Soon there were more numbers added, so they wished to see an assembly formed.

They worked hard on their hall and the Sawords went there for some time to help to finish the work. Mr. Saword sent us word to go over for the opening of the new hall and the formation of the assembly. The happy visit we had is still fresh in our memory. We shall copy from an entry made at the time:

"A brother was at Urama with a horse and a donkey, to meet us. We had a good trip to Capita. Glad to see the Sawords as we had not seen them for some time, having been in Falcón. Mr. Saword had had a spell of meetings on his chart. The first night, I forgot the long hard day, seeing the hall full of attentive listeners. That night the Lord saved a man called Juan, whose wife had professed three nights previous. Next day Mr. Saword baptized nine in the river before a respectful crowd. In the afternoon we had a ministry meeting and a very good gospel meeting at night, when another man got saved.

"On Lord's Day the Christians went from Santa Rosa

and Quebrada Bonita to be at the formation of the assembly, when about one hundred were at His table. What a triumph for the Gospel to see so many saved in that mountainous region such a long distance from the highway! Another good ministry meeting in the afternoon, and at night the hall was packed. A boy called David and a girl called Aura professed to be saved that night. Monday was to be our last night. It rained heavily in the afternoon. We did not expect many at the meeting as it is not easy to pass those mountain trails after heavy rain, and darkness adds to the discomfort.

"What was our surprise to see the hall packed to the door. Some had walked nine miles, having crossed the swollen river seven times! There was help to preach and quite a number were broken down. Four confessed faith in Christ; one man, two women and a girl of fourteen or fifteen. Our hearts were glad. It was 11 p.m. ere the Sawords got preparations made so as to be able to leave next morning at 3 a.m. From the time we got up it took three hours to get all ready to leave. We formed a goodly company of fifteen persons, eleven donkeys, two mules and two horses. We reached Urama at one p.m., where Mr. Saword had a truck to meet us and we got home at three. My wife had a welcome dinner ready for us all as we were a hungry crowd."

Capita goes on, but has suffered from the usual trek during the last years of so many of the country people to the cities. The three assemblies, Santa Rosa, Quebrada Bonita and Capita, suffer from the lack of ministry, as they are from five to seven hours by horse away from the main road. This makes visits rare. The Sawords have been very faithful to those places. Most years during the school vacation they all go up there and have special meetings. Visiting, singing and mountain climbing are the order of the day. All the folk of the mountain look forward to their annual visit. A conference is held each year, around March, in Santa Rosa. This has been a real boon to the saints as they get three days of ministry of the Word.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### CHICHIRIVICHE.

**T**HERE was a little assembly formed in a place with a big name—Chichiriviche. It has been a weakling, we are sorry to say. Sr. Pastor Peña who has his home there, has been most faithful. Although a number got saved, being a seafaring people, the men have gone to La Guaira or Puerto Cabello and usually have sent for their families later, so that they are reduced to-day to a mere handful, but those who remain are steadfast in the faith.

Chichiriviche has large cocoanut plantations and is a great producer, but drunkenness ruins the health of the inhabitants. There is much talk of building a cement producing plant. If this is carried out it may mean a new influx of life into the little assembly. There is an old veteran there, well over ninety years of age, called Don Julio Rivas. He will not give in to failing sight and reads a very large Bible so as not to need glasses. He never misses a meeting if he is able. Sr. Peña tells of how he was there one night for a Bible reading and the only one who went along was old Don Julio. Sr. Peña went through the service as if a hundred had been present. The old man said after they had finished—"That was a very good meeting, Sr. Peña!" When we knew him first he used to frighten the troublesome boys who molested us at the door, as he would get a flexible cane and lay it on to all and sundry. He is fond of singing and he gives us much food for thought from time to time as he sends us long hymns with twenty verses, which contain "more truth than poetry."

## CHAPTER XX.

### DAY SCHOOL WORK.

ONE might think that Evangelical schools have had their day. According to the Minister of Education, no religion may now be taught in the schools, and pupils must not be molested because of their religious affiliations; but in practice, this is very far from being carried out. The wily priests still influence the teachers to have the catechism taught in school and the children led to confession. Where the priest can make his influence felt, the children of Evangelical parents are bullied and boycotted until, in some cases, the parents have had to take the children from school. Then again, the Christian parents do not wish to send their children to schools where evolution is taught and dancing and all sorts of worldly associations are encouraged, which are not conducive to the conversion of the young. We refrain from mentioning the more gross forms of evil which, alas! are but too common, owing to the lax morals of some of the teachers, who, wishing to be modern, have their minds warped. Strange as it may seem, the Roman Catholics will even accept evolution, because, if the pupils answer questions relative to creation in a scriptural way, they will be failed. Many Roman Catholic parents send their children to the Evangelical schools because of the moral effect of the Gospel. Therefore we still believe that our schools have an important niche to fill in this "Venezuela on the move."

However, this branch of the work has not prospered as we would wish in the period of which we write. This is owing to several causes, one being the enforced absence of the sisters in charge. Miss Ruth Scott went home in 1941,



and, owing to ill health, has not been able to return. Miss Fanny Goff, commended to the Lord's work from the Forest Grove, Oregon, Assembly, came to Venezuela in 1938. She helped Miss Gulston in the El Mene School, but when Miss Scott went home, she had to take charge of the larger school in Puerto Cabello. Then Miss Gulston and Miss Goff went North on furlough, expecting to be absent a year; but, owing to the opposition of the regime then in power, they were not allowed to return until the next government came into power, over two years later. El Mene School was closed, much to the regret of the people there. At that time Miss Scott was awaiting permission to re-enter Venezuela. Not knowing that the delay in getting this permit would end in refusal, a Venezuelan sister teaching in the Port school, was asked to take charge pending Miss Scott's expected return. Though the sisters were not allowed to return, the Port school was kept on, as it is inscribed in the Government, and if closed, might be refused permission to re-open. However, the teacher in charge had not the needed qualifications for this responsibility, so the standard of teaching declined. When Miss Goff returned she again took charge with the help of two sisters, Juana de Bracho and Rosalba Paez, and this school now promises well. Thus we see that a lack of properly qualified and efficient Venezuelan teachers has been perhaps the chief cause of lack of success in school work. Our sisters have again and again helped to train Venezuelan teachers. Some have had little aptitude for teaching, others have done well but have been forced to leave by ill health, or have married. Then Satan seems to make a special target of those who engage in this work and one and another have given trouble through pride, jealousy or other sins. Though good training and aptitude are desirable, the chief need is for a humble and consecrated spirit.

Miss Gulston is again carrying on the work alone in El Mene—a heavy task, for she has a large class of about seventy; and besides the teaching, she is mother, sister



Miss E. C. Watson.



A typical Venezuelan Senorita.



*From left to right:*  
Miss R. W. Scott, Miss E. K. J. Gulston, Miss F. M. Goff.

and friend to most of the folk in El Mene. This gives her great influence. We consider her visits and spiritual help of equal importance to, if not greater than, the school work. Visiting is also done by the teachers in the Port. It undoubtedly helps the Sunday School and the Assembly.

The school which Srn. Serafina kept for many years in Aroa has closed, as our sister had to attend to her aged mother. But a goodly number of children got saved while in Srn. Serafina's Sunday School class. We saw two of them in Caracas the other day—grown women, both in the assembly. They have grateful memories of their school days in Aroa. Then when we were in La Guaira last week, coming north to Canada, a mechanic hailed us by name. We did not remember him, but he told us he was a former pupil of Miss Watson and Miss Gulston. Quite friendly before his companions, he said that when in Caracas he went occasionally to the Gospel Hall. We gave him a New Testament and a booklet, "Whither Bound?" He wished to be specially remembered to Miss Watson.

In both schools the Word of God is faithfully taught, and one feels that though the children may not respond in their school-days, at least they have the Scriptures stored in their minds, which undoubtedly influences them in after life.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

THE Sunday Schools have played a very important part in our evangelization effort. Nearly all the assemblies have a Sunday School ranging from the seven and eight to whom a portion of God's Word (Ref. *Eccles.* 11:2) is to be given, to the school in Puerto Cabello with about one hundred and fifty on the roll. There is a great lack of consecrated, intelligent teachers in all places, it must be admitted. As in many places at home, Sunday School work is looked upon as inferior to Bible Class, or other Gospel activities, so that we do not get the cream of the brains to teach the little ones. We have tried to prepare teachers for this work, but with little success. Yet it is wonderful how the Lord honours any honest effort on the part of those who seek to teach His Word to the boys and girls. We have none of the high tension Sunday School methods developed by the denominations in the home-lands in order to get children to go to Sunday School and to keep them interested. Most of our Sunday School children go simply because they like it, or their Christian parents induce them to go.

In a number of cases the unsaved parents of Sunday School children have been led to come to meetings and reached with the Gospel. Then, in the homes of the children of the Sunday School such parents can be visited. At the New Year the larger schools give some rewards to the children for attendance, conduct and learning scripture portions. Oft-times those prizes are Bibles, New Testaments, sound books or good texts.

We had the privilege of speaking to Port children at their examination. They certainly did very well and

accredited the superintendent's efforts, ably helped by Miss Goff. Fifty-three said their chapters without a single error. With many it was *Isaiah* 53. I spoke to them on 1946 which I had drawn in large numerals on a blackboard. They told me "One" meant unity and that God was One. "Nine" was used to remind them "where are the nine?" "Four" was used to represent the world and in each Gospel they could give me a text to prove that God loved all children in the four corners of the earth. Then "Six" was at once in connection with man's number. Miss Gulston tells me twenty-five said portions correctly in El Mene. That this Scripture stored in the young mind will one day yield fruit, is our earnest hope.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CARING FOR THE SICK.

CARING for the sick and suffering is an essential part of the Gospel, as exemplified by Him who made the poor the special object of His solicitude, and by the Apostle Paul who followed most closely His steps. He reminded the saints of Galatia that he and Barnabas had been exhorted to remember the poor, and he adds—"Which very thing I was zealous to do." He not only showed zeal in preaching, but also in caring for the poor and sick among the Lord's people.

For years we have seen the beneficial results of the kindly care of sisters in connection with the Lord's people and also the unsaved. When we were in Belén the last time, there was a man living in front of the hall who had little use for the Gospel. He had for some time been lying in his hammock with a badly swollen eye which would not respond to treatment. My wife began dressing the eye and reduced the swelling, so that one afternoon while we were in the meeting, his son saw the head of a worm or larva of an insect they call *miche* showing itself. The boy caught hold of it and pulled it out, causing intense suffering to his father. We saw it afterwards. It was about an inch long and a quarter of an inch in thickness. It had bored through the eyelash and was starting on the eyeball. This was the cause of the terrible pain the man suffered, and caused a trickle of blood to be seen on the eyeball. The eye improved right away and he was very grateful to Mrs. Williams, became friendly and allowed his daughter of fifteen to go to the meetings and the young woman is showing interest.

Then again, when Elina, one of the young school teachers in the Port school, took a hemorrhage of the lungs one day at school, Mrs. Saword and my wife, both trained nurses, put her in one of our rooms and cared for her for six weeks until she was able to return to her home in Caracas; so that with rest and care she is now real well and lungs almost free of trouble. Humanly speaking, they saved that young life. These are only two cases among hundreds, to show the variety of ways in which a trained nurse can be a real asset in evangelical work. Mr. Saword has had good success at extracting teeth. At many conferences he is busy between meetings at this service, thus giving much relief to the Lord's people as well as to the unsaved. But there is need of something more practical, such as a home or hospital for the poor and infirm. It is very costly to run a hospital, and we have neither doctor nor a trained staff. Some time ago there was exercise among the Puerto Cabello brethren about buying a home for the needy saints among them. All on their own, they began weekly prayer meetings, though the sisters had preceded them, led by Mrs. Saword. The sisters also met in private homes to pray. Then it grew and became an assembly matter; they met in the hall, the brethren in the large hall and the sisters in the anteroom. Their collections steadily accumulated. The assembly helped several poor infirm sisters monthly and the sister's interest grew until finally a house was rented and a good patient sister was put in charge. This new move was looked upon with interest to see how it would go. Mrs. Saword acted as matron and her daughter Eunice showed her capability in practical help. The sisters did all they could to make the old ladies comfortable, but they "waxed fat and kicked" so the home had to be given up.

Before this happened, when there was a hope of seeing something better, we got an offer of land at the foot of a hill on the outskirts of Puerto Cabello. Already some fine houses have been built on the hillside and there is a new street running in front of the lot. It is 175 feet wide

and 250 feet deep. The owner was a friend of Sr. Peña, through whose influence we got it at 16 cents the square meter. The land cost \$1,000.

We are all exercised about what we should do with this site. The little experience we have had with the old ladies makes us careful before tackling anything bigger; yet there is a real need for a place where aged people could be cared for as well as the sick and convalescent. It was a shame that old brother Olivero should have died in a beggar's home. The Christians still suffer a great deal in the Government hospitals where the priests and the nuns have any influence. In the large hospitals such as the Vargas Hospital in Caracas, the Lord's people are well cared for generally without regard to their religious affiliation.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### VENEZUELAN WORKERS.

#### SEÑOR PASTOR PENA. V.

AS far back as 1916 we saw that if the work was to be done in a permanent and scriptural way, it would be essential to have Venezuelan teachers and evangelists. Fortunately, most of the Venezuelan Christians at their conversion become propagandists of their newly found faith. This, with some, wears off after baptism, and they settle down to the type of Christian known at home as "bread breakers." But with many, the desire grows, and real work has been done by such men and women by means of personal evangelism.

Then we observed, as assemblies were formed, that they managed to carry on their own gospel testimony, so that the urgent need of evangelists was not so acute as it would be in the denominational places where they depend on the prepared "pastor" to run the "mission." But in 1916, as is recounted in *It Can Be Done*, a man called Manuel Acosta showed wonderful zeal and knowledge. Being clever and capable, he completely won the confidence of all the workers. He was later commended to the work, and apparently ran well for years. But in 1926 he had to be put away from the fellowship. He turned a bitter enemy, and went back to a dissolute life. In a short time he was cut off in the prime of life. Even the unsaved remarked: "*El juicio de Dios!*"—(the judgment of God!).

This sad and humiliating experience made us very wary of another attempt. Still, from time to time we encouraged some who had ability. One brother, who

had some exercise, went with us on a trip to Falcón. It happened to be a very trying trip of four days in a truck, amidst mud and rain. He got malarial fever and on returning said: "*Nunca jamás!*" (Never more!)

More and more we saw real gift and grace developing in some of the assemblies. Mr. Saword tried to encourage one brother, but at the end of two weeks he had to send him home. However this did not knock the "preach" out of him, as several times he has tried to go out on his own without the commendation of the assembly where he is in fellowship, and the last time he made a number of converts in one place. No less than thirty-two professed in about three weeks. When Mr. Wells and I went along some time later, four or five were all we could find and they were cases evangelized by the assembly for a long time previously. One Christian described his campaign as like a great fire with much flame and smoke and now there only remained the ashes. Yet in another place where he had meetings there were a number saved, as time has borne evidence, but he was stopped when the elders knew that he had never received a letter of commendation from Valencia where he was in fellowship. He returned to his home and since then has never tried again to go far afield as brethren do not accept his offer to have meetings. We had a letter from him, at this conference, still complaining that his gift was not recognized. We referred him to the case of David and the new cart. He was doing a good thing but in the wrong way. His idea to preach was good, but he must, first of all, get the fellowship of the assemblies around him and then he would see how the Lord would bless him. His weakness is that no one can labour with him unless willing to take second place. The elders do not like his affectation; he imitates we foreign preachers.

We have another good man in the Valencia assembly who, when he was encouraged, said that he could trust the Lord but he could not trust his brethren. This brother has many like-minded in our home assemblies!



Sr. Pastor Pena.



Sr. Teodora Acosta and wife, of Aroa.

Then the war came. The Fairfields had gone home and they could not get back. The Wells were awaiting the first chance to go as they had been here a very long time and Mrs. Wells was in poor health. Miss Gulston, Miss Scott, and Miss Goff were all away, and, due to priestcraft, were not allowed to return. In moving in and out among the Lord's people and in building halls, where one works with them, eats with them and sleeps with them, we began to appreciate the genuine Christian qualities of certain brethren.

After exercise and the hearty fellowship of Mr. Wells and Mr. Saword, we resolved to call a company of the elder brethren together at the Port Conference two years ago. We stated to them the need of the preaching of the Gospel, that so many workers were away, that the door might be shut to us all at any day, and that the Lord perhaps might raise up some of themselves if the assemblies had more practical fellowship in this work. In Venezuela it is difficult to remit small sums of money. This has been improved by the *giro postal*, resembling a postal money order but far more costly and complicated. Then again the assemblies are far apart and it is not easy to know the location of the workers.

We had seen very practical service rendered to we missionaries during the war by *Echoes of Service*, *The Fields*, *Voices from the Vineyard*, *Believers' Magazine*, and by others, in passing on gifts of fellowship when government regulations prohibited private individuals from sending money out of the country. The workers here were at one in seeking to encourage the assemblies to do more or less the same in cases when they could not communicate personally with the workers. We offered to pay all office expenses if the assemblies would remit to us any gifts and those sums would be passed on to the workers with whom they wished to have fellowship, and we would not use any of this money for ourselves.

We had a session of an hour and a half. Many questions were asked and answered, opinions were

expressed and finally all seemed agreed that this forward movement was of the Lord. The gifts began to come in. Mr. Saword bore the brunt of attending to this office work. The Lord has blessed the effort and at the Port conference we read a report prepared by Mr. Fairfield of the gifts received and how they had been used, which was certainly very encouraging. We are careful to show that we are only mediums in passing the assembly fellowship on to those Venezuelan brethren who give all their time to the Lord's work.

Now we had the means *coming in* for the workers but how about the workers *going out*? The first brother whom we thought would go forth was Don Pastor Peña. (We must make it clear that "Pastor" is a Christian name in Spanish and not a title as some think.) Señor Peña has a very interesting history. His father was an honest, hardworking and sincere Roman Catholic, and was the owner of a *balandra* (small type of sailing boat). He sent Pastor to be educated in Puerto Cabello in Dr. Centeno's school, where he got a fair education. He was just sixteen years of age when we landed in Puerto Cabello April 25th, 1910. God was preparing in Dr. Centeno's private school a youth we were to meet twenty-three years later. How marvellous are God's ways! Afterwards, he went to sea with his father, who must have been a good man, as his son speaks feelingly about him. He did not smoke, drink nor gamble and never allowed Pastor to go ashore alone.

His father died and the expenses of his sickness and death ate up all the capital. Young Pastor was the eldest son and he had to shoulder the responsibility of bringing up a large family, under the guidance of his mother. He was what the world calls a good son. The young mariner learned early to hate the Gómez regime with all its servility, and was soon a leader in the underground movement to overthrow the "Tyrant of the Andes." As he visited the Dutch island of Curacao frequently in his sailing boat, he was in touch with all

the political exiles from Venezuela who lived there. They gave him revolutionary literature printed in the U.S.A., and as he visited the various seaports in Venezuela he would give this to junior military officers and others who were in the secret of the movement. He ran terrible risks. Each time he sailed into Puerto Cabello, he told us, he looked at the thick walls of the Castillo Libertador where some fifteen hundred political prisoners were rotting in the dungeons, and asked himself would he be soon among them.

The final plans were nearing completion. Many of the university students were in the movement. Sr. Peña's job was allotted to him. In Puerto Cabello there was a large government launch usually anchored in the same place. He anchored his balandra as near to it as possible and took in all details. He had a trained launch crew aboard and a marine engineer for the motor. They all appeared simple sailors. At the zero hour they were to be anchored near the launch, seize it and then make full speed for Curacao where the exiles had the ammunition.

But the old Brujo-wizard, as they called Gómez, could never be caught napping. He discovered the plot. Hundreds of fine young students were treated "mildly" as he called it, forced to make new roads in a broiling sun with a fifty pound ball chained to their ankle; others, more dangerous, grew to be old men with bald heads and beards, in the dungeons. We saw some of them when they were released and they were a sorry sight. Don Pastor fled incognito to El Mene in the State of Falcón. He started working for the oil company, expecting Gómez' sleuth hounds any day, but by the Lord's good hand he was never discovered. His fidelity and honesty soon won the confidence of Mr. Brown the director of the company, who put him in charge of two hundred and fifty men.

Away back in 1921 when we first went to Aroa, a woman called Rosa Arcila got saved. She was a simple but faithful soul. When the oil boom was on in El Mene, she went there with her daughter Mercedes to wash and

iron. They lived in "Camp 28," over which Sr. Peña was foreman. He was attracted to their simple house and Srn. Rosa lost no time in giving him, first *El Mensajero Cristiano*, which he liked, and when she saw him interested she gave him a Bible. Then when he did not believe with the rapidity she expected, she told him a bit of her mind, which would not make such good reading. But she had sown the incorruptible seed. He began to go to the small meetings in Blas Colinas' home or rather hut. It was there we saw him for the first time at a meeting we had in Blas' yard, as the people could not get room inside. We noted the tall, strong, fair-looking man with a smile on his face as he listened on the outside of the ring. The Lord had to deal with him ere he was willing to accept Christ. One day he escaped death when a truck turned over at a bend of the road. While others were laughing and joking, he went up the road and thought, "If I had been killed my soul would now be in hell." When he got home he read his Bible anew. He came to *John 5:24*. "El que oye, y cree, tiene vida eterna." He mused, "he that *heareth* and *believeth* hath everlasting life." He came to the conclusion that he did hear and did believe and that he had everlasting life, but he did not at first confess openly that he was saved. He attended the little meeting with more interest, and one day when he heard that some of the men wanted to go to pass the Lord's Day in the assembly in Mirimire some eight hours away by horse-back, he offered them mounts and said that he would like to go with them. They were all simple at that time and most of them newly saved.

At the Gospel meeting in Mirimire an elder brother, seeing that Pastor seemed to have joy and came along with the Christians, asked him to say a little word on the Gospel. He then told them how he had found joy and peace through *John 5:24*. He really began to awaken to the fact that his sins were all forgiven and that he was a real child of God. He let his light shine and preached well in El Mene along with others and they won souls for

Christ. With seven others, he was baptized in a lagoon near El Mene. Later, when the assembly was formed, he was the leading man. He has suffered terrible persecution from his poor deluded Roman Catholic mother and family, and after fifteen years only one sister has got saved. He was a great help to us in building the hall in El Mene, and later, Miss Gulston's home, and has developed a fine gift as a preacher and teacher.

When the oil company closed down he dedicated himself to his plantation where he works hard, early and late. He has had spells of meetings with each of our brethren, but it has been our lot to labour most with him, sometimes for three months at a time. We have gone each year together to Falcón. To our mind, dear Pastor Peña is one of the noblest Christians we have in Venezuela. He is a Christian and a gentleman, most unselfish, always willing to don his overalls and do a bit of hard work. He is untiring in his service to the Lord's people and has been exercised about giving all his time to the Lord's work for years. But there is one hindrance. Sr. Peña is a widower. His wife died of tuberculosis years ago. He nursed her to the last. They had one boy called also Pastor Antonio. He wished this lad to be a real Evangelical and so to avoid the Roman Catholic influence of his mother and family he kept him in the Puerto Cabello Evangelical School for years. But, dear man, he found to his bitter grief that education does not make a Christian. As the boy grew and developed, the more apathy he showed for the Gospel, with corresponding hankering after his grandmother. As Sr. Peña had no home he did not have the same influence over the boy as if he had been under his own care.

The young man, now a medical student in the Mérida University, has no use for the Gospel. His father needs to carry on the plantation in order to pay the heavy expenses of his education. He gave usually about half of the year to the Lord's work and the rest he gave to the plantation. Naturally, Don Pastor Peña was the first man we thought of when we were looking for evangelists.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### SEÑOR JOSE NARANJO.

THE next we will look at is Sr. José Naranjo. Here we have a contrast in many ways, but what a mercy that God's servants are not like a lot of bricks or cement blocks, all made from the same mould! Sr. Naranjo was born in Aragua. He led a wild and careless life and nearly died in a hospital in La Guaira. He, too, went to El Mene to the oil fields and there came in contact with the Christians and the Gospel. Opposed at first, he later, through the influence of Sr. Peña became convicted of sin and went to some of the meetings, whence we saw him for the first time and with Don Pastor we walked home together. He said that he fully acknowledged that the Gospel was the true religion, but his wife Carmen was very much opposed. He did not want to have war in the house, as one cannot live in Rome and fight with the Pope.

He was a blacksmith in the Company's works. One day he and his companion went hunting, with more in their stomachs than was good for their heads. They got lost, and found themselves in a flooded river, up to the waist in water. They could not get out, so climbed a big tree, as the river was rising. What was their horror to see that the flood was carrying down snakes which tried to climb the tree also! They passed a long and terrible night. Naranjo thought of the Gospel, his sins, and the hell that awaited him if he were drowned. He made a resolution but broke it when next day he got safely out of the water and wood.

When Gómez died, strikes and sanctions were the order of the day. Sr. Naranjo was a red hot agitator and,



Mr. and Mrs. William Williams.



Sr. Jose Naranjo and Sra. Carmen de Naranjo.

along with three others, went to Caracas to see the Government about improving the workers' conditions in the camps. For this he lost his job, so then had to go to Caracas to look for work. Again he came in contact with the Gospel and, strange enough, one night Mr. Fairfield met him in Juan Ascanio's house, when Mr. Fairfield and his bride went to Caracas on their honeymoon. They had a small gospel meeting and Sr. Naranjo showed real interest. After the meeting he got saved. Mr. Fairfield went down on his knees and prayed with him while Carmen his wife stood by and sneered. However, shortly afterwards she too was won for Christ. Then he went away to work for the Governor of Caracas, on his country estate. He was lost to us, more or less, for a good while. However, he wished to be baptized but saw that this could not be arranged until he came to some place where there was an assembly, and where his life would convince the Lord's people that he was a fit subject. This brought him back to Caracas where, later he and Srn. Carmen were baptized, and showed energy in the things of God.

When we were at our wit's end to know what to do with the newly-formed assembly in Caracas because of the defection of the leaders, our eyes were directed to Sr. Naranjo. He and Sr. Luis Peña were looked upon as elders. They were both young, and not long saved and it was surely with fear and trembling that Brother Fairfield and I encouraged them to take hold. It was the Lord's guidance as they have both proved excellent men.

But it was while building the hall in Caracas when he was with us for three months that we came to know the sterling worth of José Naranjo. He took a keen interest in the work and was our right hand man. We began to encourage him to take more part in the meetings. He had been employed by a German contractor, but left him so that he might be free to give all his time to the building of the hall. The German would often come to the job and ask his help. He offered him more wages, better

conditions, and so on, to get him to leave the building where he got only his food. He remained firm in his purpose. Then another day a man he had known in El Mene came and offered him a good job at mounting boilers in the interior. This also he refused, as he said the building of the hall was of more importance.

We spoke to his wife, Srn. Carmen and found that she would not be opposed to his going forth for His Name's sake, so took him to Falcón along with my wife and Sr. Peña. We had to go on a sailing boat, called *goleta*. Sr. Naranjo was sick all the way, but he lay quietly and got wet with the spray so did not faint. My wife slept in what she called "the dog's kennel," and Pastor and I slept on the top of a hatch. José was glad to get ashore at Puerto Cumarebo. We had ten weeks together and he proved himself to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

We returned by mules. The last two days were hard riding. Sr. Peña gave my wife and I his two good mules, but we had to count on the Christians to provide donkeys for the baggage and two mules for our brethren. Sr. Naranjo got a lazy, wicked, stubborn brute, and as he was not a rider, it would make for every door along the road. He had trouble getting it started again and we had to help him drive it along. At Capadare Sr. Peña gave him his animal, a fine example of his unselfish character, and as soon as he mounted Naranjo's mule it refused to budge. Pastor got off, prepared a whip of rawhide. He mounted again and the mule baulked, but got the surprise of its life when the new rider let it have some strokes of the rawhide. He decided to go on, but he simply would not trot properly. He shook every bone in Sr. Peña's body for the whole day. Walking, he fell behind, trotting he was impossible.

Sr. Naranjo also suffered, for if one does not know how to ride a mule it shakes one badly. The last lap was from 4 p.m. until 12 midnight. We had to cross a long sandy plain in which the sand flies were in clouds. They are like midges and most irritating. They fill one's ears,

eyes and nose. Sr. Naranjo was getting away behind and we went back to help him. He was a sight in the moonlight. He was so sore that he was leaning forward to take the weight off the sore spots. Then the flies had tormented him so much that he had made plugs of paper and had stuck them in his ears and two in his nose and surely he looked queer as he jogged along. We were getting into the heavy bush where there are tigers (jaguars) and we told him that the tiger usually got the last rider. This made him try anew and he stood up in the stirrups and tried his best to keep up with the others. No one was more pleased than José Naranjo when we alighted at Anzola's house in Tucacas.

Sr. Peña helped to get all the animals unsaddled and fed. Then he started out on foot to meet the brethren with the donkeys coming behind. He came back at 3 a.m. and hung up his hammock in the yard, as there was no room inside. Unfortunately, a big pig found that his hammock was just at a convenient height for him to scratch his back on, so poor Pastor had little rest. Yet these two brethren were cheery and bright. Sr. Peña's body was sore to the very bones and Naranjo's body was simply raw in parts. We write these details to show what kind of stuff is required for pioneering in Venezuela.

But Sr. Naranjo had proved himself, and when we arrived by train at the Aroa Conference we had no hesitation in commending him to our brethren. We had a special service during the conference to commend to the Lord's work Sr. Peña and Sr. Naranjo. They both gave some details of how they were saved, then baptized, and how they had desires to live for Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. One young woman got saved as they told their experience. Then we gave each of them a letter of commendation signed by responsible brethren. Sr. Peña made it clear that he would not be able to give full time to the work as he had to look after the plantation; also that he could not receive any fellowship, as it gave him sufficient for his expenses. For the first time in the

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annals of the work, all the Lord's people fasted from the previous night. As far as the fasting was concerned we did not seem to derive much benefit from so doing, as not a few had headaches which hindered them enjoying the service to the full. New year when two more brethren were commended, there was no more fasting.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### SENOR JOSE RAMON LINARES.

**T**HIS brother is over forty, married, has five children. His mother-in-law and her mother all have lived in his home for years. It is a home of fine order and peace, which says much for all concerned, as "suegras" (mothers-in-law) have bad fame here in Venezuela. He is from the little town of Cocorote in the State of Yaracuy. He comes of a poor and simple family and probably never knew his father. His mother is a simple and sincere Roman Catholic and in spite of all the change in her son, she still goes on with her religion, much to Sr. Linares' grief. At an early age she sent him to help the local priest who gave him fine advice but showed him a very bad example. Alas! like thousands more, the inconsistencies of the priests never seemed to cause him to look for something better.

He went to Aroa and began working in the copper mines. Then he worked as a stone mason. When we went to Aroa with the Gospel tent, although the town was stirred, he never took any interest. He became more and more degenerate and lived in concubinage. Brethren Douglas and Wells had a spell of Gospel meetings in the hall. One day, whilst Mr. Wells was inviting the people to the meetings, he came across Sr. Linares and gave him a tract, *El Embajador Evangelico* from New Zealand. He noticed the kindly spirit of Mr. Wells and although without interest, he read the tract and went to the meeting, to keep his promise. He attended the rest of the series but did not get saved. He then drifted away again but occasionally went to the Gospel meeting. One night while Sr. José Peña was preaching, the word gripped him and he trusted Christ.

He soon manifested a desire to please the Lord. When we asked for volunteers to help to build the new hall in Puerto Cabello, we got in touch with him in San Felipe and he came along. As he was a stone mason, and a willing worker, we soon learned to appreciate his help. One day when we were raising a large steel truss with a block and tackle, to support the roof, José Ramón was mounted on a twenty-foot ladder, seeking to fasten the truss to the gable end, to secure it in place. A carpenter at one end of it gave the truss a great push to make it enter into the holes where the bolts were embedded in the concrete pillar about eighteen feet up. This foolish push swayed the steel form as it was not yet secured. It was top-heavy and slowly began to bend the bolts and swing over to one side. José Ramón to save himself, had to jump to the ground and there was great danger of the form falling on top of him. It was an anxious few seconds as the heavy form smashed the scaffolding like matchwood at our side and we remained between the "V" shape of the steel truss. He was carried on a camp bed to the back of the hall where Mr. and Mrs. Saword attended him. After a week he was able to move around but the pain remained for a long time. How near that steel truss came to killing José Ramón, Mr. Douglas and me, the Lord only knows, but His good hand held us up, and we were safe. This is part of the price of having to work with willing but unskilled men in building halls.

José Ramón went back to Aroa and soon showed diligence in Sunday School work. Then he looked after the hall. One time when we had a spell of ten weeks' meetings he never missed a night. Doors were open on time, the hall all clean and gasoline lamps lit. He seated the people and he would take the hats of strangers and hang them on the hat-pegs. No work was too menial for him. There were a goodly number who confessed Christ. The last night, we assured him that at the day of reward we would share, and share alike.

He then came and helped us to build the hall in San Esteban. This is one of the brightest and neatest halls we





Mr. W. J. Wells.



Mrs. W. J. Wells.



Sr. J. R. Linares.

have. The Christians in San Esteban appreciated his help. He got married to a sister, Ana Luisa Torrealba, who was almost raised amongst us, as her mother was one of the first to get saved in Aroa though the grandmother led the way. His wife is a nice quiet woman and makes a good wife for Sr. Linares. The Aroa Christians began to give him more to do and he took charge of the work in La Luz, having to walk twice a week down the line three miles to be at the two weekly meetings.

When we started on the new hall in Caracas we were glad when he promised us that he would come along to help. Again he proved a real helper by day and a preacher by night. He won the esteem of his brethren in the capital.

He then returned to Aroa and as we had decided to take out the gable end of the hall and extend it to hold some one hundred and fifty more, José Ramón was the principal man on that job. They had considerable funds but they came to an end, and the work would have been stopped had not José Ramón and his helper agreed to go on almost by faith. They kept at it and the extension of the hall and the new dining-room were finished in time for the conference last year.

He had won the esteem of all and the Christians gave him a very hearty commendation to the work although they were very sorry to see him have to leave them. He was superintendent of the Sunday School, caretaker of the hall without pay, and mainly responsible for the Gospel testimony in La Luz.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### SEÑOR CIRILO J. CHAVEZ.

**S**R. CHAVEZ is from the State of Falcón. He was raised a Roman Catholic like all others of his class. When he heard that some of us were going to his village from Mirimire with the Gospel, he had his cudgel ready. Fortunately we did not meet him when we went. His older brother Manuel, got saved when he worked for the oil company in El Mene. Cirilo went over to see his brother, met Sr. Pastor Peña, went to one meeting, got a New Testament and returned to his village. His mother had also gone on a visit to El Mene and it would seem that she got saved but she was afraid to say anything to young Cirilo as he was the oldest boy at home, and was head of the house, her husband having been shot by his enemies a short time previously.

Cirilo read the New Testament carefully until he came to *Matt. 25*, last verse: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." He reasoned: "I am not righteous; I cannot go to heaven; I am a sinner; everlasting punishment awaits me." He did all he could to get peace. He saw his mother pray with her head covered, something she had seen the women do in El Mene, and he thought there might be some merit if he too covered his head with his blanket! A seeking Saviour and a seeking sinner usually soon meet. Cirilo got delivered, and later went to El Mene to work in the oil camp, so as to be near the Lord's people.

It was when we were building the hall in El Mene that we came to know him. He worked with us for two months and was a good workman. Later he married a sister, Emilia Escobar, who used to help Miss Gulston in



Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Milne,  
newly arrived in Venezuela.



Sr. Cirilo Chavez and Sra. Emilia de Chavez.

school work. Work became scarce in El Mene and he moved to Puerto Cabello, where he began working in an oil factory at a low wage. But he had ambition and took a correspondence course on motors from a school in U.S.A. This fitted him to take charge of the Diesel motor in the plant, so that his wages nearly tripled. When he saw the need of workers he told us that he had exercise about serving the Lord and that his wife was at one with him, but he had one hindrance—he had not fully paid for his house though he hoped to do so ere the end of the year.

He was a real help in the Port Assembly, being Superintendent of the Sunday School and a good preacher of the Gospel. Sr. Peña offered him the balance he owed so as to let him be free sooner. He consulted with us and agreed with us that it would be better to wait until the Lord enabled him to pay up all his debt without outside help. It was very good of Sr. Peña to offer to help him, we made it clear, but there was a more excellent way. This was a trial to him but it proved his character, as we have seen the evil result of some going into the Lord's work before they had paid all their debts. By the end of the year he had all paid up, and we asked him to go with us to Guacara to work the portable hall in the month of January. We did not know then that he was reduced to fifty cents when he left with us. We heard him tell this four months after, when he was commended to the work at Aroa conference.

He worked hard at raising the portable hall. We taught him how to lay cement floors and the poor fellow had to stoop so much that his back ached, but he kept on and then the painting was a rest. We had five weeks together and he did very well. He then went with us to Tucacas and helped there until we formed the assembly.

At Easter we all went to the Aroa Conference when he and Sr. Linares were commended to the Lord's work as we have related. We had a very happy time. Sr. Peña and Sr. Naranjo told how they had been a year in the Lord's service and how the Lord had blessed and encouraged them. Then Sr. Linares and Sr. Chávez told of their salvation, exercise and purpose.

They have both proved themselves. Sr. Linares went with us for three months to Falcón. Later he helped to build the new dining-hall in Puerto Cabello. Then he went to Aroa and has had good meetings there and in La Luz where a number have got saved.

Sr. Chávez went to Maracay and helped them build their new hall, as we could not go. He did very well and kept the workers together until they finished a fine hall. The Christians there are very grateful to him for helping them reach this long-looked-for goal. Then he has taken an interest in Guacara, Tucacas, San Carlos, and he helped heartily in the building here. We feel that they have both proved themselves "in labours oft."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### ELECTIONS.

THE elections have been a trying time for the Lord's people. They had not gone this way heretofore. The four Venezuelan workers were face to face with a real problem. Sr. Naranjo and Sr. Linares stood right out against the Lord's people voting. Sr. Chávez was persuaded that he should have his name on the election list but he never voted. The thing that appealed to the Christians was that the Government party, Acción Democrática, was liberal and favoured the Gospel, while C.O.P.E.I. was the priests' party and if they got in, good-bye liberty of worship! The Christians in the denominations were loud in their efforts to vote for A.D. and many of them were canvassing for votes and occupying prominent places in the electoral campaign.

But it was Sr. Peña who had the greatest trial. He had always been an ardent patriot. At the first elections in Contreras' time, he was elected a representative for two districts in Falcón. We were sorry for this but he went to Coro thinking that he would be able to do much to legislate for the benefit of the poor farmers and workers of El Mene district. He confessed Christ before all and was known as "El Evangelista." When he saw the corruption in the distribution of the large sums allotted by the Federal Government to the different municipalities of Falcón (that the money was misappropriated by Government officials and politicians and nothing done for the benefit of the towns and villages) he resigned and published his letter of resignation in the newspaper *Ahora*.

This cured him of politics for a time and he kept quiet as he saw the trickery of the Contreras-Medina policy



(one going out and the other coming in) a mere game of chess, simply moving the pieces, but the same pieces. Then the Revolution came, on October 18th, 1945, and found him in his village, in Chichiriviche. He did not think that the Revolution could win and he knew that he was a suspected man by President Jurado of Falcón, so he hired a launch and fled to Puerto Cabello under cover of darkness. When he arrived here at 2 a.m. he found that the Revolution had triumphed, so coolly went aboard one of Juardo's sailing ships and slept until morning.

He then went with us to Falcón for three months and we had a fine time together. He came over with us to see Mr. and Mrs. Saword off on the 11th of July. Then he returned and we did not see him until December. In the meantime the Government was canvassing. There was a strong man for the priests, called Borregales, in the districts of Silva and Acosta. The President saw that no man could offset the influence of this man but Sr. Peña. He appealed to him personally to oppose Borregales. Sr. Peña consented to run as an independent candidate. Everybody knew Sr. Peña and he got in by a large majority. This now has let him go to what they call "La Constituyente" where an entirely new Constitution is being formed for Venezuela. We were glad that Mr. Fairfield and Sr. José Peña were in the home when Don Pastor called. We had a fine time of fellowship and prayer together. But he had to go. Our hope is that he may soon be able to draw out and be back at the work he loved so well in Falcón. He attends the Caracas assembly and takes part when he is able. He was tender and soft when we saw him last.

Sr. José Naranjo, with his wife and help from Caracas, did some good work in a new place called San Casimiro, about five hours by bus from Caracas. They suffered barbarous persecution from the priest and his followers, but a few got saved. He and his wife also accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Saword in the fruitful effort in a new place near Valencia, called Boquerón. They proved a real help. Sr. Naranjo has returned since the Sawords left and five more got saved.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### PRESS WORK.

“Seed for the sower.” (2 *Corinthians* 9 : 10).

EVERY thinking person will readily admit what a potential factor the printing press has proved to be in its contribution to the enlightenment and marvellous progress of modern civilization. More important still is that every true Christian should appreciate how greatly the printing press has been used of God since the gloomy shadows of the despotic papacy began to be dispelled by the advent of Reformation light, and Gutenberg's pioneer press began its noble task of printing the Holy Scriptures. As the printing art has developed, so God has made it increasingly possible to disseminate the light of Truth amongst earth's benighted multitudes. Our Lord Jesus, with the dark shadow of Calvary very near, was able to tell the Father: “I have given them Thy Word.” That work which the faithful Witness did so well, has now been committed to His people's charge, and He expects us likewise to be His faithful witnesses, giving the Word of the Lord to those around us.

Apostate Rome is wide awake to the incalculable advantages of aggressive propaganda through the Press and the printed page, and unceasingly endeavours to impress upon the reading world the superiority of her religion and the “truth” of her pretentious claims. When in the Island of Curacao some years ago we were grieved to see that the only newspapers in the dialect of the natives *Papiamento* were being run by the Roman Catholic priests. During the war the British Government published an attractive booklet with photographs of all

the important Roman Catholic persons in the United Kingdom, including cardinals and their cathedrals. It was printed in Spanish for free circulation in all Roman Catholic Latin-America. So Rome can, through its influential agents, pursue its press propaganda even at the expense and in the name of a Protestant government.

However, we praise God for having made possible the acquisition of a printing outfit in Puerto Cabello, which enables us in a measure to counteract the published heresies of Rome, and put before our Spanish-speaking readers the unadulterated message of Salvation by free grace. Also we cease not to thank God for having laid it upon the hearts of His good stewards to have such hearty fellowship in the initial cost of purchase and in the supply of materials. The Venezuelan believers have not been at all backward in this latter connection.

Certain interesting data relating to the commencement of the Evangelical Press work in this field appear in *It Can Be Done*, so the writer will not weary his readers with needless repetition. During the past ten years our Gospel paper, *El Mensajero Cristiano*, has not been published with the desired regularity, not through lack of funds, but rather through lack of the necessary time available, and, in some instances, through paper shortage. On the other hand we reprinted a large quantity of a useful pamphlet by Mr. Wm. Williams, which refutes the threadbare arguments of Rome against the so-called Protestant faith. This publication drew fire, so evidently the Roman Catholic clergy felt its teeth!

We have some earnest tract distributors amongst our Venezuelan Christians, who persistently and prayerfully sow the Good Seed amongst their countrymen and, although we do not hear a great deal of definite or rapid results, yet we are confident that it is labour not in vain in the Lord. Many contacts, which eventually lead to conversion, begin with the giving out of Gospel literature.

In the backwoods settlement of Quebrada Bonita,

hidden amongst the heavily timbered hills which form the border line between two States, there lives a family who owned a large Bible years before the Gospel had ever been preached there. When eventually Gospel meetings began to be held in a neighbouring settlement, Paul Sequera, the head of that family, was one of the first to get interested. He was one of the few there who could read and so he was soon scanning any helpful reading matter with a view to his soul's salvation. One morning as he opened the door of his cottage, a copy of *El Mensajero Cristiano* was lying on the threshold. His attention was arrested by a simple explanation therein of the "Blood of the Lamb," as recorded in *Exodus* 12. He saw the necessity of applying the blood of the lamb to avert the judgment of God on the night of the passover in Egypt, and then that Christ is the true Lamb of God, whose blood was shed at Calvary, and that by personally trusting in Him one is thereupon saved from coming judgment. He thus found deliverance to his troubled soul through believing. Soon afterwards, upon returning from a Gospel meeting and relating to his wife what the preachers had been saying, she was also brought to a saving knowledge of the Truth. In due course, the precious promise: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" has been literally fulfilled in that humble home, as one by one their son and four daughters have been saved, baptized and received into assembly fellowship. Although far beyond the reach of educational facilities, that self-taught man and wife have in turn taught their five children to read and write, and the girls are also skilled in basket weaving and needlework. That type of people is a credit to the Gospel.

Space does not permit the narrating of further instances of blessing through the reading of *El Mensajero Cristiano*, *El Correo Evangelico* and other literature printed by our press, but the foregoing will show our readers how God can use the printed page sometimes in isolated places, as he did Philip in the desert, to point an earnest seeking soul to the Saviour.

In addition to the many places all over Venezuela to which the *Mensajero* is sent, we are continually getting requests from Spanish-speaking countries, such as Uruguay, Peru, Colombia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Spain, etc., and gladly include these on our mailing list.

Apart from the Scriptures, our Venezuelan Christians do not have access to a large range of reading matter for their spiritual edification, so our Gospel paper is read to profit by many of them.

The progressive spirit of the present Government, with their determined campaign against illiteracy, will result in great numbers of adults and children soon being able to read and write, with a corresponding increase in the demand for reading matter. Propagators of false teachings, such as Seventh Day Adventism, Russellism and Theosophy, will seize the opportunity of getting their pernicious literature into the hands of the simple, and we must not lose the opportunity of increasing our output of printed matter and thus supply this special need, as far as possible. In this connection the writer endorses Mr. Williams' observation in *It Can Be Done* (p. 169) that much more could be done in press work had we a competent man, devoting all his time to the press room.

This chapter would not be complete without mentioning the thanks that are due to our sisters, Misses Eva C. Watson, Edith K. J. Gulston, Ruth W. Scott and Fanny M. Goff, who successively whilst residing in Puerto Cabello, have given valued help in the proof reading, and likewise to our other fellow workers, both brethren and sisters, who from time to time have kindly contributed articles and translations for publication and in other ways have heartily supported this work.

Upon our leaving for Canada last July (1946), Mr. William Williams took over the management of the press work until he and his wife later came North also. Now we are thankful that Mr. J. E. Fairfield has volunteered to assume this responsibility until our return, if the Lord so will.

S. J. SAWORD.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### GOSPEL LITERATURE.

THERE has been a great scarcity of tracts. Here, most of the Christians like to distribute tracts, but to have to pay for them as we do at home is another matter. However, we are initiating them little by little and we sold an enormous amount of literature at the Port conference this year, almost \$200.00 worth. Much of it was sold at half price to encourage them in this good work. Our press for *El Mensajero* is too big for small work, and outside printing is very dear. We wished a new edition of the booklet *Escrito Esta* (It is Written). In Caracas, the best price we could get was Bs. 800 or \$250.00 per 1,000. We got 5,000 done in Mexico for this price. Caracas brethren are saving up to buy a press, as they cannot get enough tracts.

We are greatly indebted to The Grant Publishing House for a steady supply of literature, especially *Las Buenas Nuevas*, also to Mr. Harris of Mexico for *El Sembrador*. There has been a great shortage of Bibles as the Germans destroyed the British and Foreign Bible Society's plant, and it takes time to get this in working order again. We have been unable to get Bibles for the last three months but the agent in Caracas promises a supply for 1947. We have appreciated very much the large grants of New Testaments by the National Bible Society of Scotland. Hundreds of the Christians are waiting for fine Bibles, as it is about five years since they could be obtained, and the old ones are worn out. There is a thirst also for the Bible on the part of thousands of unsaved. Man has failed to give humanity the promised peace. For the anxious time ahead the only Book that

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can give light and comfort is the Bible, and many in Venezuela are awakening to this fact. We fear that we as assemblies have been dilatory in our fellowship with the Bible Societies. The circulation of the Bible is not only our duty, but it is a fine investment.

### A CONFERENCE AT PUERTO CABELLO.

When we learned the truth of believers' baptism and gathering in His Name in the Brock Assembly, Toronto, one of the special events of the year was the conference in the Massey Hall at Easter. We used to hear the ministry of Mr. Donald Munro, Mr. John Smith, Mr. John Ritchie, Dr. E. A. Martin, Mr. T. D. W. Muir, and others, of what is now called "the old school." The ministry of those men of God moulded our early Christian life according to the Word of God and has proved a very great help in seeking to form scriptural churches.

It was natural for us then, when we began work in Venezuela, to try and have a small yearly conference of the saints. Fortunately Mr. Johnston had also seen the blessing from those Toronto Conferences, so that we were at one mind in trying our first in Puerto Cabello in 1914. There were only seventeen Christians, all told, and we served eighty-eight meals. The Lord did not fail us. We decided to have free meals, the open platform and no begging for money. The conferences have gone on now for thirty-two years on the same principles.

The following notes are copied and may be interesting to the Lord's people as they give actual details of how the conferences are conducted. Later we shall give a report of the Puerto Cabello conference of 1946:

It is about ten o'clock at night. Most of the workers are thinking of going to bed and some have already gone, when we hear a knock on the outside door leading to the street. Bernardo opens the door and by the voices we know that the folks from Guaiguayure have arrived. We go downstairs and sure enough there they are covered with dust, weary and bedraggled. Juan Maria Ortiz is the first to embrace us. He is bus-sick, has been

vomiting and has had nothing to eat since they left Barquisimeto at 6 a.m. Then comes his swarthy wife, all smiles. Her name is Maria. She and her husband have the same name, only he is Juan Maria (John Mary) and she is simple Mary. This is a product of Romanism in Venezuela, men and women named after virgins and saints. She is a real type of countrywoman with muscles developed like a man's. The next to embrace us are Felix Rosas and his wife, Ruperta. They are a hard working couple, who crush their own sugar cane by hand power. Then there is the little, old lady Tomasa, who is making her first visit to the Port. There is another buxom dame called Susana, the mother of a large family, three of whom are Christians.

The conference does not start until Thursday night and this is Wednesday, so we did not expect any one along. Fortunately we have some beds ready for others and they use them for the night. But first of all what about food? This is soon solved as the Christians had been along cleaning rice, beans and making *dulce* (sweet preserves) for the conference. They have their supper and leave sufficient to feed the new arrivals, who are soon seated at our kitchen table. The sick man does not wish to eat but the others eat such a quantity of black beans and rice with minced meat that it amazes us; then from one to three cups of coffee, and off to bed. It is now after eleven, and we are glad that the end has come.

Next day all is bustle with some fifteen or more seating the school rooms and making the final preparations for the conference. In the afternoon the people arrive from Yaritagua, Chivacoa, San Felipe, Albarico, Santa Rosa, Capita, Bejuma, Ponzuela, Nirgua, Valencia, Carabobo, Maracay, Palo Negro, Caracas, Chichiriviche, Palma Sola, Tucacas, El Mene, Aroa, and other places. It is wonderful how Sr. Gramcko and Sr. Chávez find homes for all to sleep in. It takes a long experience to locate the right people in the right homes, as there are certain grades of colour and position which have to be considered, to ensure congenial hosts and guests.

The first prayer meeting is large and hearty. Two brethren give good words and then the usual notices about meetings, meals and manners. The next meeting is at 7 a.m., a Bible reading and at that early hour a large number are already in the hall. It had been decided to read *Hebrews 11*, suggested by Miss Gulston the previous evening in our home. It was a very helpful study. Questions were asked and answered. We heard from some that they got more help from the Bible readings than from any other meeting. Tickets are handed out by Sr. Pastor Peña to the people as they leave the hall, while Sr. Gramcko receives them at the school door, a long block away. This method safeguards us from those who would be after "the loaves and fishes." About one hundred and sixty-five can be seated at each sitting. We take a seat on a plank supported by cement blocks. A plate of Quaker oats is served to all, with bananas; then a plate with grated cheese, fried plantains, and all the maize bread one cares to eat. A cup of coffee finishes the breakfast. All move out as quickly as possible and the tables are cleared and again set for others until all have been fed.

We have to advise, warn, arrange matters between most meetings, or write letters, to profit by brethren returning to places where it would take weeks for a letter to reach. Next meeting is at 10 a.m. Hall is again well filled and half an hour spent in prayer. Then one hour and a half in ministry, in which three take part. The hall is full at 12 mid-day, and again all walk orderly over to the school rooms for lunch. Again we are at the table with a good plate of soup in front of each one, made of yams, Venezuelan vegetables, and a few potatoes, with goat-meat cut up in small cubes. It has been boiled for hours and tastes delicious. One may eat *casave* bread or corn bread and have a second helping. Then comes a small plate of *dulce*, followed by Venezuelan raw fruits—oranges, bananas, etc., provided by the Christians of San Esteban; finally a cup of coffee, or *guarapo*—a drink made



of native sugar and hot water, little relished by our tea-drinking brethren. Most of the Christians are able to control their appetites but an occasional delinquent will be found. Jean Saword told us that at the table she was serving, a man had three helpings of soup and then asked her in a quiet voice if she could get him a plate of the Quaker oats they had in the morning to finish up with! The bell rings and all rise. No one leaves the table until the bell rings. All move out and we try to get a little time for reading and prayer and the "siesta" before 2.30 p.m. when the next meeting starts. Often the "siesta" has to be foregone, as we have to despatch books and tracts with brethren who require a supply.

Then there are more serious matters to be arranged which requires the presence of Mr. Saword and other responsible brethren. For example, here is the case of Martín Morales. Two brethren from Palo Negro are accusing him of having too much familiarity with a certain Maria Morón who had been baptized only a short time. Those men had hid themselves in Maria's backyard and had seen Morales leave the house very late—after 10 p.m. We told them that they did wrong in going to Maria's backyard like a couple of detectives: this was not the way to go about the matter. However, we called Maria and she said that she owed a lot to Martin, as he had been the first to tell her about the Gospel; also that those brethren had little right to speak and that they should take the beam out of their own eye first, as both of them had been at a sectarian mission, which has a work in Palo Negro, seeing their children give recitations etc. This surprised us but they both affirmed that, as their children went to the day school of that mission they only took them to the door of their hall and did not go inside! It took time and patience as some hard things were said. However, Maria finally cried, the escape valve of the weaker sex. Advice was given and we hope for better results. (Four years later: the matter was evidently arranged as all go on happily to-day.)

We are in the hall at two-thirty and have another very good ministry meeting in which five take part. There are now many more people for the school-rooms and all cannot get places at the first table. When all are seated, Sr. Chávez, who is in charge of the tables, tinkles the hand bell, there is a dead silence and all stop moving, even the waiters, while some brother chosen by Sr. Chávez gives thanks for the meal. This order and arrangement in all impresses the Roman Catholics very much as their feasts are scenes of disorder; at some, even bloodshed and murder owing to the vast quantity of firewater consumed. We labouring brethren have prayer together, and at seven o'clock the gospel meeting starts. Three preach the Gospel within the hour. There are now many people to accommodate for the night. Our house is gradually filling up. "Chief men among the brethren" usually have a chat after the meeting. About eleven o'clock we are able to get to rest. All are tired, for this is New Year's Day, and last night at twelve midnight all the whistles blew for fifteen minutes; the ships in the harbour tooted and blew, and the cannon in the fort blazed away until sleep was out of the question. Rockets flew up from all parts and the people ran in the street embracing each other while saying "*Feliz año nuevo*" (A happy New Year).

The routine of Saturday is much the same as on Friday. On Saturday night there is the baptism. This always draws the crowds and the hall is packed. Brn. José Naranjo, Luis Torres and Pastor Peña preach the gospel, after which Mr. Saword baptized nine. There is fine order and we all feel that we have had a very good day. Lord's Day is a special day, as all the conference help wish to be at the Lord's table. We have the Bible reading on *Phil. 2*—"The humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus." It is very helpful to many. The breakfast is at eight and the Lord's Supper at ten. It is a lovely sight to see close to three hundred sitting "under His shadow with great delight." There are few seats and.

little space for the unsaved and children, many of whom have to stand for two hours. Some of the Lord's servants help the local brethren seat the people as there are now so many saints that the local men do not know them all. In this service we miss the first part of the meeting but when we sit down a simple brother called Tomás Cabrera from Bejuma, unable to read, says, "Let us sing No. 272, 'Oh Christ, what burdens bowed Thy Head'." The meditation of this hymn leads us into His presence. There is fine order throughout the meeting and a real spirit of worship.

A meeting is announced for the children who have waited so long and so patiently. Luis Torres and Antonio Malpica address the little ones. About one hundred and thirty children hear the Gospel. The cooks and waiters usually try to have something special for Sunday dinner and instead of the goat-meat one can see small pieces of chicken in the soup. The afternoon meeting is the best of all. Three brethren speak with real power and then Manuel Múnoz from Valencia gives a parting word: "Why stand ye here all day idle?" The crowd is greater than ever and it surely does credit to Cirilo Chávez and his cooks and waiters the way they have served so many meals in such cramped and unsuitable quarters.

The last meeting on Sunday night is a testimony meeting. The speaker gets five minutes to tell how God saved him, or give a pithy gospel message. They often go over the time, but if they are being helped we do not mind a little extra. As can be imagined, the steam is up. Many have enjoyed the conference and they are so full of the new wine they wish to say "just a word." In spite of this, it is wonderful how help is given to control this exuberance.

Antonio Malpica, an elder brother from Valencia, told us to be careful with an old brother from there, as he was determined to speak in spite of the fact that he had warned him that as he never spoke in Valencia how could he speak in the Port? Usually those who are exercised

about taking part are sitting up in the front seats, not too far from the platform. When we went over to the hall we saw Curvelo with his Bible open, all ready to say a word. Quietly we asked him his intentions and he said that for ten years he had been preparing for this opportunity. We asked him did he think it was reasonable, that he who had never been on a platform in his life, thought it wise to start with such a large audience? We told him that he would be nervous when he got up and saw hundreds of people looking at him, that he had better ask the brethren in Valencia to let him have a little trial some time, and he would see the mess he would make of it. He was quite conformed. He a simple man with no gift at all for preaching.

We have a good meeting and a nice number bear testimony to the grace of God. Mr. Saword closes the meeting by thanking all the cooks, waiters and hosts for their co-operation. He says that some 3,150 meals have been served and that all expenses have been met without mentioning collections or appealing for money, also that there is still enough for breakfast for all who are leaving on the morrow, that the collection on Lord's Day was about \$160.00. We then sing "Count your blessings," and so ends the 28th annual conference.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### REPORT OF CONFERENCE IN PUERTO CABELLO, 1946.

**T**HIS year there were around six hundred at the evening meetings. On Saturday night the hall was packed to the door and many of the brethren had to stand outside. Three of our Venezuelan brethren preached. It did our soul good as we listened to them preaching a clear, full-orbed Gospel in the beautiful Spanish tongue. Man's ruin and God's remedy were clearly stated. We agreed with Mr. Fairfield that there was no need for so-called "Bible Schools" in Venezuela. God's Assembly is the best Bible School, His Word the best text-book and His service the best practice.

Mr. Fairfield baptized twenty-three before a packed hall and there was splendid order. Before each meeting there was half an hour of prayer, in which all who felt led, took part. There was no "rushing" the platform. There was time and room for all who had a message. The ministry was varied and helpful. On Lord's Day around three hundred and sixty sat down at His table. There was no disorder, which means much for the power of the Spirit of God in the meeting when so many were present, as the Venezuelan is much more emotional than we Anglo-Saxons. A children's meeting followed the morning worship, as many of them were present with their parents.

On Sunday night Sr. Juan Suárez, correspondent for the Port Assembly, gave some details of the blessing received. There had been five thousand full and free meals served. The expenses had been all met without any reference to money or collections. There had been

so much given that they were able to use all the offering on Lord's Day morning for the spread of the Gospel and the collection which was, in our money, \$300.00, was divided among eight of the Lord's servants who were present. He thanked the preachers for their helpful ministry, also the cooks, waiters, hosts, sweepers and seaters. He advised that there would be breakfast for all those starting at 4 a.m. for the early buses and also a parcel of lunch for all going long distances. Then came the parting farewells, always a sad time, for we had had days of heaven on earth and many had to go back to a hostile home, world and parents or friends.

They were on the move at 3 a.m., and at 5 a.m. we had a number of the helpers getting all stowed away for another year. This year we used the new kitchen and dining hall, which proved a real boon. So much more room and facilities greatly helped in serving so many meals. The new method of range cooking was a marvel as there was no heat, smoke or tears. Some of the Christians had only a few hours' trip on the bus but others had to go two long, hard and weary days. There were twenty-two assemblies represented at the conference.

An enormous amount of literature was sold this year and very much given free. The conference costs a lot of hard work, money and time, but the results justify the effort. God's people went away refreshed and strengthened for another stage of life's journey, some unsaved were reached, and, on the whole, a good and lasting impression made.

There are now annual conferences in Puerto Cabello, Aroa, Valencia, El Mene, Tocópero, Santa Rosa, with efforts at Palo Negro which will now gravitate to Maracay, seeing they have a new hall there and more accommodation.



Sunset in front of Puerto Cabello.





The Water Front, a short distance from the House and School in Puerto Cabello.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

### IN JOURNEYS OFT.

WE now got ready to leave for Valencia. Packing and unpacking have become habitual. We took out our travelling permits at the Government house. While we were waiting for the paper, a Jesuit entered in his long robe. The secretary asked him to be seated and when he said my name, Williams, the Jesuit looked at me and said in good English, "We are neighbours." We asked him if he was with the "Free French" and he replied, "Surely, we are with De Gaulle." He was very friendly and shook hands with us. He is one of three Jesuits who went into the mountains above San Esteban and got lost some five years ago, as we recounted in *It Can Be Done*. The governor of Puerto Cabello sent word to the civil chief of San Esteban to send out men to look for them. The country was unruly at the time, as Gómez had just died and democracy was in the air. No one would go at the chief's call, the men said "Let the tigers eat them." "We will not go unless we are paid." Don Francisco Ramos, one of the leading men in San Esteban Assembly, heard of the matter. He took his son, Regino, and went into the forest, coming out on the other side of the mountain. The Jesuits had also managed to get out at the same place ahead of them. However, they heard Francisco had gone to look for them when no one else would venture, so they sent for him. He took his little daughter and son with him and he had a long discussion with them. They wondered why an "Evangélico" would look for them. This gave Don Francisco a chance. The Jesuits took out the Bible and, as Francisco cited here and there, they looked up the

passages and found it to be as he said. They thanked him very much and the one we saw has been friendly ever since.

On the way to Valencia we were checked up three times by the police but they know us, accepted tracts and stamped our permits without trouble. We had a fine meeting at night with the Sunday School children. They began with a hymn which was well sung. A Valencia sister had taught the boys and girls to sing altogether, which they did charmingly. Then four children repeated from memory various portions of the Word of God. One boy said all the eleventh of *Hebrews* perfectly, in a clear, sweet voice, which must have impressed the many friends who were there listening. Then we spoke on Mephiboseth. The children answered the questions. Prizes were given for attendance, learning the memory chapter, etc. All received some prize and a small bag of candies was given each present. We had two nights of ministry with the Lord's people. We had arranged to speak at a wedding on Saturday night, but there was a delay in Caracas so that we could not go to Carabobo. So, as we were free that night, my wife and I took a walk about 8 p.m. We passed the house where we used to live 32 years ago. It brought back old memories as we looked at the windows and the outside of the house. We thought of one Sunday afternoon in 1910 when we sat in the large front room with only two small chairs in it. We had no friends, and to while away the time, as there was no meeting, we sang some hymns in English from the Believer's Hymn Book. Suddenly we were pelted with horse-manure from those very windows. We wondered if God would ever make bare His arm in fanatical Valencia. He has made bare His arm and we thought of the Assembly with well over one hundred in fellowship, so that our hearts went up in prayer and thanksgiving to our wonder-working God and Father.

On Lord's Day we had the "sweet feast of love divine." Some eighty were at His Table. My wife had Don Leon and Carmen de Castro for dinner and she gave a dinner

to others out in the hall as they had a long way to go home. On Monday we took a bus for Nirgua. It cost only about eighty cents for a four hour ride. The road has been completely changed. There are now fine cement bridges and many of the turns straightened out. We used to pay \$12.00 for a seat in an old Ford and pass sixteen hours ere reaching Nirgua. What a change a good road makes! We arrived at Nirgua at noon. Mr. Wells, Leslie and Stanley met us at the plaza. We found Mrs. Wells much better after two years in bed and the boys grown a great deal. Nirgua is delightfully cool and we enjoyed the cool air with temperature around seventy in the shade.

We had a week's meeting and examined nine for baptism. Six of them were baptized before a full hall on Saturday night. On Lord's Day, thirty-one remembered the Lord's death—the largest number yet seen in Nirgua. We had a good Bible reading in the p.m.. There are now two Sunday School classes. Sra. Carmen de Meléndez and her daughter have the classes and have greatly improved them. We finished up with a Gospel meeting when about sixty were inside.

On Monday Severiano came with the animals from Pontezuela. Mr. Wells and I left at eight on Tuesday. We had a delightful ride up to the *Picacho* (Peak) of Nirgua, and then up and down for six hours until we reached Pontezuela. We would have felt the heat down below very much, but away up at that high altitude it was delightfully cool.

We passed a number of men carrying a corpse wound in a blanket and tied to a pole, on their way to the cemetery in Nirgua, where it would be dumped like a beast into a hole. No priest, no bells, no crosses, no incense, no Latin, no holy water. Had it been a person of means, the priest would have bartered for a funeral of first, second or third class. Everything for the rich, nothing for the poor! This is the Rome, of which Americans and English are enamoured, seen as she really is in the dark. They say that a man's character is what he would do in the dark, so

if we apply this to Rome in Latin America, her character is not flattering. We gave away a few tracts along the trail but only one in twenty knows how to read—another commentary on Romanism.

At two o'clock we reached Pontezuela and received a royal welcome. They have a fine hall here with a small room alongside for the preachers. We got a good start with a full hall and some standing. We fixed up the platform and baptistry and at night examined seven for baptism. They were good cases and most of them had been saved for some time. It is two and a half years since we were here, and so that it is good to see how the Lord has blessed them. It was surely cool all the week and one night it dropped to 52 degrees. The moon was full, the landscape glorious with the Picacho away in the distance. The scenery would make an Irishman forget Killarney, or a Scot, Loch Lomond.

On the way we visited a sister who had been ill for a year with cancer, I almost stepped on a beautiful corral snake before Mr. Wells warned me. He is a wise man, for he is always on the outlook for snakes. We soon put an end to its bites and beauty. On Saturday at 3 p.m. the hall was full and we had an orderly baptism. Four men and two women were baptized by Mr. Wells. Another Gospel meeting at seven was well attended and next day we remembered the Lord's death. We reorganised the Sunday School and had a good Gospel meeting at night. We were up early, but the horse which was to have taken Mr. Wells got away, so we had to wait, and have chicken soup for breakfast!

We started out for Nirgua and at 7 a.m. we met Alquilino who had hired a mule at a sugar plantation, but he could not catch it. He was wet with the dew. An hour's shouting and running and the mule was lassoed. It was a pack mule but went well and it was fat, but a regular "bottle-washer." The mare I rode was what they call "*nueva*"—not broken in yet, and not used to a bit, only a rope halter. We tried to make up for lost time

and by the time we reached the road we were well shaken up. We left Severiano with the donkeys when we reached the *Picacho* and rode hard down the Nirgua side as it was painful to try to manage the animals, so we decided to get there as quickly as possible. All was well in the Wells' home and we did justice to my wife's dinner. We had the afternoon to pack up and at 4 a.m. next day we were on the road for Valencia. It was real cool in the old Ford as the windows were all broken and the wind whistled around the back of our heads in a fashion not to our liking. We had our first blowout at Bejuma but there was a spare and we soon got away. We made good time until nine miles from Valencia, when another burst. The chauffeur had to do some juggling with the old tyres but showed aptitude for the work and at 8.30 a.m. we were at the hall in Valencia.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### MORE JOURNEYS.

WE reached home in time for the Bible reading. We spend Wednesday and Thursday packing for a campaign in San Carlos. All had to be ready to keep house for at least three weeks. We took sufficient beds, furniture, dishes etc. for five persons. We used to have a complete outfit for this class of work in the past years, as we had to go into new places all the time, but this is the first time in some years so that we have much to renew and food to purchase as San Carlos is a poor place to get vegetables, etc. My wife and Mr. Saword left on the 6 a.m. bus and Pablo Vera offered to take the stuff in his truck, so we helped him load up and we had a hot ride, getting in at 2 p.m.

Antonio Malpica had rented the house for us at \$18.00 per month but it was a poor place and we had to start in and clean it all out before we could unload the truck. We just got the last pieces in when my wife and Mr. Saword arrived in the bus at three-thirty. All looked chaos, but at 6 p.m. we were seated at the table, with most things in their place. Our faithful Eduvigis came with my wife and between them they soon put on the touches to the house which makes it a home.

On Saturday we went to see the Governor, a blustering kind of a fellow. We then worked the place—Pablito, Mr. Saword and I—and gave away about six hundred tracts, inviting the people to the meeting that night. Many promised to come but when the hour arrived we just got *one man inside*! Mr. Saword opened the meeting, Pablito told how the Lord saved him while I finished, speaking from the chart, all inside forty-five minutes. It surely

looked bad. However, we knew the place and the people as we were here eleven years ago and had to retire without results after months of preaching. But the old Spanish priest had to flee when Gómez died as the men hated him. He was *guapo* (daring) as they say and knew better how to use his fists and revolver than the Bible, if he had one. Now there is a new man—far more political.

We were agreeably surprised on Sunday night when about twenty-five came inside. We enjoyed preaching. Pablito left on Monday and we sent word to Antonio Malpica to send us a man from Valencia to keep the door. Antonio Martínez came along on Tuesday and he did good work, going out every day with books and tracts, and devoting a good deal of time to colportage work. The first week we saw nothing done and were somewhat discouraged as the people had come out well. Then the second week the interest continued but most of the men kept changing, few came regularly. On Wednesday a man called Augustin Ojeda visited us and said that he was "going to follow the Lord." He is an old man but seemed real in his desire. We visited his home, a large tumble-down place, where he introduced us to his wife and family. He told us that we must not leave them all alone and he was disposed to let us have a large room in his house free, where a hundred could be seated. This man never got any further than being "a friend of the gospel." Then we visited another man we knew from the previous visit, called Toribio Canelón. He had always been friendly but he confessed that he had only been convinced; but that on Wednesday night he had got down on his knees and that the Lord had pardoned him. He seemed bright and certainly a changed man. This man is now an elder in the assembly. Then near the end of the week, one night when we were preaching and pleading with the people to trust Christ, what was our surprise when a very black man, called Felix Bonalde, stepped forward, went down on one knee and said "I will trust Christ." We are not used to this way so we just

asked him to sit down again and went on with the preaching. Felix had been coming to the meetings from the first and was a tough looking customer. He had come from Trinidad over forty years ago, a boy of twelve. He had forgotten English but always retained the Trinitarian style of clothes. He was wearing black trousers, a cashmere coat and an old dirty undershirt. When we got better acquainted, Mr. Saword asked him to have his undershirt washed! Sure enough, he came the next night with it washed and a piece of cord for a belt. He has been doing well and it may be that at last Felix has the root of the matter in him.

All this blessing led us to wonder if we should not try a little longer, for we had decided to leave on the 20th as the house rent was due again from that date. We had much exercise, as we were expected to start meetings in Caracas on the 1st of March. We decided that it was the Lord's will that we should try another month and then see if it would not be possible for brethren to come from Valencia each Lord's Day for a Gospel meeting after we left.

We bought some splendid mahogany boards, fifteen inches wide and an inch thick, as there are two sawmills in the place sawing lumber for Caracas, and made six good substantial benches. On Saturday Antonio Malpica came to see the work and helped us that day and Sunday. The heat here was great as we were right on the border of the great llanos or prairies, and it had not rained for two months. We walked out to El Limón, an experimental farm run by the Government, where they have spent an enormous amount of money on irrigation. The river of San Carlos swelled and washed their works away. We visited about thirty of the workers' houses. They are snug little places to be models to the Venezuelans who are to work the land, but the place had a very ruined appearance and is a white elephant. The people whom they have put into the houses are poor and filthy and many could not read. One woman was dying from great



ulcers, despised by all. We preached God's good news to her and she raised herself up on her elbows to listen. We went into the office first to see if we could visit the colony. The head man said, "By all means visit them for they are a drunken pack and need the Gospel." He had been educated in Puerto Rico and was a free-thinker! It was a long trudge on the hard road in the broiling sun. Antonio Martínez went with us and sold a Testament to a cowboy on the ranch. We have been here about five weeks; the interest is growing and we get a full hall most nights. The heat has been severe and we welcome a shower from time to time to cool the air. Mr. Saword had word that Jackie has a high fever. Escobar has offered us his large room to carry on the meetings. We gave him sixty bolívars to get it fixed up. He has been a strange man. He spent eighteen years on a river boat and is a rough article. On the seventeenth we went in Pablito's truck to Libertad, a small place about thirty miles south of San Carlos. It was just a trail through virgin bush where men are felling huge mahogany trees and carrying them on trucks to Caracas, 160 miles away. We saluted the civil chief, gave him some tracts and a New Testament. He was very friendly, as he had heard us preach in San Carlos. The brethren who went with us worked the place with tracts while Mr. Saword and I went to the post-master, who had been receiving *El Mensajero* and had sent to Mr. Saword for a Bible. We found the post office, an old tumble-down hut with palm roof and bamboo walls! Octaviano was a man of seventy-four. He hardly knew what to say when he saw us, but we found that he had read all the Bible twice over and had grasped some truth. We tried to help him all we could and read, sang and prayed with him.

This is the first time that this place has been worked. There is a road only in the dry season. This was the last night in the old house. The place was packed. We all remembered the first night when only Paco went inside. Mr. Saword spoke on *Rev. 20*, the great White Throne;

we followed on *Rev. 21* and then Pablito gave his testimony. There was a solemn hush all through the meeting. To-day we moved over to Paco's house for the last meeting. His front room was full and there was good order. We loaded the truck at 4 a.m. and got home at 4 p.m. We heard of the home call of Don Ramón Rodríguez of San Felipe. He will be much missed.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### JOURNEYINGS CONTINUED.

**M**R. SAWORD and I went on to Caracas. We had four nights in the hall and then began meetings in El Valle where Don Modesto Jorge lives. He fixed up his garage for a hall. It is beautifully painted with texts on the walls. He got saved when we had the meetings last year in Valencia and then he led his sincere Roman Catholic wife to Christ and they wished to do something for the Lord. El Valle is a suburb of Caracas, where there is no Gospel testimony. The meetings were well attended. On Sunday night we had the meetings in my portable hall in Caracas. We have enlarged it to seat fifty more. There were about two hundred packed inside. Cora Peña got saved, also a man called Félix Jacobo, belonging to a Christian family. Several others were anxious. The Peñas are delighted that their eldest girl has confessed Christ—she has been the child of many prayers.

On April 14th Isaias Carresquero was married to Matilde García. We had the service in the hall, but it was too small and the people were crowded out to the street. We went to Sr. Naranjo's for the refreshments but it was disorderly and unpleasant. We continued the meetings in Don Modesto's home up until the 16th. One soul was saved. Then we had the baptisms in the hall on the 17th when thirty-four were immersed. The crowd was immense but good order. A young man from Colonia Mendoza got saved. There were one hundred and twenty-six at the Lord's table, all in fellowship in Caracas. Got home on Monday and left again on Wednesday for

Aroa conference. We began on Wednesday night, then had four meetings each day and five on Lord's Day. We were glad when Mr. Wells came along on Friday. The conference was smaller, only two hundred and fifty at the Lord's table. Two professed faith in Christ, Mr. Saword baptized eight.

We had a comfortable return trip on the new line; some of the Valencia folk could not get a bus so we had ten of them in the home for the night. We had just time to take out soiled clothes and put in fresh ones when my wife and I left for Nirgua. We found the Wells ready for us and we had a week of good meetings, only hindered several nights by heavy rains. On 5th June we had a baptism of seven, two of them from Salom and one from Pontezuela. There was a nice number present and good order. We spoke from "We have seen strange things to-day." We made reference to some who were to be baptized. Seferino Polo of Salom had heard the Gospel for almost twenty years but delayed and delayed and only God's mercy saved him from a procrastinator's grave. Then there was aged Cleotilde de Gil, a lady of seventy but looking more like eighty. She would have nothing to do with us when we came first to Nirgua—a devout, credulous Roman Catholic. But her two sons, Fermin and Carlos, have got saved. Another son, who was educated for a priest, has opposed his mother right to the last. He made a special trip from Caracas to plead with her not to be baptized. But she was all smiles on Saturday night when she got baptized and the last tie with Romanism was gone. Then there was Dominga de Gil, her daughter-in-law. Her husband Fermin, got saved five years ago when Mr. Wells and I had some meetings. When he was converted his wife was wild. She said she would rather see him have four *queridas* (mistresses) and coming home drunk as he used to do, than embrace that horrid heresy—the Gospel.

But two years ago she went to the Aroa conference, and the devil seemed to combine all his power to make her afraid of the Gospel. When she was on the way to the

station in Aroa to come home, she fell on the rails and hurt her leg. On the way home from Marín, the bus turned over into the ditch. But Dominga was not daunted and when the assembly was formed in Nirgua, Pastor Peña and I had a week's meetings, and Dominga professed conversion. She has never been bright, always timid and afraid of her family. She wished to be baptized at the Valencia conference, but we told her that she would have more joy confessing the Lord in Nirgua. There was a baptism there in January but she was afraid. She went to the Aroa conference in April, where she again wished to be baptized, but the brethren told her that she should confess Christ in Nirgua. At last the deed was done on Saturday and she looks happy. (Three years later Dominga and her husband go on well. Their hearts are changed. They love to have the Lord's people in their home. Their house is changed. It is now clean, cement floors, nice furniture, and their lives are changed—no more drink, no more *queridas*.)

Then there was another interesting case of a woman called Cleotilde Jiménez. She was seven years in a convent in Caracas where she was being trained for a nun. But her brother in Nirgua, Alcides, got saved and he sent her a New Testament which she had to hide in her pillow. Due to the prayers and interest of her brother, about a year ago she left the convent and went to Nirgua to see him, and shortly after her arrival she accepted Christ when one of the Gil's was preaching. She came to visit us yesterday and seems a nice, quiet young lady who would have made a good nun. We had the baptism at 3 p.m. and then a good Gospel meeting at night. About forty remembered the Lord, and we had a good day.

A woman called Ofelia de Méndez, from the Andes, got saved, through the interest of her cousin, who is in fellowship in Nirgua.

Mr. Wells got his permit and we went to Valencia on Tuesday. We found that the Fairfield's home had been robbed and some valuable articles stolen the day we went

to Nirgua. We reached home at 6 p.m., spent some time answering letters, and on Thursday we left again for San Felipe. It rained every day, so that although the Christians turned out very well, few unsaved came into the hall. On Thursday Mr. Wells and I went to Albarico to help settle a matter among the brethren. It was very hot walking beneath a broiling sun.

We miss dear Don Ramón Rodríguez in San Felipe. His seat is surely empty. We have been fixing up the house here as it has been empty since the Wells went to Nirgua over two years ago. We arranged a baptism for the 19th when four were baptized. We left for Chivacoa on the 21st, and had a good week in spite of the rain. Then went to Yaritagua on the 23rd to see Don Carlos. There was a baptism of five on the 26th, with a full hall and fine order. We left on the 28th for Puerto Cabello. Mr. Wells went home to Nirgua, and we arranged to leave for El Mene on 2nd July. We had to go to Valencia on June 30th to get our permits, and were very busy for three days but managed to leave at 5 a.m. on the *autovia* (rail car) for Tucacas. We finally reached El Mene at 8 p.m., finding Miss Gulston well and busy as usual. We began special meetings at once. El Mene has had a bad year, only one to be baptized this year! We went on for three weeks with encouraging meetings. The Lord's people were revived, two were restored to the fellowship and one young man got saved. The brethren have painted the hall and all looks ship-shape for the conference.

The children had their outing last Saturday and as they could not get trucks we decided to walk to a house less than three miles away, belonging to the Oil Company. There were about seventy children with their teachers. It rained several times but the children enjoyed the outing. Sr. Peña helped a lot. He has been here all week. Miss Gulston is getting her home ready for leaving for the North. News has come from East and West that the roads are impassable, so that with the lack of transportation it does not look bright for the conference starting

to-morrow. But we read to-day in *Ps. 118*—"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in men, even in Princes." Pastor Peña and I were the only workers present for Thursday and Friday. In the afternoon a truck brought in Mr. Wells, the Sawords and some from Aroa. They had left Tucacas the previous day and had got stuck in a swollen river and having to sleep, or, rather "not to sleep" all the night on the road. They were all very tired and went to bed. Mr. Saword and Mr. Wells were refreshed enough to be able to take the meeting at night. On Saturday along came the truck with thirteen from Puerto Cumarebo. They had been two days struggling with bad roads and heavy rains, they had slept on the road and they were wet, covered with mud and presented a much worse appearance than those who came from the East. But they react much quicker than we foreigners after the trials of the road, which were soon forgotten, a new suit donned, or at least a clean one, and they were ready to enjoy the ministry. We had a good time and the Lord gave much blessing with the Word. Two got baptized, the smallest number we have ever seen in El Mene and two got saved.

We had arranged to leave Monday 6 a.m., but on Lord's Day it rained and rained so that travel was out of the question. Pastor came to us and said that he had a proposition to make; that as they had enough food and another small steer, why not have another day's conference? We all agreed and Monday was the best day. Plenty for all. It cleared up and was dry all day, so at 5 a.m. Tuesday my wife and I left with the folks going to Puerto Cumarebo. We bade farewell to Miss Gulston and Miss Goff, as we would not see them again for they were leaving for the North in a week. (Little did we think that they would be away for over two years!)

We made good time and were in Capadare early, but then trouble began and it was one delay after another. The road was terrible, so that with all the brethren and sisters who were not able to help, we walked to Belén.

The Christians there were all kindness. We ate corn bread and drank black coffee and waited for the truck, which arrived at 6 p.m. We decided to go nine miles more to Mirimire. There the Christians gave up their beds to accommodate 16 of us. My wife and I passed a good night in a wee room. We did not wish to leave at 4 a.m. as the driver wanted, for we knew he had no brakes and there was a very steep hill to go down just after leaving the town. Monche and I decided not to start until daylight. It was almost 8 a.m. before we got away. The road was now dry and in parts even good, but now the motor began to give trouble as the pump was not sending the gas to the carburettor in sufficient quantity for the steep hills. We spent the whole of Wednesday on the road. It was very dry and hot on the hills. The helper would lie on his stomach, as we went up the steep hill, and blow for all he was worth into the gas tank to send up the gas, as the pump packing was worn out. The driver would take a race at the hill, and then you could see the helper's legs sticking out at the side of the truck blowing as hard as he could, for if the motor stalled, the driver had to back down again and make another try, as the brakes would not work. I am sure that a good bag-piper would have been a help! It was hard on the nervous folk when the motor stalled and we began to go down the hill again. But by the good hand of the Lord we got to La Montana at 5 p.m., washed, and had the first meal of the day, and the fine breezes of the mountain soon had us refreshed. We began meetings right away.

We were much troubled with cockroaches, and used poison on them which we bought in Caracas, but it only killed a few dozen. Then we tried smoking them out with ground sulphur. This killed dozens more, but not all by any means. Then a plague of ants came along to eat the cockroaches, but unfortunately for us they kept falling into our bed from the roof so that finally they drove us out of the room. It was impossible to sleep as they bit severely and formed a regular army.



Monche told us that they come every now and again and clean the house of all insects and even mice and then march on through the bush. They are called the "roedores" (gnawers) and they are true to their name. After three days we were still doctoring some of their bites. Then came a plague of mice. Monche gave us a trap and eight fell the first day. This has been a bad year for rats and mice. The rats in the field have destroyed a great part of the crop. In El Mene we saw one brother catch seven large rats in a trap at one time. Miss Gulston's home was infested with them and we declared war on them and got a few. Then after the rats, came the centipedes, chasing and eating the cockroaches. Monche killed one six inches long and half an inch wide. Then my wife spied the mate in our room and when we despatched her and her family, we had peace after ten days war from the insects and mice. Yesterday we tackled the hall, as thousands of spiders had taken possession. It took six men three hours to sweep the walls, then burn them with blazing coal oil. We have never seen so many spiders; they crawled all over the people in the meetings. The men say that they have not seen so many either. They believe that after five years of drought they have multiplied, as have insects of all kinds.

On the 14th three were baptized. The hall was full and there was real help in speaking. On Saturday night we had a testimony meeting when eleven brethren told how, when, and where, the Lord saved them. The place was full and the Lord helped them all. On Lord's Day there were fifty-one at His table. At night the meeting was the largest yet and at the close a woman called Heriberta got saved. We had expected to leave the next day and said farewell to many. We went two miles to the highway to see if we could get a truck to Minimire, but we spent the whole day waiting and had to return at night with the donkeys and the baggage.

The Christians announced a meeting, but we thought that it would be small as not many would know in that

country place that we had returned, but the hall was full. The news ran from farm to farm without telephones. Next day we went again to the highway, as we had arranged for two seats in a truck. The driver told us to be out at nine and he came along at 11.30, all smiles! A number of Christians went with us and as we had to wait in the heat they got cocoanuts for us, some of which contained two glasses of water, which was most refreshing. We got to Minimire at four and had some good meetings. We were in a small hut but got along all right as the saints were most kind. We then moved on to Belén and had to fix up our house all over again. A stick across the corner serves as a wardrobe. With a native shingle, we managed to make a shelf. The hut is made of mud and canes and has never been plastered, so that it is more filthy than usual. We had to make a window of shingles and use a piece of the stirrup leather for hinges. A missionary must be a masterpiece at improvising. A door had to be fixed the same way to keep out the pigs and dogs, chickens and donkeys. The woman who was cooking for us had been in Caracas and was a jewel but had nothing to cook with and nothing to set it on, and she had a trying problem for the best of cooks! Unfortunately the fire-table is just next our room and we get the worst of all the heat and smoke, but it keeps away the insects. Our room is full of holes so that we cannot use any light at night. But the dear souls are all kindness and we make the best of things. We had a full hall and if nothing else, all had a good sweat. Sr. Peña came over for the baptism on the 28th, with about twenty Christians from El Mene. While clearing a path for the baptisms, one brother killed a "mapanare" over six feet long. This is the worst snake we have in Venezuela. For the baptism we dammed the stream and thus got a fine pool. We made two huts so that the Christians could change their clothes. Long before the time the people began to arrive and it was fine to see about two hundred of those country people gathered to witness the baptism. There was real help to speak.

The wife of Luciano professed to be saved after the baptism. Sr. Peña baptized five.

There was a man in Belén with six donkeys, buying maize. He learned of the baptism on Saturday and decided to stay, as he had heard that in our baptisms one could hear, as each one was immersed, a voice saying, *Esta alma es mia* "This soul is mine." (Of course the Roman Catholics say that the devil says this because they have left the religion of their fathers.) The man proved this to be untrue, but he heard rather the voice of God speaking to him through His Word. He was so impressed that he decided to wait and go to the meetings on Sunday. At 5 a.m. Monday he came to bid us goodbye. Perhaps, the Lord may yet save him. We left at 6 a.m. on animals which Sr. Peña had brought over. He gave his fine mule to my wife, who said that it was the best ride that she had had in Venezuela. We got wet to the skin twice and then dried out by the hot sun. This tries the stoutest frame and we were thankful to all feel well next day. Sr. Peña got a truck for us and we left at 3 a.m. for La Boca and then Tucacas. The truck was carrying a house and was too heavy behind, so that when it had to pull hard the front wheels would leave the ground and it would rear up like a prancing horse! About two miles from Tucacas the gas gave out so that we finished the last lap on foot, carrying our grips in a very hot sun, to the railway station. Oh Falcón! Land of bad roads and worse conveyances! We had now rails to run on and got home at 4 p.m. How good to be home! We had received little mail all the time we were away so that our hearts welled up in thanksgiving to our faithful God as we saw the many letters and gifts of fellowship awaiting us.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### A VISIT TO GUAIGUAYURE.

WE will pass by a visit to San Carlos with Mr. Saword and also the Valencia Conference, and tell of a short trip to Guaiguayure. As usual we had to take the 5.30 a.m. *autovia* in Puerto Cabello. What a boon the new railway is to us! We had a splendid trip to Kilometer 40. Formerly we used to have to go to San Felipe, spend the night there and then all next day in the train to reach Kilometer 40. The brethren met us with horses and a donkey for the luggage and we reached Guaiguayure at 2 p.m., just eight and one half hours from Puerto Cabello.

Meetings began the same night with a good attendance. The Lord has been blessing the testimony here and several had been saved recently. We looked forward to a good week's meetings; but the rains started and we had rain, more or less, for four days. We arranged a baptism for 3 p.m. on the Saturday, in the stream, just in front of the hall; and looked to the Lord for dry weather. It cleared up and we had a grand baptism in the creek, which meanders down the valley. We counted one hundred and twenty people present. There were four of the big men there who had never seen a baptism. José del C. Peña baptized six and all was done in due order.

Lord's Day was "election day," if we can call the process by such a name. In Venezuela, everything important has to be done on Sunday, so of course the voting too, has to be on a Sunday. All drink shops had to close for the "duration"; no arms were to be carried. The Government threatened all and sundry who would not vote in

these country places and no wonder they got 90% of the votes! It was a grand farce and yet in the ten per cent. opposition we see a hope for the future. During Gómez' reign there were no elections, as no one would have dared suggest such a thing. He was lord of all he surveyed. But now there is democracy in name and in the cities the men are beginning to read and offer opposition to the old regime.

The Christians refused to vote but they were sent for three times with policemen and at last they had to go or go to jail! Blessed democracy! Yet some of the more intelligent Christians stood aloof from it all—one, José del C. Peña, who had just done the baptizing. His name was on the list of candidates in Aroa, but he left and came to Guaiguayure on Saturday to help us with the baptisms and paid no heed to the matter. Then the leftists were there offering money for votes. They are talking about "the four liberties," and one sees them posted up on the buses and stations. But neither the Government, and much less the Roman Catholic clergy wish to see "the four liberties." It would ruin the graft in the one and the speculation in the other. Next day it came out in the Press that the Government had gained a ninety per cent. victory. We could have told them that, ere voting began! But the Press also carried large front headlines of six hundred votes for Government by persons who did not exist! This shows that the leftists are beginning to expose Government corruption.

We had forty-nine at the Lord's table and full meetings all day. It is good to see how the Lord is sustaining the testimony in Guaiguayure. Before the elections the civil chief of Duaca went to see the Christians. He saw the hall and said that it would be fine to have a sidewalk all the way out to the road and he also suggested a little plaza in front of the hall, Roman Catholic style. He offered the brethren cement for the construction. They had a meeting and then wrote the chief that it would be more for the public good to repair the irrigation canal, while the

plaza would benefit only the "evangelicos." Of course the chief wanted the Christian's votes. He told them that the cement would be at the station any day, but we know that now the elections are past it will never arrive there. (Three years after: the cement has not arrived!)

On Monday we rode to Kilometer 40 and took the *autovia* for Aroa. We used to stay with Theodoro Acosta but he is in the hospital, so we stay with José del C. Peña. They did not expect us, so that we have been carpentering all day and we now have things in shape. José del C. Peña is in fairly comfortable circumstances and is a hard worker. He starts at 4 a.m. and gets home at six p.m. He has cattle and much land, but being short of help, his home is more used for cattle than for people. For example, to keep five calves from sucking the cows during the night, he shuts them in the bathroom! When you enter in the morning, with a leaking shower and five calves, one can imagine what has to be done! I am glad that I learned to clean stables; and now we have things better organized.

The good and quiet lady of the house, Srn. Emilia, was greatly excited at the idea of having "los siervos" in her house. But she is looking around with joy at seeing doors swinging, taps fixed, cattle and pigs kept in their place, so that we told her she would be wishing a visit from us every year.

We have up dear Bertie Douglas' chart. Mrs. Douglas gave it to us when we were in Ireland and this is the first time we have used it. It was painted by Miss Ruth Scott and represents much labour. We began on Tuesday night. The attendance is increasing each night, and we are now in our fourth week. We have not preached the Gospel but rather kept to ministry for the Lord's people, as the enemy had been busy. The ministry has helped them and two have got restored.

We have walked to La Luz twice on Saturday nights when we have no meeting here. By day we have been working in Acosta's blacksmith shop most of the two

weeks, cutting and drilling forty-two steel plates for the trusses for the new hall in Caracas. We have also ordered the wood, five and one-half cubic meters at \$120.00 the cubic meter. It is two hundred miles from Caracas but it can be shipped by rail at \$18.00 per ton, and will be a big saving on the Caracas prices.

We had the Sunday School examination on Sunday, 14th, and in spite of threatening weather one hundred and twenty children were present. On Monday we got home, Mr. Saword was having special meetings and wished us to help him for four nights.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A VISIT TO CHORONI.

WE left again on Friday for Maracay and had a busy week, visiting all we could. Some of the Lord's people live in abject poverty and never know what it is to have a full meal. On Lord's Day there were thirty-eight at His table. It was a very good day. The hall was packed at night. Francisco Ramos arrived from San Esteban to help us with the meeting in Choroni. Brethren Bastidas and Naranjo arrived to see us about building the new hall in Caracas. We resolved not to start building yet as they had only about \$1,000 on hand and we need twice that sum to cover initial costs. We left to-day on a station waggon—my wife, Don Francisco, Don León and I with some other passengers. It was surely a wonderful climb up to the top of the mountains. It took a long time as the road zig-zags up the mountain side in what seems to be a perilous way. It was beautiful, as all kinds of semi-tropical vegetation could be seen. There were no houses all the way. The road was blasted out of the solid rock for miles. It required twelve years to build this road and no doubt but that Gómez made it so as to have another back door to the sea from Maracay in case of a successful revolution. There was a steady climb of about eight miles and then a descent of about eighteen to the sea. We reached the little place at one o'clock and got a hearty welcome from our sister in the Lord, Leonor de Robles, who was baptized a year ago in Palo Negro. She is the only Christian in all the place and she had suffered very much persecution.

We put up the Bible chart and managed to get six listeners to come inside. Next day we went to the seaport,





Building the New Hall in Maracay, 1946.

Colombia, over a mile away. Here we visited hut and home and got a good reception. It is only a small port for fishing but there are lovely cocoa plantations in this district. All belonged to the late President Gómez. At night we had a few more inside, but all men, not a woman would venture near the door. Next day we worked the little place of about one hundred houses, many of them empty, as the big men in connection with Gómez have all had to clear out. Since Gómez died, the Government took over the estates and through mismanagement they are about abandoned. It is the strangest little place we have ever seen. It is full of enormous boulders. Many of the houses are built on blasted rock. There are no straight streets, they wind here and there to suit the boulders. They are narrow and a great quantity of cement must have been used to fix them up. There are open sewers running through the streets and also through the yards of the houses. Most people have a large rockery built by Nature in their back yard.

We went over the place and could only give away a few tracts. Francisco and I worked the main street and then we turned down a back street to meet Don León. We found him with women and girls shouting at him, clapping their hands and howling: "*Vaya de aqui, pedazo de viejo*"—"Get out of here you bit of an old man. (Don León is small.) We came to the conclusion that this would be a hard place to work, as the priest from Maracay had the people completely under his control, especially the women. However, at night we had the best meeting yet and some twenty men listened well to the Gospel preached by three of us. Next day we had a long trudge of two hours to a small place called Aroa. The path was very difficult along the rocky coast with the sea hundreds of feet below. We thought there would be about fifty huts but we only saw about eight hovels. We found only one man who could read. He had a wooden leg and had one girlie in his school, for he was the schoolmaster! I told him that the place was quite a contrast to the Aroa

of Yaracuy. He told me that he had worked in the mines there, and at once we were friends, as he asked about many whom I knew. He had not a cent in the hut. We gave him a New Testament from the National Bible Society of Scotland, sang two hymns to him and preached the Gospel. I occupied the only chair, while he propped himself with the wooden leg against the wall. We all wondered if this was why we had walked four hours in the blazing sun: to give this Ricardo Fijando the Gospel. Don León got tired on the way home as he is now sixty-seven years of age. We had not tasted meat or drink since we left in the morning as nothing was to be obtained. When we reached home we despatched one glass of lemonade, two of *guarapo* and three of water, and Don Francisco drank more. The thirst was terrible and we did not feel well until we had a bathe in the river at 3 p.m.

The next night we had poor attendance with only about fourteen inside. Yet we had the joy of seeing a man called Angel Guzman for the second time and also his wife Maria. They came on mules to the meeting. He bought a Bible and we gave him Moody's book, *The Way to God*. He was back again last night. They are friends of the sister with whom we are staying and she has them well convinced. (Later, he has not got saved, but two of his daughters are in fellowship and his wife professes now.) My wife, Don Francisco and I went to the little seaport of Colombia and had a good reception apart from a few rowdy boys who followed us for a time and tore up all the tracts they could get hold of. We invited the people to the meeting in Choroní. It was a real joy to see some eighteen men and two women enter the room at night. There was hardly a soul inside when they entered and it gave a new impulse to the meeting. The women were getting more and more opposed but some of the men were friendly. When we were returning from Colombia, one of the men who goes to the meeting overtook us in his car and gave us a ride to Choroní. He has a Bible and is quite convinced that Romanism has

nothing for the soul. But this is only one "freedom" as it were. Those men have very often "*queridas*" (mistresses) who are opposed and hinder them from getting saved, for those fancy women know right well that when a man gets saved he will have nothing more to do with concubinage.

Lord's Day five of us met for a little devotional time in the morning. At three we tried a gospel meeting. Don León was ill and could not take part. At night we had a varied meeting, sometimes a lot and sometimes only a few—as the devil had a counter attraction in the shape of acrobats. The people listened a little while to the Gospel, but when they heard the fireworks of the circus they could not resist the temptation to go and see what was happening. We then returned to Maracay and got a bus for Palo Negro. While at dinner, Don Francisco took very ill and then my wife, with what seemed gripe. I had to take all the meetings during the week alone. This would have been little had we not had trouble to arrange among the Lord's people. The last two nights we have been in the hall until ten o'clock, but there is a rift in the clouds and we yet hope to see *Psalms* 133 fulfilled. We are ministering the word to the Christians rather than preaching the Gospel. The last week was a good week; we saw all the Lord's people united. Several said: "I have sinned," and that makes reconciliation easy. On Monday we reached home, Puerto Cabello, in time for the conference.

On Thursday night we had the Sunday School treat. It was good to see nineteen children get a prize for full marks during the year. Jimmy Saword got a special prize for being five years without missing a Sunday, with full marks every year. On Monday we went to San Esteban for the Sunday School treat, which was smaller but good. Had word to-day that Pastor Peña cannot come to the conference as he is ill with malaria.

Saturday.—The conference was extra good to-day, with large number attending. The hall was packed at night

to see the baptisms. Antonio Malpica, Luis Torres and José Naranjo preached the Gospel. Mr. Saword baptized ten before a full hall. The order was fine and real power with the Word. Jean and Ruthie Saword were baptized. It was a cheer to us to see this, as the Sawords have always put God and His work first and now he is honouring them.

Lord's Day.—Dear old Francisco Keper died this afternoon. She is the oldest Christian here in the Port. She began attending the meetings in 1914 and in 1915 was baptized and received into the fellowship. She has been a faithful soul and suffered much in her later years. She has gone to the "land that is fairer than day," free from pain and suffering, to see the One she trusted in 1914, through *Romans 1:16*.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### SAN CARLOS HALL.

WE have had four busy days getting ready to go to San Carlos. Mr. Saword left on Wednesday to look for a suitable house. My wife, Eduvigis and two more sisters left this morning on the bus. Pablito came along with his truck and we loaded up, and with the help of two volunteer brethren we reached San Carlos to find that Mr. Saword had not been able to get a suitable house, so that we had to put all in a hut with earthen floor and palm roof, where a woman had died three weeks previously. No one would rent a house to Mr. Saword, but no one wanted to live in the house in which the woman died, so we got it! The stuff filled it up but the Venezuelans are adepts at accommodating themselves and forsooth with thirty-three years' experience we are not far behind them. It was just wonderful to see the transformation ere Lord's Day. Pablito hauled all the adobes in his truck a distance of about two miles ere returning to the Port.

We pitched the old tent on the lot. It serves as a carpenter shop to keep the tools and for four of the men to sleep in at night. My wife and Eduvigis have a large household to feed. Lord's Day at last! We could surely sing to-day, "Oh day of rest and gladness." We have now worked two weeks on the hall. The work has been most trying, as the heat has been around 100 in the shade and then at night a very penetrating cold. The work has progressed fairly well but we lack skilled labour. The walls are up to the top of the windows. We have plenty of unskilled help. The expenses have been very high, up to last night Bs. 2020.00 had been spent.

Another three weeks have gone, we finished the roof yesterday with 4,000 tiles. Two of the men left three weeks ago and another leaves to-morrow. We are getting to know the capacity of each one better. Cristóbal Peña came from Chivacoa three weeks ago and has been a real help as we now have two masons. Then we could not get cement and we had a special prayer meeting and the Lord answered four days later by sending almost two and a quarter tons. We sent our original petition to the Board of Control five months ago. My wife has now eighteen at the table three times a day. Yet the Lord continues to meet all the need. We were much cheered by a gift of £54-0-0 from Ireland from different assemblies and individuals forwarded to us through Bath. It had been held up since last year and now comes along at the right time when the hall is now nearing Bs. 4,000 mark, and on the Sawords and ourselves has fallen the burden of expenses. We have been cheered by little gifts of ten, twenty and fifty bolívares but that does not go far in buying material. We have used 4,650 adobes, 1,000 bricks, 4,000 tiles and eight cubic meters of wood.

We are now nearing the end. Floors all laid, plastering almost done, but it lacks the walls in front for garden and much painting. Leocadio Flores left on Monday but José Avila came in so that the number keeps about the same.

We began meetings on Tuesday night and the interest has been fair. We have examined eighteen for baptism after the meetings. With starting at 6.15 a.m. and working until 5.30 p.m., then preaching and examining those asking for baptism until 9.30, and walking home, all are glad to get to bed as we feel that we have put in a full day. The hall looks very well, and we have only been seven weeks at it. We are thankful to the Lord that without solicitation He moves His people to meet all the expenses. Gifts from assemblies—Chivacoa, Bs. 100.0; Pontezuela, Bs. 52; San Felipe, Bs. 40; Mr. and Mrs. W., Bs. 55.00; Plinio Sequera, Bs. 20.00; Valencia assembly, Bs. 730.00.





Mr. and Mrs. Sidney J. Saword.



Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Fairfield.



We are now finished. Yesterday we had the baptisms, when fourteen confessed the Lord—seven men and seven women. Some seven more asked for baptism but we thought well to let them wait. The hall was full and the Gospel was listened to with order and attention. Eight brethren came from San Esteban and one from Valencia. We could not invite in a general way as there is little or no accommodation here. All say that the hall is lovely. We trust that it may be a real blessing to the work and a place where God will be honoured. Mr. Wells and Mrs. Saword came on Thursday night for the baptisms. To-day we formed the assembly with sixteen in fellowship. After the meeting Pablito left with his truck and all went with him, including Mr. Saword, so that we were alone on Monday. We were sorry to see Rafael Blanco go, as he was the only one who had knowledge of the work and who animated the others to work. We gave him Bs. 40 as a token of appreciation. We also gave Bs. 20.00 to Cristóbal Peña as he has worked quietly and well. The other brethren had to be watched and directed like a lot of children. We have learned that it is not good to employ men as volunteers who know nothing about building, as it is neither fair to them nor to us, to expect them to build and then for us to finish a good job with unskilled labour. Mr. Wells stayed with us to have a few meetings in the new hall. The Lord's people came out well but only about a dozen of the unsaved would come inside as already the priest and his *beatas* (praying women) are busy. We built a little house at the back of the hall with slabs and palm roof, where a brother can live as caretaker.

We had the last meeting on Lord's Day when twenty of us were at His table. It was hard leaving the little company and many a tear was shed. Even Paco wept on Sunday morning. We hardly thought that he could shed a tear. Pablito and José Morales arrived with the truck when we got home from the meeting. Next morning we loaded up and left for home.

We left Brother Wells in Valencia, as he was going.

home to Nirgua. He has been a real cheer and help to us. We got home at three p.m. Many letters to cheer us. Surely the Lord has been good to us and although we were enabled to bear a good share in the hall expenses, on arriving home we had more than when we left! O God, who is like unto Thee? The Sawords were all kindness in helping us to settle down for a few days.

We visited Leocadio to-day. He professed to be saved about fifteen years ago and went on well for some time. He was put in charge of one of the departments in the Kolster Company. He began to tipple as there was much liquor stored in his department and he had to be put out of the fellowship years ago. He has been a wreck ever since, but from time to time at special meetings he and his wife, who also drinks, went to the meetings and hoped would run high that he was to be restored; but every new year or festival season would see Leocadio Flores back at his old vice.

About New Year he professed to be restored and we decided to take him away from his environment for a while to see if that might help him to resist the temptation. He was with us for a month, but showed no fear or brokenness of spirit. When we warned him about drink being his besetting sin and to be careful when he went back to the Port, he would reply: "Do not worry, drink will not conquer me again." He is employed as a stevedore and two weeks ago when a Spanish ship came in with abundance of wine, all aboard were drunk and Leocadio could not resist. Mrs. Saword saw him lying in the street, hopelessly drunk, not far from the hall. It grieved us to learn this, so we visited him and gave him a booklet on drink by Mr. L. Ingram of Mexico.

He was surprised to see us, for he had been drinking the night before and had seen a person telling him, "Fear not, I am with thee." We told him that the voice was from the devil; had it been from the Lord He would have said "If we sin wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

But what a sad picture as we sat in the room by the seaside in which we used to preach the Gospel when he was in fellowship! We believe that Leocadio's days are numbered. God will not be mocked. He has trifled with drink and sin till he is now in its grasp. We looked at the red face, bloated and so changed. The sweat ran down his neck as he only looked at the floor. What a warning not to trifle with sin! (Later—He died shortly after).

Then we went to see Paula, who had gone on well for years and served Miss Gulston as cook in El Mene. After she left Miss Gulston she did washing for an American, and this vile man took advantage of her and she is now in the Port to suffer her shame while he looks for another victim. We expect little from a Venezuelan, as immorality and vice are the heritage of Romanism, but from an American we expect something worthy of his race and country. Paula passed the time weeping. She had fled from El Mene to hide her shame. These are dark spots which only appear on the missionary's diary and that is why we jot them down. Romantic, says the uninitiated, is the the missionary's life. Those blots on His name and testimony humble us in His presence.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### JUST ONE MORE HALL.

MRS. WILLIAMS and I went to San Esteban to-day. There were good meetings and, as usual, we spent the day in Don Francisco's home. Some three months ago he got an orange thorn in his ankle. It pained him very much and he went to the doctor in Puerto Cabello who told him he had nothing in his ankle but he charged him Bs. 40. He then went to see another medical man who also assured him that there was no thorn in his ankle. He suffered for weeks and then began using "Mecca" ointment which my wife gave him. One day lately he was squeezing the sore spot when a thorn an inch long came out! So much for the medical skill!

On Monday we went to see dear Don Leon Almérida in Valencia who has been very poorly and suffering from what seems to be cancer. He was bright and glad to see us. I ran around on business for the new hall in Caracas all day and got home late. Spent some busy days in the final preparations, then Pablito came again with his truck, we loaded up and got into Caracas at 5 p.m. My wife arrived later on the bus. We had a good prayer meeting. Glad to be back in Caracas to see His own after fifteen months' absence. They are delighted that we are to start the hall. Hopes are high. We are sure that the Lord will not disappoint them. We were encouraged by a word by Brother Sheldrake on the calendar on Friday when we left the Port: "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" If there is nothing too hard, let us trust in Him and go ahead.

On Monday we started moving the portable hall to

allow room for the new building. We took down the sides and reckoned that about sixteen of us could move around the roof without taking it apart. We got all ready for the operation when four men took hold of the poles to try the weight. They expected a very heavy weight and gave a hard lift, with the result that the top slowly fell over and shearing twelve bolts fell on the seats below. Fortunately it went down easy as bolt after bolt came away. Very little damage was done and no one hurt. A very heavy rain came on so that we could have no meeting at night. Next day we raised the hall and had all in shape for the meeting. We traced out the foundations and had the men working on them all the week. We were delighted to see José Ramon Linares and Ramón Martínez from Aroa, both good and proved men. We were glad we brought all the outfit we had in San Carlos for in Caracas everything is expensive.

Last Lord's Day the great necessity for a new hall was seen. All the meetings were packed and two Sunday School classes outside. At night, just as we were closing the meeting, a heavy rain came on when all had to rush inside so that all available standing space was occupied. We did a very difficult job on Friday in cutting the enormous limbs from the trees in the avenue. We had to get permission from the city to do this. There were wires and cables underneath and houses on either side and a slip would have been fatal. We were thankful when all was finished. We had cheering letters from assemblies enabling us to have fellowship in the cost of the hall.

Our Venezuelan boy and Regino came to-day from Puerto Cabello. Juan is on his school holidays and we thought that it would be good exercise for him to work on the building. Regino is a good mason and an old helper of ours. The work has gone ahead rapidly and we have had four masons busy all the week. The walls are nearly half-way up and no accident. We were cheered on Wednesday by a gift from Mr. and Mrs. W. of Bs. 203.

for the hall and another from Nirgua for Bs. 50. We were able to buy the roofing of asbestos. Work goes on well. P. P. sent us Bs. 200 for the hall—the only gift this week. Good prayer meeting on Monday night for new hall. Fourteen took part and three hymns were sung in the hour. It was not surprising to receive with Teodoro Acosta on Tuesday Bs. 100 from Jiménez brothers and Bs. 200 from assembly in Puerto Cabello. Glad to see dear Acosta, as it is eighteen months since we have seen him. He is very much failed, having been two years in the hospital.

It gave us a good deal of prayer and thought how we could mount the six hundred pound trusses on the top of the pillars, but Saturday saw them all in their place without mishap. The work is going well and we lack nothing. Bs. 50 from San Esteban assembly and Bs. 30 from Rafael Jorge, also Bs. 50 from Pablo Vera and his wife. Finished roof yesterday. Received word that the Fairfields have been refused permit to return to Venezuela. "Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man."

Last Lord's Day we had three meetings in the new hall in a half-finished state. They were all good. At night one woman got saved, so that the Lord has set His seal to the new building. Sent away the portable hall to Guarcara with Pablito Vera. Many were sorry to see it go as it has been the birth place of many souls. Received Bs. 283.80 from Mr. and Mrs. S. for the new hall, and Mr. G. G. J. manifested his fellowship by sending Bs. 49.50. These gifts are very precious, but only meet the daily need apart from buying materials.

Mrs. Williams returned from Port to-day with fresh gifts from the Don Carlos Rivas and Sr. Bracho for the hall. Fine progress and all plastered inside and first coat of concrete laid on floor. Much encouraged by a gift from a dear brother and his wife away in Vancouver for the new hall. The cheque is for one hundred dollars and just came along on Saturday, so all was again paid up. We are copying these details from our diary and

they just give a close-up view of how we prove God in the very details. Never before His time, never behind. We give them to His glory and that they may encourage His beloved people to prove Him more and more in the details of life. We cannot all be like the great English Missionary who said: "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God," but we can all expect greater things from God and we can all attempt greater things for God. (When those notes were jotted down there was no thought of publishing them.)

We have examined thirty for baptism and have accepted twenty-six of them. The names will be announced to the Lord's people on Lord's Day morning a week before the baptism. This allows all who are in fellowship to have a voice in their reception. If anyone objects on legitimate ground, the one concerned will have to wait.

This has been an eventful week. It has had its joys and sorrows interwoven by the Divine Weaver. Last Lord's Day we had the Sunday School examination when some eighty-three children were present. We had it in the smaller hall at the back and also the Gospel meeting at night. We found that we could squeeze two hundred into the back hall. On Wednesday, when all was finished, we filled the baptistry with water. There was a leak where the drain pipe went out and the water had seeped out into the base, where there was over three feet of earth filled in. This sunk and the baptistry broke in the centre and all the water got away. (The baptistry is raised up two feet so that all in the body of the hall can see those who are being baptized, without standing up.) The brethren got working, and by 8 p.m. all the debris was cleared away. They worked like heroes right through from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m., when the baptistry was again built stronger than ever. We put in a solid base this time of the old materials. It had to be filled next day, so we were thankful that it did not give way again. Mr. and Mrs. Saword and Mr. Wells came along on Friday. We had the first meeting at night in the finished hall. It

poured so that only about one hundred and fifty were present. On Saturday at 7 p.m. the hall was full for the baptisms, from four to five hundred being present. There was real help to preach the Gospel and fine order. We had the joy of baptizing thirty-eight before a larger crowd than was ever seen in Caracas at a Gospel meeting. Brethren rented many seats but could have used twice as many.

It was wonderful to see the joy of the newly baptized, who got the desire of their heart fulfilled; also to note the joy and appreciation of the Lord's people in seeing their desire fulfilled in the new hall. Some said that it all seemed like a dream. We surely felt like the Psalmist—"Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all His benefits." Some Christians in the Port had started laying by as they were able for the new hall. This came along, also a substantial gift from Miss E. C. W., showing that her interest is still with us. We had one hundred and forty at the Lord's table. An account of all the gifts and expenses of the hall was read by Sr. Luis Peña to the Lord's people on Lord's Day morning. The hall had cost, without the land, Bs. 15,495.94. Sr. Luis Peña was treasurer. He received gifts from Venezuelan sources. We have only noted a few we received for the building and have not mentioned special donations from assemblies on the West Coast and also individuals who have manifested real interest in the work. We had estimated that the expenses would be around this sum, but with voluntary labour, of course the hall is worth very much more. There was many a sad farewell on Sunday night, and on Monday we went to the Port on Pablito's truck with all the scaffolding, etc. It was 8 p.m. ere we got home. José Ramón, Regino and Martínez went with us to put on asbestos on our roof in the Port as, with twenty-six years, the tiles are filtering rain. The boys worked away up on the second storey as only Christians can. We all went to Valencia Conference and then came back and finished the job. We surely esteem the self abnegation of those brethren. On Friday they all left for home.



October 20th. This is our red letter day. Forty-four years ago to-day since we could sing, "'Tis done, the great transaction's done, I am my Lord's and He is mine." It is a wonder how He ever saved us at all, but all this has been enhanced a thousand times by His patience and restraining grace during these forty-four years. "That they may know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," is indeed life eternal. During these years we have got to know Him, His love, His power, His patience, His loving kindness and grace. We would seek to appreciate this and as it were seek to please God better, serve His beloved people more and seek to win the lost for Christ.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### A VISIT TO BEJUMA AND NIRGUA.

**M**R. WELLS came on Tuesday and he and I went on to San Felipe. We have had two meetings but it has rained very heavily and only the Lord's people come, last night thirty of them sat all through the meeting wet. Here they have no protection from the rain—no raincoats, umbrellas nor rubbers. It is good to be back in the old San Felipe house again. It is nine years this month since dear Bertie Douglas went home. What a loss to the work! Here is a fine comfortable home lying empty for four years. This is only one of four houses in the same condition in Valencia, El Mene, San Felipe and Duaca. (Later: Miss Gulston is back to her home in El Mene.)

My wife and I came on to Bejuma. John Wells joined us in the afternoon and we started meetings. It is about eight years since we were here for a meeting and fifteen years since my wife stayed the night. Nearly all the old stock are gone, three of them dead, others moved away and some in the world. There were only sixteen inside. It is delightfully cool here, though only about seventy-five miles from the Port, but much higher up. A woman of twenty-five got saved on Wednesday. She is a sister of a brother in fellowship and lives in Miranda. She came here to visit him and his wife and they brought her to the meeting. She was a sincere Roman Catholic and a woman of clean life, a rare thing for a person of her age and appearance. We had a good week. The interest increased and we finished with fifty inside.

We then went with Mr. Wells to Nirgua and had a

good week's meetings, finishing up with a baptism when Mr. Wells baptized seven. The hall was packed and there was good order. Then we went home to the Port for the Conference. This is the last day of the year. What mercies He has made us to prove as we look back; and what joy and satisfaction fill our heart in His service at present! What hope and peace for the future at the thought of His coming. Truly we can say "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord!"

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES IN CARACAS.

YESTERDAY we came to Caracas and started special meetings with Sr. Naranjo. It is quite cool here at present, as Caracas is at a high altitude. We had good meetings all the week. A woman called Luz got saved and then her mother. On Friday, Olga Garrido and Carmen Peña professed. They are only twelve and fourteen years of age but seem real. It is much joy to the Peñas to see Carmen saved, as she had been indifferent to the Gospel up until now. We always stay at their home. We have examined twenty for baptism but only eleven were accepted. Lord's Day we had a fine time. There were one hundred and eight at the Lord's table. A brother read of the agonies of Gethsemane before breaking the bread and it brought most into His presence. It was a very soft meeting and many a tear was shed. At night the hall was packed and a man called Benito Pérez got saved. He is fairly well-to-do and owns a bar in the centre of the city. He brought his *querida* (mistress) to the meeting during the week and she too is interested. He is going to sell out the drink business. (This man and woman, since married, are now in fellowship and are a fine couple.)

On Saturday we had the baptisms before a crowded hall. It was a real joy to us to baptize José Camacho and his wife Eloida. José used to be our chore-boy in the Port and Miss Watson took a special interest in him. Eloida was an old Sunday School girl. He has now a good position with a construction company. Three of us

took part in preaching the Gospel. Two got saved, one during the meeting and a young man of twenty afterwards. The first is a remarkable case of the grace of God. A simple sister worked for this woman, who belongs to the better class. She persuaded her mistress to go and see the baptisms. The lady was all bejewelled and fancily dressed, but the Word got into her soul. She twitched and turned during the service so that we thought it was the cold entering the window that had her upset, but after the meeting she broke down, crying like a child and later trusted Christ. Her son, who is assistant teller at the Dutch Bank, has also got saved, as well as her daughter and aunt. She is a wonderful trophy of the grace of God, led to the meetings by a simple sister who keeps bright for God. On next Lord's Day another woman got saved. Her mother was a Pole and she looks just like the pictures one sees of the Polish refugees. Sr. Naranjo and I visited many of the Lord's people away in a suburb one day. Their earthly goods are not many but they are happy in the Lord and letting their light shine. When we got to the place where we are staying a brother had brought mail from the Port. We were much cheered by a gift of One Hundred and Fifty Pounds from dear Mrs. L. away in New Zealand, the widow of the late servant of the Lord, Mr. L. This sum goes to the Evangelization Fund and will help to meet the need of the Venezuelan workers. On Wednesday a man called Cabrera got saved and a young man called Abraham. (Both have gone on well and are in fellowship.)

Later Sr. Naranjo and I went to see a brother in the cancer hospital. The matron has heard the Gospel from the Christians who have been in this institute and they gave her a Bible which she is now reading. She greeted us by name, which was surprising, but she already knew us through the Christians. She is a Colombian who has studied in Chicago. We had a very interesting chat with her and she promised to go to the meeting on Saturday night. Her name is Senora Maria de Almenar.

The last week in Caracas was the best. Attendance kept up and on Sunday night there was a full hall. At night three got saved. Had it not been that we had arranged to go to La Guaira we would have continued another week. The matron of the cancer hospital went to the afternoon meeting and seemed deeply interested. We gave her a present of a hymn book which she seemed to appreciate.

## CHAPTER XL.

### MORE ABOUT THE REVOLUTION.

**M**Y wife and I left for Caracas to meet Miss Gulston and Miss Goff who were to come by plane. We stayed this time at Sr. Naranjo's home. Miss Gulston arrived on Monday. It was good to see her again looking so well after two year's absence. Surely it was the Lord's doing that she was now able to be back. "He has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

We went to the cancer hospital to see Maria de Gales, the matron, who is a Christian, told us that there was some big move on. Sure enough when we got to the plaza the shots began, and my wife and Sr. Naranjo could hardly get out of the bus, as the people fled to it for protection. We could get no transport home and started to walk, but finally a bus picked us up. We had a meeting at night. On Friday about sixty of us got together and with closed doors we prayed. The airplanes were roaring all day and shots were fired from time to time. All civil protection was withdrawn and not a policeman was to be seen on the streets.

We passed a lively day on the 20th of October. The National Guard fought with the citizens right in front of the place where we were staying and all night they kept peppering away. On Saturday night it looked as if things were better. Miss Goff was expected to arrive at La Guaira by plane from Miami. Our brother Bastidas came with his car and he and I made our way to the Pan American Airways office. We were stopped several times when persons and cars were searched for arms. Finally we got to the office and found that the airplane pilot had heard of the revolution and had turned back from Curacao.

The plaza was a seething mass of people. We saw the troops arrive from Maracay. We had only about sixty at the Lord's table, for there was no bus service. We tried another meeting at night with shut doors and there were about one hundred inside, when shooting began afresh, close to the hall, where the communists were seeking to sow terror among the people by shooting.

As Miss Goff did not arrive we decided to try and leave next day, if possible, for Puerto Cabello. We decided to catch the 6 a.m. bus. Our old boy José Camacho kindly went for us in a car and, with Luis Peña helped us a great deal to get seats. No bus had travelled and no one cared to go but they were encouraging the people and the bus pulled out at seven. We had a most tedious journey, being stopped and searched, every one of us, about twenty-four times. A beautiful jack knife with suitable accessories was taken from Mrs. Williams by a mere youth with a badge on his arm, on the ground that it was a weapon.

Finally we got home at 4 p.m. and all were glad to see Miss Gulston. Pastor Peña was in our home having had to clear out of Falcón as General Jurado is his enemy and he would take an advantage of the revolution to do him harm.

Miss Goff arrived on Tuesday. Sr. Bastidas helped her in Caracas and she came on by bus. We had a welcome meeting in the hall for the teachers. Things were returning to normal again. My wife, Miss Gulston, Jimmy Saword and I left on the autovia for Tucacas. Nobody was there so we finally got a launch which took us to Chichiriviche and there Pastor Peña had a truck ready to take us to El Mene. The sisters must have been tired for we had been travelling for fifteen hours by rail, sea and truck. They were all glad to see Miss Gulston and gave her a welcome meeting next night. We have been helping her to get her house fixed up, which has stood empty during two years and three months' absence. Some of Miss Goff's stuff was simply riddled to pieces by the white ants and we had to burn it and throw out a trunk where



they had got into the wood. We stayed a week in El Mene and then my wife and I had to leave on a truck for hauling logs. Mrs. Williams was able to sit beside the driver but I had to sit on the chassis behind, over the worst roads. It was a little different from a Packard!

We got to La Boca at eight and we managed to get a man to ferry us over in his canoe and just caught Noel leaving for Tucacas in a truck loaded with dried cocoa nuts. As there was no room for Mrs. Williams in the front, she and I had to climb up on top of the sacks of *copra*. I asked my wife if perchance any of her forefathers had been Methodists for now we would have "to hang on and hope to see the end of a praying life!" The sun was fierce and we were burned red like berries. The dual wheels had chains which threw up the mud like a prancing driver. We were indeed a sorry mess when we landed in Tucacas. But Tomás and Freddy our good brethren soon made us at home in their own peculiar way. We had a meeting at night, two unsaved and four saved. Did we feel flat? Not at all. It was the best preach we had had all the week. A good night's rest on a hayrack lined with sacking proved a blessing.

We left on the autovia at seven and at nine we were in Palma Sola. We spent the time with two sisters, Ambrosia and Bruna. The mountain lion had run away with two of their pigs and a lynx had got into the henhouse while they were away at the meeting and killed twelve of their fourteen hens. Dear souls, they were taking the "spoiling of their goods" cheerfully. We got into the Port and my wife had just remarked that no one could be there to meet us as no one knew we were coming. Then she said, "Oh here are Mrs. Saword and Bernardo!" The news had got ahead of us and we were glad. We had to go to San Millan to help Mr. Saword that night in the meeting; on Friday spoke to the day school children for the first time in five months. The classroom was packed.

## CHAPTER XLI.

### MORE LEAVES FROM MY JOURNAL.

SANTIAGO BRACHO took us to the State prison across the channel from our home. We were agreeably surprised to see the prisoners so well kept and groomed in comparison to those of Gómez' time. We went to see Andrés Castellano who had been saved for some time. We had a fine time with him in a little plaza surrounded by hundreds of prisoners, all dressed in yellow. Sr. Bracho got permission to visit the penitentiary and he with others have made good use of it for years, and the Lord has blessed them. Another man called Guadalupe who got saved, got out just three months before Port Conference. He had been a prisoner for eleven years but got off owing to his good behaviour. He was baptized at the Port Conference this year.

19th March, 1946. We went to Santa Rosa conference which was very good. They have enlarged their hall. About two hundred were present in the evening meetings. The ministry was excellent. Mr. Saword baptized nine, four of them being from the assembly in Capita. Two young men got saved and the Lord's people were helped. We left on horseback at 3 a.m. When we got home found the septic tank was out of use so we had to start in to fix it, and we were thankful to get to bed after eighteen hours of steady work.

Lord's Day, 21st April. Aroa. We all worked late and early to have the hall finished for the conference. All was in shape when the Christians arrived on Wednesday. The conference began with a full hall and the meetings were large and good all through. We had the joy of baptizing eight. Four of them were brought up in the Sunday

School. Brethren Saword, Wells, Naranjo and Chávez, took most part. On Saturday morning we had a special service to commend to the Lord's work José R. Linares and Cirilo Chávez. It was a splendid meeting and it gave us much joy to hear the two brethren tell how they were saved and then led out into the work. Sr. Peña and Sr. Naranjo who were commended to the work the year before, gave a report of their work, manifesting the grace of God toward them. The new addition to the hall holds about one hundred and fifteen and it is a boon. The new kitchen also works very well, without the heat and smoke of the old open fires.

28th. Had a long day in the train to Puerto Cabello, from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. Had Mr. Wells, Modesto, Pastor and Hoyte in the house. Most of them left next day. Mabel and I went to Caracas to see the Wells off by plane to Miami. Received word on Tuesday that mother was very ill.

Lord's Day, June 20th. Mirimire. There were thirty-four at the Lord's Table. It rained all day. People came out well. One blind woman got saved.

El Mene, July 7th. Had fairly well attended meetings all the week. One girl of fourteen got saved. We had a good deal of trouble putting in a new foundation to Miss Gulston's home, as one side had sunk in the boggy soil. The conference was good. Several professed to be saved. Cirilo Chávez and Miss Goff came from the Port. Pastor baptized five, one sister from Tucacas. We got a letter from blind Eulogia saved in Mirimire. Miss Goff brought twenty-five letters, as we had not had mail for some time. Good and bad news as usual, joy and sorrow intermingled, true of our wilderness path. But we are going Home where unsullied joy will be ours for ever and ever.

We left El Mene in an old truck at 4 a.m. managing to catch the autovia in Tucacas and reach the Port at 4 p.m.—just twelve hours—a record run from El Mene. We soon saw why, as the Sawords had received word to leave on Thursday. We had only one full day with them instead

of a week as we had planned. There was so much to be arranged. Mr. Saword had been ill while we were away. They left by bus for Maracaibo.

September 15th. On Monday we got word of the home call of our esteemed sister, Henriqueta Acosta. My wife, Miss Gulston and I went to the funeral. It was large and orderly and a good number of the better class heard the Gospel, perhaps for the first time. There were six medical men, one lawyer, several druggists and business men and many ladies. Antonio Malpica gave out the hymn in Spanish: "We speak of the realms of the blest." It gave a fine start and I had joy in speaking for nearly half an hour. We were surprised how the women especially listened to the glorious Gospel. Sister Acosta had a good testimony. She had been saved over twenty years, through reading in *Isaiah*. She was quiet but had a very steady, consistent testimony among the class in which she moved. Her nephew, Dr. Martinez, was educated partly in the Port Evangelical School. His mother, Doña Elena, is in fellowship in Valencia. This aunt Henriqueta had a great influence over the family. Dr. Martínez met us at the door when we arrived and told us that he wished us to take full charge.

When we got home we heard of the death of old Olivero in the Beggars' Home in Puerto Cabello. He had been an invalid for years and his faithful wife cared for him until she lost her health, then his ungodly step-sons took him to that institution, as he needed constant attention. The Port brethren resolved to take him out and bury him. What a contrast between him and Srta. Henriqueta, whose memory is blest and had an honorable burial, while Olivero had to be put away from the fellowship, though later restored, and died in the poorhouse!

We sent a petition to the Minister of the Interior for entrance of Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Milne of Belfast. Hope the Lord may give us a favourable reply. Had a good meeting in Boquerón and some forty were present. On Thursday the Valencia conference began. It was large and good, almost completely Venezuelan, as I was the

only foreign speaker present. Brethren Acosta, José Peña, Naranjo, Linares and Chávez took good part. There was fine harmony all through and good order. Three thousand nine hundred meals were served and again the Lord supplied all the need. I had the joy of baptizing two women and five men.

20th October. We left Caracas at 7.30 a.m. and after two breakdowns reached Port late. We worked hard before we left for San Carlos. Chávez joined us in Valencia. We had meetings each night in San Carlos. On Friday we walked thirty kilometers to Las Vegas. They had heard the Gospel there from an erratic man called Masias. He got saved twenty-four years ago in Las Quiguas. But he started to be dictative with brethren wishing them to work and keep him while he would do the preaching. Don Francisco Ramos could not stand this and told him that the turkey cock was getting too big for the henhouse! (A saying used here.) Masias went away like Naaman and unfortunately became bitter against the Lord's people. He has lived more or less by his wits but keeps at the Gospel in his own way. Some got saved through him in Las Vegas but when they saw God's order in the assembly in San Carlos and then compared the inconsistent life of Masias with the sanctity of the Gospel they wished to have no more to do with him and wanted to be received into the fellowship in San Carlos. Masias has now left Las Vegas and is trying another place.

It was a very long walk in a scorching sun but we got home in time for the night meeting and our visit proved helpful. We had a baptism of twelve in the hall at night. Cirilo led the singing, which was like that of the Chinese—each one had his own tune and made his own time. All one could say was—they are making a noise.

We look back to-day to forty-six years ago when God in His mercy saved us. Little did we know that night, October 20th, 1900, in Aberdeen, when we trusted Christ, all the loving kindness and tender mercy He had in store for us!

Nirgua, November 10th. We had a good finish in Bejuma. A woman called Eduviges de Leon got saved. We came on here on Monday and got installed in the house of Sra. Herminia. We miss the Wells at every step. We have had long sessions after the meetings, the Christians are divided in two bands over the old story—the elections. Some had voted and some had not. Feeling had run high and hard things had been said by both parties. Finally we got them all together and after reading several portions of the Word we had the joy of seeing all reconciled. We had a good week's meetings, with the interest increasing each night.

17th. We got a telegram to-day that Mr. Fairfield returning from the North, had been in Valencia since Saturday. We had arranged another week's meetings, so could not get away. We walked to La Chapa to see a lame sister and to Sabana Dulce to visit a sick sister. Mr. Fairfield came on Saturday and we have talked all spare time since, as it is almost six years since we saw each other. How good it is to see him back again and looking so well. We had the joy of seeing two get saved so that we are glad we stayed on.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### LEAVE TAKING AND A JOURNEY

**P**UERTO CABELLO, 3rd January, 1947. Much has happened since the last entry. We have finished 1946 and have crossed the threshold of 1947. We look back and say with the inspired Writer: "The Lord is good and doeth good." We look before and hear: "Be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed." "Arise therefore and be doing, and the Lord be with thee." *Chron.* 22: 13-16. There was a splendid conference. The new kitchen and dining-room were an immense success. Some five thousand meals were served without a hitch and the waiters and cooks got through their work so quickly that they were able to hear all the ministry.

La Guaira, 16th January. There was a surprise farewell in Puerto Cabello on Saturday night, which the Christians arranged for us all themselves. After prayer and ministry we all went to the dining-hall where they had a table attractively set with good things, and all partook of light refreshments. On Lord's Day there were around one hundred and thirty at the Lord's table and eighty in the Bible class. The hall was full at night. Mr. Fairfield was with us and he announced that, as it was to be our last meeting and all wished to say farewell, it would be well to form a queue and this they did. Those last farewells were very touching. We expected to leave on the s.s. *Santa Monica* on Sunday night, but did not leave until Monday p.m. The boat reached La Guaira at six, but we were not allowed off. All day Tuesday the Christians came from Caracas to see us. Sr. Peña came down and had lunch with us. We were glad to see him for two hours. We had a fine meeting in the hall there

at night. It was a pleasant surprise for many, as they did not know that we had arrived.

On Wednesday Abraham Torrealba came down in his car and took us to the Naranjo family in Caracas where we had lunch. At night we had a large meeting in the hall—another farewell. Six took part in prayer, two followed in ministry, then Sr. Luis Peña announced that they had prepared a little refreshment in our honour and that all could go to the dining-room. When we went inside we were surprised to see the trouble the Lord's people had taken. It was a beautiful table, showing their esteem and love. Mabel got so many bouquets that as we went out to the car which was to take us to La Guaira, the people were saying "It is a marriage!" Sr. Luis Peña took us down the twenty miles of dangerous roads. Three other cars accompanied us all the way to the docks which we reached at eleven. Our state-room was fragrant with the perfume of the beautiful flowers and my wife had enough to give to the steward to put on all the tables in the dining-room. But we enjoyed a sweeter fragrance in our souls as we thought of the love and kindness of His beloved people in Caracas. Sr. Naranjo came down with us too, and said that we were accompanied by the *Estado Mayor*. I had spoken from Ps. 121 and on three of the gifts received we saw written—Ps. 121.

While in Puerto Cabello my wife had received word that her mother was seriously ill and not likely to last much longer. Now that the conference was past we wished to reach Canada as quickly as possible. The steamer was going to Cartagena and Baranquilla in Colombia and this would take six more days. We had prayer together each day and I heard my wife asking the Lord to change the route of the steamer and make it go direct to New York. Having been a marine engineer, I knew too much and knew too little. I said nothing but thought "How can the Lord answer that prayer? For we have discharged tons and there is no cargo to take on, so that this boat could not risk the voyage without ballast." The steamer



normally drew thirty feet of water, but she was now only drawing eight.

On Thursday the purser told us that the captain had received an order from New York not to proceed to Colombia but go direct to New York. Prayer changes things all right! We had a quick run of four days and fourteen hours from La Guaira to New York. The first time we went to Venezuela in 1910, it took seventeen days to reach Puerto Cabello from New York.

When we reached New York all the passengers were lined up in the dining-room. Of course when immigration officers come aboard they always say, "American citizens first," then comes the "aliens," and so as our name begins with "W," for they take the people in alphabetical order, we were going to have to wait a very long time. The doctor came over to see our health condition. He marked our cards right away and we asked him if he could do us the favour to get us through as we were interested in getting away to Toronto on the night train. He very kindly spoke to the officer and in three minutes we were passed out, head tax returned, and landing card given us. The customs officials were never so kind and in two minutes we had all on the escalator going down to the street.

We expected to meet Mr. Greene at the door, but as the boat was in four hours ahead of the time they gave him at the Grace Line office, he was not there. We were complete strangers in that part of the city, but a friendly taxi driver piled two cabin trunks, four suitcases and our two selves into his car and we were swinging up to the Grand Central in no time. We reckoned on a big fare but he only charged us \$2.50 and he lugged the trunks up to the baggage counter. He was well worth a "token of appreciation." Then the man at the counter advised us to go and do our shopping and he would keep our cases for us that when we got our purchases we could put the light clothes into the case we had reserved. He gave us checks, told us that Macy's was open until late that night. We

went to get our reservation but when we saw the queues lined up at the fifteen wickets, our hope of a berth on a train for Toronto was not great. My wife and I lined up in two queues alongside each other with the idea that the first to reach the goal should buy the ticket. Mrs. Williams won, and we soon had the last berth for Toronto on the 11.45 p.m. No other berths available for two days!

We had never seen Macy's but we were there in ten minutes, purchased warm clothing and in a short time we were back with our friend the baggage man. Unfortunately he had gone home but he left orders to another man and we put away our light clothes and checked all through to Toronto. We then went to Thomson's and had something to eat, very well satisfied with all we had been able to do in such a short time.

My wife suggested we make an effort to find Mr. Greene by telephone as he would be worried. We went to the phone booths and began searching the directory, calling up "Information" but with no success. While my wife was calling "Information" I looked over the wide passage at the Grand Central Depot and noticed another phone call place. I went over and asked the lady if she could put me in touch with Mr. Greene of Ridgewood, N.J. She said that she would, and to go to No. 7. While I turned away from her a gentleman said to me "Are you Mr. Williams?" "I am," I replied, "Are you Mr. Greene?" "I am Greene," he said. We had never met before! I said to the lady at the exchange that she did not require to call up Mr. Greene as the gentleman had found us in the Grand Central, that he did not know us, nor we him, and that he had gone to the boat and did not know where we were. "Well!" she said, "that is most wonderful! Do you mean that you never met before and did not know where to look for each other?" "No we never met before and did not know each other," we replied, "but this has an explanation. We are Christians and missionaries, and we believe that God answers prayer." I had just three English tracts

in my pocket and one of them was entitled "Will He really respond?" of the W.S.M.U. series, by Arthur Mercer. "Lady, please read this booklet. You have just seen that God does answer prayer, for you have seen how He has brought Mr. Greene right to this corner of the Grand Central." "Thank you very much. I surely will read the booklet. This is indeed wonderful!"

Mr. Greene in the meantime found his nephew, Mr. Zuidema and his wife, who had been searching in another place. They very kindly took us to Childs and never did a happier five sit around any of their tables. The friends then accompanied us to the train and in the milling crowds we saw them wave a last goodbye. I am sure there was not a happier couple aboard the "Genesee" than we were that night. We had a splendid night's sleep. The kindly Canadian Immigration Officer was the first to get in touch with us the next day. "Are you a Canadian?" he asked. "No," I replied, "I had the misfortune to be born in Scotland. But my wife was born in Canada, and I lived in Canada before going to Venezuela (and that) we are home on furlough." "Fine," he said, "you come home from time to time and you have not lost your Canadian status. You can stay as long as you wish in Canada." We gave him our last English tract, "Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment," which he received with apparent pleasure. Equally kind was the Customs officer, and we began to realize what it was to have heaven's visa, "He will keep your going out and coming in." (Ps. 121, Spanish Version.)

No one knew that we were in Toronto, as we were days ahead of the time expected. But my wife soon got in contact with her loved ones in Collingwood and then Miss Watson, and as our train did not leave until 5.50 we arranged to go to Miss Watson and she would let our friends know. What was our surprise when we met five former Venezuelan colleagues, some of the Lord's servants and His people, and we passed a most happy visit. Then Mr. Gunn took us to the Union Station. We reached

Collingwood and the loved ones met us and we were home in exactly six days from the time we left La Guaira.

What a meeting we had next day! It was Mrs. Johnston's eighty-ninth birthday and we were home in time for it. Most of the family were present for the occasion, 'God had spared dear mother to see her daughter once more after seven years' absence, as we had asked the Lord and again He had answered prayer. We had another cheer: a letter from Ireland from Mr. Wells, told us that Mr. and Mrs. Milne had got their permits from the Venezuelan Consul to proceed to Venezuela and that they expected to sail on the *Queen Elizabeth* on 11th Feb., with Mrs. Fairfield. Here we must stop.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### CONCLUSION.

THE last seven years have been the most fruitful we have seen in the work in Venezuela. They were mostly the war years. We were short-handed as five of the workers were at home from two to six years. The Allied Nations were fighting a tyrant, a forerunner of the "man of sin." Hitler was the product of culture without the cross—of evolution without creation—of vanity instead of vision. Adolf Hitler was the human personification of pride, greed, selfishness and cruelty in its most bestial form.

Yet it pleased God to make a rift in the dark cloud which enveloped the earth, and let a ray of light through which was focussed on Venezuela. Never was there such blessing in the preaching of the Gospel, not only among ourselves, but also among other Christians who labour in connection with the denominations. During the last seven years between nine hundred and one thousand have been baptized and added to the fellowship. Nine local churches or assemblies have been planted, bringing the number now up to thirty-one. Some of them are very small, not much beyond the literal "two or three" named in *Matt. 18*; while others are large and flourishing, ranging from one hundred to two hundred in fellowship. Eight new halls have been built, all free of debt. Four Venezuelan workers have been commended to the Lord's work and so far all are proving themselves called of God.

All this is wonderful indeed when you think of what Roman Catholics are and how tenaciously they cling to the "religion of their fathers." But it is very small in comparison with the millions of Venezuela. Work done in the Lord's name will ever be little and less known,

humanly speaking. We would ever have it that way. We would fear becoming known and popular. Though we dislike making comparisons, we have probably the largest number of really "born again" Christians in the Republic, yet the denominations ignore us generally when they make their statistics. The agent of the A.B.S. had an account in their organ, when the Pentecostals went into the State of Falcón, stating that they were the first to enter that State. We had been there for over twelve years and had local churches planted in five different towns and villages besides a Gospel testimony in three other towns.

There is nothing original about the work in Venezuela. If there were, it would not be of God. We have simply tried to imitate what was originated by the Holy Spirit, through the Lord's servants in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and the Church Epistles. Before we left Venezuela Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield gave us a copy of *The Divine Plan of Missions* by Mr. W. E. Vine, which we have read with joy and profit. We notice that such a veteran in missionary effort as Mr. Vine, has seen these things we assuredly believe, long before our day, and we all go back to the early pattern for real missionary work in the inspired record of the *Acts*. We would specially commend Chapter VII. of Mr. Vine's book to any exercised brother or sister—"Human Appeals or Divine Call?"

Much harm is being done by human appeals about the thousands passing into eternity every minute in China, Africa, India and so on. There were such thousands dying in the Apostles' day. But they went about their work in a calm and unassuming manner, which would have annoyed our modern statisticians with their plausible computation. As we stated in our booklet, *The Three Looks*, we believe that God is going to answer that prayer in *John 17* where seven times Jesus speaks of believers as given to Him by the Father. God is taking out of the nations a people for His name. We do not know who they are, but it is ours to preach the Gospel to all we can, as some one, or some way will be used of God to bring them

to Christ. Not a hoof will be left behind. Not a member will be missing. Mr. Vine well says: "There is no appeal to the Churches by the missionaries to send out labourers. There was no humanly arranged effort to meet the tremendous needs of other lands. Everything was done by the Spirit of God." (Page 42.)

We know that God loves every sinner. We know that Christ wishes the Gospel to be preached to every creature. We know that the Holy Spirit is here to convict the world of sin and ready to baptize into one body every son of Adam's race, who will accept the divine conditions. It is ours then to be "filled with the Spirit" and thus He will guide us to the place and persons as He did in the Acts of the Apostles. He led Philip to the Ethiopian, He led Peter to Cornelius and Paul to win Lydia and a host of others.

Thus led, we will be saved from "strange children." We will see them "hearing, believing and being baptized" as Paul did the Corinthians. We shall see them formed into Churches of God as did Paul and his helpers in so many instances, in the Acts.

Whilst warning on the one hand of the danger of modern missionary efforts, with their training schools, their zeal to organize and use high pressure methods in the Lord's work, we would also state that we have no desire to comfort those who take no interest in missionary effort whatever. It seems a strange anomaly that while some are most zealous of doctrine, church truth, and separation, they never pray for a missionary by name, much less write to one. They take no active part in seeking to carry the Gospel to the regions beyond and their investments in foreign effort is nil. Such are "straightened in their own bowels" and their loss at "that day" will be irreparable, as they see them come from the North and South, the East and West, yet they had no share in carrying the Gospel which won those jewels for our Lord and Master. The Lord help us, out of real heart devotion to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, to be all-round Christians.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE GOSPEL WE PREACH.

IT is most natural that some may be inclined to judge the work in Venezuela as mere excitement and false professions when they hear of so many being baptized, as many as forty-eight at one time; so it behoves us to state the Gospel we preach and the methods we use.

It is a grand thing to have a clear conversion. Personally I was under conviction of sin for months before finding deliverance, through *Rom. 5: 6*. I never attended a series of Gospel meetings before I was saved and so knew nothing of modern high pressure methods of evangelism. I was convinced as to the reality of the Gospel, through the testimony in the shipyard of dear Kenneth MacKay, where together we were serving our apprenticeship as marine engineers. "Mac" loved Christ and he told me that I would be in hell if I did not get saved through trusting in the death of the Lord Jesus. Such theology, as a rule, does not produce mere professors. On the 20th of October, 1900, at 9.20 p.m. in the room where I was boarding in Frederick Street, Aberdeen, I trusted Christ all alone. All the brethren and sisters who labour with us in the work in Venezuela have the same clear and definite conversion. This clear and definite experience has naturally given character to all our preaching. We all believe in preaching the Gospel that will, first of all, produce conviction of sin. We glory in the *Epistle to the Romans*. Then when we see sinners under conviction of sin we try to help them. But we never ask anyone to hold up their hand in a meeting, or to sign a card, "shake hand with the left hand," or come to a penitent form. We encourage all those who are troubled to have direct



dealings with God and thus many are saved in their own homes—the thing we like best. We do, from time to time, pray for some individually in the anteroom of the hall, if we believe that they are ready to be delivered, and thus many a seeking soul has been led to Christ. But we are careful about this as our Venezuelan brethren are quick to imitate, and there is always the danger of excitement, especially when others are getting saved in special meetings.

Then again we have never felt free to use music in the preaching of the Gospel, nor do we use solo singing. We usually find that the Gospel preached in fellowship with God will draw the unsaved and genuine sons will be the outcome. In doing this we avoid the danger of sentimentality often produced in the sinner's heart by good music and sweet singing, especially if the sinner has an ear for music.

Then again it must be remembered that a great many of those who are saved are won by the Venezuelans themselves in their regular assembly gospel meetings, and naturally our brethren follow our example more or less in their way of preaching.

When anyone gets saved, they are encouraged to go to the meetings and in their first love they are quick to learn, for freshness of affection and quickness of understanding go together. They either see for themselves, if they can read the Bible or else they learn at the ministry and Bible readings that they should be new creatures in Christ Jesus. They leave off smoking, gambling, drinking and all such vices. We do not know of a smoker in any of the assemblies. Some criticise us for this but we cannot see that the smelling weed is either good for body or soul.

Then very many Venezuelans live in concubinage and it is a real sign of new life when they get married. My wife and I went to a marriage, on the outskirts of San Felipe, of a couple who had been good Roman Catholics, but who had lived together for thirty-seven years without

being married. Their son, Pedro Castillo, got saved and he preached to his parents, and first the mother and then the father trusted in Christ. Then they had a conscience about the way in which they were living. We happened to be in San Felipe for meetings and we were invited to be at their marriage. The mayor of the city went in his car to marry them. We had a good preach to all present after the mayor united them in civil marriage, which is the only legal marriage in Venezuela. Then we asked the Lord's blessing on the union. Mrs. Williams and I then started to walk home to where we were staying when the mayor overtook us in his car, stopped and asked us in and offered to take us home. After the usual remarks he said something like this: "Well, well, and so old Gregorio and Maria have got married after living thirty-seven years in sin! Had they not got converted to the Gospel they would have died as they have lived. I am not an *Evangelico* but no sincere man can deny the wonderful power of the Gospel."

We usually wait a year or so before baptizing anyone. But circumstances and environment change this, for we have no fixed rule but each case has to be judged on its own merits. If the aspirant is a son or daughter of Christian parents and has been familiar with the Gospel for years, then time is not so much a factor as the change in the life of the aspirant. We do not baptize boys or girls under fourteen years of age or about that. We have no scripture for this, but we have experience and the Venezuelans say: "Experience costs something."

When the elders of an assembly know that there is to be a baptism they announce it to the assembly and invite anyone who desires to be baptized to communicate with them. Some may have done this before. A night, or nights, is set apart to examine those who are asking baptism. The elders meet in an anteroom and after prayer for guidance, one by one the aspirants are called in. They are questioned as to how they got saved, why they wish to be baptized, what is their testimony in the

world. Do they owe money to anyone? Do they live in a place where there is concubinage? Have they left off all the common vices? Do they cherish any grudge against anyone? If they are single, whether they have their eye on some brother or sister as the case may be, with a view to courtship, and so on. If the elders are satisfied, then on Lord's Day morning after the breaking of bread, the brother who gives out the notices usually reads slowly and carefully the names of those whom they have examined and who they feel are worthy to be baptized, but he reminds them that it is not the elders who receive nor put away, but the whole church, so that every one has a responsibility to make manifest before the baptism anything that would be a legitimate hindrance to their thus confessing Christ.

Baptisms are usually on a Saturday so that the assembly gets most of the previous week to have a voice as to those being baptized. Not infrequently there are protests on the part of some who know of certain actions of which the elders were ignorant. Those protests are inquired into and if proven, the accused has to wait until he can give a clean testimony to the satisfaction of all. At those meetings some of the Lord's servants are usually present, either our Venezuelan brethren or some of we foreign workers. The elders wish this, for greater care as to those being baptized. We have never seen the desire to swell the numbers of the baptized. Then those who are received are received into the fellowship the first Lord's Day following their baptism. We do not believe that baptism is a door into the assembly but we do firmly declare that life is—a clean life, and obedient life, is necessary for baptism so that we require evidences of that life before reception into the local church.

In spite of all our care there are nearly always a percentage who disappoint us but it is in spite of our care and not for lack of it that they do so. This has been common to the Lord's work at all times. Philip knew of it after he baptized Simon. It is so here at home.

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When we came North for a furlough we asked for some who used to be leading men and we hear that one has been swamped by business and is no longer in the assembly, the other has left "the old paths," and, yet more sad, another has been put away from the fellowship. We feel that the work in Venezuela is on a solid and scriptural basis and unless the enemy succeeds in dividing the Lord's people, we have confidence in the Lord and His Word that they without us could carry on the testimony.

THE END.