

# JOHN WESLEY

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*Rev. Richard Green.*

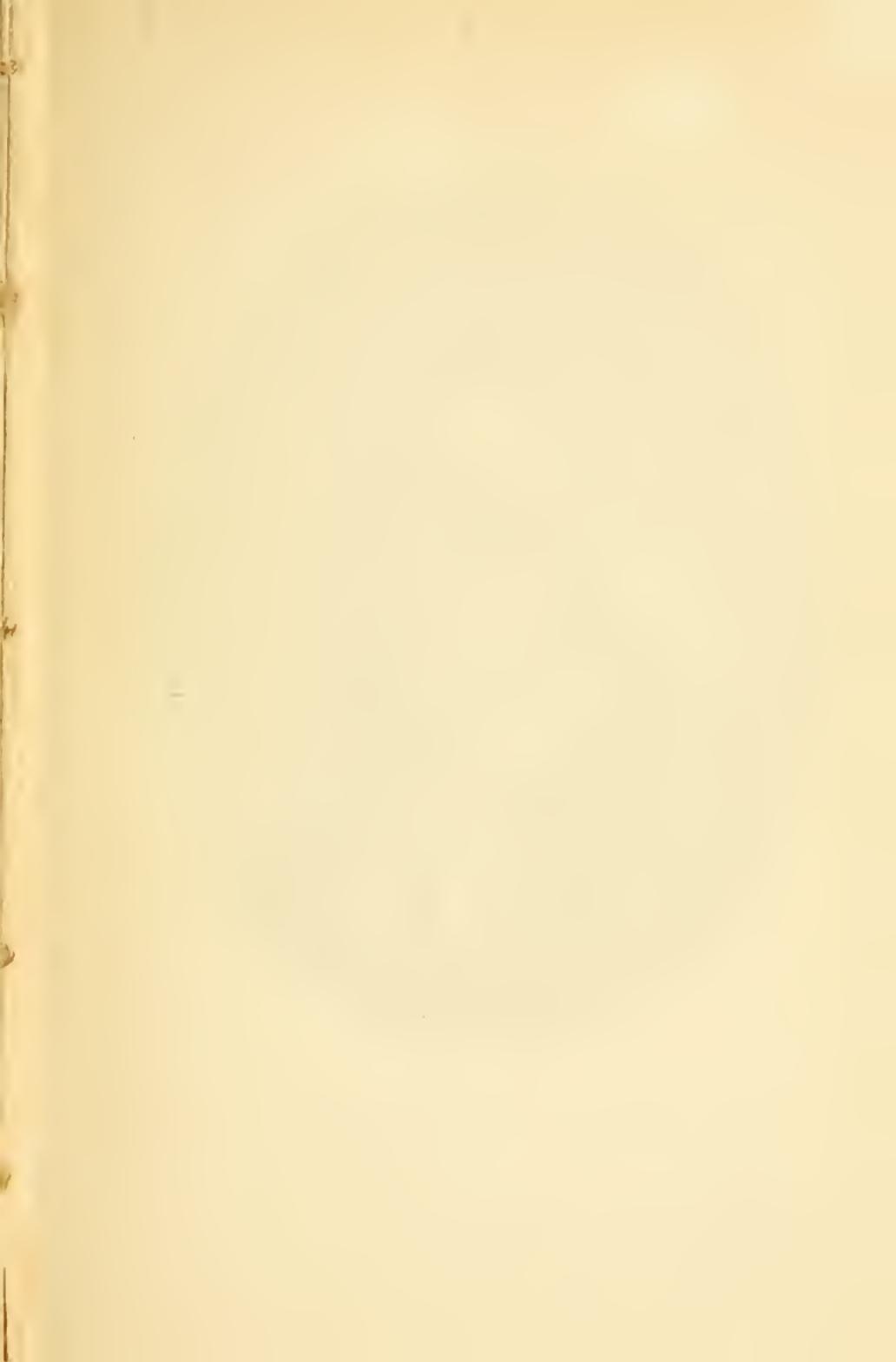


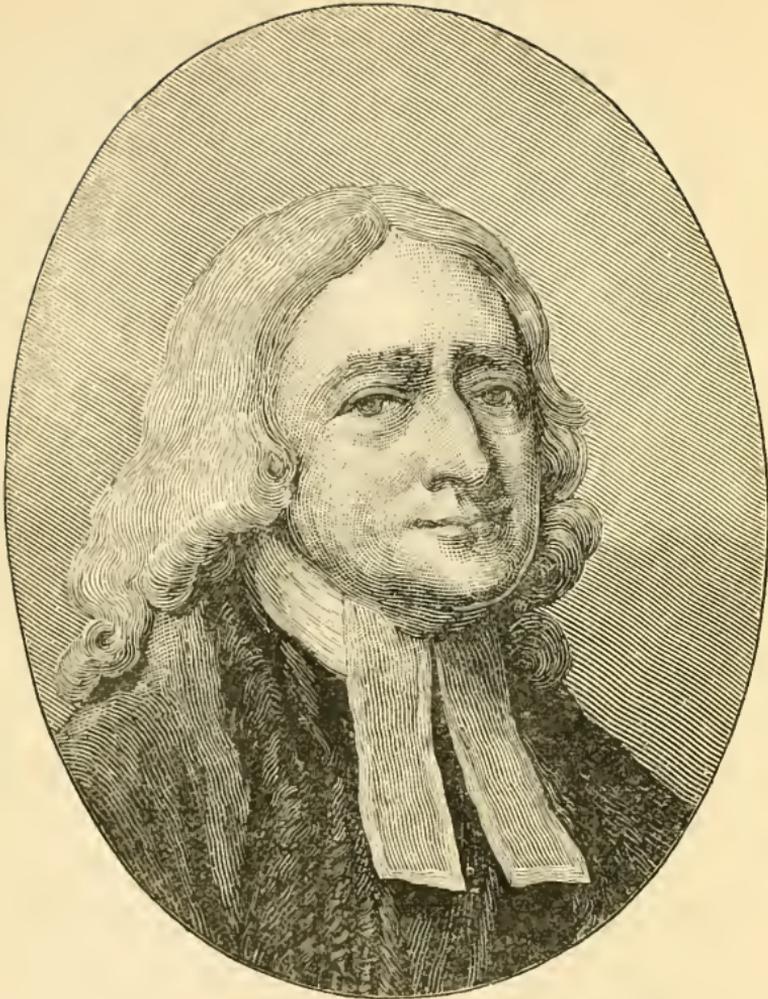
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John Wesley

# JOHN WESLEY.

BY THE  
REV. RICHARD GREEN.

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*THIRD EDITION.*

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## P R E F A C E .



IT is a coincidence that the last pages of this little book are penned on the eve of the gathering of a Methodist ŒCUMENICAL Conference at John Wesley's Chapel, in City Road, London, at which delegates are expected to be present from all quarters of the globe, who will represent more than twenty sections of Christians all claiming a near or remote relation to the original Methodist Society. Representatives of Churches are expected from Canada; from the teeming cities of the United States of America; from the West Indies; from China and Japan; from the colonies of Australia; from New Zealand, and the far-off Fijian group, and other islands of the seas; from Eastern, Southern, and Western Africa; from Sweden, Germany, Italy, and France.

From statistics carefully compiled, it appears that these Churches include 4,767,810 enrolled members,

31,477 itinerant ministers, and more than 85,000 local preachers; while the number of adherents is variously estimated at from 20,000,000 to 25,000,000. So great an aggregation of Churches gathered within so short a time under a common denomination, the result of the toil of so small a band of men, is a fact unparalleled in modern ecclesiastical history.

It would be a very ungenerous view of this large representative assembly to regard it as a mere demonstration before the world. It is easy to see that it may contemplate practical objects which are of the utmost importance. Testifying to the existence of an essential unity, it may detect and remove needless differences, and promote a unity in action which may be mutually helpful to all. The great waste of labour arising from the overlapping of the areas of activity of the several Churches, especially in the foreign missions, may be averted by a wisely concerted distribution; while to define more sharply the real and substantial unity of doctrine underlying all the varieties of outward form would, in itself, be of great practical value. But it is surely right to anticipate that by brotherly intercourse all may be stimulated to more energetic labour, with a view to

exert an influence on the world commensurate with the special facilities afforded by so widely diffused and so comprehensive an aggregation of Churches.

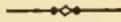
The extension of Methodism from the little Oxford band of 1738, of which Wesley was the central figure, is a most illustrious example of the work which an individual life, fitted by due training, governed by great principles, and occupied in self-denying labours, may, with the divine blessing, accomplish for the benefit of mankind. Wesley's work is to be estimated by a comparison of the moral and social condition of this country in the earlier half of the last century with its condition in the latter half of this, and of the comparative apathy which then marked all the Churches contrasted with the wakeful activity and energy which now characterises them; for to the labours of no single individual is the change traceable more than to those of John Wesley.

This is not a history of Methodism, nor can it pretend to be an adequate biography of Wesley, whose days were so crowded with ever-varying work that each had its own interesting incidents to record; nor is it a philosophical treatment of Wesley's life and character. It has been written under the control of a

belief that the greatness of Wesley's career and the lofty nobleness of its aims would be best illustrated by a recital of its incidents: that the most effective way of setting forth the special characteristics of Wesley's work, within the limits at the writer's disposal, would be to present in detail such portions of it as might properly be taken as illustrations of the whole.

R. GREEN.

# WESLEY.



## The Preparation—1735.



### CHAPTER I.

Introduction — Ancestry — Birth — Early Training — Escape from Fire — School-days — College Life — Methodist — Character — Habits.

ON a day in early spring in the year 1876 a select company gathered in Westminster Abbey to witness the unveiling, by the late Dean Stanley, of another among the monuments that make the walls of that mausoleum of England's great dead eloquent pages of England's history. It was said that "millions" of people in different parts of the world were interested in the event. When disclosed, the mural tablet, for such it was, bore within a sunken circle two medallion profiles, and the simple inscription :—

JOHN WESLEY, M.A.,

Born June 17, 1703 ; died March 2, 1791.

CHARLES WESLEY, M.A.,

Born December 18, 1707 ; died March 29, 1788.

No words of eulogy are added to explain by what great deeds these men earned their title to this dis-

tion; but a sculptured scene of historic interest represents the elder brother preaching to a rustic congregation in Epworth churchyard. Referring to this scene, the venerable Dean said:—"John Wesley is represented as preaching upon his father's tomb, and I have always thought that that is, as it were, a parable which represented his relation to our national institutions. He took his stand upon his father's tomb—on the venerable and ancestral traditions of the country and the Church. That was the stand from which he addressed the world; it was not from the points of disagreement, but from the points of agreement with them in the Christian religion that he produced those great effects which have never since died out in English Christendom. It is because of his having been in that age, which I am inclined to think has been unduly disparaged, the reviver of religious fervour among our churches, that we all feel we owe to him a debt of gratitude, and that he deserves to have his monument placed among those of the benefactors of England."

Three simple sentences are engraved on the tablet: that beneath the sculptured scene, "I look upon all the world as my parish," indicates at once the secret spring of Wesley's widespread activity, the aim of his untiring exertions, and the avowed apology for an irregularity of labour that found its truest justification in its own fruits. The second sentence, "The best of all is, God is with us," holds the truth that cheered him in his great toil, and was the utterance of the calm moments of his closing hour; while

the third, "God buries his workmen, but carries on His work," was the jubilant utterance of Charles, and finds its exposition in the "millions" interested in this incident.

Men take their places amongst the great by merit of great deeds. What gave John Wesley his right to this distinction the following pages are intended briefly to tell.

John Wesley was born at Epworth, Lincolnshire, on June 17th (o.s.), 1703, and a few hours after his birth was baptised by his father, the Rector of the parish, by the name of John Benjamin (so a family tradition runs), after two of his brothers who died in infancy. But the first name only was used.

The pedigree of the Wesley family has been sedulously traced by Mr. G. J. Stevenson, M.A., in his "Memorials of the Wesley Family," as far as Guy, a thane of *Wilsce*, Somerset, A.D. 938. It will suffice for this record to name Bartholomew, son of Sir Herbert Wesley, of Westleigh, in Devonshire, and Elizabeth, his wife, who was the daughter of Robert Wesley, of Dangan Castle, Ireland. Bartholomew Wesley (or Westley) was Vicar of Charmouth and Catherston, villages in Dorsetshire, from which eure he, being a Nonconformist, was driven immediately after the Restoration, when at the age of seventy years. Small of stature, he was dubbed "the puny parson." The average height of the Wesleys was from five feet four inches to five feet six inches. John Wesley, Charles his brother, and Samuel their father, came within this range. The only child of Bartholomew

Wesley and his wife, the daughter of Sir Henry Colley, of Kildare, was John, "one of the most worthy of the Nonconformists." Serious from his youth, he was distinguished at Oxford not only for his piety, but also for his learning. He is described as one of the most lofty characters of those remarkable times. He married a daughter of John White, some time chairman of the Assembly of Divines, an unbending Independent, who refused to read the Book of Common Prayer, and was, by the Act of Uniformity, deprived of his cure in 1662, and who, after much wandering, and after having been four times cast into prison, on account of his religious opinions, finally settled in Poole, where he ministered to a small church until his death, in the year 1678.

Samuel, son of John Wesley, was born at Whitechurch, in August, 1662, soon after his father's ejection from that living, and was baptised there on December 17th of the same year. While he was at the Dorchester Free School his father died, and he was removed to a grammar school in London, and thence, by favour of some Dissenting friends, to Stepney Academy. Here he heard many of the leading Nonconformist ministers, Stephen Charnock frequently, and once "friend Bunyan." He is described as smart, clever, and self-reliant, and a dabbler in rhyme and faction. While preparing to answer some strictures against the Dissenters, his opinions underwent a change, and further inquiry led him to see things, as he says, "in another sort of light than he had seen them before." He broke his connection with the

Dissenters, and joined the Established Church. With now scarce a friend, and with forty-five shillings as his entire property, he set out on foot for Oxford, where he entered himself as a servitor of Exeter College, and in due course took holy orders. After the Revolution, he wrote several political pieces in prose and verse, amongst them the first pamphlet that appeared in defence of the new Government. He filled a curacy in London for one year, and a chaplaincy in a man-of-war for another, when he commenced a poem on "The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"—a work in folio, of nearly eleven thousand lines. Here was a root of poesy from which grew a very fruitful vine.

During his residence at Stepney House, Samuel Wesley was welcomed, with many other earnest young students and reverend and scholarly divines, to the home of Dr. Annesley—"Samuell, the sonne of John Anslye and Judith his wife"—probably of the parish of Haseley, in Warwickshire.

Serious in youth beyond his years, Annesley had been a hard-working collegian, and much given to the study of Holy Scripture. The story is told how, on his entering his first parish (Cliffe, in Kent), his parishioners, accustomed to a jovial parson, received him with "spits, and stones, and forks." "Use me as you will," said the brave, good man, "I am resolved to continue with you until God has fitted you, by my ministry, to entertain a better, who shall succeed me." In after years these same parishioners parted from him with many cries and tears, for his ministry had

changed their hearts. He removed to London, where he was settled in the vicariate of Cripplegate, but shared the fate of the Nonconformists in 1662. Of him it is said, "His personal appearance was noble and commanding. 'Fine figure,' 'dignified mien,' 'highly expressive and amiable countenance,' are the phrases used by his contemporaries. Hardy in constitution, and almost insensible to cold, hat, gloves, and top-coat were no necessities to him, even in the depth of winter. The days of 'hoare frost' and chilling winds found him in his study at the top of the house, with open window and empty fire-grate. Temperate in all things, he needed no stimulants, and from his infancy hardly ever drank anything but water. He could endure any amount of active exercise and toil, preaching twice or thrice every day of the week without any sense of weariness." It is impossible not to think how many of these qualities his grandson, John Wesley, inherited, as these pages will show.

Mrs. Annesley was the daughter of one John White, "a grave lawyer," a member of the Long Parliament, and of the Assembly of Divines, and a witness against Archbishop Laud. He died in 1644, and was buried in the Temple Church, the Members of the House of Commons attending his funeral. Mrs. Annesley was a woman of "superior understanding and earnest consistent piety." The careful biographer of her daughter Susanna, the mother of Wesley, suggests:—"Perhaps if we had the advantage of clearer light we should find that, unknown as

is the mother of Susanna Wesley to the world, from her were inherited those grand qualities of character so much admired in her daughter; and it might possibly be further revealed that the godly order of the family in the Epworth rectory was only a beautiful and blessed imitation of that which prevailed in the house of the Nonconformist minister under the care of Susanna Wesley's own mother."

While Dr. Annesley was pastor of Little St. Helen's—probably while he lived in Spital Yard, Spital Square, Bishopsgate Street, London—on the 20th of January, 1669, Susanna, the youngest daughter of his many ("two dozen, or a quarter of a hundred") children, was born. In early life she heard learned doctors and divines discuss with her good father the high matters of the Church. Of her early history, who were her tutors, where she learned her principles of household and family management, no record tells, and we are left to the probable conjecture that one so excellent as a mother must have been indebted to a mother for her own training.

She tells us she was early instructed in the first principles of the Christian religion. That she read largely is proved by her writings, and by her entanglement in the Socinian controversy, from the errors of which she is said to have been "first drawn off" by "the religious orthodox man," to whom she was afterwards married. Before she was "full thirteen" she had given some attention to the conflict between the Dissenters and the Established Church, and in her maidenhood changed her views,

possibly to some extent influenced, if not "first drawn off," by the example of the same "religious orthodox man," who was then a frequent visitor at her father's house.

Samuel Wesley, when a curate with £30 a year, renewed his acquaintance with his early friend Susanna. In 1689 they were married, he soon after receiving his first preferment to South Ormsby, Lincolnshire, through the influence of the Marquis of Normanby.

Mr. Kirk, her painstaking biographer, describes the rectory as a miserable den, and the rector himself writes of it as "a mean cot, composed of reeds and clay."

Here, with £50 a year to live upon, and one additional child per annum, the young couple passed an uncomplaining life, his busy pen and her frugal care helping them through their first years. About the close of 1696 he was removed to Epworth, also a Lincolnshire parish, of two thousand inhabitants, thenceforth to be lifted from its obscurity by the remarkable family now settled within it.

The Epworth living, which provided £200 a year, was probably given to Samuel Wesley, in accordance with the promise of Queen Mary, in return for the dedication to her of his great poem, and for literary services on the King's behalf.

The parsonage is thus described:—"Five baies, built all of timber and plaister, and covered all with straw thache, the whole building being contrived into three stories, and disposed into seven cheife rooms, namely, a kitchinge, a hall, a parlour, a butterie, and

three large upper rooms, besides some others of common use, and also a little garden impaled between the stone wall and the south."

Thither moved Samuel Wesley, his wife Susanna, and their four children, to make it a home that should become notable among the many happy homes of our old land for all time. And there, in the year 1703, John, the fourth son, and tenth child of nineteen, was born.

Thus, from a pious, painstaking ancestry, amongst whom high principle, thorough culture, rigorous submission to right and duty, love of King, of Church, and of country, were high traditional virtues, sprang England's great Evangelist—the man who was destined by Divine Providence to give an impulse to the religious convictions of his countrymen, to inaugurate a new period of Church activity, and to revive a religious earnestness which should throb for generations, and in its far-reaching charities and labours not only penetrate to the corners of his own land, but spread to the ends of the earth. Dr. Adam Clarke finds the specific, healthy, though slowly vegetating seeds of Methodism in the original members of the Wesley family; and Isaac Taylor truly says, "The mother of the Wesleys was the mother of Methodism."

The circumstances of Wesley's early life were well fitted to combine with many other causes in favouring his preparation for his remarkable career.

Some of John Wesley's features are said to have been traceable in his father; certainly some of the elements of his son's character distinguished him.

That father was a diligent and not unsuccessful student, an able writer, who lacked neither profound learning nor poetic skill. He was fervently religious, laborious as a pastor of God's flock, diligently visiting his rude parishioners from house to house, fearlessly reproofing their vices, and charitably helping their needs. He had a Puritan sturdiness in maintaining his principles, and though not always prudent he was never insincere. His sparkling wit, liveliness of disposition, occasional sharpness of temper, allied to a touch of eccentricity, gave great interest to his character. He was vivacious in conversation, witty and instructive by turns, an active, earnest, energetic, multifarious man. He was not without his defects, those defects which place the inevitable stamp of imperfectness on all good genuine human work. Himself a sufferer in the school of adversity, he was a man of large sympathies, stretching even to foreign nations, by whose religious condition he was so deeply affected that he planned a mission to eastern lands, and offered his own services in carrying it out, declaring it to be a work "it would be worth dying for to make some progress in." Though strict in domestic rule, he was devotedly loved by his wife and revered by his children. He was a cultured, earnest, laborious, Christian man, fearing God, honouring the King, and loving his neighbour.

Such was John Wesley's father, whose portrait has been sketched with fervent admiration by the Rev. Luke Tyerman, Wesley's most voluminous and interesting biographer.

But what must be said of the beauty and loving tender firmness of that sweet saint of Epworth, his mother? So patient under her many trials, so laborious and yet so serene, amidst the cares and multiplied duties of her household and the claims of her many children. For real greatness and originality of character, Susanna Wesley must unquestionably take high rank, whilst her treatment of her children warrants her biographer in saying that "Her marvellous ability and success in their education and training have won for her a proud if not a pre-eminent position among the many illustrious mothers of the wise and good."

John was a child of method from his birth; for by Mrs. Wesley infantile life was governed by rule—sleep, meals, and manners being all under control and subject to law, even from earliest days.

At the end of the first year of life, crying must be done by the children "softly." Their wills, as unruly by nature as those of Adam's other children, were mastered at once, "the sooner the better." "I insist," she wrote, "upon conquering the will of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education." Habits were formed, and only those which need not afterwards be broken. Every act of wilful disobedience or wrong was strictly punished, save upon confession and promise of amendment; and every act of obedience, "especially if it crossed the child's own inclination," was commended and frequently rewarded. Her rule, one of absolute authority, was

unquestioned ; yet it was not a reign of terror but of love.

At five years of age, not before, the children began to learn to read. The day before the first lesson was given the house was set in order, and every one's work appointed, and a charge given that no one should intrude into the school-room during the six school hours—from 9 to 12, from 2 to 5. One day only was the time allowed the child wherein to learn its letters, and each of them mastered the task in that time except two, who were a day and a half. The following day the Bible was opened, and the young scholar began at the first verse, spelling and reading it over and over again till it was mastered. School duties opened and closed with the singing of a psalm. All proceeded according to method. There were fixed times for fixed duties which nothing was permitted to disturb. The occupation of every child for every day came under rule.

Conduct towards others was carefully ordered. Respectful treatment of each other and of servants was required. Moral obligations were taught ; fidelity in promises, strict and honourable regard of each other's possessions, even to the utmost trifle, enforced. Before their lips could declare it, they were taught by signs to recognise their food to be a gift from God. Becoming behaviour at family worship, with retirement for private prayer and reading, were inculcated.

As they grew up, they were led to the study of the essentials of religion, and for their use their diligent mother prepared three treatises, "A Manual of Natural

Theology," "An Exposition of the Leading Truths of the Gospel, based upon the Apostles' Creed," and "A Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments." These were made her text books.

She who had learned in youthful days to school herself into spending no more time in recreation than in private religious duties, would know how to be firm in the matter of diversion also. Here is one of her rules:—"Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, of the innocence or malignity of actions? Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

But religious duties were further pressed home by private personal conversation, once a week, with each child in turn. "Jacky's" day was Thursday, of which long afterwards he wrote, "If you can spare me only that little part of Thursday evening which you formerly bestowed upon me in another manner, I doubt not it would be as useful now for correcting my heart, as it was then for forming my judgment."

Mrs. Wesley was almost their sole instructor until they left home; for this she had singular abilities and endowments, and she made the training and culture of her children the supreme duty of her life. Thus were these children trained in that Lincolnshire parsonage; and when they left their home her letters,

“such as probably no other mother ever wrote to her children,” followed them, full of yearning love and desire for their spiritual welfare, rich in golden counsels, encouragements, warnings, appeals and entreaties.

It will thus be seen that, long before the name was given in derision, the Wesleys were in vigorous training as Methodists.

The orderly course of this home was rudely disturbed on more than one occasion. One year a large part of the house was burnt down, and some of the family narrowly escaped destruction ; Mrs. Wesley herself rushed through the flames, carrying two of the children in her arms. The following year fire consumed the crop of flax, and a few years later another disastrous fire occurred which entirely destroyed the rectory, and placed the lives of the family, especially that of John, in very great peril. The account, as recorded by Mrs. Wesley, is as follows:—

“On Wednesday night, Feb. 9, 1709, between the hours of eleven and twelve, some sparks fell from the roof of our house upon one of the children’s (Hetty’s) feet. She immediately ran to our chamber and called us. Mr. Wesley, hearing a cry of fire in the street, started up (as I was very ill, he lay in a separate room from me) and, opening his door, found the fire was in his own house. He immediately came to my room, and bade me and my two eldest daughters rise quickly and shift for ourselves. Then he ran and burst open the nursery door, and called to the maid to bring out the children. The two little ones lay in the bed with

her ; the three others in another bed. She snatched up the youngest, and bid the rest follow ; which the three elder did. When we were got into the hall, we were surrounded with flames, Mr. Wesley found he had left the keys of the doors above-stairs. He ran up and recovered them, a minute before the stair-case took fire. When we opened the street door, the strong north-east wind drove the flames in with such violence that none could stand against them. But some of our children got out through the windows, the rest through a little door into the garden. I was not in a condition to climb up to the windows ; neither could I get to the garden door. I endeavoured three times to force my passage through the street door, but was as often beat back by the fury of the flames. In this distress, I besought our blessed Saviour for help, and then waded through the fire, naked as I was, which did me no farther harm than a little scorching my hands and my face. When Mr. Wesley had seen the other children safe, he heard the child in the nursery cry. He attempted to go up the stairs, but they were all on fire, and would not bear his weight. Finding it impossible to give any help, he kneeled down in the hall, and recommended the soul of the child to God." Wesley himself, years afterwards, referring to the event, wrote :—"I believe it was just at that time I waked ; for I did not cry, as they imagined, unless it was afterwards. I remember all the circumstances as distinctly as though it were but yesterday. Seeing the room was light, I called to the maid to take me up. But none answering, I put my head out of the curtains and saw

streaks of fire on the top of the room. I got up and ran to the door, but could get no farther, all the floor beyond it being in a blaze. I then climbed up on a chest which stood near the window. One in the yard saw me, and proposed running to fetch a ladder. Another answered, 'There will not be time; but I have thought of another expedient. Here, I will fix myself against the wall; lift a light man, and set him on my shoulders.' They did so, and he took me out of the window. Just then the roof fell in; but it fell inward, or we had all been crushed at once. When they brought me into the house where my father was, he cried out, 'Come, neighbours, let us kneel down. Let us give thanks to God. He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go; I am rich enough.'"

The next day, as the rector was walking in the garden and surveying the ruins of the house, he picked up part of a leaf of his Polyglot Bible, on which just these words were legible: *Vade; vende omnia quæ habes, et attolle crucem, et sequere me.* "Go; sell all that thou hast; and take up thy cross, and follow me."

This scene has been graphically represented in a cleverly conceived and well executed picture by Parker, painted in commemoration of the centenary of Methodism. He has, however, unfortunately placed a view of the church in the background, although it could not under any circumstances be seen from that point of view; hence the engraving is not popular in Epworth.

The poor rector lost his books and manuscripts,

a considerable sum of money, all the linen and wearing apparel and household stuff. He and his wife were also scorched by the flames, and all narrowly escaped with their lives. But for one sad result Mrs. Wesley mourned long. The children were for some time dispersed in different families, where they learned many rude ways, and lost much of the good effect of the early discipline. Forty years after, when Wesley was conducting a watch-night service, he suddenly remembered the event of the fire, and gave a short account of it, on which the congregation joined him in praise and thanksgiving.

A surprising incident in the history of the new rectory is the occurrence of a series of mysterious sounds of various kinds, heard at all hours of the day and night, through a couple of months. It is difficult at which to wonder the more, the strangeness of the sounds or the many attempted explanations of them. John was away at school in London at the time, but he heard accounts of the remarkable proceedings, which, being generally attributed to superhuman causes, produced a deep impression on his sensitive mind, so much so that to the end of his days he believed them to have been due to causes other than natural.

John was a thoughtful, reflective, studious youth, calm and self-possessed, unflinchingly conscientious, and much given to reasoning about things. "Child, you think to carry everything by argument," said his father, on one occasion, "but you will find how little is ever done in the world by close reasoning." "I

profess, sweetheart," said he to his wife, "I think our Jack would not attend to the most pressing necessities of nature unless he could give a reason for it." But the good Rector had so high an opinion of his son's blamelessness and rectitude, the fruit of patient and thorough maternal training, that he admitted him to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper when he was only eight years of age.

Between his eighth and ninth year he had an attack of small-pox, borne, as his mother writes, "like a man, and, indeed, like a Christian, without complaint."

At ten and a half years of age he was admitted to the Charterhouse School, London, on the nomination of the Duke of Buckingham. Here he was subject to many hardships, if not cruelties; the elder lads taking from him his share of meat; so that for a great part of the five years he was there he got little solid food except bread, "and not great plenty even of that." Towards the close of his term, his brother Samuel, then an usher in Westminster School, who seems to have directed and helped John, writes to his father, "My brother Jack, I can faithfully assure you, gives you no manner of discouragement from breeding your *third* son a scholar." And again, "Jack is with me, and a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can."

His own judgment upon himself is thus recorded:—  
"The next six or seven years were spent at school, where, outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties,

and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eyes of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was—1. Not being so bad as other people. 2. Having still a kindness for religion. And 3. Reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.”

In the year 1720 he was elected to a studentship at Christ Church, Oxford, being about eighteen years of age. Very little is known of his early college life. He tells us he said his prayers, both in public and private, and read the Scriptures and several books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament, and attended the Holy Communion, as he was bound to do, three times in the year. He also says he went on habitually, and for the most part contentedly, in some known sin or other—too indefinite a statement to afford much light as to his actual character. That he studied closely, after-years proved; that he struggled hard, with small means and not unfrequent debts, his father’s letters tell too plainly.

When about twenty-two years of age, he was pressed by his father to enter holy orders, but he declined. About this time a turn was given to his thoughts by reading Taylor’s “Holy Living and Dying,” and a book fell in his way to which he ever after acknowledged himself to be deeply indebted—Thomas a Kempis’ “On the Imitation of Christ.” This book seems to have thrown him into alternate heats of anger at its strictness and comfort from its

instruction. It was evidently a goad pricking his sensitive conscience. Meeting with a religious friend, which he says he never had till now, he began to alter the whole form of his conversation, and to enter in earnest upon a religious life. An hour or two a day were set apart for religious retirement. He communicated every week. He watched against all sin, whether in word or deed, and began "to aim at and pray for inward holiness." So that now, doing so much and living so good a life, he doubted not but he was a good Christian.

In 1725 he took Deacon's orders, and preached his first sermon at South Leigh, Oxford, on October 16th. In the following year he was elected fellow of Lincoln, and on his removal to his new college he shook off all his trifling acquaintance, applied himself yet more closely to study, watched against the least departure from right, and even began to urge others to lead a religious life. And now other books arrest his attention, particularly Law's "Christian Perfection" and "Serious Call," and they open to him a stricter way of life. "The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul," he writes, "that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying Him as I had never done before." And again, "I was convinced more than ever of the impossibility of being half a Christian, and determined to be all devoted to God—to give Him all my soul, my body, and my substance." He is now in the full swing of hard work, declaring "Leisure and I have taken leave of one another. I propose to

be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged me"—a purpose he fully carried out.

In February, 1727, he took his Master's degree, and in August of the same year became his father's curate, and so continued for two years, during which time he says he preached much, but saw no fruit of his labour.

By invitation of the rector of his college he returned to Oxford and took pupils, and remained there for the six following years. "Sir," said one whom he had travelled several miles to see, "Sir, you wish to serve God and to go to heaven; remember you cannot serve Him alone; you must therefore *find* companions or *make* them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." Dr. A. Stevens says, "Wesley never forgot these words, which, perhaps, forecast the history of his life."

A very important circumstance now occurred that greatly affected his future course. During his absence from Oxford in Lincolnshire, his brother Charles, who was an undergraduate at Christ Church, and who says he had lost his first year in diversions, but who afterwards gave himself to diligent study—and with diligence gradually came seriousness—had begun to attend the weekly sacrament, and had persuaded first one and then another of the younger students to join him, and to observe the prescribed *method* of study, from which sprang at least a great *name*. For their methodical life excited general observation, and a student happening to say, "*Here is a new set of Methodists sprung up,*" the

quaint name stuck, and from that hour continued to designate the little band.

Charles attributes the change that had come over him "to somebody's prayers—my mother's most likely." John hastened to join the little company, which now comprised the Wesleys, Mr. Morgan of Christ's, Cambridge, and Mr. Kirkham of Merton—a very small beginning of a great community. John Gambold joined the little band in 1730, Clayton, Ingham, and Broughton in 1732, Hervey in 1733, and Whitefield in 1735. In addition to paying a close attention to study, and other observances, they met on several evenings in the week to read books together, especially the Greek Testament.

Wesley now began to observe the Wednesday and Friday fasts of the Church, tasting no food until three o'clock; also to visit the poor and sick, and to do what other good he was able to do to the bodies and souls of all, denying himself all superfluities, and even some of the necessaries of life. He gave away money to the utmost of his ability. Having £30 a year, he lived on £28, and gave away £2. The next year, receiving £60, he still lived on £28 and gave away £32. The following year, out of £90, he gave away £62; and the next, £92 out of £120. We find that he now commenced to rise at four o'clock in the morning—a practice he continued for sixty years. He began also "not only to read but to study the Bible as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion." He was encouraged in his good work by the Bishop of the diocese, and by his father, who

blessed God that He had given him "two sons at Oxford to whom He had granted grace and courage to turn the war against the world and the devil."

Gambold says of Wesley at this time that he was always cheerful but never arrogant, by strict watchfulness beating down his impetuosity until it became a child-like simplicity. His piety was nourished by continual communion with God, for he thought prayer to be his greatest duty; and often did Gambold see him "come out of his closet of devotion with a serenity of countenance that was next to shining."

He thus writes himself:—"In this refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness, I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein till the time of my leaving England." He was in his own eyes a sinner; in the eyes of others a saint.

Wesley was now an ascetic of the severest kind. He had schooled his body into unhesitating submission to the spirit. He had a noble aim before him, which achieved greatness in following years.

In 1730 he accepted a curacy near Oxford, which enabled him to keep a horse, and found him a sphere of usefulness.

In 1731 the brothers began the practice, continued through life, of conversing in Latin. They walked to Epworth and back, reading as they walked. In the following year his father visited Oxford, and wrote, "I am well paid both for the expense and labour by the shining piety of our two sons;" and Wesley visited William Law in

London, began to read the "Theologia Germanica," on which he afterwards wrote a severe critique ; and in the same year was made a member of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge.

In 1733 Wesley rode on horseback to Epworth to see his father, whose health was failing. In this journey he began the habit of reading on horseback, which he continued for forty years, until his advanced years obliged him to travel in a carriage. His father, being in feeble health, urged him to try to secure the Epworth living. He replied, with that consideration for his own spiritual interest which is so remarkable during his earlier life, "The question is not whether I could do more good to others there or here, but whether I could do more good to myself ; seeing wherever I can be most holy myself, there I can most promote holiness in others."

In this year he issued his first publication, "Forms of Prayer," and walked, he says, 1,050 miles, and preached constantly on the Lord's day. In 1734 he was again urged to seek the Epworth living, but positively refused. His brother Samuel seems, however, to have so influenced him that on his father's death he applied for it, but failed to secure it.

Thus he continued until 1735, in which year he formed the acquaintance of George Whitefield. His father died in this same year, the Epworth home was broken up and the family dispersed, and he left Oxford, and came to London.

So ends the earlier period of Wesley's life—a

period of preparation and training that helped much to fit him for the very extraordinary career that lay before him in the future.

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## CHAPTER II.

The Georgian Missioner—Labour—Return—Moravians—  
Reflections.

THE year 1735 was a most eventful one in Wesley's life; not the least momentous event being his consent to go "as a missioner" to a small colony then recently established in Georgia, in the Southern States of America, composed mainly of released debtors from England, persecuted Protestants from Germany, some Scotch Highlanders, and a number of Moravians. After consulting his brother Samuel, William Law, and his friends Clayton and Byrom, he mentioned the matter to his mother, whose reply, at once simple and noble, was, "Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice if they were all so engaged, though I should never see them more."

In consenting to attempt the great work, he says, "My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen." But another motive was added, "the hope of doing more good in America."

He set sail October 14th, in company with his brother Charles, Benjamin Ingham, James and Edward Oglethorpe, Charles Delamotte, and David Nitschman, a Moravian Bishop.

From the moment of stepping on board, his whole time was occupied according to strict rules. Mr. Tyerman, quoting from Ingham's journal, gives the following rules observed by Wesley and his companions:—"From four in the morning till five, they employed in private prayer. From five to seven, they read the Bible together, carefully comparing what they read with the writings of the earliest ages. At seven, they breakfasted. At eight, they had public prayers and expounded the lesson. From nine to twelve, Wesley usually learned German, Delamotte studied Greek and navigation, Charles Wesley wrote sermons, and Ingham gave instruction to the twelve children on board. At twelve, they met together for mutual prayer, and to report progress. About one, they dined; and from the time of dinner till four in the afternoon, they read or spoke to certain of the passengers of whom they had respectively taken charge. At four, they had evening prayers, and either expounded the lesson, or catechised and instructed the children in the presence of the congregation. From five to six was again spent in private prayer. From six to seven they read, each in his own cabin, to three different detachments of the English passengers, of whom about eighty were on board. At seven, Wesley joined the Moravians in their public service; while Ingham read, between the decks, to as

many as desired to hear. At eight, the four faithful friends met in private to exhort and instruct each other ; and, between nine and ten, they went to bed, without mats and blankets, where neither the roaring of the sea nor the rocking of the ship could rob them of refreshing rest."

"Here," says Stevens, "was practical 'Methodism' still struggling in its forming process. It was Epworth Rectory and Susanna Wesley's discipline afloat on the Atlantic."

Wesley read through the Old Testament in company with his friend Ingham ; he commenced to preach without notes ; began the study of German, that he might converse with his fellow-passengers ; and, in the hope of thereby promoting his own piety, he began to use a vegetable diet.

During the voyage he was much struck by the demeanour of the Moravians, especially by the contrast between their calm behaviour in a dangerous storm and the excitement of the English—an incident of no trifling importance in his life, as it tended to direct his attention to those who were to be his great instructors.

Arrived at Savannah, he established three services on the Sabbath, communion weekly and on the holidays, according to Church rules, and daily prayers morning and evening. He founded a religious society with three meetings in the week ; he visited his parishioners from house to house, and to meet the case of some Spanish Jews whom he found in his parish, he learned the Spanish language.

For a time he exchanged work with Charles at

Frederica, where he expounded the Scriptures to the Germans in his brother's house. Charles, after a stay of five months, returned to England; but John continued his labours for a little over two years. Here he published a collection of hymns; and here his ascetic practices and high Church principles were developed to their utmost extent, giving some occasion for his troubles, and the comparative failure of his mission.

After many trials and perplexities, partly the effect of his faithful, though rigid, ministry, and partly, perhaps, the result of his own imprudence and error, he found it needful to return to England. He reached London February 3rd, 1738, and thus his brief missionary career came to an end. The effect of the experience thus acquired on himself is thus told in his own words:—

“Many reasons I have to bless God, though the design I went upon did not take effect, for my having been carried into that strange land, contrary to all my preceding resolutions. I trust He hath in some measure humbled me and proved me, and shown me what was in my heart. Hereby I have been taught to ‘beware of men.’ Hereby I am come to know assuredly that if in all our ways we acknowledge God, He will, where reason fails, direct our path, by lot or by the other means which he knoweth. Hereby I am delivered from the fear of the sea, which I had both dreaded and abhorred from my youth. Hereby God has given me to know many of his servants, particularly those of the Church of Herrnhut. Hereby my passage is opened to the writings of holy men in

the German, Spanish, and Italian tongues. I hope, too, some good may come to others hereby. All in Georgia have heard the word of God. Some have believed and begun to run well. A few steps have been taken towards publishing the glad tidings both to the African and American heathens. Many children have learned 'how they ought to serve God,' and to be useful to their neighbour; and those whom it most concerns have an opportunity of knowing the true state of their infant colony, and laying a firmer foundation of peace and happiness to many generations."

His one chief regret was that he was not permitted to go as a missionary among the Indians.

His friend Whitefield bears this testimony:—"The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America is inexpressible. His name is very precious among the people, and he has laid a foundation that I hope neither men nor devils will ever be able to shake."

Yet the mission to Georgia can hardly be judged other than a failure. But by Wesley's failure in Georgia, God wrought mercy for England. America had to make its sacrifice for a time, that it might be repaid a thousand-fold. He who with prescient eye saw the great American nations of the future, stayed the uninstructed Wesley, drew him back to his own country, and led him to the knowledge of the Gospel, joining him by Moravian bands to Luther and the great Reformers, and so to the early and universal Church. The Wesleys without the clear Gospel light were not equal to Boardman

and Pilmoor with it. Saul of Tarsus wrought in all fidelity to do God service; but after it pleased God to reveal His Son in him, the great apostle preached a Gospel he had not known before.

Wesley says:—"From the year 1725 to 1729 I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labour. Indeed, it could not be that I should; for I neither laid the foundation of repentance nor of preaching the Gospel, taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them needed no repentance. From the year 1729 to 1734, laying a deeper foundation of repentance, I saw a little fruit; but it was only a little, and no wonder, for I did not preach faith in the blood of the covenant."

Wesley's mission had its great service in its effect upon himself. It was the Lord's doing.

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### CHAPTER III.

Peter Böhler—Spiritual Conflict—Charles Wesley—"Conversion"  
—New life—Retirement to Germany.

SHORTLY after his arrival in England Mr. Wesley met Peter Böhler, an immediate result of his acquaintance with Germans and the German language. He marked the day as one "much to be remembered." Indeed it was. Peter Böhler was destined to lead John Wesley to the knowledge of a great truth, a truth that many of the best writers of the Church of

England had both witnessed and illustrated, but the meaning of which had never yet dawned on Wesley's mind—the doctrine of *a conscious salvation through faith alone*. This was *the* truth pre-eminently to which Wesley was afterwards to bear his witness in the three kingdoms; this the Evangel it was to be his honour to proclaim as no other man had ever done. This more than any was the truth by which an enfeebled Church was to be revived, by which a holy, happy people was to be raised within it and spread beyond it. This truth underlies the whole system of Methodism at this day, and is now acknowledged not by a few saintly spirits dwelling apart, but is a common experience in the Churches in all quarters of the globe. Methodists of all shades of opinion regard this truth as a sacred deposit; it is the spring of Methodism's ever-new life, of its wide-spread activity, its large and extended charities. Peter Böhler lighted a candle in these islands which by God's good providence was destined to shine in all lands. Dr. Rigg says truly:—"What Philip was to the Ethiopian eunuch, what Peter was to Cornelius, Böhler was to become to Wesley."

Wesley travelled to Oxford with Böhler, and had much conversation with him, but confessed he understood him not.

We find him putting himself under more rigorous discipline, and binding himself by strong resolutions to use absolute openness and unreserve with all with whom he should converse: to labour after continual seriousness, not willingly indulging in the least levity

of behaviour, or in laughter—no, not for a moment : to speak no word and to take no pleasure that tended not to the glory of God : in particular, not to talk of worldly things. “Others may” he says, “nay, must ; but what is that to thee?” He thanked God every moment for everything he enjoyed, and therefore rejected every sort and degree of pleasure for which he felt he could not so thank Him.

The following entries in his journal have their deep interest :—“Saturday, 4th March. I found my brother at Oxford, recovering from his pleurisy, and with him Peter Böhler, by whom (in the hand of the great God) I was, on Sunday the 5th, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved. (In revising his journal some time after, he added the note, “with the full Christian salvation.”) Immediately it struck into my mind, ‘Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others who have not faith yourself?’” He appealed to Böhler, who replied, “By no means.” Wesley asked, “But what can I preach?” He said, “‘Preach faith *till* you have it ; and then *because* you have it you *will* preach it.’ Accordingly,” he adds, “I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work.” But that soul was subject to law ; and what was held to be duty must be done. Wesley therefore begins to preach the doctrine that to him was new. “The first person to whom I offered salvation by faith alone was a prisoner under sentence of death.” Supreme moment in the history both of the preacher and the hearer !

At this time we find him very diligent in the practice, continued to the end of life, of pressing home religion on all those who crossed his path, not only from the pulpit, but in meetings of friends, by the highway, in the house, the coach, the inn. "At an odd house" he finds several well-wishers to religion, to whom he speaks "plainly," as again in the evening both to the servants and strangers at the inn. After supper, at another inn, during a journey to Manchester, he read prayers and expounded the second lesson. The following day, at Birmingham, he was reproved by his conscience for negligence in allowing those who attended him and his companion to go without exhortation or instruction. But afterwards they were more faithful, and all who heard seemed serious and affected. In the evening, at Stafford, the mistress of the house joined them at family prayer, and the next morning one of the servants appeared deeply affected, as did the ostler; and after breakfast, stepping into the stable, he spoke a few words to those who were there. Thus he began to do on a small scale what afterwards it was his life's greatest joy to do on the widest scale.

It is worthy of notice how intimately personal religious interests are interwoven with the great evangelistic toils of Wesley. Duty and personal happiness mingle in the earlier motives. His first great impulse was to save his own soul. But this was no mere selfish aim. That is selfish which seeks its own at the cost of another; but here the thought of self became the stimulus of a pure benevolence.

A personal apprehension of the supreme importance of one's own salvation is the measure of one's apprehension of its importance to others. If the former be dim, the latter will be. No man can be a great religious reformer who is indifferent to his own religious state. Augustine, Loyola, Luther, St. Paul himself, declare the truth of this; and so do Wesley's great contemporaries, Whitefield, Charles Wesley and Fletcher of Madeley; and so, in their measure, do ten thousand others.

More and more amazed by what Böhler told him of the holiness and happiness of those who had living faith, he began again the close study of the New Testament, resolved to abide by the law and the testimony, being confident he would hereby be led to know if this doctrine were of God.

On the 1st of April, whilst at Mr. Fox's society, in Oxford, his heart was so full when at prayer that he could not confine himself to the forms generally used, and he burst forth in extempore prayer; and at the time resolved to be confined to forms no more, but to pray "indifferently, with form or without," as occasion might require. On the following day he preached in Lincoln College, at the Castle, and at Carfax; and wrote, "I see the promise, but it is afar off." Believing it would be better to wait for the accomplishment of it in silence and retirement, he spent a fortnight in Dummer, in Hampshire, and then returned to London.

Böhler now so far convinces him that he writes:—  
"I had now no objection to what he said of the

nature of faith—namely, that it is (to use the words of our church) ‘a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.’ Neither could I deny either the happiness or holiness which he described as fruits of this living faith. ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God,’ and, ‘He that believeth hath the witness in himself,’ fully convinced me of the former; as ‘Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,’ and ‘Whosoever believeth is born of God,’ did of the latter.”

But he is staggered when Böhler speaks of an *instantaneous* work—how this faith could be given in a moment; how a man could *at once* be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery, to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. Again he searched the Scriptures, when, to his utter astonishment, he scarce found any instances there of other than *instantaneous* conversions. Thus God wrought in the *first* ages, thought he; but the times are now changed. Out of this retreat, however, he was beaten by the concurring evidence of several witnesses. Here his disputing failed him, and he cried, “Lord, help Thou my unbelief.”

We now have the picture of Böhler walking with him a few miles, on his way to Oxford again, and exhorting him not to stop short of the grace of God. Presently we find him, acting on Böhler’s advice, declaring the truth as it is in Jesus to all who come in his way. In consequence of Charles’ illness, he

hastened again to London, to find his brother better as to his health, but strongly adverse to what he called "the new faith."

In the evening of May the 1st, 1738, the little society that afterwards met in Fetter Lane was founded. Two days afterwards, Charles had a long and particular conversation with Peter Böhler, and "it now pleased God to open his eyes, so that he also saw clearly what was the nature of that one true living faith, whereby alone, 'through grace, we are saved.'"

On the following day, Böhler left London for Carolina, and Wesley significantly writes: "O, what a work hath God begun since his coming into England! Such an one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth pass away." His prophecy has since been verified.

Wesley now boldly preaches "the new doctrine" in the churches of London, first at St. Lawrence, and St. Catherine Cree, from which henceforth he is excluded, then at Great St. Helen's, and afterwards at St. Ann's, Aldersgate, with like consequence. On Whit Sunday he was at Wapping, and St. Bennet's, Paul's Wharf, and on the same day he heard Dr. Heylin preach "a truly Christian sermon, on 'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost' (and so, said he, may *all you* be, if it is not your own faults)," and, after assisting at the Communion, he received the surprising news that his brother had found rest to his soul. "Rest to his soul;" this is the true expression. Charles entered it in his journal, "THE DAY OF PENTECOST."

This was that Charles who, but a few months

before, when Peter Böhler asked him, "Do you hope to be saved?" replied "Yes." "For what reason do you hope it?" "Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God." He adds: "He shook his head, and said no more. I thought him very uncharitable, saying in my heart, 'What, are not my endeavours a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavours? I have nothing else to trust to.'" Had not this been the Wesleys' trust all along? But, by gentle teaching from Böhler and others, amongst them Mr. Bray, a brazier, with whom he then lodged in Little Britain, "a poor, ignorant mechanic, who knows nothing but Christ, yet, by knowing Him, knows and discerns all things," he is led first to "a faint longing for faith," then to spend his "whole time in discoursing on faith, either with those that had it or those that sought it, in reading the Scriptures, and in prayer." And a few days later, after spending some hours in examining the arguments of Luther, who, he says, was greatly blessed to him, he "laboured, waited, and prayed to feel 'who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*,'" (this personal appropriating act of faith being evidently the difficulty with both the brothers), and finally wrote, "Still I felt a violent opposition and reluctance to believe; yet still the Spirit of God strove with my own and the evil spirit, till by degrees he chased away the darkness of my unbelief. I found myself convinced, I knew not how, nor when, and immediately fell to intercession." The final record of the day—this was the Day of Pentecost—is: "I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope

of loving Christ. My temper for the rest of the day was mistrust of my own great, but before unknown, weakness. I saw that by faith I stood; by the continual support of faith, which kept me from falling, though of myself I am ever sinking into sin. I went to bed still sensible of my own weakness (I humbly hope to be more and more so), yet confident of Christ's protection."

No fact in Wesley's life is of equal interest and importance with the inward struggle through which he had long been and was still passing; without carefully considering it the riddle of his life must remain unsolved. His own words convey the clearest account of it. Referring to his life on shipboard, he says:—"I was again active in outward works; when it pleased God, of His great mercy, to give me twenty-six of the Moravian brethren for companions, who endeavoured to show me 'a more excellent way.' But I understood it not at first, I was too learned and too wise. So that it seemed foolishness unto me. And I continued preaching, and following after, and trusting in, that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified. All the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the air. Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, which, by a living faith in Him, bringeth salvation 'to every one that believeth,' I sought to establish my own righteousness; and so laboured in the fire all my days." He describes his state as a vile, abject state of bondage to sin, in which he was fighting continually but not conquering. "Before, I had willingly served sin, now it was unwill-

lingly ; but still I served it. I fell and rose, and fell again. Sometimes I was overcome, and was in heaviness ; sometimes I overcame, and was in joy. For as in the former state I had some foretastes of the terrors of the law, so had I in this of the comforts of the Gospel."

Thus was Wesley tossed as in a storm by inward conflict for ten long years. He sought peacefulness, rest, and satisfaction. He sought it by endeavouring to bring his life up to a very lofty ideal. In the judgment of most observers he had truly attained it ; but he had no such conviction. The ideal which he proposed to himself seemed only to recede from him as he advanced towards it. It was a very noble, a truly heroic struggle : one of those struggles which, though often at rare intervals, occur in the life of every good man—in which men striving apparently in their own interest are really striving in the interests of their race. Well was it for multitudes that he did not weary in this strife. The wrestling continued through a long night, but the morning at length dawned. The final scene is best depicted in his own words, which are therefore given here :—

" In my return to England, January, 1738, being in imminent danger of death, and very uneasy on that account, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief ; and that the gaining a true, living faith was the 'one thing needful' for me. But still I fixed not this faith on its right object : I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again I knew not that I was wholly void of this faith ; but

only thought I had not enough of it. So that when Peter Böhler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ (which is but one), that it had those two fruits inseparably attending it, 'dominion over sin, and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness,' I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new Gospel. If this was so, it was clear I had not faith. But I was not willing to be convinced of this. Therefore, I disputed with all my might, and laboured to prove that faith might be where these were not; especially where the sense of forgiveness was not. For all the Scriptures relating to this I had been long since taught to construe away; and to call all Presbyterians who spoke otherwise. Besides, I well saw no one could, in the nature of things, have such a sense of forgiveness and not *feel* it. But I felt it not. If, then, there was no faith without this, all my pretensions to faith dropped at once.

“When I met Peter Böhler again, he consented to put the dispute upon the issue which I desired—namely, Scripture and experience. I first consulted the Scripture. But when I set aside the glosses of men, and simply considered the words of God, comparing them together, endeavouring to illustrate the obscure by the plainer passages, I found they all made against me, and was forced to retreat to my last hold—‘that experience would never agree with the *literal interpretation* of those Scriptures. Nor could I, therefore, allow it to be true, till I found some living witnesses of it.’ He replied, he could show me

such at any time ; if I desired it, the next day. And, accordingly, the next day he came again with three others, all of whom testified, of their own personal experience, that a true, living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and freedom from all present, sins. They added, with one mouth, that this faith was the gift, the free gift of God ; and that He would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it. I was now thoroughly convinced ; and by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end. First, by absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon *my own* works or righteousness, on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up. Second, by adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace a continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for *me* ; a trust in Him, as *my* Christ, as *my* sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.

“I continued then to seek it (though with strange indifference, dulness, and coldness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin) till Wednesday, May 24th. I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words, ‘There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature’ (2 Peter, i. 4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, ‘Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.’ In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul’s. The anthem was, ‘Out of the deep have I called unto Thee,

O Lord : Lord, hear my voice. O let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee ; therefore shalt Thou be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord : for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.'

“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation ; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.”

He adds :—“I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart.”

Under the date, May 24th, Charles writes :—“Towards ten my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of friends, and declared, ‘I believe.’ We sang the hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer.”

Then began the brightness of day to which, through morning mist and gloom, Wesley had so long and so patiently struggled. In order to be a prince, to have power with God and to prevail, he, like another prince, must needs wrestle with the angel. On

that struggle and triumph depended the moral condition of following generations. Great principles, which in their wide-spread influence are destined to affect the lives of many, are not unfrequently first tested and exemplified within the sphere of some individual life. So has it been in all ages; so was it here.

Wesley called this his "*conversion.*" So be it. It matters little what others call it. Certain it is the whole complexion of his life was changed from that hour. He had new views of Christ, and of human righteousness, and the way to its attainment; and he had a new "experience" such as, in his own judgment, marked this to the end of his days as the beginning of a new era in his life.

It is needful to discriminate between his general character and habits and this one incident. It did not destroy them, but it suffused them with a new force. His mind found rest—peace. Through all the laborious servitude of the past there was only occasional light, an imperfect satisfaction, a fluctuating peace, very different from that he now had. Without abating a jot of the earnest, active obedience, self-denial, and renunciation of evil which had marked his course hitherto, all is now done in the light. He is a happy man. "An assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

Wesley now enters on a new phase in his life. He is new born. He walks as a little child. He is very tender and sensitive. He watches his state of

mind with great carefulness, and we find entries in his journal such as the following:—"My soul continued in peace, but yet in heaviness because of manifold temptations. I asked Mr. Telchig, the Moravian, what to do. He said, 'You must not fight with them as you did before, but flee from them the moment they appear, and take shelter in the wounds of Jesus.' The same I learned also from the afternoon anthem, which was 'My soul truly waiteth still upon God: for of Him cometh my salvation.'" Sat., 27th.—Believing that one reason of his want of joy was want of time for prayer, he resolved to do nothing till he had been to church in the morning, but to continue pouring out his heart to God. "This day my spirit was enlarged; so that though I was now also assaulted by many temptations, I was more than conqueror, gaining more power thereby to trust and to rejoice in God my Saviour." "Sunday, 28th.—I waked in peace but not in joy. In the same even, quiet state I was till the evening." "Sunday, June 4th, was indeed a feast day; for from the time of my rising till past one in the afternoon I was praying, reading the Scriptures, singing praise, or calling sinners to repentance. All these days I scarce remember to have opened the Testament but upon some great and precious promise; and I saw more than ever that the Gospel is in truth but one great promise, from the beginning of it to the end." "Tues., 6th.—I had still more comfort and peace and joy. After some hours spent in the Scripture and prayer, I was much comforted."

Thus, for a fortnight, all the entries in his journal

relate to himself—his state of feeling. He then determines to retire for a short time into Germany, in the hope that conversing with the godly Moravians, whom he held in such reverence, would be a means of establishing him in the faith. Henceforth he is more strict in his living; he is severe, severe as the most saintly prior of any monkish order. But it is in no sense to obtain the forgiveness of past sin, or to deserve for himself a standing in righteousness, but as the fruit of it. Before, to use his own simile, he had the faith of a *servant*, now of a *son*.

From this time these references to his inward feelings cease; he gets away from self, and seldom afterwards makes any reference to his own religious state. His journey to Herrnhut occupied him three months. When there, he studied most minutely the habits, lives, history, services, and discipline of the Moravian Church. This visit, made at a time when his heart was most plastic and sensitive, had a very important bearing on his future life and work.

## The Work.

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### CHAPTER I.

First Efforts—1739—Bristol—Field-preaching—Effects—Moorfields  
—The Church—His Work a Unit—Wales Visited—The London  
Society formed—First Lay Preachers—Moravian Mystics.

WESLEY returned from Herrnhut on Saturday, September 16th, 1738, replenished with every gift necessary to prepare him for the great work he was called to perform, and with a bounding earnestness he instantly entered upon his labour. The entry in his journal for the following day is, "I began again to declare in my own country the glad tidings of salvation, preaching three times and afterwards expounding the Holy Gospel to a large company in the Minories." The day following he met the little Society in Fetter Lane, which now numbered thirty-two persons. The next day he went to the condemned felons in Newgate, "and offered them free salvation," testing his new Christian doctrine and experience; and in the evening to a Society in Bear Yard, and preached repentance and remission of sins. The next evening he "spoke the truth in love at Aldersgate Street. Some contradicted at first, but not long; so that nothing but love appeared at our parting." Again he preached to a Society in

Fetter Lane; then declared the mighty work of God with all simplicity at the Savoy; but finding abundance of people greatly exasperated by gross misrepresentations of the words he had spoken, he went to as many of them in private as his time would permit. Then he spoke "strong words," both at Newgate and at one of the Societies, and the next day at St. Anne's, and twice at St. John's, Clerkenwell; shrewdly conjecturing they would bear with him no longer. Then he preached to a small company at Windsor, and so on, preaching in churches, expounding in Societies, explaining to individuals, until October 9th, when he set out for Oxford and Bristol, reading as he walked "the truly surprising account of the conversions lately wrought in and around Northampton, in New England."

He reached Bristol on Saturday, the 14th of October, and on the following day preached twice at the Castle, and afterwards expounded at three Societies. On Wednesday he came to London again, and on Friday met a Society (of soldiers chiefly) at Westminster. He spent three weeks in preaching in such churches as were open to him, in visiting and expounding at the several Societies, and in ministering to the felons. He then returned again to Oxford, and began most searchingly to inquire into the doctrine of the Church of England "concerning the much controverted point of justification by faith;" and the sum of what he found in the Homilies he extracted and printed for the use of others—one of the most useful of his publications. He continued his work of preaching and

expounding, visiting the jails and workhouses, until, hearing Mr. Whitefield had arrived from Georgia, he hastened to London, and, on the morrow, God permitted them "to have sweet counsel together."

Towards the close of the year he preached at St. Swithin's "for the last time," at Great St. Bartholomew's, and at Islington, where they "had the blessed Sacrament every day through the week," to their great comfort. About this time he preached his first extempore sermon in All Hallows Church, Lombard Street, having forgotten his manuscript, and being encouraged by a woman who was among the congregation. He never afterwards took a written sermon into the pulpit.

On the morning of the last day of this eventful year, he preached "to many thousands in St. George's, Spitalfields, and to a yet more crowded congregation at Whitechapel in the afternoon."

A very remarkable service opens the year 1739, the year of the highest interest in Wesley's great mission. Messrs. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchins, Wesley, and his brother Charles, with about sixty others, were present at a love-feast\* in Fetter Lane. The service lasted until three in the morning, when, he says, "As we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out in one voice, 'We praise Thee,

\* A social service held by the Moravians in imitation of the *agapæ* of the early Church.

O God ; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.'” It was altogether a touching and impressive scene. Little did they know what that year was to bring forth. On the 5th of this month some seven clergymen, “despised Methodists,” met at Islington. They continued in fasting and prayer until three o'clock, separating “with a full conviction that God was about to do great things” among them.

So began the year for which all the preceding years in Wesley's life had been preparatory : the year in which his great work was to enter upon its widest and most important phase ; the year in which, led by his friend Whitefield, he would make his boldest innovations on the custom of his Church ; the year from which must be dated the spiritual revival called Methodism—that great religious movement which, to use the words of Isaac Taylor, “has, immediately or remotely, so given an impulse to Christian feeling and profession on all sides that it has come to present itself as the starting-point of our modern religious history.”

Wesley now preached with great fervour in the London churches, which were rapidly closing against him. By the advice of all his friends, he visited Oxford, and having resuscitated the Society, and preached in a few of the neighbouring towns, he returned to London to find full employment amongst the Societies, where he was continually desired to expound. A letter from his friend Whitefield reached him, entreating him to come to Bristol without delay. From this he held back, partly, as he says, “because of the remark-

able Scriptures which offered as often as we inquired touching this removal." The Society at Fetter Lane was consulted. All had a feeling that something remarkable was about to happen, but opinions were divided. Charles was immovable in his opposition, from an unaccountable fear it would prove fatal to him, until overcome by the force of some Scriptures "as spoken to himself." The matter was decided by lot. Charles writes :—"He offered himself willingly to do whatsoever the Lord should appoint. The next day he set out, commended by us to the grace of God. He left a blessing behind. I desired to die with him." He reached Bristol in the evening of Saturday, March 31st, and was most cordially greeted by Whitefield.

Shut out of the London pulpits, Whitefield had hastened to Bristol, in the hope of finding a freer field ; but here fresh obstacles presented themselves, the Chancellor of the diocese threatening suspension and expulsion. Tyerman writes :—"This was the turning-point. To muzzle Whitefield was impossible ; and hence, being shut out of the Bristol churches, away he went, on February 17th, and preached in the open air to two hundred colliers at Kingswood." He adds, "Perhaps none of the Methodists but the impulsive, large-hearted Whitefield would have had sufficient courage to be the first in such a shocking departure from Church rules and usages." The novelty of the proceeding, and the character of his preaching, soon brought the people by thousands to hear. Thus began that field-preaching which was to produce such wondrous effects.

Wesley stands amazed, nor can he reconcile himself at first to this strange way of preaching in the field, having been, as he tells us, all his life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that he would have thought "the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church;" though in Georgia, it is true, when the house would not contain the people, he had occasionally preached in the open air; but there he had no church. But in the evening, however, of the same day, while expounding our Lord's Sermon on the Mount to a little Society, he was struck by it as "one pretty remarkable precedent for field preaching; though I suppose," he adds, "there were churches at that time."

On the following day, the decisive step is taken. He writes:—"Monday, April 2. At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people."

The die is cast, the spell is broken, and if the modern revival does not begin from this moment, it assumes at any rate an entirely new character. The means are now at hand commensurate with the necessities and the greatness of the work. Henceforth Wesley is independent of church accommodation. The Scripture on which he spoke was significant (in his view "fulfilled in every true minister of Christ"): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek:

He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Unquestionably the preaching in the open air was the most important step in Wesley's career. It gave him an advantage for promoting the moral elevation of the inhabitants of this country which he could not possibly have gained in any church or in any number of churches. He not only spoke to such numbers as no church could hold, but he spoke also to tens of thousands who would never darken a church's threshold; yet these were they who of all most needed the message it was his calling to proclaim. The necessity for this innovation is seen in the fact that Wesley had not preached more than half-a-dozen sermons in three months, so that, had the fields not been open to him, his preaching career must speedily have closed.

He is presently using his freedom with great joy. On the following Sunday he preaches in Bristol to about a thousand at seven o'clock in the morning, and afterwards to about one thousand five hundred at Kingswood, and in the afternoon to about five thousand at Rose Green. On the Tuesday, by desire, he preached at Bath to about a thousand, and again to twice the number, and to about as many at Baptist Mills. On Saturday he is at the poor-house, with three or four hundred within, and more than twice that number without.

On Sunday, the 15th, five or six thousand assemble at seven, to hear him explain the story of the

Pharisee and the Publican. A little later, three thousand are present at Hannam Mount. At Newgate, after dinner, the congregation is crowded. In the evening, from five to six thousand are hearers at Rose Green; and, after these four services, he concludes the day by an address to the Society in Bristol.

Invited to Pensford, he desired the use of the church, but, receiving no answer, he preached to many of the people who were gathered in an open place, returning to address three thousand persons near Bristol in the afternoon.

On the following Sunday his first congregation at Bristol consisted of about four thousand persons. He then preached at Clifton, at the desire of the minister, who was dangerously ill. After morning service he preached at Hannam Mount, where three thousand were present. Again at Clifton, in the afternoon, the church was full at prayers, as was the churchyard at a burial which followed. From Clifton he went to Rose Green, where, by computation, near seven thousand assembled. This was followed by a meeting of the Gloucester Lane Society; and the great labour of this day was closed by a "love-feast" in Baldwin Street. Well might he exclaim, "O how has God renewed my strength! who used, ten years ago, to be so faint and weary with preaching twice in one day."

Very striking effects began now to be witnessed from his preaching. He aimed to convince the ungodly of their sins, and his words seem to have pierced as an arrow. So great was the pain of mind of many

that they cried aloud, and many were strongly convulsed; while the message of forgiveness, preached to all and urged on the acceptance of all, brought great peace and joy to the repentant ones, who put no restraint upon their shouts of thanksgiving. Sometimes the services must have presented a strangely awful scene. Men and women fell to the ground as though thunderstruck; and often his voice could scarce be heard amidst the groanings of some and the cries of others, calling aloud to Him who is mighty to save. Cautious people, who came to witness and condemn these irregularities, were themselves smitten to the earth, often writhing as in extreme anguish. Many explanations of these strange scenes, and especially of the bodily contortions, have been given, but the great mental and moral disturbance caused by these new efforts seems amply to account for them.

In March, when at Reading, he found a young man "who had in some measure known the powers of the world to come." This was John Cennick. Describing a scene of very solemn confusion, which occurred at Bristol in May, he speaks of another young man who, fixing his eyes on one who had been struck to the earth, "sunk down himself as one dead; but soon began to roar out, and beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarce hold him. His name was Thomas Maxfield." These two, with Joseph Humphreys, were his first lay preachers.

His daily work in Bristol he thus describes:--  
"Every morning I read prayers and preached at Newgate. Every evening I expounded a portion of

Scripture at one or more of the Societies. On Monday, in the afternoon, I preached abroad near Bristol; on Tuesday, at Bath and Two Mile End alternately; on Wednesday, at Baptist Mills; every other Thursday, near Pensford; every other Friday, in another part of Kingswood; on Saturday, in the afternoon, and Sunday morning, in the Bowling Green; on Sunday, at eleven, near Hannam Mount; at two, at Clifton; and at five, at Rose Green."

It was impossible for Wesley to continue in so unusual a manner of ministering without exciting questions within himself as to the propriety of his doings. One accustomed to give "a logical reason" for all things would demand one for this. To it he gave close attention, and wrote his thoughts at length. From this writing the following are extracts:—"If you ask on what principle I then acted, it was this: 'a desire to be a Christian, and a conviction that whatever I judge conducive thereto, that I am bound to do; wherever I judge I can best answer this end, thither it is my duty to go.' On this principle I set out for America; on this, I visited the Moravian Church; and on the same am I ready now (God being my helper) to go to Abyssinia or China, or whithersoever it shall please God, by this conviction, to call me. You ask, 'How is it that I assemble Christians who are none of my charge, to sing psalms and pray, and hear the Scriptures expounded?' and think it hard to justify doing this in other men's parishes, upon catholic principles.

"Permit me to speak plainly. If by catholic prin-

ciples you mean any other than Scriptural, they weigh nothing with me. I allow no other rule, whether of faith or practice, than the Holy Scriptures; but on Scriptural principles I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God, in Scripture, commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish—that is, in effect, to do it at all, seeing I have now no parish of my own. If it be just to obey God rather than man, judge you. A dispensation of the Gospel is committed to me; and woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.” “Suffer me to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far, I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare, unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am that His blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I, therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work He hath given me to do. His servant I am, and as such am employed according to the plain direction of His word, ‘As I have opportunity, doing good unto all men.’ And His providence clearly concurs with His word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, ‘and go about doing good.’”

Thus Wesley justifies himself in the strange proceeding which was undoubtedly a breach of Church custom, if not of Church order.

Referring to these services, he writes:—“I cannot

say I have ever seen a more awful sight than when on Rose Green, or on the top of Hannam Mount, some thousands of people were joined together in solemn waiting upon God, while

‘They stood, and under open air ador’d  
The God who made both air, earth, heaven, and sky.’

And whether they were listening to His word with attention still as night, or were lifting up their voice in praise, as the sound of many waters, many a time have I been constrained to say in my heart, *How dreadful is this place! This, also, is no other than the house of God! This is the gate of heaven!*”

The whole question, as between him and objectors, is thus condensed into a few unanswerable statements:—  
“Be pleased to observe—first, that I was forbidden, as by general consent, to preach in any church (though not by any judicial sentence) *for preaching such doctrine*. This was the open, avowed cause; there was at that time no other, either real or pretended (except that the people crowded so). Secondly, that I had no desire or design to preach in the open air till after this prohibition. Thirdly, that when I did, as it was no matter of choice, so neither of premeditation. There was no scheme at all previously formed which was to be supported thereby; nor had I any other end in view than this—to save as many souls as I could. Fourthly, *field-preaching* was, therefore, a sudden *expedient*—a thing submitted to rather than chosen, and therefore submitted to because I thought preaching even *thus* better than *not* preaching *at all* :

first, in regard to my own soul, because, *a dispensation of the Gospel being committed to me*, I did not dare *not to preach the Gospel*; secondly, in regard to the souls of others, whom I everywhere saw *seeking death in the error of their life.*"

Field-preaching in these days needs no apology. The bold innovators on long-continued custom proved by argument and by results that they were not invaders of any law of right. And the general conscience has since then borne its testimony to the propriety of their procedure. Now-a-days clergymen and high dignitaries within, as well as Evangelists without, the Church of England, may be seen, free from any compunction on their own part or condemnation on the part of others, preaching to few or many in the open air. But it was no easy matter for those who began this practice.

Wesley was at that time called to London, to give his advice and help to the Society. He arrived on the morning of June 13th, received the Holy Communion at St. Mary's, Islington, and met his mother for the first time since his return from Germany.

On the following day he went, in company with Mr. Whitefield, to Blackheath, where some twelve or fourteen thousand persons had assembled to hear the latter preach. To Wesley's great surprise, Whitefield desired him to preach in his stead, and "though nature recoiled," he finally consented, preaching from his favourite subject, "Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

We find him on the following Sunday preaching at seven o'clock in Upper Moorfields, to six or seven thousand people; and at five o'clock on Kennington Common with fifteen thousand hearers.

After only eight days' stay in London, he returned to Bristol, meeting for the first time Howel Harris, the Welsh Evangelist, whom Charles Wesley describes as "a man after my own heart."

His time was fully occupied, as before, in preaching "abroad" to large congregations, and in expounding at Newgate (till at length it was forbidden by the sheriff's), and to the Societies, correcting and instructing them, and in earnestly conversing with individuals, especially those who were deeply affected under his preaching. He was also engaged in preaching at the towns near, chiefly in the open air, and often to very large congregations, on one occasion at Gloucester to two or three thousand persons, though "it rained violently."

For a time he was helped by Mr. Whitefield, and afterwards by his brother Charles, who had learned to preach "from George Whitefield's pulpit, the wall."

Charles Wesley gives the following account of his own decision to take the field:—"My inward conflict continued. I perceived it was the fear of man; and that, by preaching in the field next Sunday, as George Whitefield urges me, I should break down the bridge and become desperate. I retired, and prayed for particular direction, offering up my friends, my liberty, my life, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. I was somewhat less burdened, yet could not be quite

easy till I gave up all." The next day, Sunday, June 24th, he adds, "The first Scripture I cast my eye upon was, 'Then came the servant unto him and said, Master, what shall we do?' I prayed with zest, and went forth in the name of Jesus Christ. I found near ten thousand helpless sinners waiting for the word in Moorfields. I invited them in my Master's words as well as name: 'Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The Lord was with me, even me, his meanest messenger, according to his promise. At St. Paul's the Psalms, Lessons, &c., for the day, put fresh life into me. So did the Sacrament. My load was gone, and all my doubts and scruples. God shone upon my path, and I knew this was His will concerning me."

Returning to London, Wesley is presently preaching to eight or ten thousand people at Kennington, and, on the following Sunday, in Moorfields, to ten thousand; and at five o'clock in the evening at Kennington again, where twenty thousand persons are supposed to be present, his mother among them; thence to a Society in Lambeth, where "the house being filled, the rest stood in the garden;" and afterwards to the Society at Fetter Lane.\*

\* He records an interesting conversation with his mother on the subject of the having forgiveness of sins now, or God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirit, of which she affirmed she had "scarce ever heard such a thing mentioned" till a short time since, much less did she imagine this was the common privilege of all true believers. "Therefore," said she, "I never durst ask it for myself. But two or three weeks ago, while my son Hall was pronouncing these words, in delivering the cup to me, 'The blood

We find Wesley at this time exhorting the “brethren to keep close to the Church, and to all the ordinances of God; and to aim only at living ‘a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.’” When pressed by a serious clergyman as to the points in which the Methodists differed from the Church of England, he answered, “To the best of my knowledge, in none. The doctrines we preach are the doctrines of the Church of England—indeed, the fundamental doctrines of the Church, clearly laid down in her prayers, articles, and homilies.”

This cannot be denied, nor must it be overlooked. Wesley preached nothing but Church of England doctrines. Even the doctrines which *seemed* to be novel he found embedded in the Liturgy and in the simple commands of Holy Scripture—as the doctrines of the witness of the Spirit and Christian holiness. The “Christian perfection” which he preached (he never used the term *sinless* perfection) he defined by the words of the old law :—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and

of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee,’ the words struck through my heart, and I knew God, for Christ’s sake, had forgiven *me* all *my* sins.’ I asked her whether her father (Dr. Annesley) had not the same faith, and whether she had not heard him preach it to others. She answered, he had it himself, and declared, a little before his death, that for more than forty years he had had no darkness, no fear, no doubt at all of his being ‘accepted in the Beloved,’ but that, nevertheless, she did not remember to have heard him preach—no, not once—explicitly upon it; whence she supposed he also looked upon it as the peculiar blessing of a few, not as promised to all the people of God.”

with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." The Methodist language of holiness is the language of the collects of the Book of Common Prayer. If this had not been hitherto formulated as a dogma, it was because it permeated all the Christian teaching. This was the point up to which he urged his hearers to press, and he was logical enough to say, "If it is commanded, it can be attained." The pursuit of a holiness which should govern the inner life—the thoughts, affections, and purposes, the outer conduct towards men and the soul's aspiration towards God; a holiness that should meet the utmost demand of rapt devotion, and at the same time control the practical duties of life, was the necessary complement of the free justification of the repentant sinner, which his Church warranted him to proclaim. It cannot be charged upon Wesley that he was either indifferent to the doctrinal formularies of the Church or careless to maintain good works. Perhaps no great reformer of ancient or modern times was truer to these two principles.

In the preface to the "Oxford Tracts for the Times" it is said, "Methodism and Popery are, in different ways, the refuge of those whom the Church stints of the gifts of grace; they are the foster-mothers of abandoned children."

The Methodists need not be aggrieved by this association. The "different ways" widely separate them from Romanism. Most truly these words indicate Wesley's purpose. It was the rescue of cruelly abandoned children; the feeding of souls stunted of

their daily bread. To this he was driven by no Church theory, and by no purposed opposition to the Church. He was in no sense a Dissenter. History does him the justice to affirm that his sole endeavour was to carry out the essential aims of the Church of England, and that within its borders and according to the severest restrictions of its order. Every departure in method was imposed upon him by the attitude of a misguided clergy. To this fidelity the present general appreciation of his labours is largely due. From that order he never willingly departed. For the existence of a separate organisation or sect the Church herself is responsible : certainly Wesley is not. He aimed at nothing beyond the true aim of his Church—the conversion of men from sin to righteousness. Here his utmost desire was satisfied ; but his heart was too intensely aglow, and his zeal too fervid, for the coldness of the hour. His work was too real, too deep, and too spiritual to be other than repulsive to the apathetic, worldly spirit of the age. He had neither theological crudities to broach nor novel Church theories to proclaim. But if Wesley had neither doctrinal nor ecclesiastical peculiarities to offer, we may ask, What was the secret of his success ?

Wesley's work was a unit : his aim was single. It was solely a determined assault upon evil—a simple, ceaseless, unwearied attack on sin. In its positive aspect it was the promotion of holiness. This runs like a silver thread through the whole of his life's labours. He never departed from it ; he never forgot it. To it everything was subordinate ; in its presence

everything was adventitious. All his plans were framed with a view to accomplish this. That they took a particular hue is due to the influence of his early associations, especially those experienced when his mind was in its most plastic condition, when he was undergoing that spiritual change which was ever to him the typical change for all.

Here is to be noted the very marked difference between Wesley and Luther, with whom he has been compared. It is true both were religious reformers, both were driven to their work by the existing condition of their respective Churches; but there was not a greater difference in their personal character than in their work and their methods. Luther rose up in opposition to error and to vicious practices which had the sanction of the highest Church authorities. He was essentially a reformer of doctrine. He had to establish a new theological platform—old, it is true, but new to the Church of his time. The authoritative decrees, documents, and decisions of the Church were against him. Not so Wesley. He had no new doctrine to promulgate. To him the doctrines of his Church were his stronghold. He stood his ground firmly on the Church of England theology as taught by her authoritative documents, her formularies, her articles and homilies, and as expounded by her best writers. It was his to revive attention to her exact teaching, to shake off lethargy, to spread, not new doctrines, but Scriptural holiness throughout the land, and for this he found nothing more serviceable than the doctrines the Church had held from the

beginning. Luther protested against the Church: Wesley witnessed for it.

Wesley continued his labours in London until October, when he set out for Oxford, where he found matters in a sad state. After a brief stay he went forward to Gloucester, preaching on his way at Burford and Bengeworth. His stay at Gloucester was brief, but was crowded with work. He arrived on Friday evening. On Saturday evening he preached to about one thousand people. At an early service on Sunday morning some two or three thousand were present. At eleven o'clock he preached at Randwick, seven miles away, in a crowded church, upwards of a thousand remaining in the churchyard; he preached again in the afternoon, the crowd being larger by some thousands. Between five and six o'clock he stood on a little green near Stanley. Three thousand persons listened to him while, he says, he was strengthened to speak as he never did before. He continued preaching for nearly two hours, the darkness of the night and a little lightning not lessening the number, but increasing the seriousness of the hearers. After these four services he concluded the day by expounding "part of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount to a small serious company at Ebley."

The next morning at eight o'clock he preached on Hampton Common to a company computed to be more than five thousand in number. Then he hasted away to Bristol, where he found his brother Charles, and they were both speedily engaged in trying to remove misapprehension from the Society at Bradford;

and in the evening he inculcated outward holiness as taught in the Epistle of St. James, on the Society at Bristol.

Now the sphere widens. Howel Harris, or others, had carried news of him to Wales; and, yielding to a pressing invitation, he sets out, preaching wherever he stops. At Abergavenny, the church being refused him, he described "the old religion of the Church of England, which is now almost everywhere spoken against under the name of Methodism," to about one thousand persons, who stood patiently in the open air, though the frost was sharp, it being after sunset. In an hour's time he was again expounding—this time in a house.

The following morning the frost was sharper still, but five or six hundred persons listened while he explained the nature of that salvation which is by faith. At noon he preached at Usk. In the afternoon he spoke at Pontypool, where, unable to procure a more convenient place, he stood in the street and cried aloud to five or six hundred attentive hearers; and again in the evening, when many were melted into tears. At Cardiff he preached in the Shire Hall, the minister not being willing he should preach in the church. The next morning he spoke in an open space at Newport; in the afternoon at the Shire Hall again, when he had such freedom of speech as he had seldom had. At six o'clock, while addressing "almost the whole town," his heart was so enlarged he knew not how to give over, so that he continued three hours! The following day he reached Bristol,

having been struck by the beauty of the country through which he had passed, and the spiritual ignorance of the people, whom he described to be "as ignorant of the Gospel as any Creek or Cherokee Indians."

Preaching once more at Bradford, the violent rain did not hinder an immense congregation from listening to him—"near ten thousand people, who all stood to hear with awful silence and great attention," as an eye-witness, a clergyman, wrote. That night he and others continued in prayer for a troubled soul until near one o'clock.

On his way to London he passed through Reading, where a little company met in the evening, "at which the zealous mob were so enraged they were ready to tear the house down;" and earned for themselves the unenviable honour of being his first violent persecutors.

About this time Wesley began to encounter hindrances from a source he had little suspected. His close alliance with the Moravian Church, and his deep indebtedness to it, led him to cherish towards it a very warm affection. In many respects the Moravian Church appeared to him to present the typical form of a Christian community; and he subsequently embodied many of its peculiarities in Methodism. But some who bore the Moravian name were not true to Moravian principles, or had allowed themselves to be carried to extremes on certain questions, the germs of which were to be found in Moravian writings. In his earlier acquaint-

ance with the Brethren, Wesley himself, as he afterwards acknowledged, did not wholly escape a mystical tendency. But now certain men, invested with authority as teachers and preachers, taught a mystic doctrine of stillness, forbidding the use of any of the means of grace, particularly the Lord's Supper, to all who could not speak of themselves as far advanced in religious knowledge and experience, and affirming that the ordinances are not means of grace—Christ is the only means. These teachings were directly opposed to all Wesley's predilections, training, and convictions. His frequent absence from London gave the disseminators of these views every advantage over him, and we find him hurrying up again and again with heavy heart to help and rescue the torn and distracted Society. He held lengthened and anxious conferences with the Moravian teachers, and seemed to be sometimes almost on the verge of yielding principle in his desire to secure peace. This was a stab to the heart of the joyous Evangelist, and proved a source of grievous trouble to him and a great hindrance to his work.

On November 6th, 1739, his eldest brother, Samuel, died, at the comparatively early age of forty-nine. To Wesley this was as a dark streak across the sky. For though they differed in opinion on many important points, and though he had been severely taken to task by Samuel on more than one occasion, yet he loved and honoured him, and in gratitude remembered his own and the entire family's indebtedness to him. Wesley, who schooled himself into a

suppression of his emotions, or, at least, did not give utterance to them, cast his eye upon what he judged to be the one essential, and found cause to rejoice at hearing concerning his brother that "several days before he went hence God had given him a calm and full assurance of his interest in Christ." This was just a month before the founding of the Methodist Society, and Wesley's mind was diverted from the intensity of his sorrow by the pressure of the great work which Providence was forcing upon him. He stayed not to brood over his trial, but hied away to his work.

On the 11th November he preached at eight o'clock in the morning to a congregation of from five to six thousand people; and in the evening to seven or eight thousand, gathered for the first time in a building near Moorfields, London, formerly used by the Government for the casting of cannon, but henceforth to be historical in Methodism, as the first Methodist "meeting-house" in London. For nearly forty years the "Foundry" was the metropolitan centre of the Methodist movement.

By invitation, Wesley preached in St. Mary's Church, Exeter, on the morning of November 25th, but was forbidden the pulpit in the afternoon. He afterwards preached in Bristol, when several persons being in great anguish of mind, he and others continued in prayer with them through the night, until nine o'clock the next morning—fifteen hours! Leaving Bristol, he preached at Malmesbury and Burford, and came, Saturday, December 8th, into his old room at Oxford. "Here," he wrote, "musing on

the things that were past, and reflecting how many that came after me were preferred before me, I opened my Testament on those words (Oh may I never let them slip!), ‘What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.’” The analogy is by no means strained. Still, it is proper here to take note of the custom which Wesley had borrowed from the Moravians, and which not only he and they, but many others practised, of opening the Bible at random, and taking the first words that caught the eye as a sort of message specially sent from God. Many times the coincidences were striking, but the practice cannot be approved. It is right to say Wesley afterwards abandoned it. A note of a late writer, now conveniently at hand, may be sufficient to explain and condemn this curious practice:—

“We should shrink from any use of Scripture which reminds us of a game of chance rather than of ‘trembling at it;’ a curious, harmless hazard when a pagan poem only is concerned, but an unworthy device when the Word of God is its subject.”\*

Sad news of the state of the Society reaching him,

\* “*Virgilianæ Sortes*. The practice was to open the *Æneid* at chance, and to suppose a kind of oracle in the line which first met the eye. Such soothsaying is an outrage on the Bible.” (R. W. Hamilton, “Pastoral Appeals on Devotion.”)

he hastened to London, "though with a heavy heart," to find that the doctrine of mystic stillness had set the Society reasoning and disputing together. He spent the last hours of the year in a long and particular conversation with one of the leading Moravian teachers, and then retired to write an account of the differences which he conceived to lie between them. And so the eventful year closed with a dark cloud hovering over him and his great work.

The year 1739 must always be distinguished in the life of Wesley as the year in which he commenced his great evangelistic work: commenced it, that is to say, with the two prime conditions of success—his own clearer spiritual experience of evangelical truth, and the field-preaching.

In this year, also, lay-preaching began, which has since proved of such signal service in the spread and maintenance of Methodism. But for it, many of Wesley's Societies must have been left without religious instruction and oversight, and the services of a band of men must have been lost whose wide-spread usefulness amply justifies their employment.

It is doubtful who had the honour of being the first Methodist lay-preacher. Almost every biographer of Wesley and every historian of Methodism gives the place to Thomas Maxfield; but Mr. Tyerman points to circumstances which assign the priority to John Cennick. Wesley himself says Joseph Humphreys was his first lay-helper, in 1738. Maxfield's pre-eminence was gained by the following incident. Wesley, about to leave London on one occasion,

appointed him to meet the Society at the usual times, to pray with them, and to give them such advice as might be needful. Maxfield's fervent addresses drew many to hear him, and his success led him to go further than was at first intended, and he began to preach. Some complained of this as an irregularity; so Wesley hastened to London to put a stop to it. His mother, who now lived in his house adjoining the Foundry, observing his appearance of dissatisfaction, inquired of him the cause. "Thomas Maxfield," said he, "has turned preacher, I find." Looking attentively at him, she said, "John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as assuredly called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself." He did so; and, as Mr. Moore, by whom this account is given, says, "his prejudice bowed before the force of truth, and he could only say, 'It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good.'" It is probably in this capacity as an authorised preacher that Maxfield takes precedence. From that hour lay-preaching became an institution of Methodism, and from it an amount of good has resulted that is simply incalculable.

Another circumstance that distinguishes the year in the history of Methodism is the purchase of a piece of land for building upon. It is true the building was to be only for a Society similar to many already in existence within the Church, but

it was another step towards a position of independence, obviously quite unpremeditated. The providence of God, anticipating the future importance of the work, doubtless led to this, as to so many other steps being taken. The corner stone of the first Methodist chapel was laid in Bristol, May 12th, 1739.

The year must be further distinguished as that from which Methodism, as a distinct organisation, took its rise, for it was in this year the Methodist Societies were founded. Wesley's words are explicit. In his "Rules of the Society of the People called Methodists," dated 1743, and signed by himself and his brother, he says:—"In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together; which, from thenceforward, they did every week—viz., on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), I gave those advices from time to time which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meetings with prayer suitable to their several necessities. This was the rise of the United Society, first in London, and then in other places. Such a Society is no other than 'a company of men having the form, and

seeking the power, of godliness; united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.' ”

From this year, therefore, the great Methodist revival must be dated; and to aid and encourage the work, Wesley published his first Hymn Book, with his own and his brother's name on the title-page, of which three editions were issued during the year.

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## CHAPTER II.

1740—Mysticism—Leaves the Moravians—Whitefield—1741—Cennick—Sickness—1742—Watch-nights—The Class-meeting.

WE have seen that the last hours of 1739 were overcast with gloom, and no record of happy watch-night service brightens the first day of January, 1740. Wesley began the work of the year by endeavouring to explain to the brethren the true Scriptural stillness, “largely unfolding” the words, “Be still, and know that I am God.” No other record was made. It was a sad augury for the new year! The next day he earnestly besought the Society to “stand in the old paths.” They prayed together, and he, so ready to find the brighter side, left cheered, went to Oxford, and spent a couple of days in revising the correspondence of the past sixteen or seventeen years. He then passed on to Bristol, where he remained until the end

of the month. Finding many poor persons unable to work in consequence of the severe frost, he made collections, and fed from a hundred to a hundred and fifty daily—one of the many works of charity by which his life was characterised. He purposed spending some time in Bristol, but was suddenly called to London to minister to a young man, under sentence of death, who had expressed a desire to see him. He remained there a month, and found to his sorrow that many were leaving off the ordinances of God, and persuading others also.

On returning to Bristol, he wrote:—"It is easy to observe here in how different a manner God works from what He did last spring. He then poured along a rapid flood, overwhelming all before Him. Whereas now

‘He deigns His influence to infuse  
Secret, refreshing as the silent dews.’

Convictions sink deeper and deeper. Love and joy are more calm, even, and steady."

He continued in laborious service, ministering to individual prisoners, preaching to multitudes, expounding to the Societies, correcting the difficulties of the troubled, until first the prisons were closed against him, and afterwards riotous mobs assailed him; "not only the court and the alleys, but all the street, upwards and downwards, was filled with people, shouting, cursing and swearing, and ready to swallow the ground with fierceness and rage." This, however, the firm hand of justice quelled.

Pressed by Howel Harris, he set out for a

preaching tour in Wales, in the midst of which the sad news reached him that the brethren in Fetter Lane were in great confusion again. Hurrying to London, he found that the mystic stillness, though faithfully opposed by his brother, was working great mischief. He disputed with one of the brethren for two hours, and returned home with a heavy heart. In the evening the Society met, "cold, weary, heartless, dead." Many came to him in deep sorrow, "troubled by this new Gospel." "I was now utterly at a loss," he writes, "what course to take, finding no rest for the sole of my foot. These vain janglings pursued me wherever I went."

Turning for counsel to his friend, Mr. Stonehouse, the Vicar of Islington, he found, to his dismay, that he and the Society there were also affected. He spent his time in public and private efforts to bring back those that had been led astray, and returned to his labour in Bristol, May 3rd, when he was met by another strange effect of the great excitement of mind of which some were the subjects—an uncontrollable laughter seized many during the services, greatly to their own distress and his. He continued, however, in ceaseless labours, preaching both within and without, and striving to build up the Societies in knowledge and goodness.

Early in June he returned to London, to find a general temptation prevailing to "leave off good works in order to an increase of faith," and so he fell to expounding the Epistle of St. James, "the great antidote against this poison." His friend Stonehouse

was even about to sell his living. Matters drew to a crisis. Ready as he always was to give way in non-essentials, he would not yield an inch of ground he was warranted by Scripture in holding. At a meeting at Fetter Lane it was said he had been preaching up the law, "which," added one, "we are no more bound to obey than the subjects of the King of England are bound to obey the laws of the King of France."

It was now resolved he should not preach again in Fetter Lane. On Friday, July 18th, he joined with his mother and a few more in "the great sacrifice of thanksgiving," and then consulted as to the course to be pursued. On the following Sunday he preached in Moorfields, and in the evening went once more to the love-feast in Fetter Lane. Here he read a paper in which he set forth the mystic views, and affirmed that they flatly contradicted the Word of God, adding, "I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the law and the testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgment follow me." With that he withdrew, as did some eighteen or nineteen of the Society. Three days afterwards, on Wednesday, August 23rd, the little company met at the Foundry instead of Fetter Lane; and Methodism was loosed from its swaddling bands. From that hour Wesley's spirit revived.

From this day Tyerman dates, but not accurately, the founding of the Methodist Societies. True it was

the day on which they separated from the Moravians ; but it was not the day on which anxious inquirers came first to Wesley for spiritual instruction and comfort, and when he began to meet them week by week. That, he tells us, was at the close of 1739.

Confining his labours mainly to London and Bristol, he was presently at work with as much self-devotion as ever, not forgetting to clothe the poor of the London Society, as they had need, with clothes which many who could spare them brought for the purpose. For four months he employed them in carding and spinning cotton, so saving them at once from want and from idleness. In Bristol, too, finding many poor who were unable to work in consequence of the severe frost, he made a collection, and fed from one hundred and fifty to two hundred of them daily.

Sad accounts of the Society at Kingswood reaching him, he went down again, in the hope of allaying unhappy strife, when he encountered a new sorrow in the defection of his lay-preacher, John Cennick, who accused him plainly of being in error respecting election. It was the precursor of a deeper sorrow and a sadder separation which soon was to come to pass.

During the year Wesley had occasional correspondence with Whitefield, who had embraced views on the doctrines of predestination and election that were entirely opposed to Wesley's. The correspondence shows on Whitefield's part a tender, gushing heart, full of love and honour towards his friend. On Wesley's it was calm and logical, but faithful.

Whitefield, who was ready to wash the feet of his friend and "father" in the Gospel, declared, "I am ten thousand times more convinced of the doctrine of *election* and the *final* perseverance of those who are truly in Christ than when I saw you last." Unhappily, the diversity was not confined to opinions merely. There was a period of painful separation and estrangement between them, and the good work lost for a time the advantage of their combined labours—a loss the greatness of which it is impossible to estimate. It was their rigorous adhesion to diverging truths that bore them apart, like men standing on either side of a widening chasm in a drifting ice-floe. Happily these good and great servants in a common cause were afterwards reconciled in perfect oneness of heart, though their views were still diverse. An intenser light than that of our sun is needed to reveal the mediating harmonies between many apparently conflicting truths.

The year 1740 was closing. It had been a year of very hard labour, mainly expended upon the Societies and individual cases, and on bitter controversies; nor had it been one of very remarkable religious progress. The excitement of the previous year had somewhat abated, and the novelty of the field-preaching had partly worn off. Very few references are made to it in the year's records. Wesley had preached but once in a church in England, and twice only in Wales. The unhappy disputes had for months overshadowed his spirit, and caused him "to go heavily all the day long." Controversial and even malignant pamphlets had been issued against him, and he had

endured some violent personal treatment. Yet the year closed with a gleam of brightness at Bristol, he and his friends "wrestling with God in prayer, and praising Him for the wonderful work which He had already wrought upon earth."

The year 1741, which Wesley spent chiefly in London and Bristol, was not less one of strife and difficulty. Although he had separated himself from the Fetter Lane Society, he clung in heart to the Moravians, notwithstanding the grief and trouble they continued to occasion him. In Kingswood, Cennick had introduced strife by taking sides with Whitefield, preaching doctrines contrary to Wesley, and speaking strongly against him. He had even gone so far as to form a separate Society. With great patience Wesley strove to heal the breach, but finding this impossible, he was driven to exclude the malcontents.

But all this did not preclude him from his laborious service. On the 15th of March he preached "twice at Kingswood and twice at Bristol, on those words of a troubled soul, 'Oh that I had wings like a dove; for then would I flee away and be at rest.'" He also spent much time in visiting the sick.

Towards the close of March he went to London, and found Charles touched with the "stillness" mania, from which, however, he speedily recovered. Soon afterwards he heard Whitefield himself affirm that they preached two different Gospels, and therefore he not only would not join with Wesley or give him the right hand of fellowship, but was resolved publicly to

preach against him and his brother whenever he preached at all.

Many efforts were made by Wesley to effect a reunion with the Moravians, towards whom he was strongly and, as he thought, strangely drawn; but all was in vain. Their mystical notions were always in his way, while they stoutly rejected his own misunderstood doctrine of Christian perfection. Wesley now spent much time in instructing and uniting his agitated Societies. Finding many very poor, destitute of clothing and food, and unable to obtain employment, he called upon the members of the Societies to bring what clothes each could spare, to be distributed, and to give weekly a penny or whatever they could afford for the relief of the poor and sick. The women he employed in knitting, paying for their work, and adding as he was able. He also appointed district visitors of the sick poor, who met weekly to give account of their work. He never overlooked the practical charity of caring for the bodies as well as the souls of men.

Charles was now preaching with great success at Bristol; but the Society being embarrassed with financial difficulties, Wesley went to their help. Coming into the room just after Charles had finished his sermon, he was received with tumultuous delight. "Some wept aloud, some clapped their hands, some shouted, and the rest sang praise, with whom (having soon recovered themselves) the whole congregation joined." So he trusted that if he were called upon to suffer for the truth's sake, all other sounds would soon be

swallowed up in praise and thanksgiving. In the course of a week he set matters on a better footing, and returned to London, resuming his labours at the Foundry, and exhorting the Society, now numbering nine hundred, to let their love appear in deed as well as word.

Early in June he paid a short visit to the Midland Counties, where the Moravians had societies, and where Ingham had preached with great success. But the "still" doctrines had preceded him, and he was saddened to find the wide-spread and desolating influence they had produced. At Nottingham he could only expound to the Society with a heavy heart, but he preached joyfully to a full church at Markfield, and again the next morning, and a little later in the day, at Melbourn, where, the house being too small, he stood under a large tree; and again, towards evening, at Hemmington, where the people crowded about the door and windows. The next day, Sunday, June 14th, he rode to Nottingham, and preached at eight o'clock, in the market-place, to an immense multitude. Then, after morning service, he returned to Markfield, to find the church crowded in every part, and the heat so great he could scarcely read the service; and as many could not get in, he went outside and preached, as he did again in the evening inside the sacred edifice. During this journey he made the acquaintance of the Countess of Huntingdon.

Returning to London, he read, on the way, Luther's "Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians," and blamed himself for his former estimation of it. "Here," he wrote, "I apprehend is the real spring

of the grand error of the Moravians. They follow Luther for better for worse. Hence their 'no works, no law, no Commandments.'” For though they held to Luther's exhibition of justification by faith alone, they had allowed it to obscure the duty of practical obedience.

Passing through London, he went on to Oxford, where he found the little Society torn asunder and scattered abroad. Out of twenty-five or thirty communicants only two were left, and no one continued to attend the daily prayers. The corrupting leaven had spread here also. On Saturday, the 25th July, he preached before the University, and the following day was in his place in the Foundry. His time was now fully occupied in hard reading, in endeavours to correct the prevalent error, and in visits to London, Bristol, Abingdon, and elsewhere.

Throughout the year he is found grappling, almost single-handed, with the false views by which the Societies are assailed. With brave, if often almost breaking, heart, he preaches and warns, exhorts and instructs, in public and in private, never sparing himself; now meeting the Society for exposition, now debating with the supporters of the mystic error, now snatching one and another out of the snare, conversing severally even with hundreds, and still urging upon larger or smaller congregations, wherever he was, the Gospel of God, which was his own great comfort, and pressing upon his followers the duty of seeking to be

“In heart and life entirely clean.”

Towards the end of the year he was worn down by severe sickness; but as soon as its severity was abated, he betook himself to close reading, and then, though advised to rest, expounded an hour without weariness or faintness, preached once every day in the week, and on Sunday he taxed his strength still further by preaching both at Kingswood and Bristol. But his body could not keep pace with his mind, and a painful relapse followed.

He closed the year in London, preaching with unabated ardour, and carefully sifting the Society. In the afternoon of December 31st the fever came on again, but finding it not violent, he attended a funeral at four, exhorting the "almost innumerable multitude of people;" then fain would rest, but was closely occupied till he entered the pulpit in the evening and preached; and then repaired to the Society, which he did not leave until ten o'clock.

The new year, 1742, found him prostrate with fever; but he consented to keep his bed only on condition that none should be excluded who desired to speak with him. Fifty or sixty did so; and in the evening he sent for "the Bands," a sort of inner guild of the Society, and they held a service of praise. As soon as he was able he engaged in incessant labour, preaching morning and evening daily, ministering to the poor prisoners in Newgate, visiting the sick, meeting the Society, regulating a charity school he had begun, and snatching moments for other work. Nor did he labour quite in peace. Rude interruptions assailed him—as, when he was preaching in bodily weakness

at Chelsea, some sought, but failed, to drown his voice, or arrest the service, by casting fireworks into the room. After he had searched the London Society, and excluded such as did not walk according to the Gospel, about eleven hundred remained.

In the early part of February he set out for Bristol, the weather being so boisterous he could scarcely keep on his horse. One of his first works was to clear off a heavy debt the Society had incurred. The members of the Society who could afford it agreed each to subscribe one penny a week ; the whole Society was divided into classes or companies of twelve persons each ; one person in each class was appointed to receive the contributions of the rest, and pay them to the stewards weekly : a very simple device, that afterwards had great results in ways not then anticipated. After a brief tour in Wales, he held a watch-night service in Bristol, when the cries of the people were so loud that his voice was lost amidst them. After the service about one hundred of them walked home together, in the exuberance of their joy, "singing and rejoicing and praising God."

The watch-night service was derived from the Moravians. The service began at half-past eight o'clock, and lasted until a little after midnight. This was a profitable change of occupation for men who, like the Kingswood colliers, had been accustomed to spend their nights in the public-house. Wesley often found a deep awe resting upon the congregation in the solemn silence of the night. The practice is now confined to an annual service, held during

the closing hours of the old year and the first minutes of the new.

During a service in Weaver's Hall, Bristol, several persons dropped to the ground, as if struck by lightning, some crying out in bitterness of soul. He says, "I knew not how to end, being constrained to begin anew again and again." His preaching was not unfrequently followed by these and other equally remarkable effects.

At Pensford, while preaching in "a little green spot near the town," he was assailed by a hired mob, who brought a bull they had been baiting, and strove to drive it in amongst the people. The congregation for an hour stood their ground, praying and singing, when by main strength the helpless beast, torn and beaten both by dogs and men, was forced right up to the table on which Wesley stood, when he quietly put its head aside, lest its blood should mark his clothes; but the table falling, he was caught in the arms of his friends and borne off a little distance, after which he finished his discourse.

One of the most prominent and serviceable peculiarities of Methodism is to be found in its class-meeting—a weekly meeting held for praise and prayer, for inquiry into the religious "experience" of the members, for mutual encouragement, and for such counsel as the "leader" may see fit to give. The class-meeting dates from 1742. The number of persons flocking to the Societies made it impossible for Wesley to continue his practice of personally visiting all at their homes at intervals, and inquiring

into the character of each individual, thus meeting and conversing with all "severally." He therefore invited several earnest and sensible men to meet him, "to whom," he says, "I showed the great difficulty I had long found of knowing the people who desired to be under my care." They all agreed there could be no better method of coming to a thorough knowledge of each person than to divide them all into classes, as at Bristol, and place each class, or company, under the care of a suitable leader. This was the origin of the division of the Methodist Societies into "classes" for religious oversight and mutual help. The division of the Bristol Society was at first merely a financial arrangement, though as the leaders went round weekly in that Society to collect the contributions of the members, they noticed first one and then another that did not live as they ought. On their reporting this to Wesley, it struck him immediately, he tells us, "This is the thing, the very thing;" and he called all the leaders together, and told them to make particular inquiry into the behaviour of those whom they visited weekly. As soon as possible, the same method was used in London. He subsequently resolved to meet and speak with every member once in three months, and to each whom he approved he gave a ticket. This practice continues to this day, the ticket being the token of membership in the Society.

This most important step called forth Wesley's thankfulness at the time, and the words he wrote then may, after nearly a century and a half's experi-

ence, be emphasised to-day, "the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having been ever since more and more manifest."

Wesley had sagaciously seen that the religious Society was a means most suitable for the preservation of godliness in the midst of surrounding evil. It gave each member a definite place in a community established solely for the conservation of religious principle and life; it enabled each to use his talent, however small it might be, for the welfare of the rest; and it gave an opportunity for mutual encouragement, while it placed all under special observation and care. It was a home whither the spiritual outcast might hurry for shelter, and where brotherly words and a brotherly welcome might dissipate fear, and it afforded opportunity for special instruction and counsel. It was an organisation at once simple and compact. All felt themselves to be bound together by close ties in a religious fellowship. They were not isolated atoms, nor was their union that mere idea in which "the communion of saints" is so apt to lose itself. It was made real by privileged meetings, by personal recognition, by individual responsibility. How the timid and half-persuaded could have been kept together in a time of fierce persecution, and amidst the hostile forces abroad, without some such bond, it is difficult to say. The Society was a harbour of refuge—a defence. It offered no interference with ordinary Church institutions, nor was it designed, whatever might grow out of it, to constitute a Church organisation. Its meetings were

not to be held in Church hours ; and its members were encouraged to avail themselves of Church ordinances and to live as worthy members of the Church of England. Yet the Society was free from any necessary connection with the Church, save that the clergyman might, were he so minded, be its natural guardian ; were he not friendly it could subsist without him.

The division of the Society into classes was a very great advance on the original idea, and was rendered necessary by the large numbers now gathering around Wesley. The precise intention of this division was the distribution of the toil and responsibility of oversight, that every one might come under careful and affectionate watchfulness, and the religious character of each be guarded with tender fidelity. It was not devised in order to introduce another form of religious service, though it led to that ; nor was the mutual helpfulness of the members at first prominent, though this happily grew out of it. It was the committing sheep to the care of under-shepherds, and was another of those bold, natural, simple, and serviceable devices which Wesley, led doubtless by Divine providence, called into play. None of all his many practical arrangements has tended more to preserve the unity, the continuance, the spiritual fervour, and the religious usefulness of his Societies than this division of the whole into small companies, each under the care of a trustworthy guardian, whose duty it is to watch over his little flock with loving attentiveness, and report concerning it at intervals to the

minister. It was the necessary complement of the itinerant ministry.

Next in importance to Wesley's preaching must be placed his devotion to the Societies, in which lay the promise of the permanence of his work. In these Societies, at first confined to the large towns, and gradually spreading to the remoter villages, he had great faith, though he often had to mourn over defection. But defection seemed to him to be a new demand for effort. To find a Society in trouble, strife, or decay, was a call of duty, clear as a bugle-note, summoning him to fresh endeavour to search the evil to the core, to correct it, to revive the drooping, and to add fresh strength by adding fresh numbers.

One of the most distinguishing features of Wesley's character was his power to persevere under discouragement and apparent defeat: apparent to others, for he himself knew not defeat. It may be truly said, and every student of Wesley's life must see it, that to the reviving and re-reviving of Societies among whom he could not stay long enough to act the part of a shepherd, but could only visit at intervals, must be attributed, more than to almost anything else, the preservation of Methodism in many parts of the kingdom.

## CHAPTER III.

First Visit to the North—John Nelson—Death of Susanna Wesley  
—Newcastle—1743—First Visit to Cornwall—Wednesbury—  
Persecution—1744—First Conference.

HITHERTO Wesley had confined his labours almost exclusively to London and Bristol and the neighbouring towns, with occasional brief trips into Wales. About the middle of May, 1742, he set out, by pressing request, for the North. Halting at Birstal, he met with one John Nelson, a stonemason, who had been converted under his ministry—one of the fruits of the preaching at Moorfields. The great change in Nelson's manner of life arrested the attention of his neighbours, and brought many to inquire of him, some to put him to the proof. Insensibly, in conversation, he was led to explain and enforce the Scriptures, and with such effect that his little company of listeners gradually increased until his house would no longer hold them; and the beautiful picture presents itself of this hard-handed labourer standing at the door of his cottage, evening by evening, after the toil of the day, talking to his quibbling neighbours until they become interested listeners, and he glides insensibly into the habit of expounding the Scriptures as far as he knows them, aided by his experimental acquaintance with the Gospel they contain, until he becomes, quite unintentionally, a preacher. Nor were

his efforts fruitless. Many like himself were brought out of the darkness of ignorance and the corruptious of vice, to purity of life, and to at least the beginnings of religious knowledge. The question rises almost involuntarily, Whence has sprung the notion that the Gospel is the one truth that may or can be taught only by the authorised instructor?

Wesley preached on the top of Birstal Hill to "several hundreds of plain people," spent some time in conversation with those who had benefited by Nelson's instructions, preached again on the side of Dewsbury Moor, and rode on to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he was deeply and painfully affected by the drunkenness, and cursing and swearing, even from the mouths of little children. Judging this place ripe for the Gospel, he began in "the poorest and most contemptible part of the town" by singing the Hundredth Psalm. Crowds flocked around him, to whom he preached, told them who he was, and that he would preach there again in the evening. An immense concourse gathered. Of this first work in what became a very fruitful field, he says, "After preaching, the poor people were ready to tread me under foot, out of pure love and kindness." He left Newcastle at three o'clock the next morning and rode to Boroughbridge, a distance of nearly eighty miles. The following day he held a prayer meeting at Knaresborough, and pushed on to Birstal, where in the evening he held a service lasting two and a half hours before a multitude of people. Leaving Birstal, preaching much and reading closely,

he came to Epworth; where, forbidden the church, he, in the evening, stood on his father's tomb and preached to such a congregation as he believed Epworth had never seen before. He remained several days, preaching in all the neighbourhood, and striving to root out the "stillness" heresy, which he found had preceded him wherever he went. His closing service was in the churchyard again at Epworth, when a vast multitude was gathered together. The service continued for nearly three hours, and yet they scarce knew how to part from him. This is the truly parabolic incident, as Dean Stanley saw it. Pushed—almost driven—out of the church, yet clinging to it with loving tenacity, he, from the tombs of its prophets, and within its own consecrated acre, speaks to the world with a voice whose vibrations widen as the years roll by.

He passed on to Sheffield, where, in the midst of his sermon, at five o'clock on the morning after his arrival, he was compelled to break off—"our hearts," he says, "were so filled with the love of God, and our mouths with praise and thanksgiving." He then recommenced and finished his discourse. He rode on, preaching at Coventry, Evesham, and the various towns through which he passed, until he reached Bristol, having been six months engaged on this his first great evangelistic expedition. Thus commenced the most remarkable series of evangelistic tours ever recorded—tours that were repeated with unbroken continuity for half a century! Never, since the founding of Christianity, was an effort made by any indi-

vidual to evangelise a people, at once so direct, so systematic, so long continued, and so successful.

At Bristol he secured, at length, a week's rest, all disputes being ended. Happy respite ! It was needed, for fresh sorrow was at hand. Coming to London towards the close of July, he found his mother "on the borders of eternity." Three days afterwards he wrote :—"About three in the afternoon I went to my mother, and found her change was near. I sat down on the bed-side. She was in her last conflict, unable to speak, but I believe quite sensible. Her look was calm and serene, and her eyes fixed upwards, while we commended her soul to God. From three to four the silver cord was loosing, and the wheel breaking at the cistern ; and then, without any struggle, or sigh, or groan, the soul was set at liberty. We stood round and fulfilled her last request, uttered a little before she lost her speech : 'Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God.'" She expired at the Foundry, July 23rd, 1742, aged seventy-three years. So died one of England's greatest mothers !

On Sunday, August 1st, in presence of an almost innumerable company of people, he committed her body to the earth in Bunhill Fields, "to sleep with her fathers," and then, standing by the open grave, he addressed the most solemn assembly he ever saw or expected to see on this side of eternity.

On Sunday, September 12th, he was desired to preach in an open place called the Great Gardens, lying between Whitechapel and Coverlet Fields. Here

he found a vast multitude gathered together. The service was rudely disturbed by a rabble trying to drive a herd of cows among the listeners; but, as he writes, "the brutes were wiser than their masters. They now threw whole showers of stones, one of which struck me just between the eyes; but I felt no pain at all, and when I had wiped away the blood, went on testifying with a loud voice that God hath given to them that believe, 'not the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.'" The effect of this incident upon the congregation may be imagined. He bore the scar to his grave.

London and Bristol were now the scenes of his labour until November, when he set out for a second visit to Newcastle, where Charles had been successfully labouring for some weeks before. He arrived on the 13th, and the same evening met "the wild, staring, loving Society." On the following day, Sunday, he preached at five o'clock in the morning, "a thing never heard of before in these parts; and the victorious sweetness of the grace of God was present with His word." At ten o'clock he went with the Society to All Saints' Church, where communicants were present in numbers such as he had never seen except in London or Bristol. After evening service he preached in the square of the Keelman's Hospital, which became a favourite sanctuary with him, and afterwards met the Society, exhorting all who had set their hand to the plough not to look back. Day by day he preached in and about Newcastle, expounding in the house to the Society, and "abroad" to the

multitudes. Nor did the severity of the season hinder him. He preached in the hospital square in November, and though it rained all the time, it disturbed neither preacher nor congregation. In the middle of December, when the cold was so intense that he could not write for a quarter of an hour without his hands being benumbed, though his desk was within a yard of the chimney, yet, as the "house" would not contain the people, he stood, in spite of the frost, in the open air. Two days after Christmas he preached in the open air again, the wind driving upon them "like a torrent," and the straw and thatch flying round their heads, yet scarce any one stirred till he closed the service; so also on the following day, when the wind was "high and exceeding sharp." His farewell service in the hospital square, on the last day of the year, lasted two hours; and then men, women, and children hung upon him, so that he had difficulty in escaping.

During this visit Wesley laid the foundation stone of what became famous as the Orphan House at Newcastle. It was the largest Methodist meeting-house of the time, and the head-quarters of northern Methodism. Mr. Tyerman says of it, "Here one of the first Sunday-schools in the kingdom was established, and had not fewer than one thousand children in attendance. Here a Bible Society existed before the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed. Here was one of the best choirs in England; and here among the singers were the sons of Mr. Scott, afterwards the celebrated Lords Eldon and Stowell. Here was the

resting-place of John Wesley's first itinerants; and here colliers and keelmen, from all parts of the surrounding country, would assemble, and after the evening service would throw themselves upon the benches and sleep the few remaining hours till Wesley preached at five next morning."

In the evening of New Year's Day, 1743, Wesley arrived at Epworth, and on the following day, Sunday, he preached at five in the morning, and again at eight from his father's tomb; but he was denied the Sacrament in the church by the minister. He travelled through Birstal, and came wet and weary to Sheffield, and thence, for the first time, to Wednesbury, where Charles had preceded him two months before. Arriving at four in the afternoon, he preached at seven in the Town Hall; and the next day at five. At eight he stood in the place where his brother preached—a large hollow near the town, which was capable of holding four or five thousand people. In the evening this place could not contain the crowd that assembled. On the following day he preached three times, in the intervals speaking to all who desired it. Twenty-nine joined the Society on that day; one hundred on the next. On the following day, after preaching early, he took his leave, and hurried on to Bristol, having laid the foundation of a work in Wednesbury which was destined to be very wide-spread and influential. Having examined the Societies closely at Bristol and Kingswood, he repaired to London for a similar purpose; he and his brother being engaged in this work every day from

six in the morning till six in the evening for nearly a fortnight. He then set out again for Newcastle, preaching, as was his invariable practice, wherever he halted. He remained in Newcastle two months, diligently preaching in that and the surrounding towns and villages, and expounding the Scriptures, in order, to the Society. He found many had united themselves to him who were not worthy, and with searching fidelity put away a large number.

Some ten miles from Newcastle lay Placey village, inhabited only by colliers, who had always been reputed to be remarkable for savage ignorance and wickedness of every kind. His heart was moved towards them. He says:—"Their grand assembly used to be on the Lord's Day, on which men, women, and children met together to dance, fight, curse and swear, and play at chuck, ball, span-farthing, or whatever came next to hand. I felt great compassion for these poor creatures from the time I heard of them first, and the more because all men seemed to despair of them. Between seven and eight I set out with John Heally, my guide. The north wind, being unusually high, drove the sleet in our faces, which froze as it fell, and cased us over presently. When we came to Placey, we could very hardly stand. As soon as we were a little recovered, I went into the square and declared Him who 'was wounded for our transgressions,' and 'bruised for our iniquities.' The poor sinners were quickly gathered together, and gave earnest heed to the things which were spoken. And so they did in the afternoon again, in spite of the

wind and snow, when I besought them to receive Him for their king; to 'repent and believe the Gospel.' On Easter Monday and Tuesday I preached there again, the congregation continually increasing; and as most of these had never in their lives pretended to any religion of any kind, they were the more ready to cry to God, as mere sinners, for the free redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

One knows not whether to admire more the brave fortitude of this act or its tender, compassionate charity.

He now visited Leeds and Sheffield; then forward to Wednesbury, there to find that the first seeds of cruel and brutal persecution were being sown in the hearts of the people by one whose office it was to scatter seed of a good kind. He then went forward to Bristol, to get "a week of rest and peace, which was refreshing both to body and soul." A short preaching tour in Wales followed. At this time Charles paid his first visit to Cornwall, and John repaired to London, where he found abundant scope for labour. On Trinity Sunday, after the usual early service, he opened a chapel in West Street, near the Seven Dials, of which he had obtained a lease. After preaching, he administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to several hundreds of communicants. The entire service lasted five hours. Yet in the evening he preached again in the Great Gardens, to an immense congregation, then met the leaders of the classes, and after them the "Bands." On the following Sunday the morning service lasted till nearly four o'clock in the

afternoon, so that he found it needful to divide the communicants into three parts, that there might not be more than six hundred at once! His examination of the London Society, now numbering one thousand nine hundred and fifty, gave him cause for great thankfulness.

Hearing of terrible riots at Wednesbury, raised against the Methodists at the instigation of the clergyman, he hurried down to seek legal help for the protection of his people; then pressed forward to Newcastle, preaching every day. Having examined the Society, he gave himself up to writing, when his heart was stirred by the crowds of Sabbath idlers he beheld on the Sand Hill. He writes, "I resolved, if possible, to find them a better employ; and as soon as the service at All Saints' was over, walked straight from the church to the Sand Hill and gave out a verse of a psalm." But though he had company enough, "thousands upon thousands crowding together," yet such was the hubbub, that, after singing and praying for above an hour, and failing to make his voice heard, he adjourned to the preaching room. After three weeks spent in and near Newcastle, he returned to London, and then went to Bristol, redeeming every moment of time and every opportunity of usefulness.

From Bristol he set out for his first visit to Cornwall, preaching at the Cross at Taunton, and to "one poor sinner at the inn at Exeter," none knowing of his coming. On the following day, however, he preached, "as some imagined," to half the grown persons

of the city, "all silent and still." For near a month he traversed Cornwall, from Launceston to the Land's End, preaching three or four times daily, generally "abroad," to larger or smaller crowds. For the first time the now celebrated Gwennap pit was used for preaching, and it was computed that ten thousand people were gathered together there. The service continued till it was so dark that they could scarce see one another, yet there was the deepest attention. During this visit he crossed over to the Scilly Isles. Returning by way of Bristol, he paid another brief visit to Wales, when he writes, "Fearing my strength would not suffice for preaching more than four times in the day, I only spent half-an-hour in prayer with the Society in the morning. At seven o'clock, and in the evening, I preached in the Castle, and at eleven in Wenvo Church; and in the afternoon, in Port Kerry Church."

Repairing to Bristol, he employed several days in examining and purging the Society, which still consisted, after many had been put away, of more than seven hundred persons. The leaders now brought in the contributions from their classes, and the Society's debt was discharged. He then rode off to visit Wednesbury, preaching on the way at several places, including Quinton and Birmingham. This visit to Wednesbury must not be passed over hurriedly. Wesley here experienced the violence of a rabble mob, who were little better, if not worse, than brute beasts. For five hours he was entirely in their hands. While he was writing, a mob beset the house, crying aloud

for him. Getting the ringleaders within the doors, he spoke a few words, after which they became calmer. He then bade them make way for him, and he went forward into the crowd, demanding what they desired with him. The cry arose, "We want you to go to the justice." "That I will, with all my heart," was his reply; and forward they went, first to one magistrate and then to another, but without avail, their worships sending word they were in bed. By this time he had won the hearts of those around him, so that fifty of them volunteered to defend him. But a great mob from the neighbouring town, Walsall, came rushing upon them, and drove the defenders away, leaving Wesley to the mercy of the new rabble. They dragged him along to the town, where, seeing a door open, he attempted to go in, but a man catching him by the hair pulled him back into the crowd. Making another effort, he demanded if they were willing to hear him speak. "No, no!" they cried; "Knock his brains out! Down with him! Kill him at once!" He managed, however, to engage their attention for a quarter of an hour, until his voice failed, and the uproar re-commenced. But some of the ringleaders, at length, moved by shame, took pity upon him, and formed a body-guard around him, and with much difficulty and risk got him away, but not until he had been very roughly handled. He at length reached Wednesbury, escaping with the loss of a flap of his waistcoat and a little skin from one of his hands.

He reflected afterwards with thankfulness that though many strove to throw or drag him down, he

never once stumbled ; that though a lusty man struck him several times with a large oaken stick, he never hit him on the back of the head, which would probably have ended his troubles ; though another raised his hand to strike him, he on a sudden let it drop, and only stroked his head, saying, "What smooth hair he has ;" and though one struck him on the breast with all his might, and another on the mouth so that the blood gushed out, yet he was without pain, and from beginning to end was as calm as if in his own study. The next day he rode through the town amid marked expressions of "cordial affection," so that he scarcely could believe what he saw and heard.

He went through town after town preaching, till he reached Newcastle again, and spent three weeks in his favourite toil, and in regulating the Societies there and in the surrounding villages. He then turned his steps to Leeds, Birstal, Wakefield, Sheffield, Nottingham, and returned to London on the 1st of December, where he found employment for several weeks in "speaking severally" to the members of the Society, now numbering two thousand two hundred persons.

The year 1744 was one of increasing labour and usefulness, if labour could increase where every hour was husbanded for work. The early part of the year Wesley spent in London, where the poor moved his heart again, and he collected about £200 for their relief. He purposed leaving town on the 27th of February, but, understanding that a proclamation was just published requiring all Papists to go out of

London before the Friday following, and as the strange report had gone abroad that he was a Papist, he determined to stay another week, that, as he says, he "might cut off all occasion of reproach." This gave him further opportunity to procure raiment for the poor. While he was engaged in this work "a justice of peace came with the parish officers, being on their search for Papists." He seized the opportunity to talk with them at large both of his principles and practice. When he went out, "a pretty large mob" attended him to the door of the house to which he was going. But they did him no hurt, "only gaped, and stared, and hallooed as loud as they could."

On the 11th of March he set out for Bristol. Riding through Newbury the next day, his horse fell and threw him into a deep mire, which had happily no other effect than greatly to dirty his clothes. The next day he preached at Kingswood and Bristol. A week later, having received a summons from the justices of Surrey, he appeared at their court at St. Margaret's Hill. Their worships demanded, "Sir, are you willing to take the oaths to His Majesty, and to sign the declaration against Popery?" He replied, "I am;" signed, and returned home. Towards the end of March he started for Cornwall, where his toil was very great, and not lessened by the unusually severe and wintry weather. On the 1st of April he rode to Sticklepath, preached at one in an open place; a storm of rain and hail began, but the congregation did not move. At five he preached again. At the close of the service many of the poor

people followed him to the house where he lodged, and he spent another hour in exhortation and prayer and thanksgiving. After preaching one morning as usual, at five o'clock, he rode for some hours through a storm of hail and rain, and came, wet and weary, to Trevint, but preached again. The next day he rode over a snow-covered moor, seven miles of the way in a hail-storm; he reached Gwennap, and preached in the evening. This picturesque place had a fascination for him, and he returned again in a few days, and thus describes the scene:—"I stood on the wall in the calm, still evening, with the setting sun behind me, and almost an innumerable multitude before, behind, and on either hand. Many, likewise, sat on the little hills at some distance from the bulk of the congregation. But they could all hear distinctly." This place, re-modelled and enclosed, is now annually visited at Whitsuntide by thousands of Methodists, who hold a great commemorative service on the site of the "Founder's" achievements.

On another day, after preaching once or twice, he rode through constant rain for some hours, and came, "wet through and through," to Morva, where, the people being assembled, he preached. The next day he rode to Penzance, dried his clothes, and preached, again in the afternoon at Galval, and in the evening at St. Ives. The following evening found him again at Gwennap, and the day after, being Sunday, he preached there at five in the morning; then to many thousands at St. Stithian's; again, in

the evening at the pit, the rain continuing throughout the service; then he closed the day with a meeting of the Society. No wonder he complained that his teeth and head ached so violently that he felt he had hardly any senses; or that some days after he "found a natural wish for ease and a resting-place;" though his brave spirit cried out, "Not yet; eternity is at hand."

After a visit to Wales, and a rest for eight days—"though not unemployed"—in Bristol, he set forth on his northern tour. The country at this time was in a great ferment, fearing an invasion by the French. Several of Wesley's lay-preachers were taken by the press-gang; and wild rumours, declaring him to be a Papist, and in league with the Pretender, were freely circulated, subjecting him to much inconvenience in consequence.

Wesley returned from the North on the 20th of June; and the following week held his FIRST CONFERENCE, which marks a very distinct resting-place in the review of his work.

Nothing could exceed the joyous toil of these first years of his great evangelistic labours. His own heart was free. He rejoiced in the assurance of his personal interest in the Divine mercy. He had peace with God. To his utmost he strove to please God; and he had the fullest scope for the exercise of his zealous charity towards men. With his high estimate of righteousness, his painful knowledge of the moral condition of his country, and of the inactivity of the clergy—concerning whom, however, comparatively

few words escape him—it was no wonder that his yearning pity burst forth like a flood, and that he poured out his life in the service of his fellows.

His ministry was attended by crowding thousands, over whom he exerted an extraordinary power; for by his winning earnestness he held them enchained in spite of wind or rain or cold. He did not trifle. He had one object—the saving of souls. To this end he exposed sin, its character and danger, and in no measured terms. His word was mighty; men and women trembled and cried aloud. He had a sovereign remedy for all repentant ones—the free proclamation of pardon to the penitent, humble believer. His ministry was wondrously successful, even at the beginning. Hundreds believed, and began a new life, in the conduct of which they were constantly urged to the utmost care. High standards of living were set before them. Righteousness was neither a name nor a notion with him. It was a condition attained by faith, but retained only by the utmost obedience to law. He taught and exemplified charity, patience under provocation, obedience to rule, strictness in living, love and good-will to all.

He had the stimulus of success. He was but little over forty, healthy, and very active; and thoroughly under control. He had disciplined both mind and body: the one by hard study, the other by austere rule. He abhorred indolence. When at college he said, "Leisure and I have parted company;" and they never again shook hands to the day of his death. Opposition threw him upon his principles, which were

the very spring of all his labour. He was utterly unselfish. He was bright, sparkling, happy. "I do not remember," said he, at seventy-seven, "to have felt lowness of spirits for one quarter of an hour since I was born." Ready of speech, decorous in manner, he conquered his enemies by his wit, his goodness, or his kind actions. He feared nothing but sin, and mourned little except over it, and the unhappy working of error amongst the newly formed and imperfectly instructed Societies—Churches he never called them.

It is worth while to pause at this period of his career to contemplate the features of his great success. It was the success of supremacy in all circumstances. He seems to have been a match for foes and a prince amongst friends. He had more learning than most of the ablest men he met; and certainly it was more readily available. He could cope with the most skilful in dialectics: he not only wrote on logic, but he lived by it. He had a marked singleness of purpose, which disarmed even mobs, before whom he was fearless and calm. If he spoke of wickedness, there was a guilty response in the breast of every man in that degenerate age. If he spoke of righteousness, there were some hungering and thirsting ones to whom the word was as a spring in a desert. If he raised a high standard of living, elect spirits amongst men were attracted.

But his greatest success was in the conversion of men. Multitudes not only listened attentively to his voice, but fell to the earth with the confession of sin upon their lips, and with loud cries to Heaven for mercy.

To these he proclaimed the Gospel—a Gospel of free grace ; and hundreds rejoiced in believing it. The fruits of righteousness were the fruits he coveted ; and in this his success was exceedingly great. Although false powers, as with the breath of an east wind, blasted much fair blossom of promise, yet men were changed in the habits and manners of their lives, and even whole neighbourhoods underwent a moral transformation. It was the success of an accomplished purpose—a purpose very distinctly proposed from the beginning—the revival of religion throughout the country. This in some measure he witnessed wherever he went.

The first Conference, a natural and necessary development of Methodism, plainly marks a new era in its history. For though there is nothing to prove, or even suggest, that Wesley then designed the formation of a distinct body, or Church, yet matters had assumed a shape and an importance independently of his purpose and probably beyond his expectation. He had struck a rock from which waters gushed out, and he could not wholly determine whither or in what channels they should flow.

The Conference was composed of the leading spirits of the movement, called together by Wesley for the purpose of advising with him on “ the best methods of carrying on the work of God ”—words which indicate that by this time he saw a distinct and important work was before them. What that work was neither he nor they could precisely define, for there was no premeditation in their design.

There were six clergymen present—the two Wesleys; John Hodges, Rector of Wenvo; Henry Piers, Vicar of Bexley; Samuel Taylor, Vicar of Quinton; and Henry Meriton, from the Isle of Man: also four lay-preachers—Thomas Richards, Thomas Maxfield, John Bennet, and John Downes. The Conference consisted essentially of the six clergymen, and the first question, when they assembled, was “whether any of our lay-brethren should be present.” It was agreed to invite from time to time such of them as it was judged proper. The Methodist Conference in its recent changes has not contradicted its original spirit. These men met as brethren in a family, as co-workers in a godly enterprise. They had no thought that they were laying the foundations of a great edifice.

They began the Conference by partaking together of the Lord’s Supper. Then, on the morning of the first day, Charles Wesley preached. After determining the spirit in which the Conference should be conducted, they affirmed, as a first principle, the responsibility of private judgment: “Every man must judge for himself, for every one must give an account for himself to God.” They then proceeded to consider, “(1) What to teach. (2) How to teach. (3) What to do—*i.e.*, how to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice.” Here is no ecclesiastical structure. Wesley’s work bears no resemblance to a building, wrought according to plan. It is a growth from a vital seed; free to grow as the trees of the field beneath the open expanse of heaven, and gathering up from surrounding elements whatever will meet the

necessities of its progressive life, and will assimilate with its original germ, but falling into inevitable decay if its inherent vital principle be destroyed.

Lady Huntingdon invited the Conference to her house, where Wesley preached from the text, "What hath God wrought?"

In the course of the Conference the question was considered, "Can we have a seminary for labourers?" The discussion was postponed, and the plan was never carried out in Wesley's time.

It is obvious they felt their somewhat anomalous relation to the Church. With the desire to remain within her fold, and the equal desire to carry forward their irregular work, they interpret the definition of the Church in favour of their position, and throw the responsibility of separation on opposing clergymen.

Then, with a few rules for their guidance, and with the one purpose before them, "to save their own souls and the souls of them that hear them," they go forth, unfettered by plans, to be used as God by His providence may direct. At this time there was no division of the country into "circuits," or appointment of men to particular spheres.

The Conferences were held annually. At each a review was taken of the year's work, its results were recounted, and the plans of campaign for the following year laid down. Wesley attended them all. He never gave up his position as the centre and leader of the movement. All who aided him came to him. They proffered their services, and were accepted or rejected by him as he judged meet.

## CHAPTER IV.

Evangelisation—Great Labour—1745-1747—First Visit to Ireland  
—1748-1749—Grace Murray—The Lions of Bolton.

FROM the first Conference Wesley's work of evangelisation assumes a more systematic character, and settles down into the supreme labour of his life. Nothing is allowed to intermit the series of his evangelistic tours. Year by year, for more than half a century, did he traverse these islands alone, or with one or more of his itinerants. Long years of continuous labour, all directed to one single end, all carried out on the original plan without any great variation, or any striking novelty to add fresh fuel to a fading fire, demanded a most indomitable energy, a singleness of purpose, and the support of great principles. Most men find stimulus for protracted toil in fresh scenes and new devices. He maintained his in the old ruts. The sprightly spring with which many enter upon new schemes, which so often either droop into mere routine or die down into a gradually waning effort, was in his case kept up with unflagging freshness to the very end. As Mr. Tyerman (to whom the writer cannot sufficiently express his indebtedness) says, "While all his old clerical friends either died, or were disabled, or otherwise were obliged to relinquish the itinerant ministry, he, and he alone, ended

as he first began ; and from 1735 to 1791, a period of fifty-five years, lived, not the enviable life of a settled pastor, but the homeless life of a wandering Evangelist." It was a grand monotony of holy toil, which no weariness could abate and no discouragement daunt.

The full record of Wesley's life can be none other than a daily and a very minute itinerary, for he crowded so much into every day that each has its own peculiar interest. Yet, amid a singular variety of incidents, this life preserves its unity, because its one aim is so steadily and unweariedly kept in view. This great story requires volumes for the telling. His own *abridged* journals, much of them very tersely written, occupy four octavo volumes, though they omit thirty years of his life. The manuscript journals fill twenty-six small volumes, and are written mostly in shorthand. The true greatness of this life lay in the greatness of its labour and the lofty simplicity of its aim.

Undoubtedly, of all Wesley's great works his evangelistic work was the greatest: for, though he inaugurated a cheap and wide-spread literature, and introduced some of the best pieces of English theology and practical divinity to popular notice; though he founded schools of various kinds in different parts of the country; though he wrote and translated hymns and psalms, and published books of music and treatises on singing, and taught the poor to chant saintly verses from the many books of praise he circulated through the country; though he initiated many works of practical benevolence and philanthropy; and though

he promoted by word, by pen, and by example—more than he has always had credit for—obedience to law and to right government; yet his pre-eminent work—a work most distinguished among his many works, and that distinguished him among so many workers—was his unwearied, unparalleled labours as an itinerant preacher of the Gospel.

No biographer of Wesley need exaggerate his labours. The barest computation is prodigious. Robbed of all detail, which could only be given in widely-extended records such as no biographer save himself has yet had the patience to write, and for much of which there are no published memoranda, the baldest outline gives an amount of work that is truly astounding. It has been calculated that during the fifty years of his itinerant ministry he travelled a quarter of a million of miles, and preached more than forty thousand sermons. Yet nothing but a minute record of his labours could convey an adequate impression of their greatness. No mere summary suffices.

The answer to the question, How could this man exert so great an influence over multitudes of men in the nation? must be found in this story of work thus repeated with unwavering monotony year after year. Over and over and over again the country is traversed, from the north of Scotland to Land's End, and through the entire principality, and the length and breadth of Ireland.

Christmas and the early days of the new year are generally spent in London, where a watch-night

service closes the labour of the old year, and, separated by a few moments of silent prayer only, begins the toil of the new. The earlier weeks of the year have scarcely ended ere he is wending his way, riding and reading, to Bristol. The chill winds and biting storms of early spring yearly meet him pushing his way to Newcastle and the north of Scotland ; then he goes westward to Whitehaven, Holyhead, or Parkgate, and over channel to Ireland, returning through Lancashire and Yorkshire ; or Cheshire, Derbyshire, and the Midlands. Then, in longer and hotter days, he pursues his course by way of Gloucester, or London and Oxford, to Bristol and Cornwall, visiting the Societies in Somerset and Devon, and returning to London to take his "little journeys" into Kent or Hampshire ; to Northampton, Herts, or Norfolk. Then he repairs to London again, to complete the year where it was begun. This he continues year after year, only varying the route as necessity may demand, but never varying the steady patient endeavour to preach in season and out of season. But he is not a mere preacher to multitudes. He has learnt the value of an individual life, and will ride for hours to visit one man, or will argue or write with unending patience to secure another ; and for hours together will pray with an anxious and troubled inquirer. To a rapidity of action that astonishes, he adds a patient plodding continuance, a dogged, though calm perseverance that is equally surprising. Had there been no unusual combination of elements of power, the mere iteration of ordinary work

must have ultimately produced marked results. The water must have worn the stones.

Year by year he journeyed and read, for such was his habit, generally on horseback, through the length and breadth of the land, at all seasons, in all weathers, in heat and cold, hail, rain, and snow, through frost or driving wind ; preaching wherever he went, in churches or private houses, barns or market-halls, at town-crosses, on hill-sides, in gardens and inn-yards, in green fields, or open streets—anywhere “abroad,” as his expression was, wherever and whenever it was possible ; early in the morning, at seven, six, five, or four o’clock, and even late into the night, only avoiding church-hours, to crowds or few, and not unfrequently for an extended time.

Year by year this irrepressibly active Evangelist, “unhasting, unresting,” with an almost unparalleled energy, exerted himself to fulfil the ministry which he believed he had received of the Lord Jesus. There was no abatement of his energy even when amid great discouragements, or when external circumstances diverted the current of that energy. If he could not preach in churches, he would in the field. If not in the field, he would in the “house” (now called chapel), or to the Societies, in their different rooms, or would spend his time in the sifting examination of his adherents, in the visitation of the sick, in service to prisoners, or in some of the prodigious literary work which in the midst of all he accomplished.

The toil of long journeys, begun early and ending late, is overlooked or lost in the diligence of reading

or the joy of public service in the towns where he rests for the night, or halts for mid-day meal. The journey that occupies him two or three days is not lost time; for he reads as he rides, and preaches where he rests, and speaks on the one question of personal religion kindly but closely to fellow-travellers, or to those who wait on him, and, as though by force of will, commands sleep when, and for as long, as he needs it.

The Conference being closed, Wesley applied himself to separate from the London Society such as walked not according to the Gospel, reducing the number to one thousand nine hundred. "But number," he said, "is an inconsiderable circumstance."

Early in July he was introduced to Mr. Perronet, vicar of Shoreham, Kent. He hoped to have, and afterwards had, "cause of blessing God for the acquaintance begun that day." He spent some time in Oxford, preaching every day, so Dr. Kennicott tells us, in courts, public-houses, and elsewhere; and on the morning of the 24th of August, "he held forth twice in private at five and eight, and came to St. Mary's at ten o'clock," where he preached for the last time before the University. The sermon created great excitement, especially on account of what was thought to be its extravagant censures of the University. He wrote, "I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul." He left Oxford the same day, and preached in Wycombe in the evening.

The remainder of the year was spent in incessant labours alternating between London and Bristol and their respective neighbourhoods.

Early in 1745 he is out again on his way to Newcastle, calling at several towns, and travelling over the pathless waste of snow—"the causeways in many places being impassable, and turnpike roads not known in these parts of England till some years afterward." "Many a rough journey have I had before," he writes, "but one like this I never had: between wind and hail and rain, and ice and snow and driving sleet and piercing cold. But it is past. Those days will return no more, and are therefore as though they had never been." This six days' journey covered two hundred and eighty miles.

Two months were spent in carefully searching the northern Societies, and building them up with fuller teaching, visiting the sick, and continuously pursuing his great and varied labours. Then gathering the Newcastle Society one morning, he held a parting service at half-past four; at eight o'clock he preached "abroad" in Chester-le-Street; at mid-day reproved a company of swearers at Darlington, and in the evening preached again in an inn at Northallerton, when a Catholic priest expressing a wish that he had time to preach in his house at Osmotherley, he replied he *would* have time, and ordered out the horses immediately, and came thither between nine and ten o'clock. In about an hour the people were gathered together, when he preached to them. It was after twelve o'clock before he lay down; "yet (through the blessing

of God),” he writes, “I felt no weariness at all.” The next morning he preached at five o’clock to a large congregation.

He then pursued his way to Grimsby, preaching to “a stupidly rude and noisy congregation.” On the Sunday he preached at Epworth, at five o’clock in the house, and at eight at the Cross, and again in the evening to most of the adults in the town, besides attending service in the church to hear another railing accusation. Thence he pressed forward to Leeds, Armley, and Birstal, being constrained at the last-named place to continue his discourse nearly an hour longer than usual, God pouring out such a blessing, he says, that he knew not how to leave off.

At Bradford he found the labour of them made void who made void the law through faith. He then visited several places in Lancashire and Cheshire; afterwards he preached at Bongs, in Derbyshire, where “the word was as dew upon the tender herb.” Near Chapel-en-le-Frith a miller, near whose pond he stood, tried to drown his voice by letting out the water from the mill-dam, which fell with a great noise. But it was labour lost; for his strength was such that his voice was heard “to the very skirts of the crowd.” At Sheffield he preached to a large and quiet congregation. In May he was at Nottingham and afterwards at Wednesbury, where the number of people, even at five o’clock, obliged him to preach “abroad;” then after service in the church he preached at one o’clock at Tipton Green, at four at Wednesbury, and at six near Birmingham, where it was dangerous for them

who stood to hear, for the stones and dirt were flying from every side almost without intermission for nearly an hour. This laborious day closed with a meeting of the Society, whom he exhorted, "in spite of men and devils, to continue in the grace of God." After an absence of three months he returned to London, where he spent a month, and then went down to Cornwall, where the joyfulness of preaching to large crowds of attentive hearers alternated with the rudest and most annoying persecutions.

Then he peacefully found refreshment of both soul and body in Bristol. Here the second Conference was held, commencing August 1st. Only one clergyman was present except the Wesleys. Seven lay assistants, or itinerants, were there, and one gentleman not a preacher. The Conference was occupied mainly on practical and doctrinal questions.

Having visited the little Societies in Wiltshire and Somerset, he started for London, and thence went to Leeds, where the excited mob treated him and his Society "to a pelting with stones and dirt."

At Newcastle he found the utmost consternation, news having just arrived that the Pretender (Charles Stuart) had entered Edinburgh. He remained until all danger was over, ministering to the Societies and preaching repentance to crowds alike of civilians and soldiers. At Gateshead the congregation was so moved that he began again and again, and knew not how to conclude.

Passing through Leeds again on the 5th November, he stopped the merrymaking by informing the magis-

trates that he had met several expresses on the road sent to countermand the army moving southward, the rebels having crossed the Tweed. He passed through Cheshire after many interruptions from "those poor tools of watchmen, who stood with great solemnity at the end of almost every village." Coming to Wednesbury in the dark, he stuck fast in a quagmire at the end of the town; but several coming with candles, he managed to get out, leaving them to disengage the horse while he walked on and preached; as he did the next day at five, at eight, at one, and at four o'clock to "well nigh the whole town." The following day he preached at Birmingham, and reached London the next day but one; and gave himself up to writing, especially to finishing the "Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," one of the ablest of all his works.

The approach of the rebels causing great alarm, a day of national fasting and prayer was observed. Wesley preached three times, and distributed many thousands of tracts, which provoked others to do likewise, the Lord Mayor amongst them; a copy of "An Earnest Exhortation to Serious Repentance" being given to every householder in London. He was now urged to renounce the Church of England by his brother-in-law, Hall, who, on Wesley's refusal, left the Methodists. Hall subsequently lost his religion, but died a penitent in 1776.

Wesley commenced the year 1746 by preaching at four o'clock in the morning. Riding to Bristol, he read, on the road, Lord King's account of the primitive

Church, and wrote, "In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial *draught*; but if so, it would follow that Bishops and Presbyters are (essentially) of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent of all others." The influence of this book upon him is seen in the decisions of the Conference of the following year, and in his subsequent views.

He remained in Bristol about a month, and then set forward to Newcastle, though with much difficulty, the common roads being impassable for part of the way. In consequence of the heavy rains he was obliged to leave the high-road and take to the fields, and came the first night, wet and dirty, to Evesham; thence he went to Birmingham, then forward, from early morning till evening, through rain and snow, to Stafford, where he preached and formed a Society. At Leeds the mob threw whatever came to hand, striking him several times, and once or twice in the face. An appeal to the Recorder stopped these disgraceful proceedings.

Little more than a fortnight was spent in Newcastle, but the time was employed in hard work of various kinds, not the least being the visitation of the sick, of whom there were very many, no less than two thousand of the troops having died in the camp. Here he preached with so much effect that though, on one occasion, a vehement storm began in the middle of the sermon, driven by the cold north-east wind on a March day, yet the congregation did not move.

At Nottingham his Society gave him trouble. At Wednesbury and Birmingham he found anti-nomianism rife. By the end of March he reached Bristol, laid the first stone of the new "house" at Kingswood, then worked his way to London and back to Bristol by the early part of May, and there held his third Conference. Doctrinal subjects were further discussed; also the important questions of the call and qualifications of the lay-preachers. At this Conference, which lasted two days only, the distribution of the country into "circuits" was first proposed.

In order to save expense, and for general good, he tries to persuade the poor of his Societies to leave off the use of tea, setting the example himself, at much personal inconvenience—a noteworthy example of self-denial for the good of others. He establishes a "lending-stock," relieving above two hundred and fifty persons in the course of one year, and setting up some in business.

After a fortnight's visit to Wales, he started in September for his Cornish tour. At Plymouth Dock he preached at half-past four in the morning, then rode to Gwennap, arriving at seven o'clock in the evening, when, the congregation awaiting him, he at once preached, and "without faintness or weariness." On the Sunday he preached at five o'clock, the house not holding the people; at eight again to a large congregation at Marva, then rode on to Zennor before the Church service began, and immediately after service preached again near the churchyard; and at

St. Ives again at five o'clock. The day was finished by the usual meeting of the Society. Another day, after taking leave of the brethren at St. Ives at morning service, he rode to Bray, and preached in the open air, and again at six o'clock, at Sithney, where night came on, and he finished by the light of the moon, intending then to hold a meeting of the Society, but the people crowded round him so, he met them all together, and exhorted them "not to leave their first love." The next day, Sunday, delaying service for the sake of them who came from far, he preached in the open air at eight; again at one near Porkellis, and at half-past four, at Gwennap to "an immense multitude of people." At six, he took horse and rode for three hours to St. Columb. And so on all through the journey, till he reached Exeter, "weary enough;" but preached again with unabated ardour and frequency, nearly killing himself with incessant toil. He reached London in October, where he spent the remainder of the year. Amongst other benevolent schemes that he devised was one to provide physic for the sick poor, for which he engaged the services of an apothecary and an experienced surgeon. The first day about thirty came, and in three weeks three hundred. This was continued for several years, but the number of applicants so increased that the expense was more than he could bear. It was the beginning of many similar efforts, one of which is said to have been the City of London Dispensary.

Towards the close of the year he resumed a vege-

table diet, which he continued till compelled to relinquish it. He was now living as austere as an anchorite, and had all the severity without the unnaturalness of a monk.

Thus ended a year of immense labour in preaching and travelling, in visiting and nourishing his Societies, and in superintending the various benevolent institutions.

Early in the following year (1747) he went down to Bristol, and spent a week in great peace; then visited the Societies in Somerset and Wilts, and returned to London to spend a fortnight in examination of the classes. Then setting forth northward, long before daybreak on the 16th of February, he came by two o'clock, through a violent storm of wind and snow and hail, to Polten, where at six he preached. Before daybreak the next day he and his companion set forward with much difficulty, the untracked snow covering the roads, and making it hard to keep their horses on their feet. Then the wind rose higher and higher, till it was ready to overturn both man and beast. But on they went. till in the middle of an open field the storm of rain and hail drove through their coats, great and small, boots, and everything, and yet froze as it fell, even upon their eyebrows; but through drifts of snow they pushed their way, till at sunset they came, "cold and weary," to a little town called Brig-Casterton. The next day they pressed forward, partly on foot and partly on horseback, till they reached Grantham, and finally Epworth, where, on the follow-

ing Sunday, Wesley preached at five and eight in the "room," and after evening prayers, on this hard winter day, at the Town Cross to most of the adult inhabitants.

He spent six or seven happy weeks in Newcastle and the neighbourhood, preaching, reading rhetoric and ethics with some young men, probably candidates for the itinerant work, visiting and examining the Society, now reduced from eight to four hundred, and amidst all snatching time for much reading.

Six weeks more were occupied in his return journey to London. He passed through the principal towns of the West Riding of Yorkshire, preaching three and four times daily. On Thursday, the 7th of May, he came to Manchester, and found not only that notice had been given that he would preach, but that the people had already assembled. He was now in a great strait. The house would not contain a tenth part of the people, and he knew not "how the unbroken spirits of so large a town would endure preaching in the street." Besides that, having ridden at a swift trot for several hours in a sultry day, he was both faint and weary. But after considering that he was not going a warfare at his own cost, he walked straight to Salford Cross, and preached at once to an innumerable crowd of people.

He came to London by the end of May, and on Sunday, the 31st, after preaching at seven o'clock in Moorfields, was desired by Mr. Bateman (who had been converted under Howel Harris's ministry in Wales) to preach a charity sermon at his church, St.

Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield. The crowd was so great he had difficulty in getting into the church. Thus, after an exclusion of eight years, he is again admitted to a City pulpit.

On the 15th of June the fourth Conference was begun. Six clergymen were present, including Mr. Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham, Mr. Bateman, of St. Bartholomew, London, and Howel Harris. Several lay "assistants" and one "local preacher" were also present. From the returns presented to the Conference it appears there were in different parts of the country twenty-two "assistants" and thirty-eight "local preachers—'those that assist us chiefly in one place.'" Many practical questions were considered; the preachers probing themselves as to their fidelity in "field-preaching."

On the following week Wesley started for Cornwall, calling at Bristol, where he preached in the Old Orchard to rich and poor, a great multitude: it was "a solemn and a joyful hour." The following day he set out at three o'clock, the rain began at four; at seven he was "dropping wet;" yet he took horse again, and rode through continuous rain to Exeter, where, anticipating the election, he seized the opportunity of writing "A Word to a Freholder," while his clothes dried; then set out again. At Plymouth a wild mob awaited him; but he walked straight into the midst of them, having long learnt "always to look a mob in the face." The month's record is a beautiful reiteration of toilsome journeying, of frequent preaching, of hearty and loving reception from some,

of the brutal and cruel conduct of others, of faithful searching of "the Societies," and patient efforts to build them up in goodness.

He returned to Bristol to spend one Sunday, his evening congregation in the Old Orchard being the largest he had yet seen in Bristol, and then set out on his first visit to Ireland, where one of his itinerants had formed a Society. Passing through Wales to Holyhead, he reached Dublin on the 9th of August, and hearing the church bells, went directly to service, and himself preached in the afternoon. He continued preaching, as Mr. Tyerman says, "in streets, in churchyards, on tombstones, in meadows, in castle-yards, and wherever he had a chance;" filling up the intervals with travelling, or diligently visiting the Society or the sick, or in reading and writing. He reached Bristol by way of Cardiff, where he had just strength enough to finish the service. From Bristol he rode to London, through rain all the way. For a week he preached every evening in Shoreham Church, in Kent. During the next few weeks he preached each Sunday twice at his favourite place, Moorfields, where "the congregation was more serious than in any church in London, West Street only excepted." At the end of November he went down again to Bristol, through a hurricane of wind and blinding snow. He returned to London to spend a happy and reviving Christmas Day with his Society, strongly urging them to give themselves wholly to God. So ended another year, a year of great activity and extending usefulness.

He began the year 1748 at four in the morning, with praise and thanksgiving. He reviewed the affairs of the sick society, and made a further collection for the lending-stock, which had relieved two hundred and fifty-five persons in eighteen months. Setting forth, he came to Salisbury, and gathered the remnant of the Society together, and encouraged them to walk in the Bible way. Commending them to God, he set forward, when he barely escaped death by a fall from his horse; and again at Shepton Mallet he was in equal danger from a drunken, infuriated mob, who pelted him and his companions, and broke into the house where they were staying.

On Sunday, February 14th, he preached four times, met the Society, and afterwards held a love-feast. Well might his body be worn out, and his voice spent. But the next morning he set out for Ireland, making his way through storms and untracked snow, preaching where he halted, within or without, as at Buihth, where, after two services, he began in the churchyard, notwithstanding the north-east wind. Here "more than all the town were gathered together," and they made the woods and mountains echo to the words—

"Ye mountains and vales, in praises abound,  
Ye hills and ye dales, continue the sound;  
Break forth into singing, ye trees of the wood,  
For Jesus is bringing lost sinners to God."

Detained a fortnight at Holyhead, he filled up the time with abundant labour. He reached Dublin

March 8th, and going straight to the meeting of the Society, found his brother there; but the noise of the people shouting and praising God prevented his voice being heard. Instantly he gave himself to work, preaching at five o'clock—a thing unheard of in Ireland before—and daily two, three, or four times; travelling far and near, meeting and searching and helping the Societies.

At Athlone, April 3rd, he preached at five o'clock, then as he walked a mile to see a sick woman, a hundred and fifty people ran after him, and he turned to a smooth grassy place. All knelt down, he prayed, they sang a psalm, and he gave them an exhortation. At eleven o'clock he went to church, and at two and six preached in the open air to large companies. The following morning at five almost all the town seemed moved—full of goodwill and desire of salvation. He then took horse, preaching at twelve o'clock at Moat, and in the evening at Tyrrell's Pass, having great enlargement of heart. No wonder that at the Society meeting he was quite exhausted, and dismissed them after a short exhortation. But he was at his post at five o'clock the next morning. No summary would suffice to give an idea of the amount of his toil, though he was suffering from painful sickness, and was often so wearied as to be scarce able to stand. This visit lasted from March 8th to May 18th.

He reached Bristol May 25th, and on the 29th (Whit Sunday) he preached at four o'clock at the Weaver's Hall, at seven in the Old Orchard, at ten

at Kingswood, at two under the Sycamore Tree, and at five in the Orchard again; then rode to Kingswood, and concluded the day with a love-feast. The next day he preached twice in the Orchard, and in two days was in London in time for the fifth Conference.

The Conference over, he returned to Kingswood, and opened the new school, designed for the sons of his people and his preachers. The building still remains; it is used as a reformatory. Then he took horse for the north, preaching by the way. At Birmingham the rain failed either to disturb him or to disperse the congregation. At Wednesbury, in the evening of the same day, an exceedingly large congregation behaved as becometh the Gospel; so great a change had been wrought. At Épworth he had the joy of receiving the Sacrament again in the church, and he marked a decided change in the morals of the people, then under the care of a new rector.

He spent five weeks at Newcastle, and extended his journey to Alnwick and Berwick, where, when preaching, he was compelled to begin again and again after he thought he had done. This tour was one of great labour, and not a little suffering; yet he resolutely pressed on, preaching three, four, and five times a day, and in the intervals visiting the sick and meeting the Societies for instruction and exhortation and praise and prayer.

Leaving Newcastle he came to Leeds, preaching by the way in the Market Place at Stockton and at Yarm, and in the street at Osmotherley, where it rained all the time, but none went away. Whilst

preaching at Halifax Cross the excited rabble cast dirt upon him, and his cheek was laid open with a stone. He made signs to the congregation to move away ; most of them followed him, and he concluded a solemn hour with the song of joy. He returned from this tour to spend a week with the Society in London ; then set off to Cornwall for a month ; returning to his home at the Foundry by the middle of October.

Several benevolent institutions were at this time connected with the Foundry, amongst them a charity-school of sixty children and a home for poor widows and orphans. Of this Wesley writes in 1748 :—“ We have now nine widows, one blind woman, two poor children, and two upper servants, a maid and a man. I might add four or five preachers ; for I myself, as well as the other preachers who are in town, diet with the poor, on the same food, and at the same table ; and we rejoice herein, as a comfortable earnest of our eating bread together in our Father’s kingdom.” This home was supported by collections made at the Sacraments and in the Band-meetings.

He designed in the early part of the new year (1749) to visit Holland, but, being much pressed to answer Dr. Middleton’s book against the Fathers, he postponed his voyage, and spent “ almost twenty days in that unpleasing employment.” He also spent much time in the preparation of material for his “ Christian Library.” During a visit to Bristol, extending over five weeks, he collected a number of his preachers together and read to them on theology, logic, and elocution, and gave attention to the four

boarding and day schools. Preaching, as usual, was his chief work. This he may truly be said to have done, both in season and out of season. On one occasion, at Freshford, the people could not be accommodated in the "house," so he held his service out of doors, though it was dark when he began and rained all the time. Early in April he set out for Ireland, reaching Dublin after a stormy passage of twenty-one hours; but he preached three times that day, in the evening in the garden, which was the place of worship the next Sunday, when a vehement shower of hail fell, but all kept their ground until he concluded. He spent two months in a great preaching tour; then returned to London, and set forward to Berwick, where he was much out of health, but continued his labour. When at Whitehaven he received a request from Whitefield to meet him in Leeds on October 4th. He set out the day before, riding dripping wet through heavy rains for several hours, the next day continuing his journey from five o'clock in the morning till nine at night; so eager was he to welcome the return of brotherly love. Both Whitefield and he preached.

At this time a painful occurrence took place. Grace Murray, whom Wesley desired to marry, but was prevented by domestic intrigue, was united to John Bennett, one of his itinerants. Wesley was cut to the quick, and poured forth his sorrows in long, tender, and touching stanzas, which are printed by Henry Moore in his life of Wesley; and also in a separate pamphlet.

It was but a momentary shock to his labours, though his heart was almost broken.

He was presently at Rochdale, where his preaching created a wild excitement; the streets, he says, were "lined on both sides with multitudes of people, shouting, cursing, blaspheming, and gnashing upon us with their teeth." But he soon found "the lions of Rochdale lambs in comparison with those of Bolton;" "such rage and bitterness," he says, he "scarce ever saw before in any creatures that bore the form of man." Mr. Perronet was rolled in the mire. They broke into the house, and filled the street from end to end. Stepping right into the midst of them, and calling for a chair, he addressed the mob, when lo! "the winds were hushed, and all was calm and still. My heart was filled with love, my eyes with tears, and my mouth with arguments. They were amazed, they were ashamed, they were melted down, they devoured every word. What a turn was this! O, how did God change the counsel of the old Ahithophel into foolishness, and bring all the drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, and mere sinners in the place to hear of his plenteous redemption!" The next day he preached in a meadow, and then walked through the town without any molestation.

Pursuing his way, he came to Wednesbury, "wet and weary enough," hoping for a few hours rest, but in vain; for notice had been given that he would preach at Bilbrook in the evening, so he had to ride seven or eight miles further and preach. The next morning he preached again; then in the market-place at Dudley,

to a "huge unwieldy, noisy multitude;" then at Wednesday, and on to Birmingham, where he was happily disappointed in finding the congregation behaving so much better than he expected, and wrote, "Will, then, God at length cause even this barren wilderness to blossom as the rose?" He then passed through Evesham to Bristol, and retired to Kingswood for a week to write part of a volume of sermons. Thence he returns to London, for the Conference on November 16th, and spends the remainder of the year in London.

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## CHAPTER V.

1750—Re-union with Whitefield—Revivals—Simplicity of aim  
—Character and Work—Early Preachers.

THE opening service of 1750 was held at the Foundry at four o'clock in the morning, and was attended by a large congregation. This year was brightened by the happy re-union of Wesley and Whitefield, and they interchanged pulpits. Charles Wesley wrote, "George Whitefield, my brother, and I are one; a threefold cord which shall no more be broken." A great flame of holy excitement was kindled in London, which detained Wesley until the end of February.

In Bristol, complaints of a universal coldness, heaviness, and deadness met him. He instantly addressed himself to his work. He wrote, "I knew

but one that could help, so I called upon God to arise and maintain his own cause; and this evening we had a token for good, for his word was as a two-edged sword." He appointed a day of fasting and prayer; preached at five; then held meetings for prayer from seven to nine, from ten to twelve, and from one to three. He then gathered all the preachers in Bristol every day at four. Signs of reviving soon came; but tidings from Ireland hurry him thither. He reached Dublin April 7th, preached three times next day, spent thirteen days there, and set forward on his evangelistic tour through the provinces, meeting with some rough usage in one or two places, and travelling in one day ninety miles, being on horseback seventeen hours. He then spent a day in writing, and the following day preached three times in the open air. He travelled and preached until July 14th, returning to Dublin to find all things in a more prosperous state. At Closeland he preached to a little earnest company, and wrote, "O, who should drag me into a great city if I did not know there is another world. How gladly could I spend the remainder of a busy life in solitude and retirement." Thus he pushed his way unweariedly over vast tracts of country to revive slumbering Societies, and to lay the foundations of future churches.

He reached Bristol towards the close of July, then set off through Cornwall, preaching much, even though, as at Camelford, the rain poured down all the time. London was reached September 8th; but he returned to spend another month in Kingswood, being especially

engaged in preparing works for the press. He returned to London at the end of October, and found much work in seeking to provide for the poor. He then "set upon purging that huge work, Mr. Fox's 'Acts and Monuments,' from all the trash which that honest, injudicious writer has heaped together and mingled with those venerable records which are worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance," and he filled up the year with the most abundant toil.

The excellence of Wesley's work lay in the simplicity of its object. He had but one work to do—to combat sin. He laid down his own idea of duty when he said to his helpers, "You have nothing to do but to save souls." To this everything was bent: to this his ease, his most closely-bound friendships, his cherished hopes, his time, his attainments, his prospects, his possessions, were all devoted. He seems to have made everything over which he had influence subservient to it. Preaching, writing, reading, journeying, talking, living, were all dedicated to the one end from which he never swerved. His one spring of joy was here, and his one reward; for he seemed to prize even the assurance of the Divine favour most when it shone through successful work. As to aiming at forming a party, or a Church, such an idea never for a moment entered John Wesley's mind. If Societies would "save souls," Societies should be formed; if classes, classes. If open-air preaching, tracts, schools, sacraments, lay-preaching, anything would aid, it was welcome; but though a faithful son of the Church, a lover of her institutions, her history,

her worship, her literature, her schools of learning, and though he strove with his might to retain his Societies within her fold, yet the Church might go to the wall if she stood in the way of his one work—the Church's one work. His own words are most instructive here: "Church or no Church, I must save souls."

It is impossible to trace one's way through his voluminous journals without this singleness of aim forcing itself upon the attention. Were history to condemn his methods, it could not assail his motives. They were of the purest possible character. Personal ambition, the love of ruling, he had not, though he has been charged with it. That he ruled was a necessity, alike of his superiority to those around him and of the work that sprang up at his feet. That it was ever a preconceived desire no true student of his life will allow. He may have seemed autocratic; but he was alone. He longed for others to share his burden; but none could or would. He was obliged to act on his own responsibility, and in his own name. He was a leader, for he could not help it: he was born to lead. He did not seek the distinction: his gifts lifted him to it. He took not this honour upon himself: he was called of God. The charge of personal ambition is refuted by the fact that at his death he possessed only three or four silver spoons and a watch-seal. He walked amongst men, he laboured, he suffered solely for their good. If not a perfect example, it is, at any rate, a noble one, of disinterested, unselfish service.

With the masterful strength of his intellect he

seized on the true idea of his mission. Anxious as he was to promote the salvation of individual souls, ready as he was to expend time and strength over even one, yet at the very outset of his career he saw that his work was to be a widespread one,—He could gather congregations anywhere, as he knew, and as he said at Norwich; but his calling was to revive religion throughout the land. It was truly a high calling, and anything that stood in the way of the accomplishment of the great purpose must be sacrificed. He was charged with excess of enthusiasm, for there was great receptivity of spirit; but he yielded to nothing without a logical reason, and if any deny his premises, as at times it is not difficult to do, few can question his process; in a true sense he was an enthusiast, but he was no fanatic. Seldom has a man been in greater danger, or suffered less from the deceits of success. He may have had ambitions, but they do not force themselves on our attention. They are hard to find, and if found cannot be said to mar either his character or his work.

If he laid down strict rules of living, he was the typical example of their observance. “Rise at four; never be unemployed; never while away time,” were not merely the “rules of a helper,” they were those of the master. He denied himself all luxuries, save the luxury of doing good. He pared down his living until he was as abstemious as an anchorite. He had truly learnt to deny himself, to take up his cross, to follow wherever he believed Christ led.

He served with a white-heat of devotion, yet he

cannot be called an excitable man. He was seldom off his guard. Having love of all men, he had fear of none. Tender as a child, yet he did not quail before an excited rabble. He was in a certain sense timorous; he dreaded going where he was not sent. He would gladly screen himself behind a great authority. A lover of peace, he longed for the fellowship of friends. He tried to the end to act in harmony with the Church of England, or he would not so persistently have attended her services, even when he knew he would be personally reviled; or have continuously urged his Societies to do so; or have held his own services at inconvenient hours, so as not to clash with those of the parish church; or have framed his Societies so that they could co-exist with the Church. He strove to continue in alliance with the Moravians; and he endeavoured to harmonise his views with those of Whitefield and the Calvinistic clergy, and was even in danger of being betrayed into stepping beyond the bounds of his own principles in order to approach them.

He had not the impetuosity of Whitefield, but he had a steadier aim. He could not spend his life in the service of men more lavishly than did his great compeer; but by more cultured powers, by greater variety of labour, and by greater severity of method, he did more work; and the results are more permanent.

He had large love of heart, great fervour, yet cool judgment. He could be roused to preach for hours together, breaking off in the midst to sing praise, and then begin again. He could talk calmly

to an excited mob, or reason closely with an intellectual adversary. Though a gentleman by birth and training, he could hold happy intercourse with all classes, down to the degraded inmates of a jail, amongst whom his visits were ever welcome. He was laborious in the two-fold work of preaching to them that were without, and guarding them who were within, the fellowship of his Societies. These Societies he watched with great care, nourishing them by instruction and encouragement, and giving them such oversight as could be rendered only at the expense of almost unparalleled labours. For them he provided, as he became able, first guardians, in the persons of the leaders of the several classes into which all the Societies were soon divided; then preachers, to oversee the whole. These preachers combined the characteristics of pastors and evangelists; the latter predominating in the earlier years, and the former as their number increased and the fields of their labour became more circumscribed. He was a sort of travelling Bishop, overseeing the whole, and descending to particulars with marvellous minuteness. He searched them through and through, enquiring into the character of each person; and though very tender towards the feeble, he was very firm, and rooted out defaulters, rich or poor, without fear or favour, and no Society was too small or insignificant to receive his attention.

He may, in one light, be regarded as the founder of an "order." It is true that no antique dress was insisted upon; though matters of dress did

not escape him. True, he did not confine all the members of his Society to a celibate life, or to absolute poverty; though he himself was an example of the one, and almost of the other. True, there was no bodily flagellation; but there was great austerity, exemplified above all in himself. But these details were not essential to the "order." They were adventitious; they were aids to an end. That end coincided, in the case of the founders of several of the Romish orders, with the end Wesley sought—viz., separation from the world, thought of as an evil world, more fervent devotion, more charitable labour, more brotherly communion, and the strength of association; in other words, righteousness—the true aim of the Church. Even though the one movement was in error, though it degenerated, even though the true righteousness was not seized, yet the aim in each was similar, if not identical. Loyola and Wesley have points in common as truly as Luther and Wesley.

Wesley kept a careful watch over his helpers, who gave him more and more work as they increased in numbers. On him rested the toil of receiving and testing the men who offered themselves, like recruits, for his service. Not one of them escaped his eye, and each had his work in the campaign assigned, as the great chief deemed most suitable. He instructed and guarded them as they needed, not sparing the rod of correction, or failing to rally them with the cheery word of encouragement, or by a line in one of his many clearly-written, terse letters, when it was needed. He was familiar with the ground they had to travel.

He knew the character of the people in each circuit amongst whom they had to labour, as he knew the capabilities and adaptations of his men. He not only appointed their sphere of toil, but he regulated their habits and their reading. He thought for them, planned for them, wrote for them as well as to them, and he loved them. They could all find a friend in him, a counsellor, a helper, and a pattern. All felt he was above them, as indeed he was, in learning, in labour, in popular esteem, in success. None could rival him in power; and none but foolish renegades attempted to do so. He held an unequalled place in the affections of his people, of preachers and hearers alike. He had been instrumental in the conversion and happiness of large numbers, and they looked up to him as children to a father. He felt and declared he was called to a special work, and told his assistants they were not. He could preach more than they, and with less weariness, doing his great share of work more easily than they their smaller portion.

Those men themselves deserve, as many of them have found, a memorial, at least in the affections of the people still called Methodists, or in those brief biographies which from the first it has been the practice of the Methodists to preserve. This regard for the early pioneers is a striking feature of the Methodist writers and readers. Ample justice has not yet been done to all, though many of them are embalmed in records of extreme interest. They were moved by one passion—the desire to “save

souls." This was sufficient to encourage them in heroic labours, in great sacrifices, in hard endurance. They were men gathered from all ranks, mostly from very humble ones; but they had learnt a simple Gospel, had proved its sufficiency to rescue themselves from degradation and evil, and they knew enough to be able to urge the same upon others. Their characteristic work was the "calling sinners to repentance." Their speech was inflamed by vivid apprehensions of the pains and ills of evil-doing, and of the grace and love of God. They spoke with a fervour that was intensified by a pitiful regard for sinful men as lost for both worlds. They preached Christ as their one theme, and they preached Him to all. Thousands listened to them, and listened attentively; for they spoke a language their hearers understood, they denounced sins of which the hearers knew themselves to be guilty, and they proclaimed a peace for which many longed. They spoke, too, with an authority derived from their own unhesitating persuasion that God had called them to the work, and that conviction was strengthened by their association with the great prophet of the times, and a further confirmation they found in the fruits of their ministry. Every convert—and they were many—was a seal to their ministry, and every soul added to the Society was a satisfying hire for their labours.

But another spirit also burned within them. Not a man of them was insensible to the love of Christ, of which they spoke much, and by which they were moved. They found their reward not in worldly

endowment, for they laboured in poverty, but in the effects of their ministry, in the silent approvals of conscience, and in the hoped-for "well-done" of the great Master, of which they sung, and for which they confidently looked. The early Methodist preachers were a band of heroic, devoted, self-sacrificing, enthusiastic evangelists, deserving a very high place in the esteem of all who value benevolent disinterested toil. They were men well suited to their times; and he is a true philosopher and a true patriot who seizes on the spirit of his own time, and does the work that time requires.

In addition to the itinerating preachers, who were entirely separated from secular employments, and being wholly devoted to "the work" were supported, though feebly, by it, there were the "local preachers," who, being engaged in their daily trade, could spare only their Sabbaths or their evenings for more sacred toil. They, together with the leaders of the classes, formed a kind of subordinate pastorate, and were of great use, especially where the occasional nature of the visits of the itinerants—the "round preachers"—left large blanks in the service to be filled up by the local supply. Some of these may have been more distinguished for zeal than for knowledge, but they were earnest and good, while amongst them, from the first, were men of no mean endowments and culture; and the feeblest of them, if he could not preach as accurate a sermon, could generally preach a more interesting one than could be heard at most of the parish churches.

Wesley had rare skill in calling all into helpful service. A close observer of character, he chose for each his place. Stickler for routine as he was in earlier days, he became liberal enough as he saw the multiplied wants of the nation, and as he saw how great ends might be answered by the use of irregular methods and the services of even unlettered men. He soon learnt that spiritual usefulness was not confined to official position. And the pain of seeing a negligent clergy in an evil age failing to stem the tide of vice, and having himself innumerable proofs that friendly words, rugged or smooth, prompted by Christian kindness, could win men from vicious courses; that any one who had himself drunk at the fountain of living waters could tell others where in the desert that fountain rose; and having, moreover, many striking examples of singular usefulness and adaptation presented to his notice, he encouraged each to use his powers, however small they might be, in striving to promote the general good.

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## CHAPTER VI.

Interval between 1750 and 1770—Writings—America—Marriage—  
The Year 1770—The Annual Tour—Account of his Health—  
Another Journey—Death of Whitefield—End of the Year.

It is impossible within these limits to follow this untiring evangelist, step by step, through all his journeyings. An interval of twenty long years of

work must be allowed to pass unnoticed, during which there is literally no abatement of the energy, diligence, and self-denying toil already detailed. Blithe as the lark, whose song he often awakens by his early steps, he sings and prays, writes and visits, preaching the Gospel of God to sinful men as his one chief work, and steadily keeping in view the end that justified all his apparent irregularity, the revival of scriptural religion throughout the land.

The record for each year during this interval is full of interest; many important events happened, affecting his own life and the conditions of his Societies. In 1751 he introduced Methodism into Scotland, and in the following year finished the compilation of "The Christian Library." Then a serious illness bowed him down, and being confident of speedy death, he prepared a modest epitaph for his tombstone. His illness continuing, he began, early in 1754, to write his "Notes on the New Testament," which was accompanied by a revised translation—a work, he says, he should scarce have attempted but that he was too ill to travel or to preach. For four months he did not enter a pulpit—a very painful repression to one who could say, "I do indeed live by preaching." In 1757 he was joined by John Fletcher, the saintly, humble, laborious Vicar of Madeley. In 1758 he preached to a small colony of Germans in Ireland, called the Palatinates. Soon after some of them emigrated to America, and introduced Methodism into New York, Philip Embury being their first preacher.

Charles, being in feeble health, had gradually discontinued itinerating, and so the burden of the work fell more and more on Wesley himself. Public feeling was undergoing a change in regard to him; so that though rude treatment had not wholly subsided, yet in many places it had been supplanted by honour and respect. His friend Whitefield had become "an old, old man, fairly worn out in his Master's service, though only fifty years of age." Through the whole time a running controversy was kept up on the subject of separation from the Church, which Wesley stoutly resisted to the end.

But the event which stands in closest relation to his personal history is his marriage to Mrs. Vazeille, in 1751. This marriage seems to have been a mistake. Wesley says he married because he believed he could be more useful. Fault cannot be found with such a motive, and his sincerity is above suspicion; but looking at his work of evangelisation, extending over the three kingdoms, it is difficult to see how such a work could be better done by a married than by a single man. The reasonable conclusion is that he was mistaken in his judgment. In 1771 she left him; and he wrote, "*Non eam reliqui; non dimisi; non revocabo.*"

With the sole exception of the hindrance caused by illness, he relaxed no effort; and the period from 1750 to 1770 witnessed gigantic and progressive work, though done in the face of many and great difficulties.

The year 1770 opened, as usual, with special religious observance. It was Monday. The Sabbath

services, begun at five o'clock in the morning, continued until midnight; and the last moments of the old and the first of the new year were spent in solemn silence. Then followed a burst of song, and a word of blessing, and the crowd—for such it was—broke up for brief repose; for at four or five o'clock the early service of the morning began. In the evening a "Covenant Service" was held, for which the previous Friday's fasting and prayer and the Sabbath's services had prepared the one thousand eight hundred members of the London Societies who assembled in the Foundry to "avouch the Lord to be their God," and to unite in the service and sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Wesley says it was "a most solemn season."

The daily record for January is imperfect, there being but three entries. He refers only to his "little journey" into Bedfordshire in the end of the month, during which he read closely; and to one visit to a dying woman. The steady labour of two, three, or four services a day is passed over in silence, as is the reading, writing, visiting, and other work. In February he is busy with the writings of Rousseau, Voltaire, Swedenborg, and others. In a letter (his last) to Whitefield, who is in America, he expresses his readiness to go there too, though he was sixty-seven years of age.

His annual tour commenced early in March, at Newbury, where he preached in a large workshop, because the meeting-house was closed against him by

the Dissenters, and the playhouse by the mayor. The next evening he preached at Bristol, where he spent a week. He then passed on through Stroud, Painswick, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Upton, Worcester (and the naming of a town signifies it was the scene of his toil); then pressed forward through the snow to Evesham and Birmingham, where the people were packed in the preaching-house as closely as possible, and many were shut out, as was the case at the early service next morning, after which he preached on Bromwich Heath, and at Wednesbury. On the following day he rode to Craidley, where the multitude obliged him to stand "abroad," although the north wind whistled round his head. At mid-day he took the field again at Stourbridge, where many of the hearers were "wild as colts untamed." At six in the evening of the same day he was in Dudley, the air being almost as cold as he had ever felt it. The next day he preached at Wednesbury at five, at Bilston at ten, at Billbrook at one, and at Wolverhampton at five. Then he wends his way slowly, through Staffordshire and Cheshire, to Manchester, reflecting as he rides, "Near thirty years ago I was thinking, 'How is it that no horse ever stumbles while I am reading?' (History, poetry, and philosophy I commonly read on horseback, having other employment at other times.) No account can possibly be given but this: because then I threw the reins on his neck. I then set myself to observe, and I aver that, in riding above one hundred thousand miles, I scarce ever remember any horse (except two, that would fall head over heels any

way) to fall, or make a considerable stumble, while I rode *with a slack rein.*”

His route now lay through Rochdale, Chester, Liverpool, Wigan, Bolton, and Ambleside to Whitehaven. Here he preached on Good Friday in the early morning, again at Cockermouth at one, and at Carlisle at six, then walked two miles to sleep in peace on “a hard clean bed.” The next morning he preached at five to most of the village, at eight at Carlisle, then came to Longtown, where, finding no better place to screen him from the wind, he stood in a large broad passage with a room on either hand.

Getting to Glasgow in two days, he remained there for two more, then came to Edinburgh, and endeavoured to confirm them whom many had tried to turn out of the way. Leaving Edinburgh, he pushed on through violent wind and rain to Perth, and preached in the Tolbooth. In a few days he pressed on his way through heavy snow to Inverness. Here he remained four days, preaching in the kirk and the college library, and conversing with many who followed him to his lodgings. At Aberdeen he preached in the college, kirk, and elsewhere. Coming to Montrose, and finding notice of his preaching had not been given, he went down to the green, sung a hymn, and the people flocked from all parts. To them he preached, and in the evening at Arbroath, where the whole town “seemed moved.” Thence he passed to Dundee, where he dealt very plainly with them at six, and again in the morning, and then came to Edinburgh, where he found the Society diminished from one

hundred and sixty at his previous visit to fifty now. Such, he says, is "the fruit of a preacher's staying a whole year in one place." He remained a few days, preaching and reviving the Societies. Then taking leave at a five o'clock service, he rode to Musselburgh, preached again, and in the evening at Dunbar. Then he came to Berwick and Alnwick. On Sunday, May 20th, he preached at seven a.m. in the "house," at four and at seven in the market-place, and then met the Society. The next day he was at Morpeth and Newcastle, where he spent a few days, visiting also Sunderland and elsewhere. On the following Sunday he preached three times in the open air in Sunderland, Gateshead, and Newcastle.

He then took a short circuit through Weardale, Teesdale, and Swaledale; then spent ten days more in and near Newcastle; and after a cheerful leave of "that loving people" at the early service, he preached at Durham at noon, and in the evening at Stockton to "a numerous congregation before Mr. Watson's door." Then preaching at Norton, Yarm, Halsey, Thirsk, Potto, and Hutton, he reached Whitby on the 15th of June, and having preached thrice a day for five days, he would fain have preached "in the house," but notice having been given of his preaching in the market-place, he began at six to a large congregation.

Early on Sunday (17th) he met the Whitby Select Society of sixty-five members, preached at eight, at nine met the children, went to Church and heard "a poor sermon," but remembered Philip Henry's words,

“If the preacher does not do his duty, bless God that I know mine.” Between one and two of the same day he met the Bands, at five he preached in the market-place, then held a love-feast which lasted two hours, and after all met a few of the children again. The next day he preached at Robin Hood’s Bay, and at Scarborough, the following at Burlington, on the quay, “to many plain and many genteel people,” and in the evening at Hull; then rode to Beverley, and on to York in time to spend a “busy, happy” Sunday, meeting the Select Society at six, preaching at eight, meeting the children at nine, then attending service—twice, of course—preaching again at five, and afterwards spending an hour with the Society. The next day he was at Tadcaster at noon, and at Pateley Bridge in the evening, where it rained all the time, but “the congregation stood as still as the trees.” It rained again the next day while he preached at Otley to a numerous congregation; the next evening it “hemmed them in the house,” at Yeadon.

Thus laboured the man, who the next day, after preaching on the smooth grass at Hoolhole, wrote, “I can hardly believe that I am this day entered into the sixty-eighth year of my age. How marvellous are the ways of God! How has He kept me, even from a child! From the age of ten to fourteen I had little but bread to eat, and not great plenty of that. I believe this was so far from hurting me that it laid the foundation of lasting health. When I grew up, in consequence of reading Dr. Cheyne, I chose to eat sparingly and drink water. This was

another great means of continuing my health, till I was about seven and twenty. I then began spitting of blood, which continued several years. A warm climate cured this. I was afterwards brought to the brink of death by a fever, but it left me healthier than before. Eleven years after I was in the third stage of consumption: in three months it pleased God to remove this also. Since that time I have known neither pain nor sickness, and am now healthier than I was forty years ago. This hath God wrought."

Then follow visits to Heptonstall, Keighley, Haworth, where, being much concerned for the poor parishioners, who "hear and hear, and are no more affected than stones," he speaks to them "in the most cutting manner" he could; then to Bingley, Bradford, Halifax, and Dewsbury, where, preaching at six o'clock on Daw Green, he is compelled to say, "All things contributed to make it a refreshing season; the gently declining sun, the stillness of the evening, the beauty of the meadows and fields, through which

'The smooth, clear river drew its sinuous train,'

the opposite hills and woods, and the earnestness of the people covering the top of the hill on which we stood, and above all the day-spring from on high, the consolation of the Holy One."

He then visited Miss Bosanquet's school at Morley, and on Sunday preached at Birstal and Leeds, at each place to as many as his voice could reach. Then he is at Woodhouse, a village near Leeds, "where a flame had suddenly broke out," and the following day

at Harewood. Thence he rode to Doncaster, preached at noon, and in the evening at Finningley, and the next day at Epworth. Then, through heavy rain, he rode to Newton-on-Trent, and preached before the house to an earnest congregation. Taking horse about eleven, he rode, "broiling in the sun," through Lincoln to Horncastle, where, in the market-place, he preached to "an unbroken multitude." This, he says, was the first day he had been weary since setting out from London; but now the violent heat drank up his spirits. The next day was equally sultry, when he rode to Louth, "formerly another den of lions. At first, great part of the congregation seemed careless; but God made them care." He says, "I have seldom seen persons more sensibly struck. They gathered closer and closer together till there was not one inattentive hearer, and hardly one unaffected." Riding thence to Grimsby, the heat being as intense as ever, he was tired again, but soon recovered, and preached to "a congregation of good old Methodists."

The next day, Sunday, July 15th, he preached at eight and two, and hastened to Barrow to preach again, and the next day at Aukborough, Amcoats, and Swinfleet, where he preached on a smooth green place sheltered from the wind.

In the market-place at Thorne, the next day, all were quiet and tolerably attentive. Thence he went to Crowle, and on to Epworth. On the Sunday he preached at Misterton, Haxey, and Epworth Cross to "the largest congregation in Lincolnshire." Then follow visits to Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield,

where he spent two days, and where his heart was at last so enlarged while preaching he knew not how to break off. He then pushed his way to Crich, Derby, and Burton; and thence to Castle Donnington, where a violent shower drove the hay-makers home to hear the word. In the evening he preached at Nottingham; and the following day at Sandiacre in the morning, and in the evening to thousands upon thousands, who stood "as still as night," in the great market-place of Nottingham. He closed the day with a love-feast. The next day he was at Bingham and Houghton; on the following at Loughborough, where the congregation in the market-place was almost as large as at Nottingham. The same day he was at Markfield, where, notwithstanding the harvest, the church was quickly filled; and in the evening in the castle-yard at Leicester, before "a multitude of awakened and unawakened." The day after he rode to Northampton, and took his place on the side of the common. At St. Alban's he was met by friends from London, which he reached August 2nd, after an absence of five months spent in unbroken evangelistic work.

On the 7th of August the Conference began at the Foundry, and ended on the 10th. As soon as it was over, he started "in the machine"—a carriage purchased for him by his friends—and preached the next evening in Bristol. Here he spent a week, and preached amongst other places on Redcliff Hill. At the end of the week he started for Cornwall, preaching, at the close of the first day, under a tree, to a

congregation "all attention." Then he passed to Tiverton, Launceston, Camelford, Port Isaac, Cubert, St. Agnes, Redruth, and St. Ives, where he preached in a meadow, and, by request, in the market-place; then at town after town until he came to Gwennap, where he preached to probably twenty thousand people. The next day he preached at Truro, Mevagissey, and St. Austell, each service in the open air. Then he came by way of Medros, Plymouth, and Cullompton to Taunton. Nor must it be forgotten that the mention of a town indicates that he preached there once or twice or oftener.

The following day he says, "My voice was weak when I preached at Princes Street in the morning; it was stronger at two in the afternoon, while I was preaching under the sycamore-tree at Kingswood; and strongest of all at five in the evening, when we assembled near King's Square, Bristol." An early and a late service must be added to these. On the following Sunday, the early morning preacher not appearing, he took the pulpit at five; preached again at eight in Princes street, at two at Kingswood, and five at Bristol. At this time there was "a great revival of the work of God" in all the Societies round about.

In October he preached in the towns around Bristol, and found the congregations increasing in every place. On Sunday the 7th, after the early service, Charles and he began a service with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, at 9 o'clock. He then rode to Kingswood, gave an exhortation to the children

and preached ; and a little before five began in the square. He says, "At the conclusion of the morning service I was weak and weary, hardly able to speak ; after preaching at Kingswood I was better ; and at night quite fresh and well." It is unnecessary to describe in detail the remainder of the journey ; suffice it to say that he came back to the Foundry in London, after an absence of two months.

He stayed in London but two days, and set out again for Oxfordshire, preaching at several towns, mostly in the open air. Then he went on to Northampton, preaching there one day at five, at Brighton at ten "abroad," at two at Haddon, and again at Northampton at night, with a meeting of the Society to close the day. In the following fortnight Colchester, Norwich and Yarmouth, Lakenheath, Bury and Braintree are the scenes of his labours. He returns to London November 10th, to hear the sad news of the death of his friend Whitefield in America. Whitefield had preached a sermon two hours long in the open air from the top of a hogshhead, and a friend had said to him, "Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach." "True," he replied ; then added, "Lord Jesus, I am weary *in* Thy work, but not *of* Thy work." At six o'clock the following morning he was found dead on his knees. Wesley retired to Lewisham, to write a funeral sermon, which he preached at Tottenham Court Road to "an immense multitude gathered together from all corners of the town." "It was an awful season," he says, "all were still as night ; most appeared to be deeply affected." He

was to preach the same sermon at the Tabernacle at half-past five ; but by three the building was full, and he began at four. Again he preached the sermon at the Tabernacle, Greenwich, on the following Friday.

Early in December he took "a little journey" into Kent and Surrey, preaching morning, noon, and night at Chatham, Canterbury, Dover, Faversham, Dorking, and Reigate. Christmas Day was indeed "a day full of work," but he blessed God it was "not tiresome work." He began at the Foundry at four ; then was at West Street, Seven Dials, at nine ; met the children at three, preached again at five, and then had a comfortable season with the Society. He concluded the year at the Foundry Chapel with the voice of praise and thanksgiving, and wrote, "How many blessings has God poured upon us this year! May the next be as this, and more abundant."

If this is not a record of apostolic labour it would be difficult indeed to write one. And this man was in his sixty-eighth year! Can it be believed that twenty years more of similar labour may be o'erleaped ere the final year's record is written? Yet so it is.

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## CHAPTER VII.

Brief Review of interval between 1770 and 1790—Wesley's Vigour  
—Change in Public Opinion—Foundation-stone of City Road  
Chapel laid—The Arminian Magazine—Last Visit to Ireland  
—America—Ordinations—English Methodism.

It is impossible, within the limits of these pages, to chronicle the events of these two decades (1770–1790).

They were filled up with the same toilsome, diligent, unwearied service that characterised the former years of his life, and through the greater part with but little abatement of energy, so that he wrote, as late as 1786, "I enter into the eighty-third year of my age. I am a wonder to myself. It is now twelve years since I have felt any such sensation as weariness. I am never tired (such is the goodness of God!), either with writing, preaching, or travelling." Two years after, he wrote, "What cause have I to praise God, as for a thousand spiritual blessings, so for bodily blessings also! How little have I suffered yet by 'the rush of numerous years!' It is true I am not so agile as I was in times past. I do not run or walk so fast as I did; my sight is a little decayed; my left eye is grown dim, and hardly serves me to read." He found some decay also in his memory of recent events, but none in his hearing, smell, taste, or appetite, though he needed but a third part of the food he did once. He had no sense of weariness, either in travelling or preaching; and adds, "I am not conscious of any decay in writing sermons, which I do as readily, and, I believe, as correctly as ever."

It was not until the following year that he wrote, while attending the Conference in London, "I now find that I am growing old: 1. My sight is decayed; so that I cannot read a small print, unless in a strong light. 2. My strength is decayed; so that I walk much slower than I did some years since. 3. My memory of names, whether of persons or places, is decayed, till I stop a little to recollect them. What I

should be afraid of is, if I took thought for the morrow, that my body should weigh down my mind, and create either stubbornness by the decrease of my understanding, or peevishness by the increase of bodily infirmities ; but thou shalt answer for me, O Lord, my God."

During the interval lying between 1770 and 1790 a marked change in the complexion of affairs becomes apparent. The press loses its severity, and now and again bears high testimony to the worth of his character and the usefulness of his work. The cold winter of neglect has passed away, and the warm air of the spring-time is clothing the fields with verdure. Wesley is beginning to receive the recognition he deserves. Detraction is supplanted by approval. He has demonstrated, by his long-continued and patient labour, both the unselfishness of his motives and the loftiness of his aims. The doors of the churches are again slowly opening to him, until at length he declares, "The tables are turned : I have now more invitations to preach in churches than I can accept." It was a partial amend for the error of the past ; but it was too late to undo what that past, for good or evil, had done.

During this interval he laid the foundation-stone of City Road Chapel. On Monday, April 2nd, 1777, he wrote, "The rain befriended us much by keeping away thousands who purposed to be there. But there were still such multitudes that it was with difficulty I got through them to lay the first stone. Upon this was a plate of brass (covered with another stone) on which was engraved, 'This was laid by Mr.

John Wesley, April 1, 1777.'” He added, “probably this will be seen no more by any human eye ; but will remain there, till the earth and the works thereof are burned up.” His views on the future, as published in his “Notes on the New Testament,” will help to explain this apparent confidence in the permanence of earthly works.

In 1778 he started a religious magazine, which has appeared regularly once a month ever since the first issue, and is the oldest of its kind in England. In 1780 he issued “The Large Hymn Book,” which has been in use now one hundred years. In 1779 he preached his last sermon in the Foundry, a place of worship which he had occupied for forty years. Great changes had taken place amongst his companions. Mr. Perronet, his trusty adviser, was dead ; his brother Charles and John Fletcher—the saintly Fletcher—were also dead. Retiring to write a brief life of his departed friend, he says, “I dedicated all the time I could spare from five in the morning till eight at night. These are my studying hours. I cannot write longer in a day without hurting my eyes.” He was eighty-four years of age !

In the year 1789 he paid his last visit to Ireland, and spent three months in his accustomed evangelistic work. For the last time he was present at the Conference in Dublin, and greatly rejoiced in the character and spirit of the preachers who met him. The parting scene is thus described by Mr. Tyerman:—“At length, on July 12th, Wesley bade adieu to the shores of Ireland for ever. It was a touching scene.

Multitudes followed him to the ship. Before he went on board he read a hymn, and the crowd, as far as emotion would let them, joined the sainted patriarch in singing. He then dropped upon his knees, and asked God to bless them, their families, the Church, and Ireland. Shaking of hands followed; many wept most profusely, and not a few fell on the old man's neck and kissed him. He stepped on deck; the vessel moved; and then, with his hands still lifted up in prayer, the winds of heaven wafted him from an island which he dearly loved, and the warm-hearted Irish Methodists 'saw his face no more.' The sea being smooth, he shut himself up in his chaise and read. Then in the evening a hymn was sung on deck, which brought all the company together, and he preached.

One of the most important works that engaged Wesley's attention in the interval now under consideration was the making provision for the growing Societies of America. During the War of Independence, the clergy had either been silenced or had fled to England, so that the Societies were left without the sacraments. On the proclamation of Independence all ecclesiastical authority ceased. In this exigency Wesley was appealed to. He applied to the Bishop of London for the ordination of one of his preachers, but without success. He had long believed that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years he had been importuned to exercise this right by ordaining some of his itinerant preachers,

but he refused, he says, not only for peace sake, but because he was determined to violate as little as possible the established order of the national church. "But," he adds, "the case is widely different between England and North America. Here are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish ministers, so that for some hundreds of miles together there is none either to baptise or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end, and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest." He accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint *superintendents*, and two others to act as *elders*. He also prepared for them a liturgy, an abridgment of that of the Church of England, and then declared himself ready to embrace any "more rational and Scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness. They are now," he adds, in justification of his conduct, "at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive Church."

The question was a vexed one. Charles Wesley believed, with Lord Mansfield, that "ordination was separation." It may not have been contrary to Wesley's *views* to ordain, but it is not easy to reconcile it with his *position* as a Presbyterian of the Church of England.

Wesley's action may well have seemed at times to be at variance with his professions. He desired to remain in connection with the Church of England, and

he wished his Societies to do so. As late as 1790 he wrote: "I never had any design of separating from the Church. I have no such design now. I do not believe the Methodists in general design it when I am no more seen. I do, and will do, all that is in my power to prevent such an event." And again, "I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and that none who regard my judgment or advice will ever separate from it." But almost everywhere the Methodist people received the most unfriendly treatment from the clergy; and their sympathy and attachment to the Church were consequently strained to the utmost degree. Again and again Wesley stoutly refused to visit some of the Societies unless they would continue faithful in their attendance at the services of the Church. In not a few cases they were prevented from revolt only by their personal affection for him.

To the charge of inconsistency he replied that in preaching abroad, using extempore prayer, forming Societies, and employing lay preachers he was not alienating himself from the Church; and he said, "Put these two principles together: first, I will not *separate* from the Church; yet, secondly, in case of necessity, I will *vary* from it; and inconsistency vanishes away. I have been true to my profession from 1730 to this day."

## CHAPTER VIII.

Wesley's Appearance and Labours—1790—The Last Tour—Failing Strength—The Last Conference—The Last Open-air Service—  
“Little Journies.”

THE interval lying between 1770 and 1790, of which a few prominent features were briefly indicated in the last chapter, was marked by the same diligent monotony of toil that characterised the previous years of Wesley's life. Southey wrote of him: “Mr. Wesley continued to be the same marvellous old man. No one who saw him, even casually, in his old age can have forgotten his venerable appearance. His face was remarkably fine; his complexion fresh to the last week of his life; his eye quick, and keen, and active. When you met him in the street of a crowded city he attracted notice, not only by his band and cassock, and his long hair—white and bright as silver—but by his face and manner; both indicating that all his minutes were numbered, and that not one was to be lost.”

Although Wesley accomplished so much in public, his work done in seclusion was little less astonishing. How he was able to do so much reading and writing, and at the same time travel so far and so long, is explained by the following extract:—“Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry; because I never undertake any more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit. It is true I travel four or five thousand miles in a year, but I

generally travel alone in my carriage, and consequently am as retired ten hours a day as if I were in a wilderness; on other days I never spend less than three hours (frequently twelve) in the day alone, so there are few persons who spend so many hours secluded from all company."

The record of 1790 opens with the reflection, "I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much." But he adds, "Blessed be God, I do not slack my labour; I can preach and write still." Of the daily preaching partial record only is given. He preached at Snowsfield, Southwark, on the 2nd, to an enlarged congregation. On the first Sunday in the year near two thousand people were present at the Covenant Service in City Road Chapel. Early in the year he wrote to one of his "assistants," "If you and I should be called hence this year, we may bless God that we have not lived in vain. Let us have a few more strokes at Satan's kingdom, and then we shall depart in peace." The first two months he spent in and about London, preaching to old and young, meeting the Society, in which work he spent eight days, there being two thousand eight hundred members. He was also engaged in visiting, writing, and revising his papers. On the 28th of February he preached at City Road to a large congregation, in the afternoon at West Street, and in the evening at Brentford. His sight was now failing him, so that he could not read small print. But he could write; and he thought it did him more good than harm to preach once or twice a day.

He left Brentford for his last great tour early in the morning of March 1st, and preached at Newbury in the evening, and in Bath the following evening. At Bristol, where he remained ten days, he preached three times on the Sunday, besides meeting the Society. Every day of the week he preached, visiting all the classes, and on the following Sunday met the Strangers' Society, instituted for poor, sick, friendless strangers—one of the beneficent fruits of Methodism. On the Monday he set out early and preached at Stroud, the following day at Painswick and Gloucester, the next at Tewkesbury and Worcester, then at Stourport. The following morning, coming to Quinton at eleven, and finding a congregation waiting, he preached at once; then went on to Birmingham, which he thought was thrice as large as when he saw it fifty years before. He preached at Birmingham in the evening to a people “whose behaviour was so decent, so serious, so devout, as to do honour to their profession.” The next day, Sunday, 21st, he preached there twice, and on Monday at Wednesbury; on Tuesday at Dudley and Wolverhampton, and in Madeley Church the next two days. The following day he finished his sermon on the Wedding Garment, adding, “Perhaps this is the last that I shall write: my eyes are now waxed dim, and my natural force abated. However, while I can, I would fain do a little for God, before I drop into the dust.”

He preached at Shrewsbury and Newcastle-under-Lyre, Mile End, and Burslem in one day, at the two last places in the open air. On the following day he

preached at Tunstall and Congleton ; the next two days at Macclesfield, then at Stockport, Oldham, and Manchester. At the last place on Easter Day there were one thousand six hundred communicants at the Lord's Supper ; and he preached both morning and evening "without weariness, and in the evening lay down in peace." The next day he preached at Altrincham, Nantwich, and Chester, where he preached again the following day, and the next at Warrington and Liverpool, where the congregation was very great, as it was on the following evening. He then went on to Wigan, "proverbially called *Wicked Wigan*, but it is not now what it was ; the inhabitants have taken a softer mould." The following day he preached at Northwich and at Bolton in the "lovely house" to "one of the loveliest congregations in England ; who by patient continuance in well-doing have turned scorn and hatred, into general esteem and good-will." Through a break in his journal our knowledge of his wanderings is less complete. He travelled through Blackburn, Colne, Keighley, Haworth, and Halifax, where "on his tottering up the pulpit stairs, the whole congregation burst into a flood of tears ; and more than once his memory failed him." Then he journeyed on to Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Wakefield, Birstal, Leeds, Bradford, Otley, and York, where it is said "he preached a useful sermon."

He then passed on to Darlington where he appeared very feeble, his sight failing him, but his voice was strong and his spirits remarkably lively. So said Mr. Atmore, one of his assistants, who was

not far wrong in adding, "Surely this great and good man is the prodigy of the age."

At half-past three the next morning he started for Newcastle, and preached there in the evening, and the next night delivered to a congregation of children a sermon in words of not more than two syllables. Then he came to North Shields, preached "an excellent sermon," and the next day spoke to several thousands in the open air, and preached in the Orphan House in the evening, many hundreds being unable to gain admission. These details are gathered by Mr. Tyerman's diligent hand. On Monday, May 10, he started for Scotland; but we have no record of his work until the 24th, when he set out at four o'clock in the morning, travelling till noon, making observations on the improved agriculture and manufactories, and the increased industry and cleanliness of the people, and preaching in the evening at Forglen. He returned to Aberdeen next day, and took a solemn farewell of a crowded audience. The following day he preached at Brechin, but was so faint and ill as to be obliged to shorten his discourse. Forfar, Cupar, Auchterarder, Stirling, and Kilsyth bring him to Glasgow, where the congregation was "miserably small." The next day he travelled seventy miles, reaching Dumfries between six and seven, where, after "a few minutes," he preached without pain, but was almost exhausted, and few could hear him; nor could he see either hymn or text. But he was at the five o'clock preaching the next morning, hearing one of his itinerants, and preached himself in the evening. The next

day he was cheered by the character of the people at Hexham, and the two following days preached to numerous congregations at Newcastle, and then wrote, "Were I to do my own will, I should choose to spend the short remainder of my days in this and Kingswood House; but it cannot be: this is not my rest." On Sunday, June 6, he preached twice, regretting the rain would not suffer him to preach "abroad." He revised "the stations of the preachers," wrote a form for settling the preaching houses, to prevent the "villanous tautology of lawyers," and preached to six or seven hundred children of the Sunday School. Then, having dispatched all the business he had to do, he took "a solemn leave of this lovely people, perhaps never to see them more in this life." The following day he preached at Walsingham and at Weardale, then at Stanhope "in a broad place near the church;" and the same day also in the open air at Durham; the next at Sunderland to a numerous congregation; the next in Monkwearmouth Church, and to several thousands in the open air. Then at Hartlepool, Stockton, and Yarm "in the open street;" at Potton and Hutton Rudley in one day; then at Stokesley in the morning and Whitby in the evening; the next day twice, besides attending church; the next, setting out early, at Pickering and Malton; then at Scarborough, Bridlington (in the Dissenters' chapel), and Beverley, where forty persons from Hull met him and dined with him, intending to form an escort to him. But in the midst of the repast he took out his watch, started to his feet, stepped into his coach, and

was far on his way before his friends could join him. He preached in Hull in the evening, and twice the next day. Two days after he wrote:—"Monday, June 28th. This day I enter into my eighty-eighth year. For above eighty-six years I found none of the infirmities of old age: my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural strength abated; but last August I found almost a sudden change: my eyes were so dim that no glasses would help me; my strength likewise now quite forsook me, and probably will not return in this world. But I feel no pain from head to foot, only it seems nature is exhausted, and, humanly speaking, will sink more and more, till

‘The weary springs of life stand still at last.’”

Here he wrote a long letter to one of the Bishops, entreating for toleration and liberty for the Methodists. He preached at Owston “abroad, in the calm, mild evening,” then at Lincoln, Newton, “abroad,” and at Epworth; the next day at Misterton “under a spreading tree,” attended service and Sacrament in Epworth Church once more, and in the evening preached in the market-place to “such a congregation as was never seen in Epworth before.” Then, by steps that are hidden—for there is another blank in the journals—he went to Bristol, where he began his last Conference, July 27. He was very feeble; his sight failed him, “but his voice was very strong, his spirit remarkably lively, and the powers of his mind and his love to his fellow-creatures were as bright and as ardent as ever.”

In the last decade there had been a great increase

in the Methodist Societies, the total number of members in the Methodist Societies throughout the world being 120,073 ; so greatly had the little band of six, who constituted the Society in the year 1739, grown under the Divine blessing.

After the Conference, Wesley set out for a three weeks' tour in Wales, returning to Bristol August 27, and spending a month there. On Sunday, the 29th, he read prayers, preached, and administered the Lord's Supper—a service lasting three hours—and in the afternoon preached out-of-doors, and the next day at Carey and Ditcheat, where the people stood at the windows to hear ; the next at Shepton Mallet and Pensford. Through the month he preached, read, and wrote, and met the classes in Bristol, which occupied him four days, there being nine hundred and forty-four members. He visited the Isle of Wight, preaching generally twice a day. Leaving Portsmouth at two o'clock in the morning, he reached London in the afternoon in good health and spirits. The next day, Sunday, he preached twice at City Road, and held a love-feast. During the week he travelled to Rye, a distance of sixty miles, and preached ; and the day after, at Winchelsea, under a large tree by the side of the church, he “called to most of the inhabitants of the town, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand : repent ye and believe the Gospel.’” An eye-witness says, “The word was attended with power, and the tears of the people flowed in torrents.” This was his last open-air service. The scene was touching : this venerable man, eighty-seven years of age, worn but

not weary, his snow-white locks falling upon his shoulders, his tremulous hand holding up for the last time his little pocket Bible,\* his eyes well-nigh closed, his form bent, his face upturned, a placid, peaceful countenance betraying the calm unruffled mind within; but the clear voice makes known once more with power the Gospel it has so long proclaimed. Well might the people weep. For fifty years, without let or hindrance, this saintly man had raised his voice "abroad," clear in its truth as in its tones, preaching faithfully, almost ceaselessly, in all parts of the kingdom, probably to more people than any teacher of the Gospel had ever addressed before. Now all was over. On that October day, beneath that spreading ash-tree, under the shadow of old Winchelsea Church, Wesley's happy, holy, useful work of open-air preaching ended.

In the evening he preached again "in the house," returned to London for the Sunday services, and on Monday started on his Norfolk tour, preaching at Colchester in the evening to "a wonderful congregation, rich and poor, clergy and laity;" as again on the Tuesday, when Henry Crabb Robinson heard him, and long afterwards wrote:—

"It was, I believe, in October, 1790, that I heard John Wesley in the great round meeting-house at Colchester. He stood in a wide pulpit, and on each side of him stood a minister, and the two held him up,

\* This little Bible is one of the two modest insignia of office held by the President of the Methodist Conference; the other is the official seal of the connexion.

having their hands under his armpits. His feeble voice was barely audible, but his reverend countenance, especially his long white locks, formed a picture never to be forgotten. There was a vast crowd of lovers and admirers. It was for the most part a pantomime, but the pantomime went to the heart. Of the kind, I never saw anything comparable to it in after-life."

Setting out early, he came by way of Ipswich, reading all the way, to Norwich, where he preached. In the journey the wind, with drizzling rain, came full in his face, and, having nothing with which to screen himself from it, he was thoroughly chilled from head to foot, but says, "I soon forgot this little inconvenience, for the earnestness of the congregation made me large amends." At Lynn he preached with nearly all the clergy in the town among the congregation; the next day in Diss Church, one of the largest in the county; it had not been so filled for a century. That evening and the next he preached at Bury St. Edmunds, and the following day returned to London, and on Sunday preached to large congregations in Spitalfields Church and St. Paul's, Shadwell. This was October 24th. Here his voluminous journals end, but not his work, for he fills up the year with "little journies" into Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Northampton, and Kent, as may be gathered from his letters.

The year's work included the issue of a revised edition of his "Notes on the New Testament," and the writing of several sermons and pieces, most of which appeared in the "Arminian Magazine." So ends the last completed year of this most active life.

## The End.



Literary Work—The Christian Library—His Object—The Last Sermon—Extracts from Wesley's Letters—His Death.

ONE of the most striking illustrations of Wesley's remarkable activity, diligence, and careful husbandry of time, is seen in the amount of literary work accomplished by him in the midst of all his other works, and that not merely or mainly in the quiet of the study; but on horseback, often drawing from his saddle-bags a portly volume, supporting it on the pommel, casting the reins on the neck of his horse, and reading and marking for revision page after page for hours together; he was equally industrious in "the machine," the stage-coach, the inn, or the house of a friend. His reading was prodigious, and his writing and publishing little less so. He began to publish when at Oxford, in 1733, his first work being a book of prayers. A revised edition of Kempis' "On the Imitation of Christ" followed in 1735, and his father's "Advice to a Young Clergyman." When in the midst of his toils and his buffetings in Georgia, he issued a small collection of hymns, but anonymously. From 1738 every year had its issues of books, tracts, or pamphlets, until the number of separate publications

amounted to nearly four hundred. As early as 1771 so great was the demand for his works that he had them collected and issued in thirty-two 12mo. volumes.

Though the bulk of the poetical works were written by Charles Wesley, several were written or translated by John, and almost all were revised and published by him. His prose works range from the humble "Word" of four pages to his commentary on the entire Scriptures, and the fifty 12mo. volumes of extracts from the writings of the older English divines, forming the "Christian Library." They include translations, abridgments, and extracts from many writers, memoirs, medical works (especially for the benefit of the poor), grammars of five languages, an English dictionary with a racy preface, extracts from his voluminous manuscript journals, sermons, doctrinal treatises, controversial papers in defence of his work, his opinions and his personal character, tracts, an ecclesiastical history in four volumes, and a history of England of the same size, a work on natural philosophy in five volumes, most of which were revised and carried through several editions.

His publishing enriched others, not himself; for, after labouring "more than most writers for seventy years," he gained, he tells us, "only a debt of near £600." Wesley's object in writing has been well stated to be "that peasants and persons of neglected education might have the means of acquiring useful knowledge at the smallest expense of time and money." In this he laboured almost alone for half a century—anticipating the work of more recent years.

Two months only of the year 1791 remain to be chronicled. They were spent in London.

He preached at Lambeth on Thursday, February 17th; on Friday, he read and wrote as usual, and preached at Chelsea in the evening. Saturday was spent in reading and writing. In a letter to a friend in Worcester he says, "As the state of my health is exceeding wavering, and waxes worse, I cannot yet lay down any plans for my future journeys. Indeed I propose, if God permit, to set out for Bristol on the 28th instant; but how much further I shall be able to go I cannot yet determine. If I am pretty well, I hope to be at Worcester about the 22nd of March." He sent forward his chaise and horses to Bristol, and took places for himself and friends in the Bath coach. But ere the day for starting had arrived, his earthly journeys had ceased. He was unable to preach on Sunday, but on Tuesday he preached at City Road. On Wednesday he rose at four, paid a visit to a magistrate at Leatherhead, eighteen miles from London, and preached in the dining-room from the words, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." This was his last sermon! So ended the most remarkable preaching career that the Church of Christ has witnessed in modern times. The following day he spent with his friend Mr. Wolff, at Banham, where he penned his last letter. So, one by one, his works ceased.

Extracts from two letters written in these months may well be inserted here. The first, dated February 1, 1790, was addressed to Ezekiel Cooper, one of the

itinerants in America, and contained the following passage :—

“I have given a distinct account of the work of God which has been wrought in Britain and Ireland for more than half a century. We want some of you to give us a connected relation of what our Lord has been doing in America since the time that Richard Boardman accepted the invitation, and left his country to serve you. See that you never give place to one thought of separating from your brethren in Europe. Lose no opportunity of declaring to all men that the Methodists are one people in all the world, and that it is their full determination so to continue :—

‘Though mountains rise, and oceans roll,  
To sever us in vain.’”

The second letter, his last, was addressed to the great anti-slavery advocate, Wilberforce.\* It is dated London, February 24, 1791.

“MY DEAR SIR,—Unless the Divine power has raised you up to be as Athanasius, *contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise, in opposing that execrable villany which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils: but, *if God be for you, who can be against you?* Are all of them together stronger than God? O, ‘*be not weary in well-doing.*’ Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it.

“Reading this morning a tract, wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance, that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a *law*, in our colonies, that the

\* It is a fact deserving of permanent record that William Wilberforce privately gave Mrs. Charles Wesley, from 1789 to 1822, an annuity of £50, to supplement her very small income.

*oath* of a black, against a white, goes for nothing. What villany is this!

“That He who has guided you, from your youth up, may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of, dear sir,

“Your affectionate Servant,

“JOHN WESLEY.”

On the day after this letter was written he was brought home to City Road, retired to his room, and asked to be left alone for half-an-hour; shortly afterwards it was found needful to call in his physician.

He remained but one brief week in his room, repeating and singing, as he was able, snatches of his brother's and Dr. Watts's hymns, the chaste expression of his cultured faith, and words of the Holy Scriptures he had so long studied, loved, and proclaimed; and now and again exultingly declaring, “The best of all is God is with us;” while his friends around responded to his repeated request to “pray and praise.”

Then, surrounded by his dearest friends, true representatives of his “people,” and while they on bended knees commended his spirit to God,—faithful Joseph Bradford, one of his travelling preachers, as was most fitting, saying “Lift up your heads O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the heir of glory shall come in”—with a simple “farewell” upon his lips, John Wesley fell calmly asleep about nine o'clock in the morning of March 2nd, 1791, aged eighty-eight years. Then his sorrowing friends arose, and standing round his lifeless body sang a hymn, knelt again and prayed and wept, and in sorrow departed.

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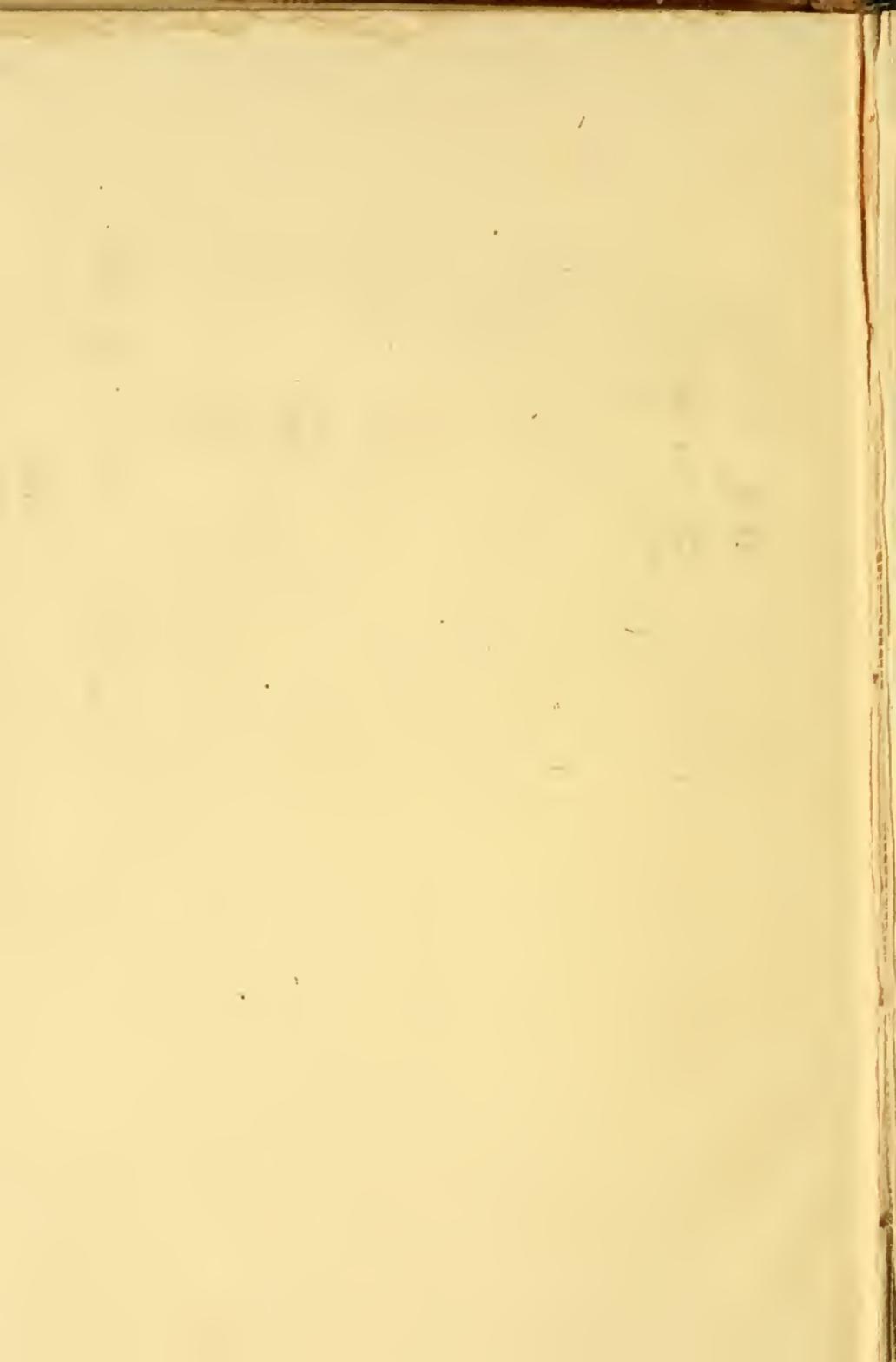
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