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OF  
*EARLY*  
METHODISM.

*Withrow.*

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***WORTHIES OF EARLY METHODISM.***



WORTHIES  
OF  
EARLY METHODISM.

BY THE  
REV. WILLIAM H. WITHROW, M.A.

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"The memory of the just is blessed."—*Proverbs.*

"That the generation to come might know them; who should  
arise and declare them to their children."—*Psalms.*

"Lives of great men all remind us,  
We may make our lives sublime."

—*Longfellow.*

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TORONTO:  
SAMUEL ROSE, METHODIST BOOK ROOM.

1878.

W. H. B. S. T.  
TO THE  
SARAH B. COACH

BX 8A91  
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ENTERED, according to the Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy-eight, by the REV. SAMUEL ROSE, in the office of the Minister of Agriculture.

862678

TO THE  
REV. SAMUEL DWIGHT RICE, D.D.,

WHO HAS  
ILLUSTRATED IN HIS LIFE THOSE MORAL PRINCIPLES  
WHICH INSPIRED  
THE  
*WORTHIES OF EARLY METHODISM*

HEREIN COMMEMORATED,  
*This Book,*  
AS A TRIBUTE OF AFFECTIONATE ESTEEM  
TO THE  
GUIDE AND INSTRUCTOR OF MY YOUTH,  
AND THE  
FRIEND OF MY LATER YEARS,

IS  
*Respectfully Dedicated*

BY THE

*AUTHOR.*



## PREFACE.

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**N**O grander or more heroic characters ever existed than many of those developed by the great religious revival of the last century. The records of their lives have been for many years among the choicest classics of Methodism. Amid the multiplicity of modern books, however, the younger generation of readers is far less familiar with their grand life-story than is desirable. These condensed narrative sketches of some of the more conspicuous of those early worthies have therefore been prepared that their saintly character may become better known, especially among the young. By the study of these noble lives may they catch the inspiration of their moral heroism and emulate their holy zeal for the glory of God and the welfare of man.

So shall the bright succession run  
Through the last courses of the sun.

So may they, too, become followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

W. H. W.

Toronto, January 7th, 1878.





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I.

John Nelson.





## WORTHIES OF EARLY METHODISM.

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### I.

#### JOHN NELSON, THE YORKSHIRE MASON.

“**J** JOHN NELSON, was born in the parish of Birstal, in the West Riding in the County of York, in October, 1707, and brought up a mason, as was my father before me.” Thus begins one of the most remarkable autobiographies in the language. In simple, homely Saxon words, the author tells the story of his life. We get in his pages a vivid picture of the England of a hundred years ago—of its spiritual destitution, and of the great Wesleyan revival that swept over it, and gave it a grand, moral impulse, which is felt to-day throughout the world.

John Nelson's life was one of apostolic zeal and grandest heroism. Like many a man through whom God has blessed the world, he was made to pass through intense religious experience, doubtless, that he might the better counsel and comfort

those who were in spiritual distress. We shall tell the story, as much as possible, in his own words. While yet a boy, he was "horribly terrified with the thoughts of death and judgment." As the awful imagery of the Apocalypse was presented to his mind, the word came with such power that he "fell with his face on the floor, and wept till the place was as wet, where he lay, as if water had been poured thereon." Still, he had no saving acquaintance with the truth till after his marriage and settlement in life. But all the while, his heart cried out for the living God. The hand of God was heavy upon him, and often forty times a day he prayed for pardon. His fellow-workmen persecuted him because he would not drink with them, till he fought with several of them; then they let him alone. He wandered from one part of the kingdom to another, seeking rest and finding none. In his thirtieth year, he writes, "O that I had been a horse or a sheep! Rather than live thirty years more as I have, I would choose strangling. O that I had never been born!" An awful sense of the reality of the unseen world and of the impending terrors of the judgment-day, weighed, like an intolerable load, upon him. He went from church to church,—to St. Paul's, to the Dissenters, the Quakers, the Roman Catholics, to "all but the Jews,"—to try to save his soul; but

still the burden of conscious guilt was unremoved. He realized, in all its bitterness, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified."

A score of times he stood amid the surging, grimy throng that gathered around Whitefield, as he preached on Moorfields; but though he loved the man, and was ready to fight for him, he found no peace from hearing him. The pains of hell gat hold upon him. Sleep departed from his eyes, and when he fell into slumber he dreamed that he was engaged in mortal combat with Satan, and awoke convulsed with horror and affright.

At last John Wesley preached at Moorfields. When he spoke he made the heart of Nelson beat like the pendulum of a clock. Conviction deepened. He felt that his great business in this world was to get well out of it. His friends would have knocked Mr. Wesley's brains out, for he would be the ruin, they said, of many families if he were allowed to live and go on as he did. For weeks Nelson wrestled with God in agony of soul. At last he vowed that he would neither eat nor drink till he found forgiveness. He prayed till he could pray no more. He got up and walked to and fro, and prayed again, the tears falling from his eyes like great drops of rain. A third time he fell upon his knees, but "was dumb as a beast before God." At length, in an agony, he cried out, "Lord, thy



will be done, damn or save." That moment was Jesus Christ evidently set before him as crucified for his sins. His heart at once was set at liberty, and he began to sing, "O Lord, I will praise Thee. though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me." Through such spiritual travail was this valiant soul born into the kingdom of God.

That night he was driven from his lodgings on account of his much praying and ado about religion; but, as he was leaving, conviction seized upon his hosts, and they were both, man and wife, soon made partakers of the same grace.

Nelson was ordered to oversee some work on the following Sunday. He declined, and was threatened with dismissal from his employment. "I will not willingly offend God," he replied. "Nay, I would rather see my wife and children beg their way barefoot to heaven than ride in a coach to hell. I will run the risk of wanting bread here rather than the hazard of wanting water hereafter." His master swore that he was as mad as Whitefield; that Wesley had made a fool of him. But, instead of being dismissed, he was raised higher than ever in his master's regard, nor were any men set to work on the Sunday.

In all this time he had never spoken to Mr. Wesley, nor conversed with any experienced person

about religion. He longed to find some one to talk with ; but, he pathetically says, he sought in vain, for he could find none. Nevertheless, he was taught of God, and had sweet fellowship with Him in almost constant prayer and in the study of His Holy Word.

Such a desire for the salvation of souls now possessed him that he hired one of his fellow-workmen to hear Mr. Wesley preach, which led to his conversion and that of his wife.

But Nelson was permitted to be sorely buffeted by Satan ; grievous temptations assailed his soul, God's hand, too, was laid heavy upon him. An accumulation of calamities, almost like the afflictions of Job, overtook him. A single letter informed him that his almost idolized daughter was dead, that his son's life was despaired of, that his wife had fallen from a horse and was lamed, that his father-in-law was dead and his mother sick. But-like Job, he exclaimed, " Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

A solemn sense of the presence of God resting upon him constrained him to leave London and go to Yorkshire. He set out on his eventful journey, but he " had no more thought of preaching than of eating fire." His friends were astonished at the story of his conversion. They said they had never heard of such a thing in their lives.

His mother said his head was turned. "Yes," he replied, "and, I thank God, my heart also." His neighbours upbraided and mocked him. His wife refused to live with him; but by his faith and love he brought her to a knowledge of the Saviour. He forthwith began exhorting his neighbours to flee from the wrath to come. Like Andrew, he first brought his own brother to Jesus, and in a few days, six of his neighbours also. There was a spiritual famine in the land, and he had found the bread of life. He could not, therefore, but cry aloud to those who were perishing of soul-hunger. Soon his aged mother, another brother, and most of his kindred were brought to God; and, for several weeks, six or seven persons every week were converted through his exhortations.

He was urged to preach, but he exclaimed, "O Lord, Thou knowest I had rather be hanged on that tree than go out to preach;" and, Jonah-like, he fled from the call of God. A great congregation was gathered in the fields, and begged him to preach. He fell flat on his face, and lay an hour on the grass tasting, he believed, the cup of the damned. "Let me die, let me die!" he exclaimed in bitterness of soul, in his shrinking from the burden of this cross. But in his anguish the Sun of Righteousness shone upon him, and he

exclaimed, "Lord, I am ready to go to hell and preach to the devils if Thou require it." That night two men were converted under his burning words, which he took as a seal of his call of God to preach the Gospel. But in his mental strait he would have given ten pounds, he said, for an hour's conversation with Mr. Wesley.

Some of his more cautious friends now urged him to wait a month till he knew more of his own heart; but the Word of God was a fire in his bones, and he exclaimed, "Nay, unless you will persuade the devil to be still for a month from going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Oftentimes when he preached at night, after his day's work, the people, hungering for the bread of life, refused to go away, waiting like beggars that wanted a morsel of food.

Soon he began his ranging through the kingdom, a herald of salvation proclaiming the Word of Life. As he entered Leeds, he was warned,— "If you preach there you need not expect to come out alive, for a company of men have sworn that they will kill you." "All the men in the town cannot kill me," answered the dauntless soul, "till I have done my Heavenly Father's work." But the people, he tells us, heard the Word with meekness. At Manchester, however, some one threw a stone which cut him in the head, but

as his audience saw the blood run down his face, they kept quiet till he was done preaching. With a boldness not less than Luther's on his way to the Diet of Worms, the sturdy Englishman, in spite of the threat that he would be mobbed and killed if he entered Grimsby, exclaimed, "By the grace of God, I will preach if there were as many devils in it as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses."

Nelson's most bitter opposition came from dissolute clergymen of the Established Church. In Derbyshire, a drunken parson, with a lot of lead-miners, began to halloo and shout as if they were hunting with a pack of hounds; but the power of the truth so affected the rude miners that they became the champions of the man they came to persecute. Thus God put a bridle in the mouths of howling mobs, who came not merely to mock but to kill, and many of them remained to pray.

He was summoned by Mr Wesley to London. But he had worn out his clothes in the cause of God and had none fit to travel till some tradesmen, unsolicited, sent him cloth for a suit. Unable to hire a horse, he set out on foot for London, preaching as he went. The aristocratic gownsmen and embryo parsons of Oxford vied, in ruffianism, with the rude miners of Derbyshire.

"I never heard a soldier or sailor," says Nelson, "swear worse than they did."

On his way to Cornwall with a fellow-evangelist, they had but one horse between them, so they rode by turns. Like the Apostle Paul, Nelson laboured with his hands at his trade, that he might not be burdensome to those to whom he preached. Nevertheless, he was sometimes in want of bread, and, like his Master, had not where to lay his head. At St. Ives, he and Mr. Wesley, for some time, slept every night on the floor—the earned Oxford Fellow and the Yorkshire mason, side by side. "Mr. Wesley," writes Nelson, "had my great coat for a pillow, and I had Burkett's Notes on the New Testament for mine. After being here three weeks, one morning, about three o'clock, Mr. Wesley turned over, saying, 'Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer. I have one whole side yet, for the skin is off but one side.' We usually preached on the commons," he adds "and it was but seldom any asked us to eat or drink."

One day after preaching, Mr. Wesley stopped his horse to pick the wayside berries, saying, "Brother Nelson, we ought to be thankful that there are plenty of blackberries; for this is the best country I ever saw for getting a stomach, but the worst I ever saw for getting food. I

thought of begging a crust of a woman," he added, "but forgot it till I had got some distance from the house." By such unostentatious heroism were the foundations of Methodism laid in Great Britain by these apostolic labourers.

On Nelson's return to Yorkshire he found his wife ill through maltreatment by a mob, while she was bravely defending a preacher whom they were assaulting. "You are Nelson's wife, and here you shall die," swore the savages, and did their best to fulfil their threat.

"In Leeds," Nelson naively remarks, "the mob did not meddle with me, only some boys threw about a peck of turnips at me." A sergeant, who came to assault him, publicly begged his pardon, and went away weeping.

At Grimsby, the Church parson rallied a drunken mob, and smashed the windows and furniture of the house with paving stones. A ringleader, after beating his drum three-quarters of an hour, began to listen, and then to weep, and at last to pray. "So we had great peace in our shattered house that night," says Nelson, "and God's presence amongst us."

At length the drink-loving parsons and the ale-house keepers—worthy allies!—resolved that Nelson must be impressed into the army, as the only way to stop his interference with their

pleasure or profits. Still he durst not keep silent, but continued hewing stone all day and preaching every night. "I am not my own but the Lord's," he said; "he that lays hands on me will burn his own fingers." By a monstrous perversion of justice he was arrested as a vagrant; £500 bail was refused; and the Commissioners of the Peace, among whom was the parson; pressed him as a soldier, under the penalty of death if he refused. Still his soul was kept in perfect peace, and he prayed to God to forgive them, for they knew not what they did.

With other prisoners condemned for vagrancy and theft, Nelson was marched off to York, he being singled out for especial severity. At Bradford, he was lodged in a noisome dungeon, reeking with filth, without even a stone to sit on, and with only a little foul straw for a bed—a type of too many of England's prisons a hundred years ago. But his soul was so filled with the love of God that the felon's cell was to him a paradise. Exulting in the glorious liberty of the sons of God, he realized that

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage.

Some friends brought him meat and drink, which



they put through the small opening in the door, and

Like Paul and Silas in the prison,  
They sang the praise of Christ arisen.

“I wished that my enemies,” he says, “were as happy in their houses as I was in the dungeon.”

At four o'clock in the morning his noble wife visited his cell and said, although she then most required a husband's care, “Be not concerned about me and the children: He that feeds the young ravens will be mindful of us;” and the brave-souled husband answered, “I cannot fear either man or devil, so long as I find the love of God as I do now.”

“Now, Nelson, where is thy God?” jeered a woman, as the prisoners stood, like a gang of slaves, for hours in the streets of Leeds. He referred her to Micah vii. 8, 10, “Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy,” etc.

Large bail was offered for his release, but was refused. “I am too notorious a criminal,” he somewhat bitterly remarks, “to be allowed such favours; for Christianity is a crime which the world will never forgive.” And this persecution for righteousness' sake took place in Christian England little more than a hundred years ago.

But he was not without consolation. “The time has not yet come,” he says, “for me to be

hated of all men for Christ's sake." At night a hundred of his friends visited him in the jail. They sang a hymn and prayed together, and he exhorted them through the opening in his cell-door.

When he was brought before the military officers, he boldly reproved them for the sin of swearing. "You must not preach here," he was told; but he answered, "There is but one way to prevent it, that is, to swear no more in my hearing." All York came forth to see him guarded through the streets, "as if he had been one that had laid waste the nation;" but he passed through the city as if there had been none in it but God and himself. He refused to take the King's money. "I cannot bow my knee to pray for a man and then get up and kill him," he said. Nevertheless, he was girded with the weapons of war; but he bore them as a cross, and would not defile his conscience by using them. But if he was bound, the Word of God was not bound; for "if any blasphemed, he reproved them, whether rich or poor."

At the instigation of some clergymen, he was forbidden to preach, under the penalty of being severely flogged; but, Peter-like, he replied, "Is it better to obey God than man?" "I will have no preaching nor praying in the regiment," swore

the officer. "Then," said Nelson, "you should have no swearing nor cursing either." He was, however, carried off to prison; yet God gave him to rest as well on the bare boards, he declares, as if he had been on a bed of down. "For what were you imprisoned?" demanded the major. "For warning people to flee from the wrath to come," said the intrepid preacher; "and I shall do so again, unless you cut my tongue out."

The London Methodists, having hired a substitute to serve in his place, through the influence of the Wesleys and the Countess of Huntingdon with the Earl of Stair, the discharge of this resolute non-combatant was procured. When he left the regiment, several of his fellow-soldiers wept and desired him to pray for them.

He was now free to indulge his hallowed passion—to preach the Gospel without let or hindrance. For the most part the people heard him gladly; yet, in many places, lewd fellows of the baser sort assailed him with sticks, stones, and filth. Once a halter was put round his neck to drag him to the river to drown him. At Ackham, in Yorkshire, he was knocked down eight times in succession by a drunken mob, led by some "young gentlemen;" he was dragged over the stones by the hair of the head, kicked, beaten, and trampled on, "to tread the Holy Spirit out of him," as the murderous

wretches blasphemously declared. "We cannot kill him," they said; "if a cat has nine lives, he has nine score." "This," says Nelson, "was on Easter Sunday." They swore they would serve Mr. Wesley the same way. "Then we shall be rid of the Methodists forever," they said, in vain, deluded prophecy; "for none will dare to come if they two be killed." The next morning this Ajax of Methodism set out to meet Mr. Wesley, and "was enabled to ride forty miles that day." But these things were light afflictions; for the Gospel had free course, and multitudes were converted to God.

Here ends the remarkable journal of John Nelson. For five and twenty years longer he continued to range through the kingdom as one of Mr. Wesley's regular helpers—a burning and a shining light to all—a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. He finished his course with joy, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, 1774.

We shall obtrude no comments of our own upon the lessons of this noble life. No braver soul ever went to the martyr's stake, or won the martyr's starry and unwithering crown. He, and such as he, by their consecrated toils, their sufferings, and their undying zeal, laid the foundations of that goodly structure of Methodism that now rises fair throughout the land they loved so well, and

throughout the world. Their memory is the imperishable heritage of the Church universal. It shall be to all time, and in all lands, a glorious example of valiant living and holy dying, a rebuke to indolence or self-seeking, and an inspiration to zeal and energy in promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls.



II.

**Silas Cold.**





## II.

### SILAS TOLD, THE PRISONERS' FRIEND.

**T**HE life of Silas Told was one of extraordinary vicissitude. He has left the record of his remarkable adventures, written with a vividness of detail that Defoe might have envied. He was born in the ancient seaport of Bristol, in the year 1711. Both his father and grandfather were eminent physicians and landed gentlemen. But, through misfortune and ill-advised speculation, the family, on the father's death, was reduced almost to poverty. Silas received a meagre education at a charity hospital, endowed by a wealthy East India merchant. Here, even in boyhood, he was the subject of deep convictions of sin and of subsequent religious enjoyment. While swimming with some school companions he was well-nigh drowned, and, with difficulty, was brought back to life, to pass through tribu-



lations which "seemed like a sea of blood and fire."

In his fourteenth year he was apprenticed to a West India sea captain. In the hard school of the ship's fore-castle, he received such barbarous treatment that he thought he should have broken his heart with grief. But the orphan cabin-boy, alone in the wide world, had no friend to whom he could apply for redress. On the Spanish Main the crew were several weeks on the short allowance of a single biscuit and half a pint of fowl water a day. At Kingston, Jamaica, they were overtaken by a hurricane, and of seventy-six sail in the harbour only one escaped destruction.

For miles along the shore the drowned seamen were cast up by the waves and devoured by the vultures. The poor lad was abandoned, ill of fever, in the port of Kingston, without money or friends, and lay down to die on a dunghill. Here he "pondered much upon Job's case, considering his own condition similar to his." Rescued from death by a London captain, he returned to England, and was soon shipped with a Guinea slaver, bound for the coast of Africa and the West Indies. A greater villain than his new master, he writes, he firmly believed never existed. From the negro savages he received more kindness than from his own countrymen. The appalling cruelties of that

floating hell, a slave ship, were never more vividly described. Battered down under the hatches, half the human cargo were suffocated in a single night. Driven to frenzy by outrage and wrong, the slaves rose in mutiny. Overpowered by their tyrants, many plunged overboard and were drowned. Lust, and bloodshed, and murder rioted unrestrained. "The mariners," says Told, "seemed greedy of eternal death and damnation." The unhappy boy, amid these vile companionships, plunged recklessly into sin; yet, through the mercy of God, his terrified conscience was never without fear of death, hell, and the judgment.

The outrages and wrongs wreaked upon the hapless slaves in Jamaica were too revolting to be described. By an awful and inevitable retribution, such wickedness degraded masters as well as slaves; and in his many sojourns on the island Told never met a single person having the fear of God, or even the form of godliness.

With a sailor-like vein of superstition, he tells us that, on the home voyage, the captain being sick, a hideous devil-fish followed the ship for eighteen hundred miles, and on the captain's death disappeared, and was seen no more.

During a later voyage the vessel in which Told sailed was captured by Spanish pirates, and the crew were informed that "every one of them should

be hanged, and that without ceremony." The prize, with its crew, made its escape, however, but only to be wrecked upon a rocky shore. The crew were rescued by a New England vessel, but were again wrecked on Martha's Vineyard. Reaching the mainland, they set out for Boston, but were arrested for travelling on Sunday. In Boston, "a commodious and beautiful city," Told remained four months, and—marked contrast to Jamaica!—never heard an oath uttered, nor saw any Sabbath-breaking, nor found an individual guilty of extortion. "Would to God," he exclaims, "that I could say this of the inhabitants of Old England."

After several other voyages, in one of which, through stress of weather, the ship's company could dress no food nor change their wet clothing for six weeks, the whole crew were pressed for the royal navy. The commander of the ship to which Told was assigned, in striking exception to many of his class of that age, was a devout Christian, and used constantly to visit the ship's invalids on his knees at their bedsides. The story of Told's short sailor-courtship and marriage is recorded in four lines. He now joined the royal fleet of twenty-four ships of the line, which soon sailed to Lisbon to protect the Brazil fleet from the Spaniards. They lay at anchor in the Tagus ten

months, and then returned to Chatham, which movement occupied another month. Those were the leisurely times before the days of steam and telegraphs.\* Told was now paid off, and, disgusted with the hardships and wickedness of a life before the mast, he never went to sea again.

“Being now married, and desirous of living a regular life,” as he says, “he habituated himself to church-going;” but, finding churchmen living as others, he hastily concluded that religion was a mere sham. He obtained the position of a schoolmaster on the magnificent salary of £14 a year. The curate of the parish frequently decoyed him to his lodgings to join him in smoking drinking, and singing songs, so that often he could scarcely find his way home. As the sailor once quoted a text of Scripture, the parson exclaimed, “Told, are you such a blockhead as to believe that stuff? It is nothing but a pack of lies.” Such clerical influence and example certainly did not deepen his conviction of the reality of religion.

He shortly after found employment with a builder in London. One day a young bricklayer asked him some question on business. He answered him roughly, which treatment the young man re-

\* Even half a century later, Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor, was a whole year in making the journey from Copenhagen to Rome.

ceived with much meekness. "This," says Told, "struck me with surprise." That young man, by his meek silence, had preached an eloquent sermon, which led to Told's conversion, and, through him, to the conversion of multitudes of others.

His new acquaintance introduced him among "the people called Methodists." Told tried to stifle his convictions by cursing and swearing at his young friend, who had been so largely the cause of them; but he bore it all with unwearied patience, without returning one evil look or word. "His countenance," says Told, "appeared full of holy grief, which greatly condemned me."

Told was at length induced to go to early Methodist service at "the Foundery." He found it a ruinous old place which the Government had used for casting cannon. It had been abandoned, and was much dilapidated. Above the smoke-begrimed rafters was seen the tile roof-covering. A few rough deal boards were put together to form a temporary pulpit. Such was the rude cradle of that wondrous child of Providence called Methodism.\*

Exactly at five o'clock a whisper ran through the large congregation that had assembled, "Here

\* Wesley assigns as the epoch of Methodism the formation of the United Society, immediately following the purchase of the Foundery in 1739.

he comes, here he comes!" Told expected to see "some farmer's son, who, not able to support himself, was making a penny in this low manner." Instead of this, he beheld a learned clergyman of the Established Church arrayed in gown and bands. The singing he much enjoyed, but the extempore prayer savoured rather of dissent for Told's sturdy Churchmanship. Wesley's text was, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you." The words sank into the heart of the long-storm-tossed sailor, weary with bearing its load of sorrow and sin. "As long as I live I will never leave this man," he exclaimed, with a characteristic, generous impulse. He was soon met by persecution. "What, Told, are you a Whitefieldite?" jeered his boon companions. "As sure as you are born, if you follow them you are damned," admonished those zealous enemies of Methodism. His wife, also, although, he says, "a worthy, honest woman," swore at him, and said, "I hope you have not been among the Methodists. I'll sacrifice my soul rather than you shall go among those miscreants." Thus was the despised sect everywhere spoken against. His firmness and affection, however, overcame her opposition.

Told was soon requested by Mr. Wesley to undertake the teaching of the charity children at the Foundery school, at the salary of ten shillings

a week. At this work he continued for seven years, having the children under his care from five in the morning to five in the evening, both winter and summer. During this time he educated two hundred and seventy-five boys, most of whom were fit for any trade." Thus early did Methodism grapple with the social problem of the education of the ignorant masses of the population.

One morning as Told, with his scholars, attended the five o'clock sermon, Mr. Wesley preached from the words, "I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." The generous-hearted sailor was conscience-stricken at his neglect of what was now revealed as a manifest duty, and was "filled with horror of mind beyond expression." Learning that ten malefactors were lying in Newgate under sentence of death, he committed his school, without an hour's delay, to the care of an usher, and hastened to the prison.

Silas Told had at length found his vocation. For five and thirty years he continued to burrow in the dungeons of London and the neighbouring towns—often literally to burrow, for many of them were underground—carrying the light and liberty of the Gospel to their dark cells, and to the still darker hearts of their inmates. The unvarnished story of his experiences abounds in incidents of the most thrilling and often harrowing interest.

He was often locked up with the felons all night before their execution ; he sat beside them as they rode to the gallows in the death-cart, with the halter on their necks, sharing with them the jibes and jeers, and sometimes the missiles, of the inhuman mob who gloated on their misery ; he prayed with them and exhorted and comforted them as they stood on the brink of eternity ; he begged or purchased their bodies for burial ; and often succoured their wretched and suffering families. He led many to repentance and forgiveness of sins. Hardened criminals broke down under his loving exhortations ; and turnkeys, sheriffs, and hangmen wept as they listened to his prayers. Friendless and degraded outcasts clung to him for sympathy and counsel, and through the manifestation of human love and pity caught a glimpse of the infinite love and pity of Him who died as a male factor to save the malefactors. Through his influence the felon's cell became to many the antechamber of heaven ; and to those that sat in darkness and affliction and terror, light and joy and gladness sprang up. The ribald oaths and obscene riot of the British jails—then the vilest in Europe, save those of the Inquisition—often gave place to the singing of Christian hymns and the voice of prayer and praise. At one time Told had a Methodist society



of thirty members, and at another, of thirty-six members, among the poor debtors of Newgate. Yet was he "very cautious of daubing them with untempered mortar," but sought to bring about their real and permanent conversion. The chief opposition to this Christ-like work came from the "ordinaries" or chaplains, whose hireling and heartless service was put to shame by the intense and loving zeal of this voluntary evangelist. But he burst through every obstacle, and, "in the name of God, would take no denial." The appalling condition of that prison-world, with which he became so familiar, makes one recoil with horror.

In many of the prisons there was little or no classification of age or sex, and hardened felons became the teachers in crime of youthful offenders against cruelly unjust laws. The extortion and rapacity and inhumanity of jailors and turnkeys seem to us almost incredible. The dungeons reeked with squalor and wretchedness and filth. Honest debtors were confined, sometimes for years, in odious cells; and, as a favour, were permitted, caged like wild beasts, to solicit the precarious charity of passers-by. Men and women were dragged on hurdles to Tyburn, and hanged by the score, for forgery, for larceny, for petty theft. And, worst of all, Told cites certain instances which demonstrate, by the subsequent discovery

of the real criminal, that sometimes innocent persons had fallen victims to this sanguinary code.

One young woman was thus judicially done to death, although even the sheriff was convinced of her innocence. A ribald mob clamoured for her blood, her religious resignation was jibed at as hardness of heart, and so great was the popular fury that Told, riding with her to the gallows, was in imminent peril of assault. Her innocence was afterwards completely established.

Told records the tragic circumstance of a poor man who was hanged for stealing sixpence to buy bread for his starving wife and babes. Their parting in the prison was a harrowing scene. Told collected from a poor Methodist congregation a sum of money for the destitute widow, and successfully overcame the official brutality of the poorhouse guardians, so as to obtain for her parish relief.

On another occasion the multitude, when exhorted by Told to pray for the passing soul, answered with a shout of execration, and a shower of stones that endangered the life of the culprit before the law could do its work. "Nothing could have equalled them," says Told, "but the spirits let loose from the infernal pit." Yet all this did not draw off the mind of the dying

woman from resting in that supreme hour on the Lord Jesus.

Sometimes a rescue of the culprit was attempted by his friends. A volley of stones would assail the sheriff's *posse*, and a rush would be made toward the gallows. Then the ghastly proceeding would be hurried through with the most indecent despatch and confusion.

Yet the frequency of this awful spectacle did not diminish crime. On the contrary, it flourished, seemingly unrestrained, beneath the very gallows. Familiarity with scenes of violence created a recklessness of human life and propensity to bloodshed. Often the confederates of the felon surrounded the gibbet and exhorted the partner of their guilt "to die game," as the phrase was. Even the sheriff's officers sometimes incurred the penalty they had often assisted to inflict. We may well rejoice that, through the ameliorating influence of a revived Christianity on the penal discipline and social life of Christendom, such scenes of horror are now scarcely conceivable; and may we not hope that under its wider sway the dread shadow of the gallows may soon cease to affront the day?

Sometimes the faithful warning and most solemn adjuration of this hero-heart, burning with such passionate zeal to "pluck poor souls out of the

fire," though he probed the guilty conscience to the quick, failed to move men to repentance, even on the awful brink of perdition; but many, without doubt, found, through temporal death, eternal life.

Sometimes Told had the great joy of conveying a reprieve to the condemned. After a convivial election dinner, three young sprigs of nobility, half crazed with drink, diverted themselves by playing highwaymen and robbing a farmer. One of them, an officer on one of the King's ships, was betrothed to Lady Betty Hamilton, the daughter of an ancient ducal house. The lady importuned the King upon her knees for the life of her lover. "Madam," said His Majesty, "there is no end to your importunity. I will spare his life upon condition that he be not acquainted therewith till he arrives at the place of execution." The condemned man fainted with joy when the reprieve was communicated to him; "but when I saw him put into a coach," says Told, "and perceived that Lady Betty Hamilton was seated therein, in order to receive him, my fear was at an end."

Such were some of the checkered scenes in which this humble hero bore a prominent part. He was not only a remarkable trophy of divine grace, but an example of the power of Metho-

dism to use lowly and unlettered men in evangelistic and philanthropic work. And what was the inspiration of this unwearying zeal? It was the *entire consecration* of an earnest soul to the service of its divine Master. At a time when Told rose daily at four o'clock, attended morning service at five, and toiled every spare hour for the prisoner and the outcast, he was agonizing in soul over the remains of the carnal mind. Like the psalmist, he even forgot to eat bread by reason of his sin. Often he wandered in the fields till near midnight, "roaring for very disquietude of soul." If he might, he would have chosen "strangling rather than life." At length deliverance came. The heavens seemed visibly to open before him, and Jesus stood stretching forth His bleeding palms in the benedictions of full salvation. Tears gushed from the eyes of the impassioned suppliant, and, in ecstasy of soul, he exclaimed, "Lord, it is enough."

Thus was he anointed to preach good tidings to the prisoners, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty of soul to them that were bound. Like the Lord he loved, he went about doing good, till, with the weight of well-nigh seventy years upon him, "he cheerfully resigned his soul into the hands of his Heavenly Father."

III.

Susanna Wesley.





### III.

#### SUSANNA WESLEY

**T**HE record of woman's work and woman's influence in the Christian Church forms one of the noblest and most inspiring chapters in its history. From none did our Lord receive more hallowed ministration or kinder sympathy than from the sisters of Bethany and those loving women who, lingering longest at the cross and visiting earliest the sepulchre, first communicated the tidings of His resurrection to His incredulous disciples. Among the earliest converts and most devoted adherents of St. Paul were those faithful women who ministered unto him in the Gospel—Phoebe and Lydia, and Priscilla, and Persis, and Tryphena, and Tryphosa, and, doubtless, many another, whose name, unrecorded on earth, is written in the Book of Life. The names, too, of Helena, of Monica, of Eusebia, of Paula, of Marcella, with others of lesser note, though not of inferior piety and zeal, in early ecclesiastical



history, will remain forever an inspiration and a spell of power in the Christian Church.

And no branch of the Church has been rich in holy and devoted women than has Methodism. To mention only a few of the illustrious names of its early years, we have Susanna Wesley; Selina, Countess of Huntingdon; Lady Maxwell; Mary Fletcher; Grace Murray; Dinah Evans, the heroine of "Adam Bede;"\* Elizabeth Walbridge, immortalised by Legh Richmond in that Christian classic, "The Dairyman's Daughter;" and Barbara Heck, the real foundress of Methodism on this continent, whose ashes slumber in a quiet graveyard of our Canadian Methodist Church.

Of these, one of the most notable and most influential on the destiny of Methodism, of which she was indeed the virtual foundress, was Susanna Wesley.† She fulfils the poet's ideal of true womanhood:—

A perfect woman, nobly planned /  
To warn, to comfort, and command ;  
And yet a spirit still, and bright  
With something of an angel light.

In the quiet rectory of Epworth, often amid

\* Miss Evans, now Mrs. G. H. Lewes, is herself a relative of Seth Evans, commemorated in "Adam Bede."

† "The mother of the Wesleys," says Southey, "was also the mother of Methodism."

straitened circumstances and manifold household cares, she moulded the character of those distinguished sons who were destined to originate a great religious movement, which should morally regenerate the age in which they lived and send its waves of beneficent influence to furthest shores and remotest times.

In the eyes of some, it will be a feature of additional interest in the history of Susanna Wesley that she was "nobly related." But no adventitious circumstances of rank or birth can increase the lustre of her character. She was the daughter of Dr. Samuel Annesley, who was a nephew of the Earl of Anglesea, a noble lord, whose pedigree goes back to the Norman conquest. Her father was noted at Oxford for his piety and zeal. He entered the ministry of the National Church, and acted as a chaplain at sea. He subsequently preached in Kent and in two of the largest congregations in London, and was also lecturer at St. Paul's. When the Act of Uniformity was passed, in 1662, Dr. Annesley was one of the two thousand English rectors and vicars who, for conscience' sake, were driven from their parishes, and persecuted throughout the realm. He became a prominent leader among the ejected Nonconformists, preaching almost daily, and finding food and shelter for many

of his impoverished brethren. After a half a century's service and many sore trials, from which he never shrank, he died on the last day of the year 1696, exclaiming, "I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness; satisfied—satisfied." He was beloved and revered by all who knew him; and, on her deathbed, his noble relative, the Countess of Anglesea, requested to be buried in his grave.

From such pious parentage was Susanna Wesley descended, and the energy of character and intellectual vigour which she inherited she transmitted to her illustrious son. She received, under her father's care, an education superior to that of most young women of her own, or, indeed, of the present, time. We are informed that she was acquainted with the Greek, Latin, and French languages, and exhibited a discriminative judgment of books. An illustration of her early maturity of thought and independence of character is presented in the fact that, before her thirteenth year, she had examined the ground of controversy between Churchmen and Dissenters, and adopted the principles of the Established Church, renouncing the views on account of which her father had been driven from his parish, and for which he had espoused a life of suffering and persecution. This change

of opinion, however, produced no interruption of the loving intercourse between the affectionate father and his favourite child.

Miss Annesley, about the year 1689, being then in her nineteenth or twentieth year, was married to the Rev. Samuel Wesley, the hard-working curate of a London parish, receiving an income of only thirty pounds a year. The Wesleys were also an ancient family, probably, as is inferred from the "scallop shell" upon their coat of arms, descended from crusading ancestors. It is remarkable that both the father and grandfather of the Rev. Samuel Wesley were clergymen of the Established Church, who, refusing to obey the Act of Uniformity, were driven from their homes and churches. By the Five Mile Act they were prohibited from approaching their former parishes or any borough town. Driven from place to place, fugitives and outcasts for conscience' sake, they preached wherever they could, enduring persecutions similar to those with which the early Methodists were afterwards so familiar. Four times was the father of Samuel Wesley thrown into prison—once for six, and, again, for three, months; and at length he sank into the grave at the early age of thirty-four. His aged father, heart-broken by his griefs and sorrows, soon followed him to Heaven. Of such godly stock, on

the side of both father and mother, familiar with persecutions, and strengthened in character by trial and suffering, was the founder of Methodism born.

A portrait of Susanna Wesley, taken not long after her marriage, presents a fair young face, with delicate features, of refined expression and almost classic regularity of outline, and with bright, vivacious eyes. A profusion of long and curling hair adorns a head of singularly graceful pose, "not without an air," says Dr. Stevens, "of the high-bred aristocracy from which she was descended." A beautiful hand and arm support a book upon her bosom. Her dress is simple, yet tasteful, like that of a well-bred lady of the period, and equally removed from the worldly fashions of the time and from the ascetic severity which characterised some of the women of early Methodism. Dr. Adam Clarke describes her as not only graceful, but beautiful. One of her sisters was painted by Sir Peter Lyly as one of the "beauties" of the age, but she is admitted to have been less beautiful than Mrs. Wesley.

But the more enduring attractions of her well-stored mind and of her amiable and pious disposition, surpassed even those of her person. She possessed a correct literary taste and sound judgment, and projected several literary works,

which, however, the practical duties of a busy life prevented her carrying into effect. Among these was a work on Natural and Revealed Religion, comprising her reasons for renouncing Dissent, and a discourse on the Eucharist. A fragment, which is still extant, on the Apostles' Creed "would not," says a competent critic, "have been discreditable to the theological literature of the day."

Her sincere and earnest piety was her most striking characteristic. She nourished her soul by daily meditation on the Word of God and by prayer. To this purpose, an hour every morning and evening was devoted. Her letters to her children, and her counsel to her sons on questions of grave religious importance, evince at once the clearness and the soundness of her judgment. The respect with which her views were received by her cultured and filial sons proves the weight which they attached to her opinions. The poetical faculty with which John, and especially Charles Wesley, were so highly endowed was derived from their father rather than from their mother, who has left no special proof of talent in this direction. With the Rev. Samuel Wesley on the contrary, "beating rhymes," as he called it, was almost a mania. He was a man of extraordinary literary industry, and poem after poem

came in rapid succession from his pen. These found their way into print by the aid of Dunton, a London publisher, who had married a daughter of Dr. Annesley. He rendered Mr. Wesley, however, more valuable service by making him acquainted with Susanna Annesley, his future wife. Pope knew him well, and commends him to Swift as a learned man whose prose is better than his poetry. His longer poems were a "Life of Christ" and a "History of the Old and New Testaments," written in rather doggerel rhymes; but his most able production was a learned Latin dissertation on the Book of Job. He possesses the rare distinction of having dedicated volumes to three successive Queens of England.

One of these dedications procured him the presentation to the rectory of Epworth, with a stipend of two hundred pounds a year. This was a piece of great good fortune, for, as he wrote to the Archbishop of York, "he had had but fifty pounds a year for six or seven years together, and one child, at least, per annum;" but he welcomed each addition to his family as a gift from God, and bravely struggled to provide bread for the constantly-increasing number of hungry mouths.

Even when living, with his wife and child, in lodgings in London on an income of thirty

pounds a year, his sturdy and hereditary independence was manifest. He was offered preferment by the Court party, if he would read from the pulpit King James the Second's famous Declaration of Indulgence; but, believing it to be a design to favour the Roman Catholics, as indeed it was, he not only refused to read it, but denounced it from the pulpit in a sermon on the words of the three Hebrew children with reference to the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar. The High Church notions of Samuel Wesley, like those of his wife, were the result, therefore, of conviction, and not of self-interest.

In the little rectory of Epworth was reproduced one of the noblest phases of what Coleridge has called the one sweet idyl of English society—life in a country parsonage. Here, in a quiet round of domestic joys and religious duties, was trained, for usefulness and for God, a numerous family, numbering in all nineteen children. Mr. Wesley was zealous in pulpit and pastoral labours and bold in rebuking sin, whether in lofty or lowly. Evil livers, to whom the truth was obnoxious, soon resented his plainness. They wounded his cattle, twice set fire to his house, and fired guns and shouted beneath his windows. For a small debt, he was arrested while leaving his church and thrown into prison, where he remained three



months. "Now I am at rest," he wrote from his cell to the Archbishop of York, "for I have come to the haven where I have long expected to be." But he immediately began to minister to the spiritual wants of his fellow-prisoners, to whom he read prayers daily and preached on Sunday. He was greatly sustained by the sympathy and fortitude of his noble wife. "It is not everyone," he wrote again to the Archbishop, "who could bear these things; but, I bless God, my wife is less concerned with suffering them than I am in writing, or than, I believe, your Grace will be in reading them." "When I came here," he writes again, "my stock was but little above ten shillings, and my wife at home had scarce so much. She soon sent me her rings, because she had nothing else to relieve me with, but I returned them."

The Epworth rectory was a humble, thatch-roofed building of wood and plaster, and venerable with moss and lichen, the growth of a hundred years. It had a parlour, hall, buttery, three large upper chambers, with some smaller apartments and a study, where, we are told, the rector spent most of his time, "beating rhymes" and preparing his sermons. The management of the domestic affairs, together with the often vexatious temporalities of the tithes and glebe, he left

to his more practical and capable wife. That rectory family was a model Christian household. Godly gravity was tempered by innocent gaiety, and the whole suffused with the tenderest domestic affection. "They had the common reputation," says Dr. Clarke, "of being the most loving family in Lincolnshire."

The centre and presiding genius of this fair domain was Susanna Wesley. Like the Roman matron, Cornelia, she cherished her children, of whom she had thirteen around her at once, as her chiefest jewels. They all bore pet "nick-names," which were fondly used, like an uttered caress, in the family circle and in the copious correspondence that was kept up after they left home. The noblest tribute to this loving mother is the passionate affection she inspired in her children.

Her son John writes to her from Oxford, at a time when her health was precarious, in strains of lover-like tenderness, and hopes that he may die before her, that he may not endure the anguish of her loss. "You did well," she wrote him, in unconscious prophecy, "to correct that fond desire of dying before me, since you do not know what work God may have for you to do before you leave the world."

By her daughters she was beloved almost with

filial idolatry. Death and sorrow many times entered that happy home, and several of the nineteen children died young. But upon the survivors was concentrated the affection of as warm a mother's love as ever throbbed in human breast. And the children seem to have been worthy of that mother. They were all intelligent; some of them noted for their sprightliness and wit, and others for their poetic faculty, and several of the girls were remarkable for their beauty and vivacity. Fun and frolic were not unknown in this large family of healthy, happy children, and the great hall of the rectory became an arena of hilarious recreations. "Games of skill and chance, even," says Dr. Stevens, "were among the family pastimes, such as John Wesley afterward prohibited among the Methodists."

But maternal affection never degenerated into undue indulgence. The home discipline was firm, but not rigorous; strength, guided by kindness, ruled in that happy household. Mrs. Wesley superintended the entire early education of her children, in addition to her other numerous household cares. Her son John describes, with admiration, the calmness with which she wrote letters, transacted business, and conversed, surrounded by her numerous family. She has left a record of

her mode of government and instruction. "The children," she says, "were always put into a regular method of living in such things as they were capable of, from their birth, such as in dressing, undressing, etc. They were left in their several rooms awake, for there was no such thing allowed in the house as sitting by a child till it fell asleep. From the time they were one year old they were taught to cry softly, if at all, whereby they escaped much correction, and that most odious noise of the crying of children was rarely heard. The will was early subdued, because," she judiciously observes, "this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. But when this is thoroughly done," she continues, "then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind." So early did this religious training begin that the children were taught "to be quiet at family prayer, and to ask a blessing at table by signs, before could they kneel or speak."

At five years old they were taught to read. One day was allowed for learning the letters—a feat which each of them accomplished in that time, except two, who took a day and a-half,

“for which,” says their mother, “I then thought them very dull.” As soon as they could spell they were set reading the Scriptures, and kept at the appointed task till it was perfectly mastered. One of the girls, we are 'told, was able, in her eighth year, to read the Greek language.

The culture of the heart was no less sedulously observed than the culture of the mind. “The family school opened and closed with singing. At four o'clock in the afternoon all had a season of retirement, when the oldest took the youngest that could speak, and the second the next, to whom they read the Psalm for the day and a chapter of the New Testament. She herself also conversed each evening with one of her children on religious subjects, and on some evenings with two, so as to comprehend the whole circle every week.” The hallowed influence of those sacred hours is incalculable.

A high-souled sense of honour was cultivated in the hearts of the children. If any of them was charged with a fault, he was encouraged to ingenuous confession, and, on promise of amendment, was freely forgiven. The result of this pious home-training was seen in the character it produced. Ten of the children reached adult years, and every one of them became an earnest Christian, and, after a life of singular devotion.

died at last in the triumphs of faith. "Such a family," says Clarke. "I have never heard of or known, nor, since the days of Abraham and Sarah, and Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, has there ever been a family to which the human race has been more indebted."

This noble woman was deeply concerned for the spiritual welfare of her neighbours as well as of her own household. While her husband was confined in prison, she opened the doors of her house for religious service. Sometimes as many as two hundred were present, while many others went away for want of room. To these she read the most awakening sermons she could find, and prayed and conversed with them. Wesley's curate and some of the parishioners wrote to him against the assembly as a "conventicle." She vindicated her course in a letter of great judgment and good taste. The meetings were filling the parish church, she said, with persons reclaimed from immorality, some of whom had not for years been seen at service. As to the suggestion of letting someone else read, she wrote, "Alas! you do not consider what these people are. I do not think one man among them could read a sermon through without spelling a good part of it; and how would that edify the rest?" But, with a true wife's recognition of

the rightful authority of her husband, she says, "Do not advise, but command me to desist."

The tranquil rectory of Epworth was not, however, without its visitations of sorrow. Time after time, death visited its charmed circle, till nine of the loved household were borne away. And there were sadder things even than death to mar its happiness. The beauty and native graces of several of the daughters led to marriages which proved unfortunate. In anguish of soul their sympathising mother writes thus to her brother of this saddest sorrow which can befall a woman's life: "O brother! happy, thrice happy are you; happy is my sister, that buried your children in infancy, secure from temptation, secure from guilt, secure from want or shame, secure from the loss of friends. Believe me, it is better to mourn ten children dead than one living, and I have buried many."

The pinchings of poverty, too, were only too familiar in this family, and sometimes even the experience of destitution. The shadow of debt often hung over it, and beneath that shadow Mr. Wesley sank into the grave. Although the living of Epworth was nominally valued at £200, it did not realise more than £130. How, even with the utmost economy, such a large family was clothed, fed, and educated on this meagre stipend

is one of the most extraordinary circumstances in its history. Yet, these privations were borne not complainingly, but cheerfully. In a letter to the Archbishop of York, this noble woman was able to say that the experience and observation of over fifty years had taught her that it was much easier to be contented without riches than with them.

It has been already stated that the rectory was twice fired by the disaffected rabble of the parish. It was on the second of these occasions that the future founder of Methodism was snatched, as by a special Providence, almost from the jaws of death. Mrs Wesley, who was in feeble health, was unable to make her escape, like others of the family, by climbing through the windows of the burning building. Thrice she attempted to fight her way through the flames to the street, but each time was driven back by their fury. At last, with scorched brow and branded hands, she escaped from the flames. It was now found that little John Wesley was missing. Several times the frantic father strove to climb the burning stairs to his rescue, but they crumbled beneath his weight. The imperilled child, finding his bed on fire, flew to the window, where two of the neighbours, standing one upon the shoulders of the other, plucked him from destruction at the



very moment that the burning roof fell in, and the house became a mass of ruins. Everything was lost—the furniture and clothing of the household and the precious books and manuscripts of the studious rector. But the Christian and the father rose supreme above it all. “Come friends,” he exclaimed, as he gathered his rescued family around him, “let us kneel down and thank God; He has given me all my eight children; I am rich enough.”

The grateful mother consecrated the child so providentially rescued to the service of God. “I do intend,” she subsequently wrote, “to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child, that Thou hast so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been, that I may do my endeavour to instill into his mind the principles of true religion and virtue. Lord, give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempt with good success.”

While her boys were absent at Charter House School and at Oxford University, this loving mother kept up a constant correspondence with them. Her letters are marked by a special solicitude for their spiritual welfare.\* “Resolve to make religion the business of your life,” she wrote to her son John; “I heartily wish you would now enter upon a strict examination of yourself, that

you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. If you have, the satisfaction of knowing it will abundantly reward your pains; if you have not, you will find a more reasonable occasion for tears than can be met with in any tragedy."\* With such a mother, and with such counsels, small wonder that her sons became a blessing to their race.

Some years afterwards, when widowed and lonely, the departure of John and Charles Wesley as missionaries to Georgia, in North America, depended upon her consent. "Had I twenty sons," she exclaimed, "I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them again."

For many years this now aged saint was spared to aid by her wise counsels, the novel and often difficult decisions of her sons. When the "irregularities" of field preaching were complained of, she recognized the hand of Providence in the circumstances which made it a necessity, and stood by her son on Kennington Common as he proclaimed the Gospel to an audience of twenty thousand persons.

When Thomas Maxfield, one of the lay "helpers" of early Methodism, essayed to preach from the Foundery pulpit, in the absence of any ordained clergymen, John Wesley hastened home

to forbid the innovation. But the wise mother read the signs of the times with a profounder sagacity than her learned son. "Take care what you do to that young man," she said; "he is as surely called of God to preach as you are," and she counselled him to hear and judge for himself. "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth to Him good," the staunch Churchman remarked as he beheld the fruits of this pioneer of the great army of Methodist lay preachers.

Adjoining the old Foundery, the mother chapel of Methodism, Wesley had fitted up a residence for himself and his assistants in London. Here with filial affection he brought his revered and beloved mother, and sustained her declining years with the tenderest care. When unable to attend the services, she could hear the sound of the singing and prayer, that almost daily were heard in that now historic edifice. Here, in the seventy third year of her age, she peacefully passed away. "She had no doubt, no fear," writes her son, "nor any desire but to depart and be with Christ." John Wesley and five of her daughters stood around her dying bed and commended her soul to God in prayer. When unable to speak, she looked steadfastly upward, as if, like Stephen, she saw the Heaven she was so soon to enter open before her. With her last

words she requested that her children should sing, as she departed, a psalm of praise to God. With tremulous voices, they fulfilled her last request, and her spirit took its flight from the toils and the travails of earth, to the peace and blessedness of Paradise. Her ashes sleep with those of the many illustrious dead of Bunhill Fields, and at City Road Chapel a simple marble monument commemorates her virtues.

This noble life needs no words of eulogy. Her own works praise her. Her children rise up and call her blessed. Many daughters have done virtuously, but she has excelled them all. Her life of toil and trial, of privation and self denial, of high resolve and patient continuance in well doing, has been crowned with a rich and glorious reward. The hallowed teachings of that humble home originated a sacred impulse that quickened the spiritual life of Christendom from that day to this, the pulsing tides of whose growing influence shall roll down the ages and break on every civilized and savage shore till the whole world is filled with the knowledge of God.



VL

Barbara Beck.





#### IV.

#### SELINA, COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON.

**T**HE history of early Methodism, like the history of primitive Christianity, shows that not many mighty, not many noble were called to the great religious work of those important eras. Both won their trophies chiefly among God's great family of the poor. But as there were those of Cæsar's household who acknowledged Christ, so there were those of noble rank who became the friends of Methodism. One of the most notable of these was Selina, Countess of Huntingdon.

The names of Wesley and Whitefield are inseparably joined as the apostles of Methodism. Yet, a difference of opinion on doctrinal grounds soon led to a divergence of operations and a division of ecclesiastical interests. Whitefield was destined to be the flaming apostle whose mission it was to revive the almost extinct spiritual life of the Church of England and to establish that Calvinistic Methodism which is so



potent for good in the principality of Wales to the present day.

It was with this branch of Methodism that Lady Huntingdon was connected. She was of noble birth, the daughter of the Earl of Ferrers, and was remotely connected with the royal family. In her early youth she was married to Theophilus Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon. Lady Elizabeth and Lady Margaret Hastings, her sisters-in-law, had become interested in the Oxford Methodists. Through their influence, and through severe personal and family affliction, the Countess was led to a religious life and to a strong sympathy with the methods and principles of the evangelists, especially of Whitefield.

Her husband sent for Bishop Benson to restore her to a "saner mind," but the learned prelate failed in the attempt. Although she moved in the most aristocratic circles, the Countess was not ashamed of the lowly and despised Methodists through whom she had received such spiritual benefit. She invited John Wesley to her residence at Downington Park, where he preached to fashionable congregations the same uncompromising Gospel that he declared at Gwenap Pit or Moorfields Common. With a wise prevision of one of the greatest evangelistic agencies of the

age, she specially encouraged the employment of a lay ministry, against the strong ecclesiastical prejudices of the Wesleys.

When the separation took place between Whitefield and the Wesleys on the ground of the Calvinistic controversy, she sought to win the beatitude of the peacemaker by mediating between them. She succeeded in bringing about a reconciliation, which was confirmed by exchange of pulpits and of kindly offices. The friendship thus happily cemented continued uninterrupted throughout their lives, their only rivalry being one of hallowed zeal in promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Lady Huntingdon still considered the moral unity of Methodism unbroken, and when Wesley's first Conference was held in London, in 1744, the entire body were entertained at her elegant mansion at Chelsea. She used her social influence in high places with such effect on behalf of brave John Nelson, who had been impressed into the army and suffered bonds and imprisonment for conscience' sake, that he was rescued from his persecutors and set free to range the kingdom, proclaiming everywhere the great salvation.

In 1748, Lady Huntingdon became a widow. Henceforth her life was devoted to labours of pious zeal in the promotion of Christ's kingdom.

Whitefield became one of her permanent chaplains, and the trembling plumes on the heads of the court dames in the elegant *salons* of the mansion of Chelsea, no less than the tear-washed furrows on the grimy faces of the Cornish miners, attested the power of his message. High-born and titled hearers were now brought under the influence of the simple Gospel story, and not unfrequently, with saving and sanctifying results. Lord St. John became a convert from the fashionable skepticism of the times to the faith of Christ. His brother, the witty Bolingbroke, complimented the preacher, but despised his message. The wife of Lord Chesterfield and her sister, the Countess of Delitz, received the Gospel and died in the triumphs of faith. Many "elect ladies" of the highest rank became devout and humble Christians, adorning with their holy and useful lives the doctrines of the Lord Jesus.

Many of Whitefield's courtly hearers were doubtless attracted by the fashionable character of the assemblage, as they would be to the opera; and others were fascinated by the eloquence of the preacher, as they would be by the skill of an actor. The skeptical Hume, for instance, said that he would go twenty miles to hear him; and Garrick, the actor, who doubtless took lessons in style from his matchless elocution, declared that

he could make one weep by the way in which he pronounced the word Mesopotamia. Chesterfield paid his courtly compliment, and Horace Walpole employed his keen wit upon the earnest preacher whose solemn messages they both neglected and despised. The notorious Countess of Suffolk, the fair and frail favourite of George II., procured admission to one of the fashionable religious services. Mr. Whitefield's burning denunciations of sin, which probed her guilty conscience to the core, were an unwonted and unwelcome experience to the proud court beauty. She flew into a violent passion, abused Lady Huntingdon to her face, and declared that she had been deliberately insulted. Deeply mortified she went her way and returned no more.

Nor was the zeal of this high-born and pious lady, whose life and character are the subject of our present study, restrained to mere passive patronage of those zealous evangelists—a sort of dilettante piety that cost her little. She proved her sincerity by her self-sacrifice and by her generous donations to the cause of God. She curtailed her expenditure and reduced her domestic establishment that she might build chapels for the poor. She gave up her liveried servants and costly carriages, and sold her jewels that she might have money for charitable purposes. In

London, Bristol, and Dublin, she purchased public halls and dilapidated chapels and theatres, that the Gospel might be preached to the perishing masses. Many new chapels were also erected by her liberal aid in England, Ireland, and especially in the principality of Wales. In these philanthropic labours she expended not less than half a million of dollars—a sum relatively much larger a hundred years ago than it is to-day.

The practical heathenism of a large portion of Great Britain, notwithstanding the vast organization and immense revenues of the Established Church, appealed strongly to her Christian sympathy. She devised a comprehensive plan for the evangelization of the kingdom. With a shrewd practical method she divided all England into six districts, to be systematically visited by travelling “canvassers,” as she called them, who were zealously to preach the Gospel in every village, town, and hamlet in the country. With her were associated in these pious labours some of the most learned and devout Evangelical clergymen and Dissenting ministers in the kingdom; such as Venn, Madan, Shirley, Romaine, Toplady, Dr. Conyers, Berridge, Howell Harris, Fletcher, Benson, Whitefield, the Wesleys, and many others.

With certain like-minded noble ladies, she

made tours through many parts of England and Wales, accompanied by eminent evangelists, who everywhere preached the Gospel to attentive multitudes. Where they had opportunity, they preached in the parish churches, or in Wesleyan or Dissenting chapels. Indeed, some of the evangelists were parish clergymen and had churches of their own; but frequently the churches were closed against the itinerants, in which cases they preached in the churchyards, on the highways, or in the fields. Public worship was held twice a day, sometimes for several weeks in succession. Under the burning words of Whitefield all Yorkshire and the neighbouring counties were kindled to a flame; then pressing on to Scotland, or overseas to America, he left to his fellow-workers the task of organizing into churches the multitudes of converts quickened into spiritual life by his apostolic labours.

In this good work the Countess of Huntingdon, and the elect ladies who journeyed with her, took a profound interest, though never transcending what was deemed the bounds of decorum for her sex, by taking any part in the public assemblies. While she counselled the converts privately, and assisted the evangelists in planning their labours, she was only a quiet hearer at public preaching.

Notwithstanding the growing divergence of

doctrine between the two branches of Methodists, so deep was the piety that animated both parties, and so catholic their charity, that, as the devoted Grimshaw expresses it, "it is difficult for either themselves or their enemies to distinguish between them." In the year 1762, with Whitefield, Venn, and others, Lady Huntingdon visited Wesley's Conference, at Leeds. They were received with the utmost cordiality, and Wesley records his gratitude to God for the rich spiritual influences and Christian fellowship that prevailed.

The record of a grand "field day," on one of those preaching excursions, is preserved. It was at Cheltenham, in Gloucestershire. The use of the parish church was refused for preaching, but Whitefield mounted a tombstone in the churchyard, and addressed the assembled thousands from the words, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" Many of the hearers fell prostrate on the graves, others sobbed aloud, and all seemed stricken with a solemn awe. Whitefield himself, under the stress of his intense feelings, burst into tears. His word of exhortation, says Venn, cut like a sword. Many of the people cried out in their anguish of soul. The zealous evangelists present went among the crowd to comfort and counsel the penitent seekers of salvation; and each was soon surrounded by an eager

audience anxious to learn the way of life. "A remarkable power from on high," wrote the Countess concerning these services, "accompanied the message, and many felt the arrows of distress."

But though excluded from the parish church, the Methodist evangelists were not unbefriended. A nobleman of the highest rank, the friend of his sovereign, a member of the Privy Council, First Lord of the Treasury and Secretary of State—the Earl of Dartmouth—stood by their side among the graves, and opened his hospitable mansion for their reception. That night Whitefield administered the sacrament in his house, and the next day, standing on a table beside the door, preached to the multitude that filled the rooms within and thronged the grounds without. Charles Wesley and many zealous Methodists from Bristol and the neighbouring towns hastened to take part in the good work and to share the blessings of those Pentecostal showers.

It was this Lord Dartmouth to whom Cowper refers in the lines,—

" We boast some rich ones whom the Gospel sways,  
And one who wears a coronet and prays."

His name is commemorated in America by Dartmouth College, of which institution he was a zealous patron. "They call my Lord Dartmouth



an enthusiast," said George III., who always had a profound respect for religion; "but surely he says nothing but what any Christian may and ought to say."

Through the influence of Lady Huntingdon, the friendship of the Wesleys and Whitefield became firmly cemented. These once estranged but now reconciled friends, unable to coincide in doctrinal opinion, wisely agreed to differ, but kept up to the close of their lives a kindly interchange of Christian courtesies. They formed with each other and with the Countess, their common friend and the peacemaker between them, a sort of formal "quadruple alliance," as Charles Wesley called it, whereby they agreed to co-operate in their common work, and to knit more firmly the bonds of Christian fellowship between them.

For John Wesley's genius for organization, Lady Huntingdon had a profound regard. In this respect, he was much superior to his more eloquent colleague Whitefield. Indeed, the greatest historian of modern times has bestowed on him the eulogy of having had "a genius for government not inferior to that of Richelieu."\* The permanent and wide-spread organization of

\* Macaulay—*Review of Southey's Colloquies.*

Arminian Methodism, as contrasted with the comparatively evanescent results of Whitefield's labours, is largely the result of Wesley's superior gifts of ecclesiastical legislation.

Far more than Whitefield did Lady Huntingdon possess this qualification, and had she been a man the history and present status of Calvinistic Methodism might have been very different. She was deeply convinced of the necessity of a college for the training of ministers for the numerous chapels which, through her zeal and liberality, had sprung up in many parts of the country. She broached her scheme to John Wesley and others, and received their hearty approval. A romantic and dilapidated old castle at Trevecca, in Wales, was accordingly purchased and fitted up as a place of residence and instruction for candidates for the ministry. This enterprise exhausted her means, but she was assisted by contributions from titled and wealthy ladies who sympathized with her project. The saintly and accomplished Fletcher became its first president, and the learned Wesleyan commentator, Joseph Benson, its headmaster. The first student was a poor collier, who subsequently became an able and useful vicar in the Established Church. The ancient cloisters were soon thronged with earnest students. No conditions of admission were im-

posed, other than those of conversion to God and a purpose to enter the Christian ministry, either in the Established Church or in any Dissenting body. In this truly catholic institution the students received lodging, maintenance, instruction, and an annual suit of clothes, at the expense of the Countess.

The first anniversary of the college was celebrated as a religious festival of holy rejoicing. For nearly a week previously, the scattered evangelists of the "Connexion" continued to arrive in the courtyard of the picturesque old castle. Very different was the scene from those of tilt and tourney with which it had resounded in the days of knightly chivalry. Hymns and prayers and sermons, in English and Welsh, echoed beneath the ancient arches. On the great day of the feast, Wesley and Fletcher, Shirley and Howell Harris, Arminian and Calvinist, English and Welsh, preached and prayed, and administered the sacrament and celebrated the "love-feast," together, all differences being forgotten in their common brotherhood in Christ. The ministers all dined together with Lady Huntingdon, while great baskets of bread and meat were distributed to the multitude in the courtyard. Thus they all kept high festival with gladness of heart before the Lord.

Still it was not the purpose of either Wesley or Whitefield or Lady Huntingdon to establish a new sect. They were all attached members of the Church of England. Not till they were thrust forth from its embrace did they organize separate societies. In order to protect her numerous chapels from suppression or appropriation by the Established Church, Lady Huntingdon was obliged to take advantage of the Act of Toleration, and thus convert her "Connexion" into a Dissenting community. The clergymen of the Establishment who had hitherto been her most influential allies now withdrew their aid, and preached no more in her chapels.

The doctrinal divergence between the two branches of Methodism continued to increase. The controversy which called forth Shirley's "Narrative" and Fletcher's "Checks" tended to widen the breach.

The Countess, not content with the success of her evangelistic plans in Great Britain, resolved to extend her efforts to the New World. Whitefield died in 1769. The support of the Orphanage and of the mission work in Georgia, objects of deepest solicitude to that zealous philanthropist, became the cherished purpose of the Countess of Huntingdon. A day of solemn fasting and prayer was observed in all her churches on behalf of

this work. She resolved to send a principal and pastor to the Orphanage and a band of missionaries to carry on the work of evangelism among the colonists and blacks. The movement stirred an impulse of Christian sympathy in the heart of British Methodism that greatly quickened its zeal in the missionary enterprise, of which it has since given such marvellous illustrations.

Before they sailed, the missionaries preached daily to immense audiences in Whitefield's Tabernacle and in the open air on Tower Hill. At length, amid many prayers, not unmingled with the tears of thousands of spectators, the "destined vessel, richly freighted," sailed on its voyage. The labours of the missionaries were attended with great success, especially among the coloured population, and it seemed probable that Calvinistic Methodism would become the predominant type of religious belief throughout the Southern colonies of North America. But Providence had willed otherwise. The Orphanage was destroyed by fire. The Revolutionary War entirely disconcerted the plans of the Countess. Most of the missionaries, remaining faithful to their allegiance to the mother country, returned to Great Britain. The Countess had acquired by purchase large estates in Georgia, which she held for missionary purposes. She corresponded with

Washington for their recovery, and Benjamin Franklin acted as one of her trustees. But the disturbances consequent upon the prolonged war and severance of the colonies from the mother country, prevented the restoration of her estates.

Full of years, as full of honours, like a ripe sheaf waiting to be garnered home, the Countess of Huntingdon drew near her end. ' Earthly distinctions had been hers, worldly wealth and troops of friends. But as she bent beneath the weight of four and eighty years and faced the mysteries of the spirit-world, what was the ground of her confidence and hope? Simply her humble trust in the atonement of her Redeemer. As the outward body failed, the inward spirit was renewed day by day. As the frail tabernacle crumbled, she exulted in the possession of a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Amid the sufferings of a lingering and painful sickness, she exclaimed: "I am well; all is well—well forever. I see, wherever I turn my eyes, whether I live or die, nothing but victory. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh! The thought fills my soul with joy unspeakable—my soul is filled with glory. I am as in the element of Heaven itself. I am encircled in the arms of love and mercy; I long to be at home; O, I long to be at home!"

Shortly before she died she said over and over, as though she longed to be away, "I shall go to my Father to-night." Soon after she exclaimed, "Can He forget to be gracious? Is there any end of His loving kindness?" Almost with her dying breath she exultingly declared: "My work is done; I have nothing to do but to go to my Father."

Servant of God ! well done,  
Rest from thy lov'd employ,  
The battle's fought, the victory's won,  
Enter thy Master's joy.

The very year that this aged saint passed away, 1791, John Wesley also died. Thus passed from the toils of earth to the everlasting reward of Heaven, two of the most remarkable spirits of the eighteenth century, who, more than almost any others, left their impress on the age. One of the most striking proofs of the moral and intellectual superiority of the Countess of Huntingdon was the influence that she exerted, during a long series of years, over many of the most eminent men of the time, and this influence resulted from sheer force of character and earnestness of purpose, and not, as has been well remarked, from an official or ecclesiastical prerogative. Her private character was one of great simplicity and beauty. Says one who knew her

well, "In conversing with her you forgot the earldom in her exhibition of humble, loving piety." She sometimes asserted her woman's prerogative in her tenacity of opinion and of purpose; but her opinions were the result of conscientious conviction, and her purposes were purely unselfish. Her contributions to the poor were liberal to excess, so much so as often to leave herself embarrassed. Her benefactions of religious purposes amounted, as we have seen, to the sum of half a million of dollars. At her death she left twenty thousand dollars for the poor. The residue of her large fortune was left for the endowment of the sixty-four chapels which had been erected, chiefly through her instrumentality, in different parts of the kingdom.

It is in the principality of Wales that the influence of the Calvinistic Methodism of "Lady Huntingdon's Connexion" has been the most strongly felt. Largely as the result of the stimulus that it imparted, says a competent authority, the thirty Dissenting churches of 1715 have increased to twenty-three hundred, so that "a chapel now dots nearly every three square miles of the country, and a million people, nearly the whole Welsh population, are found attending public worship some part of every Sabbath."



See how great a flame aspires,  
Kindled by a spark of grace !  
Jesus' love the nations fires,  
Sets the kingdoms on a blaze.  
More and more it spreads and grows,  
Ever mighty to prevail :  
Sin's strongholds it now o'erthrows,  
Shakes the trembling gates of hell.



v.

Mary Bosanquet Fletcher.





v.

MARY BOSANQUET FLETCHER.

**R**ARELY, if ever, have two more saintly lives been united in Christian wedlock than those of John Fletcher and Mary Bosanquet. The former was providentially called to be the expounder and defender of the theology of Methodism : the latter beautifully illustrated, throughout a long and useful life, its rich spiritual graces. Her memoir, written by herself, is a remarkable record of religious experience, and, as one of the classics of Methodist biography, has helped to mould the character and kindle the piety of successive generations.

Mary Bosanquet was the daughter of wealthy and worldly parents. She was born in the year 1739, and in her youth was surrounded by associations eminently unfavourable to a religious life. Nevertheless, she very early became the subject of spiritual influences. When in her fifth year, she says, she began to have much concern about her eternal welfare. She was a backward

child, she naively confesses, and not very well read in the Scriptures at that early age—it would be very remarkable if she were—yet certain passages of the Word of God frequently occurred to her mind, and made a deep impression on her youthful heart. She could not, however, help contrasting the requirements of the Scriptures with the careless lives of those around her, till she began to doubt whether the Bible really meant what it said about the future life and the unseen world.

“About this time,” she writes, “there came a servant-maid to live with my father, who had heard and felt some little of the power of inward religion. It was among the people called Methodists she had received her instructions.” The conversations of this lowly and unlettered girl with an older sister of Mary Bosanquet deepened her religious convictions, and she thought if she could only become a Methodist she would be sure of salvation. But she soon found that it was not being joined to any people that would save her, but being joined by a living faith to Christ.

Still, this way of faith seemed dark to her mind. When between seven and eight years old, as she mused on the question, “What can it be to know my sins forgiven and to have faith in Jesus?” she felt that if it were to die a martyr she could

do it, and she wished that the Papists would come and burn her, for then, she thought, she would be safe. But soon she was enabled to grasp the vital truth of salvation by faith, and exclaimed with joyful fervour, "I do, I do rely on Jesus; yes, I do rely on Jesus, and God counts me righteous for what He has done and suffered, and has forgiven me all my sins!" "I was surprised," she adds, "that I could not find out this before"—a common experience of the soul on apprehending the simplicity of the way of salvation. Such spiritual exercises in the mind of a child of tender years were an augury of future piety and usefulness.

Miss Bosanquet's worldly-minded parents, as their strange, unworldly child grew up, instead of fostering her religious feelings, endeavoured to dissipate them by fashionable amusements. She was introduced to the gaieties of London society, and taken to the ball and playhouse and other resorts of folly and frivolity. But she found no pleasure in these dreary amusements. "If I knew how to find the Methodists, or any who would show me how to please God," she wrote, "I would tear off all my fine things and run through the fire to them." "If ever I am my own mistress," she prophetically exclaimed, "I will spend half the day in working for the poor, and the other half in prayer."

At length she made the acquaintance of some of the Methodists, from association with whom so much spiritual profit was anticipated. But they did not quite answer the expectations of this earnest soul, hungering and thirsting after religious fellowship. "But we must not form our judgment from the rich," she remarks. "Let us wait till we get acquainted with some of the poor among them: perhaps they will be the right Methodists and more like the first Christians." It is not by concessions to the world, nor by the adoption of its spirit on the part of the Church, that the devotees of fashion will be lured from its frivolities and brought to Christ. Let the followers of the Lord Jesus beware lest when some yearning, empty, aching heart comes to them for spiritual help and guidance, they find only a worldly conformity or half-hearted religion, that may forever discourage their efforts to live a Christian life, if, indeed, it do not beget in their souls the doubt whether there be such a thing as a Christian life at all.

In her fourteenth year, Miss Bosanquet received the rite of confirmation in the stately cathedral of St. Paul. The religious exercises preceding and accompanying this impressive ordinance were made to her devout spirit a great blessing. It was to her no idle form, but an intense reality—

a solemn renewal of her covenant with God and consecration of herself to His service. She soon felt that she could no longer attend the theatre, a place of fashionable resort to which her parents were addicted. "I considered the playhouse," wrote this mature young maiden, "had a tendency to weaken every Christian temper, and to strengthen all that was contrary; to represent vice under the false colour of virtue; and to lead, in every respect, to the spirit of the world—the friendship of which, the Apostle declares, is enmity with God." She therefore begged to be left at home, and on the refusal of her request, laid open her whole heart to her father. Notwithstanding parental remonstrance, she was firm in her obedience to the dictates of her conscience. It was a season of great trial, she wrote, but the Lord stood by her and strengthened her.

One incident, recorded as occurring in her seventeenth year, gives us a glimpse of the gay world in the middle of the last century. With her father and a numerous company, she visited the "Royal George" man-of-war, whose subsequent tragic fate was made the subject of Cowper's pathetic ballad.\* When they got into the ship

\* It will be remembered that the vessel sank, in port, with all her crew, while careened for the purpose of cleaning her copper sheathing. As the ballad has it,—



“it seemed like a town, such a variety of places like shops were all around.” The commander, after doing the honours of the ship, proposed a dance. “Now, Miss Bosanquet, what will you do? You cannot run away,” gaily queried one of her friends, for her scruples were well known. Just then the unexpected approach of the Prince of Wales (afterward George III.) and Admiral Anson was announced, and the dance was adjourned *sine die*, to the great relief of Miss Bosanquet. While in the boat which conveyed them from the ship the party were exposed to imminent peril. “How are you so calm?” one of the votaries of pleasure asked our heroine. “We are in God’s hands,” she answered; “I am quite ready to sink or to be saved.” On reaching shore, the majority of the party insisted on going to Vauxhall, the fashionable Cremorne Gardens of the day. On her firm refusal, Miss Bosanquet was escorted home by her brother.

Her convictions of duty were exposed to another trial. A gentleman of wealth and religious profession sought her hand in marriage. Her parents, and even her religious advisers, favoured the match. She could not, however, reconcile

His sword was in its sheath,  
His fingers held the pen,  
When Kempenfelt went down  
With twice four hundred men.

his fashionable habits with his religious professions, and neither her "understanding nor affection could approve the proposal," so his offer was kindly but firmly declined. She was reserved for a nobler destiny than to be a mere leader of fashion.

Through mental perturbation, and anxiety, and physical weakness, she fell into a low nervous fever, which her parents attributed to her religion. Severe medical treatment and confinement in a dark room were ordered. "Will you put me in a mad-house, papa?" asked the poor distraught girl. "No," replied her father, "but you must be shut up at home unless you strive against this lowness."

But God graciously helped her in her extremity. She seemed to see a light and hear a voice, which assured her, "Thou shalt walk with me in white," and she was greatly benefitted by the society of some of the wise mothers in Israel of London Methodism. She satisfied herself, by seven good reasons, which she records, that she ought no longer to conform, in the matter of personal dress and adornment, with the somewhat imperious requirements of the fashions of the times. "I was perplexed," she writes, "to know how far to conform and how far to resist. I feared, on the one hand, disobedience to my parents, and on the other hand, disobedience to God."

One day her father said to her, "There is a particular promise which I require of you, that you will never, on any occasion, either now or hereafter, attempt to make your brothers what you call a Christian."

"I think, sir," she answered, "I dare not consent to that."

"Then," he replied, "you force me to put you out of my house. I do not know," he continued, "that you ever disobliged me wilfully in your life, but only in these fancies."

She was now twenty-one years of age, and had a small fortune of her own. She, therefore, engaged a maid-servant and took lodgings, but did not remove, hoping that she might still remain beneath her father's roof. One day her mother sent her word that she must leave that night for her lodgings, and that the family carriage would convey her personal effects. She bade farewell to the servants, who stood in a row in tears, and went forth from her father's house, banished for conscience' sake.

Her lodgings had, as yet, neither chair, nor table, nor bed; so, after a supper of bread, rank butter, and water, this delicate child of luxury lay upon the floor in the cold, bright moonlight which streamed through the uncurtained windows into

her room, the sweet solemnity whereof, she writes, well agreed with the tranquillity of her spirit.

She thus records her emotions under this painful trial. "I am cast out of my father's house. 'I know the heart of a stranger.' I am exposed to the world, and know not what snares may be gathering around me. I have a weak understanding, and but little grace." She therefore cried unto God, and found a sweet calm overspread her spirit. She remembered the words, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me," and was cheered by the promise, "When thy father and mother forsake thee, the Lord shall take thee up."

She was, however, permitted to visit her home, but the parting as she took her leave made, she says, the wound to bleed afresh.

She was soon joined by Sarah Ryan, a pious widow, and devoted her life thenceforth to works of active beneficence and Christian charity. She shortly after removed to a house of her own at Laytonstone, her native village, and converted it into a charity school for orphan children and home for destitute women. Before long she had received thirty-five children and thirty-four grown adults. With the aid of her friend, Mrs. Ryan, she devoted herself with enthusiasm to this work. For economical reasons the whole household were clothed

in dark purple cotton dresses of uniform pattern. Many, both of the children and adults, were sickly, and demanded much physical care, and all received wise moral guidance and control. The children were trained in habits of usefulness. They rose between four and five, had early prayers and breakfast. School, and house work, and recreation occupied the day, and by eight at night, after prayers, they went to bed.

She had great need, she said, of wisdom and patience, as may well be conceived. The novel enterprise met with much adverse criticism and opposition. On Sunday evenings a religious service of the neighbours was held in the house, and sometimes, "when the nights were dark," we read, "a mob used to collect at the gate and throw dirt at the people as they went out; and when they were gone the mob used to come into the yard and break things there, and, putting their faces to a window which had no shutters, roar and howl like wild beasts."

One night "four shabby-looking men, with great sticks in their hands," the ring-leaders of a mob, forced their way into the kitchen. But Miss Bosanquet explained the Methodist "Rules of Society" to them, and asked if they would accept copies. Subdued by her womanly influence, and by the unexpected request, "they received them

with a respectful bow, and went out." This was truly a remarkable work for a young lady of only twenty-three to carry on, but she derived much help from her friend, Mrs Ryan, who had previously had valuable experience as head of the domestic department of Wesley's Woodhouse Grove School.

At times the expenses of the establishment exceeded its income; but, in answer to prayer, help always came when most needed, frequently from anonymous sources. A wealthy Methodist lady, a Miss Lewen, came to live in the family, where, after a time, she sickened and died. By a codicil to her will she left two thousand pounds to the Orphanage. But Miss Bosanquet, fearing that God's cause might be reproached thereby, prevailed on her to let it be burned, for "what is two thousand pounds," she exclaimed, "or two hundred thousand pounds, when compared to the honour of my God?" When Miss Lewen was dying, she called for pen and paper, saying, "I cannot die easy unless I write something of my mind concerning Sister Bosanquet having the two thousand pounds." But the money never was claimed, that the cause of God might be above reproach.

Shortly after this both Miss Bosanquet's parents died. She had the privilege of alleviating their

last illness by her filial ministrations. She received from them many marks of affection, and on their death, found her fortune largely increased. But the expenses of her growing household more than kept pace with her increase of income.

The orphan institution was now removed to Cross Hall, in Yorkshire, where a large farm was secured for it. Miss Bosanquet was now employed, with her characteristic energy, in building, farming, malting, and other operations, in order to meet the growing expenses of the institution. The religious services were continued as at Laytonstone, and worshippers from far and near flocked to the meetings so numerously that there was not room for their accommodation. Miss Bosanquet, therefore, established similar services at convenient places throughout the country. In 1770 Wesley visited the institution, and records in his Journal that "it is a pattern and a general blessing to the country."

A gentleman of wealth, and of religious character, struck with admiration of her person and disposition, warmly solicited Miss Bosanquet's hand in marriage. "Though I had a grateful love towards him," she writes, "I could not find that satisfying affection which flows from perfect confidence, and which is the very spirit and soul of marriage." She therefore declined to give her hand

where she could not freely and fully give her heart. She accepted a life of toil and anxiety, rather than one of luxury and ease, at what she conceived to be the call of duty.

Notwithstanding the utmost economy the financial condition of the institution became greatly embarrassed. Although "the strictest account was made of every grain of corn, pint of milk, or pound of butter, the farm did not pay its way." Miss Bosanquet was greatly perplexed. She wrote, "I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit." She resolved to sell the establishment and live on twenty pounds a year till she could pay her debts.

She felt increasingly laid upon her heart the burden of souls. On account of her health she went to Harrowgate to drink the waters. While stopping at an inn, the lodgers on Sunday requested her to address them in the "great ball-room." "This was a trial indeed," she writes, "Yet, I considered, I shall see these people no more till I see them at the judgment seat of Christ; and shall it then be said of me, 'You might that day have warned us, but you would not.'" She therefore consented to the request, and had much comfort and "some fruit" of her labours. Similar invitations were now frequently urged upon her. She dared not refuse them. On



one occasion she rode twenty miles over the Yorkshire moors to address a meeting, in the absence of the regular preacher. To her dismay she found two or three thousand persons assembled. The multitude filled a spacious quarry, from the edge of which she addressed them. The people seemed as if they could never have enough, and said, "When will you come again?"

This remarkable woman seems to have possessed singular ability for addressing an audience. "Her manner of speaking," writes Wesley, "is smooth, easy, and natural. Her words are as a fire, conveying both light and heat to the hearts of all that hear her." But her womanly sensitiveness shrank from the task. Of one occasion, she writes: "All the day I kept pleading before the Lord, mostly in these words of Solomon, 'Ah! Lord, how shall I, who am but a child, go in and out before this, thy chosen people?'"

This noble woman was now to receive a new development of her character, and a great increase of her joys. A kindred spirit, in every way worthy of her love, was now to win her hand and heart. Jean Guillaume de la Flechere, or Fletcher, was the scion of a noble Savoyard family. He entered, in his youth, the military service successively of Portugal and Holland. Peace being declared he went to England, joined the Metho-

dists, and took orders in the Established Church. He declined the rich living of Dunham because "it afforded too much money for too little work," and devoted himself to the poor miners and factory workers of the parish of Madeley—a name to be forever associated with his memory. Five and twenty years before the date of which we write the youthful beauty and lovely character of Miss Bosanquet had won the heart of the devoted pastor. But she was rich and he was poor, and travel, study, and abounding labours, and, perhaps, somewhat ascetic notions, postponed for long years the consummation of his dream of wedded bliss. For fifteen years they had not met. On his return from the continent in 1781, he made the long-cherished object of his affection an offer of his hand. It was accepted, and at the mature age of fifty-two and forty-two respectively this long-waiting bridegroom and bride kept their honeymoon. In her devout thanksgiving the loving wife exclaims, "My cup runneth over." So well suited to each other were these pious souls that John Wesley was unwilling that either should have married otherwise than as they did. The wealth of the bride was now at least no barrier to the long-delayed union. To pay her debts all her furniture, except a few trifles, had to be sold. "Deal would do for me," she writes, "as well as

mahogany. I felt some attachment to my neat furniture; but love to the order of God made me take the spoiling of them very cheerfully." "I know no want but that of more grace," she adds. "My husband loves me as Christ loved the Church." "My wife," writes Fletcher, "is far better to me than the Church to Christ."

This happy union of heart and soul was destined to be of short duration. Four short years passed away in labours more abundant for the glory of God. The zealous pastor established a day-school and a Sunday-school, and soon had three hundred children under religious instruction. The parish became a proverb for its piety, and the saintly influence which emanated from its humble vicarage was widely felt in quickening the spiritual life of the neighbouring community.

But this blessed toil, for one of the labourers at least, was soon to cease. The health of Fletcher, long infirm, broke down. Yet, despite remonstrance, he continued his labours to the last, and died, like a hero, at his post. In the first outburst of her sorrow the bereaved widow was almost inconsolable. "The sun of my earthly joys forever set," she writes; "not only my beloved husband, but, it appeared to me, my Saviour also was torn from me. Clouds and darkness surrounded both body and soul."

But faith rose triumphant o'er her fears, and for thirty years she continued to perpetuate the influence of her sainted husband. Her home at Madeley became a sanctuary to the poor, to devout women, and to the Methodist itinerants. It became, also, a potent centre of religious influence. In her own house, and in neighbouring hamlets, the Scripture expositions of this "widow indeed" were accompanied by striking results. The anniversaries of her marriage and of her husband's death were commemorated by holy exercises. On one of these occasions, in loving recollection, she writes thus:—"Twenty-eight years this day, and at this hour, I gave my hand and heart to Jean Guillaume de la Flechere. A profitable and blessed period of my life! I feel at this moment a more tender affection toward him than I did at that time, and by faith I now join my hands afresh with his."

Still later she wrote:—"Thirty years since, this day, I drank the bitter cup, and closed the eyes of my beloved husband, and now I am myself in a dying state. My soul doth wait and long to fly to the bosom of my God." "I am very weak," she writes again, "and yet am oft five times in a week able to be at my meetings, and I have strength to speak so that all may hear, and the Lord is very present with us." Her labours were extremely

exhausting, yet she sustained them as long as she had any strength. In her seventy-sixth year, and a few weeks before her death, she writes, "It is as if every meeting would take away my life, but I will speak to them while I have my breath."

The last entry in her faithfully-kept journal is an aspiration to depart and be with Christ. "I seem very near death, but I long to fly into the arms of my beloved Lord. I feel His loving-kindness surrounds me." Soon after she entered into her eternal rest. Among her dying utterances were expressions of triumphant confidence: "I am drawing near to glory;" "There is my home and portion fair;" "Jesus, come, my hope of glory;" "He lifts His hands and shows that I am graven there." "The Lord bless both thee and me," she said to a friend who watched by her bedside, and insisted on her retiring to rest. Then, in the solemn silence of midnight, unattended in her dying hour by earthly ministrations, but accompanied by angelic spirits, her soul passed away from the travails and trials of earth to the raptures and triumphs of Heaven.

Her whole life was a precious box of alabaster broken on the feet of the Lord she loved, the rich perfume of whose anointing is fragrant throughout the world to-day. In the profusion of her beneficence to others she practised toward herself

a rigorous self-denial. During the last year of her life her expenditure on her own apparel was less than twenty shillings. The same year her "poor account" amounted to over one hundred and eighty pounds. Her annual personal expenditure on dress, for many years, never amounted to five pounds.

At her death, as at that of Dorcas, there was much weeping and lamentation, not only for the alms-deeds which she did, but for the loss of her spiritual ministrations.

For well-nigh seventy years the "Life and Journal" of this sainted soul have been one of the classics of Methodist biography. They have, doubtless, been an inspiration to multitudes to emulate her Christian heroism and imitate her holiness of heart and life. Being dead, she yet speaks in many lands and in many tongues. She rests from her labours, and her works do follow her.

Intrepid and blessed spirit! May kindred zeal and devotion and impassioned love for souls never cease from among the women of Methodism till the Church of God, the Lamb's wife, appear adorned as a bride for her husband, for the eternal nuptials of the skies.



VI.

Barbara Heck.







## VI.

### BARBARA HECK, THE MOTHER OF AMERICAN METHODISM.

**I**N the banks of the majestic St. Lawrence, about midway between the thriving town of Prescott and the picturesque village of Maitland, lies a lonely graveyard, which is one of the most hallowed spots in the broad area of our country. Here, on a gently rising ground overlooking the rushing river, is the quiet "God's acre" in which slumbers the dust of that saintly woman who is honoured in two hemispheres as the mother of Methodism on this continent in both the United States and Canada. It is of her life and work that we wish to present a brief record.

In the providence of God, times and places most remote from one another are often indissolubly linked together by chains of sequences—by relations of cause and effect. The vast organ-

ization of Methodism throughout this entire continent, in this nineteenth century, has a definite relation to the vaulting ambition and persecuting bigotry of Louis XIV. in the seventeenth century. That dissolute monarch, not sated with the atrocity and bloodshed caused by his infamous revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, whereby half a million of the best subjects of France became exiles forever, and multitudes more became the victims of foulest outrage and wrong, twice ruthlessly invaded the German Palatinate. In a few weeks the consummate tactician Turenne overran the country, and gave to the flames and sack and pillage thirty thriving towns. Unable to maintain his conquests against the resolute Protestant inhabitants and their allies, the Grand Monarque, the most polished gentleman in Europe, deliberately gave orders from his palace of Versailles for the utter devastation of the country. The inhuman orders were obeyed with atrocious fidelity. Eighty thousand men, trained in the art of slaughter, were let loose upon the hapless country, which they ravaged with fire and sword. Heidelberg, Manheim, Spire, Worms, Oppenheim, Bingen, and Baden, towns and cities of historic fame, with their venerable cathedrals, their stately palaces, and their homes of industry, together with many a humble hamlet and solitary farmstead,

were given to the flames. At the old imperial city of Spire the French soldiers stole the ornaments off the coffins, and mockingly scattered to the winds the dust of the German Emperors. "Crops, farms, vines, orchards, fruit trees," says a veracious chronicler, "were all destroyed; and his once rich and smiling land was converted into a desolate wilderness." In the bleak and bitter winterweather a hundred thousand houseless peasants—grey haired sires, and childing mothers, and helpless children—wandered about in abject misery, "imprecating," says the chronicler, "the vengeance of Heaven upon the heartless tyrant who had caused their ruin." Everywhere were found the corpses of men frozen to death.

Thousands of the wretched fugitives took refuge within the lines of the English General, Marlborough, and sought the shelter of that flag whose protection is never denied to the oppressed. Ships were sent to bring them from Rotterdam to England. More than six thousand came to London, reduced from affluence to poverty, and were fed by the dole of public charity. They were encamped on Blackheath and Camberwell Commons, and their wants were supplied by Protestant benevolence and by Government Commissioners. Nearly three thousand were sent to

the American colonies, and formed a valuable addition to the population of New York, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina.

A number, and with these we are at present more particularly interested, immigrated, under the auspices of the British Government, to Ireland, and settled in the county of Limerick, near Rathkeale. They received grants of eight acres of land for each person, young and old, for which the Government paid the rent for twenty years. Each able-bodied man was enrolled in the free yeomanry of the county as "German Fusileers," received arms, and underwent military drill. In a contemporary list of these "Irish Palatines" occur the names, afterwards so familiar in the United States and Canada, of Embury, Heck, Ruckle, Sweitzer, and others. They are described by a historian of their adopted country as frugal and honest, "better clothed than the generality of Irish peasants. Their houses are remarkably clean, besides which they have a stable, cow-houses, and neat kitchen gardens. The women are very industrious. In short, the Palatines have benefitted the country by increasing tillage, and are a laborious, independent people, who are mostly employed on their own farms."

In the good Protestant soil of those hearts providentially prepared for the reception of the

Gospel, the seed of Methodism was early sown, and brought forth its natural fruit of good-living. Wesley's itinerant "helpers" penetrated to their humble hamlets, and these poor refugees received the Word with gladness. When John Wesley, in 1758, passed through Ireland, preaching day and night, he records that such a settlement could hardly elsewhere be found in either Ireland or England. The Palatines had erected a large chapel. "There was no cursing or swearing, no Sabbath-breaking, no drunkenness, no alehouse among them. They were a serious, thinking people, and their diligence had turned all their land into a fruitful garden. How will these poor foreigners," he exclaims, "rise up in the Day of Judgment against those that are round about them!"

In this remarkable community was born, in the year 1734, the child destined to be the mother of Methodism in the New World. The family seem to have been of respectable degree, and gave the name, Ruckle Hill, to the place of their residence in Balligarrene. Barbara Ruckle was nurtured in the fear of the Lord, and in the practice of piety. She grew to womanhood fair in person, and adorned especially with those spiritual graces which constitute the truest beauty of female character. In her eighteenth year she gave her-

self for life to the Church of her fathers, and formally took upon her the vows of the Lord.

“From the beginning of her Christian life,” records her biographer, “her piety was of the purest and profoundest character. The Wesleyan doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit was the inward personal test of piety among the Methodists of that day; and it was the daily criterion of the spiritual life of Barbara Heck; and when, in extreme age, she was about to close her life-pilgrimage, in the remote wilds of Canada, after assisting in the foundation of her Church in that province, as well as in the United States, she could say that she had never lost the evidence of her acceptance with God, for twenty-four hours together, from the day of her conversion. She was of a thoughtful and serious habit of mind, calm, self-recollected, and quietly resolute. She had, through her entire Christian life, intervals of sadness and of severe mental conflict; and there are traditions among her descendants which show that these trials were not unlike those of the great Reformer when enduring the ‘hour and power of darkness’ in the castle of Wartburg.

Her German Bible, her familiar companion to the end of her days, was her consolation in these ordeals, and prayer her habitual resource;

it was her rule always to persist in the latter till she prevailed."

In 1760, in the twenty-sixth year of her age, our gentle heroine was united in Christian wedlock to Paul Heck, who is described as a devout member of the Teutonic community. Ireland then had scarce begun to send forth the swarms of her children who afterward swelled the population of the New World. Only her more adventurous spirits would brave the perils of the stormy deep and of the untried lands beyond the sea. It is therefore an indication of the energy of character of those Irish Palatines that about this time a little company of them resolved to try their fortunes on the continent of America.

"On a spring morning of 1760," writes one who was familiar with the local history of the Palatines, "a group of emigrants might have been seen at the Custom House Quay, Limerick, preparing to embark for America. At that time emigration was not so common an occurrence as it is now, and the excitement connected with their departure was intense. They were accompanied to the vessel's side by crowds of their companions and friends, some of whom had come sixteen miles to say 'farewell' for the last time. One of these about to leave—a young man with a thoughtful look and resolute bearing—is evi-



dently leader of the party, and more than an ordinary pang is felt by many as they bid him farewell. He had been one of the first-fruits of his countrymen to Christ, the leader of the infant Church, and in their humble chapel, had often ministered to them the word of life. He is surrounded by his spiritual children and friends, who are anxious to have some parting words of counsel and advice. He enters the vessel, and from its side once more breaks among them the bread of life. And now the last prayer is offered; they embrace each other; the vessel begins to move. As she recedes, uplifted hands and uplifted hearts attest what all felt. And none of all that vast multitude felt more, probably, than that young man. His name was Philip Embury. His party consisted of his wife, Mary Sweitzer (remarkable for her personal beauty, and recently married, at the early age of sixteen, to her noble husband), his two brothers and their families, Paul Heck and Barbara his wife, and others. Who among the crowd that saw them leave could have thought that two of the little band were destined, in the mysterious providence of God, to influence for good countless myriads, and that their names should live long as the sun and moon endure? Yet so it was. That vessel contained Philip Embury, the first class-leader and local-

preacher of Methodism on the American continent, and Barbara Heck, 'a mother in Israel,' one of its first members, the germ from which, in the good providence of God, has sprung the Methodist Church of the United States [and Canada]; a Church which has now under its influence about seven millions of the germinant mind of that new and teeming hemisphere!"

The sailing of the little vessel was all unheeded by the great world, and little would it have recked had it foundered in the deep; but that frail bark was freighted with the germs of a mighty movement, with the seeds of a glorious harvest which was destined to fill the whole land, the fruit whereof should shake like Lebanon. Those earnest souls, in the flush of youth and hope and love, carried with them the immortal leaven which was to leaven with its spiritual life a whole continent.

After a weary voyage of many weeks the "destined vessel, richly freighted," safely reached New York on the 10th of August, 1760. Amid the disappointments of hope deferred, and the novel temptations by which they were surrounded, deprived, too, of the spiritual ministrations with which they had been favoured in the old home, these humble Palatines seem to have sunk into religious apathy and despondency, and, like the

exiles of Babylon, to have said, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Embury seems to have soon lost his zeal, and, constitutionally diffident, to have shrank from the responsibility of religious leadership. While he justly ranks as the founder of American Methodism, Barbara Heck, as Dr. Stevens well remarks, may even take precedence of him as its foundress. She nourished, during all this time, her religious life by communion with God and with her old German Bible.

Five years later other Palatines, some of them relatives or old friends of the Emburys and Hecks, arrived at New York. Few of these were Wesleyans, and some made no profession of religion whatever. In the renewal of social intercourse between the old and new arrivals a game of cards was introduced. There is no evidence that any of the Wesleyans took part in this worldly amusement. But Barbara Heck felt that the time had come to speak out in earnest remonstrance against the spiritual declension of which she regarded this occupation as the evidence. In the spirit of an ancient prophetess she seized the cards and threw them into the fire, and solemnly warned the players of their danger and their duty. Under a Divine impulse she went straightway to the house of her cousin, Philip Embury, and, "falling pros-

trate" before him, she appealed to him to be no longer silent, "entreating him with tears." With a keen sense of the spiritual danger of the little flock, she exclaimed, "You must preach to us or we shall all go to hell together, and God will require our blood at your hand." "I cannot preach, for I have neither house nor congregation," he replied. Nevertheless, at her earnest adjuration, he consented to preach in "his own hired house," and this mother in Israel sallied forth and collected four persons, who constituted his first audience. Its composition was typical of the diverse classes which the vast organization of which it was the germ was to embrace. "Small as it was," says Dr. Stevens, "it included white and black, bond and free; while it was also an example of that lay ministrations of religion which has extended the denomination in all quarters of the world, and of that agency of woman to which an inestimable proportion of the vitality and power of the Church is attributable. The name of Barbara Heck is first on the list, with her was her husband, Paul Heck; beside him sat John Lawrence, his 'hired man;' and by her side an African servant called 'Betty.' Thus Methodism began its ministrations among the poor and lowly, destined within a century to cover with its agencies a vast continent,

and to establish its missions in every quarter of the globe."

At the close of this first Methodist sermon ever preached in America, Philip Embury organized his congregation into a class, which he continued to meet from week to week. The little company continued to increase, and soon grew too large for Philip Embury's house. They hired a more commodious room which was immediately crowded. "No small excitement," says Dr. Stevens, "began quickly to prevail in the city on account of these meetings." Philip Embury, toiling all the week for the bread that perisheth, continued from Sabbath to Sabbath to break unto the people the bread of life. As in the case of the Great Preacher, "the common people heard him gladly." He was one of themselves, and spoke to them of common needs and of a common Saviour, and their hearts responded warmly to his earnest words.

One day the humble assembly was a good deal startled by the appearance among them of a military officer with scarlet coat, epaulets, and sword. The first impression was that he had come in the King's name to prohibit their meetings. They were soon agreeably undeceived. In the good and brave Captain Webb, they found a fast friend and fellow-labourer in the Lord. He was one of Wesley's local preachers who, sent with his

regiment to America, found out the New York Methodists and gladly cast in his lot with them. He soon took his stand at Embury's preaching desk "with his sword on it by the side of the open Bible," and declared to the people the word of life. The preaching of the soldier-saint roused the whole city, and promoted at once the social prestige and religious prosperity of the humble Church. For the ten years that he continued in America he was the chief founder of Methodism on the continent, preaching everywhere among the seaboard towns and villages. "The old soldier," said President John Adams, "was one of the most eloquent men I ever heard." He had the honour of introducing Methodism into the Quaker City, where to-day it is so powerful, as well as of planting it in many of the towns of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Long Island.

In 1767 the famous "Rigging Loft," in William Street, was hired for the growing New York congregation; but "it could not," says a contemporary writer, "contain half the people who desired to hear the word of the Lord." The necessity for a larger place of worship became imperative, but where could this humble congregation obtain the means for its erection? Barbara Heck, full of faith, made it a subject of prayer, and received in her soul, with inexpressible

assurance, the answer, "I, the Lord, will do it." She proposed an economical plan for the erection of the church, which she believed to be a suggestion from God. It was adopted by the society, and "the first structure of the denomination in the western hemisphere," says Dr. Stevens, "was a monumental image of the humble thought of this devoted woman. Captain Webb entered heartily into the undertaking. It would probably not have been attempted without his aid. He subscribed thirty pounds towards it, the largest sum, by one-third, given by one person." They appealed to the public for assistance, and the subscription list is still preserved, representing all classes, from the Mayor of the city down to African female servants, designated only by their Christian names. A site on John Street, now in the very heart of the business portion of the city, surrounded by the banks of Wall Street and the palaces of Broadway, was procured, and a chapel of stone, faced with blue plaster, was in course of time erected. As Dissenters were not allowed to erect "regular churches" in the city, in order to avoid the penalties of the law, it was provided with a fireplace and chimney. Its interior, though long unfinished, was described as "very neat and clean, and the floor sprinkled over with sand as white as snow." "Embury, being a skilful carpenter,

wrought diligently upon its structure ; and Barbara Heck, rejoicing in the work of her hands, helped, to whitewash its walls." "There were at first no stairs or breastwork to the gallery ; it was reached by a rude ladder. The seats on the ground floor were plain benches without backs. Embury constructed with his own hands its pulpit ; and on the memorable 30th of October, 1768, mounted the desk he had made and dedicated the humble temple to the worship of God. It received the name of 'Wesley Chapel,' and was the first in the world to receive that honoured name."

Within two years we hear of at least a thousand hearers crowding the chapel and the space in front. It has been more than once reconstructed since then, but a portion of the first building is still visible. We had the pleasure of worshipping there a few months ago, and saw an engraving of the original structure. A wooden clock, brought from Ireland by Philip Embury, still marks the hours of worship. Marble tablets on the walls commemorate the names and virtues of Barbara Heck and Embury, and of Asbury and Summerfield, faithful pastors whose memory is still fragrant throughout the continent. This mother-church of American Methodism will long continue to attract the footsteps of many a devout pilgrim to the birthplace of the Church of his fathers and



of his own religious fellowship. He will discern what potency God can give to even a feeble instrumentality, that with Him there is neither great nor small, that He can make one to chase a thousand and two to put ten thousand to flight.\*

Methodism having now been established by lay agency in the largest city in the New World, it was soon destined to be planted by the same means in the waste places of the country. John Wesley, at the solicitation of Captain Webb and other Methodists in America, had sent from England as missionaries, to carry on the good work begun in New York, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, the pioneers of an army of ten thousand Methodist preachers on this continent. To these Philip Embury readily gave up his pulpit, and shortly after, in 1770, removed with his family, together with Paul and Barbara Heck and other Palatine Methodists, to Salem, Washington County, New York, near Lake Champlain.

\* It is a somewhat remarkable coincidence that shortly after Embury had introduced Methodism into New York, another Irish local preacher, Robert Strawbridge by name, was the means of its introduction into the Province of Maryland. Like Embury, he preached first in his own house, and afterwards in a humble "log meeting-house," the prototype of thousands such which were destined to rise as golden candlesticks amid the moral darkness all over this vast continent.

This now flourishing and populous part of the country was then a wilderness. But under these changed conditions these godly pioneers ceased not to prosecute their providential mission—the founding of Methodism in the New World. While they sowed with seed grain the virgin soil of their new farms, they sought also to scatter the good seed of the kingdom in the hearts of their neighbours. Embury continued his labours as a faithful local preacher, and soon among the sparse and scattered population of settlers was formed a “class”—the first within the bounds of the Troy Conference, which has since multiplied to two hundred preachers and twenty-five thousand members.

Embury seems to have won the confidence and esteem of his rural neighbours no less for his practical business efficiency and sound judgment than for his sterling piety, as we find him officiating as magistrate as well as preacher

He received, while mowing in his field in the summer of 1775—the year of the outbreak of the Revolutionary War—so severe an injury that he died suddenly, at the early age of forty-five. “He was,” writes Asbury, who knew him well, “greatly beloved and much lamented.” He was buried, after the manner of the primitive settlers, on the farm on which he had lived and laboured. “After

reposing," writes Dr. Stevens, "fifty-seven years in his solitary grave without a memorial, his remains were disinterred with solemn ceremonies, and borne by a large procession to the Ashgrove burial-ground, where their resting-place is marked by a monument recording that he 'was the first to set in motion a train of measures which resulted in the founding of John Street Church, the cradle of American Methodism, and the introduction of a system which has beautified the earth with salvation and increased the joys of Heaven.'"

The loyal Palatines, whose forefathers had enjoyed a refuge from persecution under the British flag, would not share the revolt against the mother country of the American colonists. On the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, therefore, they maintained their allegiance to the old flag by removing to Lower Canada. Here they remained for ten years, chiefly in Montreal. In 1785 a number of them removed to Upper Canada, then newly organized as a colony, and settled in the township of Augusta, on the River St. Lawrence. Among these were John Lawrence and Catharine his wife, who was the widow of Philip Embury, Paul and Barbara Heck, and other Palatine Methodists. True to their providential mission, they became the founders and pioneers of Methodism in Upper Canada as they had been in

the United States. A "class" was forthwith organized, of which Samuel Embury, walking in the footsteps of his sainted father, was the first leader. Thus, six years before the advent into Canada of William Losee, the first regular Methodist preacher who entered the country, Methodism was already organized through the energies of those honoured lay agents.

The first Methodist meeting-house in Canada was built at Hay Bay, Adolphustown, a deep indentation of the beautiful Bay of Quinte. It was a barn-like, wooden structure, thirty-six feet by thirty, two stories high, with galleries, which still existed a few years ago in a tolerable state of preservation.\* On the subscription list appear the

\*The first place of worship erected in Upper Canada was the Church of England Indian Mission Chapel, near Brantford, built in 1784. On the severance of the thirteen American colonies from Great Britain, the loyal Indians on the Mohawk River, with their gallant chief, Joseph Brant, maintained their allegiance to Great Britain, and removed to the Indian Reserve on the Grand River. The old church is still in excellent repair, and is used for regular service. The old bell in the tower bears the name of its London maker of the last century. The communion service, of solid silver, was the gift, as an inscription which it bears asserts, of Queen Anne to the "Mohawk Chapell" of her Indian children. It must, therefore, date from the first fourteen years of the eighteenth century. Beside the old church, beneath a lichen-covered grey stone slab, slumber the remains of the stormy

names of Embury, Ruckle, and other of the godly Palatines whose memory is associated forever with the introduction of Methodism to this continent and to this Dominion. The same year another church of similar size and character was begun at Earnestown, near Kingston, which we believe in a renovated condition, is still regularly occupied for Methodist worship. This year also died at his home at Augusta, in the faith of the Gospel, Paul Heck, aged sixty-two years. His more retiring character shines with a milder radiance beside the more fervid zeal of his heroic wife. But "he was," writes our veteran Canadian ecclesiologist, the Rev. Dr. Carroll, "an upright, honest man, whose word was as good as his bond."

Barbara Heck survived him about twelve years, and died at the residence of her son, Samuel Heck, in 1804, aged seventy years. "Her death," writes Dr. Stevens, "was befitting her life; her old German Bible, the guide of her youth in Ireland, her

Chief Joseph Brant and of his son and successor John Brant. The present Indian mission school is maintained largely, if not solely, by the endowment fund of the "New England Society"—not a missionary society in New England, but one of the mother country which, in the seventeenth century, sent Eliot, Brainard, and other missionaries to the savage tribes of America. Thus are our first Canadian chapel and the present Indian school linked with the pious benevolence of those godly Puritans of two hundred years ago.

resource during the falling away of her people in New York, her inseparable companion in all her wanderings in the wildernesses of Northern New York and Canada, was her oracle and comfort to the last. She was found sitting in her chair dead, with the well-used and endeared volume open on her lap. And thus passed away this devoted, obscure, and unpretentious woman, who so faithfully, yet unconsciously, laid the foundations of one of the grandest ecclesiastical structures of modern ages, and whose name shall shine with ever increasing brightness as long as the sun and moon endure."

Many of the descendants of the Embury and Heck families occupy prominent positions in our Church in Canada, and many more have died happy in the Lord. Philip Embury's great-great-grandson, John Torrance, jun., Esq., has long filled the honourable and responsible position of treasurer and trustee steward of three of the large Methodist churches of Montreal.\*

A correspondent of the *Christian Guardian*, we think the Rev. Dr. Carroll, writes that a grandson of Paul and Barbara Heck "was a probationer in the Wesleyan ministry when he was called to his reward. He was eminently pious,

\* Letter of John Matthewson, Esq., of Montreal, in the *Christian Advocate*, Jan. 11, 1866, quoted by Dr. Stevens.

a clear-headed theologian, and a preacher of promise. His father, Samuel Heck, was an eminent local preacher for more than forty years, and, by his consistency, earned the meed of universal respect; and from none more than from his immediate neighbours, to whom he preached nearly every second Sabbath during that whole period. Jacob Heck," (his brother) continues the writer, "was one of the best read men we ever had the happiness to converse with, and one whose conversation was as lively and playful as it was instructive. We never saw a finer old man. We can imagine we can now see his venerable white head stooping form, and sparkling dark eyes, and also hear his ringing, hearty laugh. He showed his amiability by his fondness for little children, who were equally fond of him. The ten surviving grandchildren of Paul and Barbara Heck are pious, and many of their great-grandchildren also."

Dr. Carroll has preserved, in the fifth volume of his invaluable history of Canadian Methodism, a letter of the venerable Elder Case, in which he writes as follows:—

"A few years since I visited John Embury and his worthy companion. He was then ninety-eight years old. The scenes of early Methodism in New York were revived in his recollections, and he referred to them as readily as if they had recently

occurred. He said: 'My uncle, Philip Embury, was a great man—a powerful preacher—a very powerful preacher. I had heard many ministers before, but nothing reached my heart till I heard my Uncle Philip preach. I was then about sixteen. The Lord has since been my trust and portion. I am now ninety-eight.—Yes, my Uncle Philip was a great preacher.' After this interview he lived about a year, and died suddenly, as he arose from prayer in his family, at the age of ninety-nine. The Emburys, Detlors, Millers, Maddens, Switzers, of Bay of Quinte, are numerous and pious, and some of them ministers of the Gospel—all firmly grounded in Methodism. Their Palatine origin is prominent in their health, integrity, and industry, and their steadfast piety. The parents are gone, and the sons have followed them in the way of holiness to glory; but a numerous train of grandchildren are pursuing the Christian course 'their fathers trod'—intelligent, pious, and wealthy. 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.'"

In the old "Blue Church Graveyard," on the banks of the majestic St. Lawrence, slumbers the dust of the founders and of many of the pioneers of Methodism in this land. The spot takes its name from an ancient church, now demolished, which once wore a coat of blue paint. The forest



trees which covered this now sacred scene were cleared away by hands which have long since ceased from their labour and been laid to rest in the quiet of these peaceful graves. Thither devout men, amid the tears of weeping neighbours and friends, bore the remains of Paul Heck and of Barbara his wife. Here, too, slumbers the dust of the once beautiful Catharine Switzer, who, in her early youth, gave her heart to God and her hand to Philip Embury, and for love's sweet sake braved the perils of the stormy deep and the privations of pioneer life in the New World. Here sleep also, till the resurrection trump awake them, the bodies of several of the early Palatine Methodists and of many of their descendants, who, by their patient toil, their earnest faith, their fervent zeal, have helped to make our country what it is to-day.

"Canada," writes one who well knew this spot and loved to moralize among its memory-haunted tombs, "is highly honoured in having the guardianship of the sacred dust of persons who were instrumental in kindling that fire which has broken forth into such a glorious conflagration on this continent. It is, however," he adds, "to the shame of Canadian Methodists that no worthy memorial has been erected ere this to the honour of Paul and Barbara Heck."

The Methodists of the United States worthily honoured the memory of Barbara Heck on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of the planting of Methodism in that land by the erection of a memorial building in connection with the Garrett Biblical Institute at Evanston, Illinois, to be known forever as HECK HALL. Thus do two devout women, one the heir of lowly toil, the other the daughter of luxury and wealth, join hands across the century, and their names and virtues are commemorated, not by a costly but useless pillared monument, but by a "home for the sons of the prophets, the Philip Emburys of the coming century, while pursuing their sacred studies."

"Barbara Heck," writes Dr. C. H. Fowler in commemorating this event, "put her brave soul against the rugged possibilities of the future, and throbbled into existence American Methodism. The leaven of her grace has leavened a continent. The seed of her piety has grown into a tree so immense that a whole flock of commonwealths come and lodge in the branches thereof, and its mellow fruits drop into a million homes. To have planted American Methodism; to have watered it with holy tears; to have watched and nourished it with the tender, sleepless love of a mother and the pious devotion of a saint; to have called out the

first minister, convened the first congregation, met the first class, and planned the first Methodist church edifice, and to have secured its completion, is to have merited a monument as enduring as American institutions, and, in the order of Providence, it has received a monument which the years cannot crumble; as enduring as the Church of God. The life-work of Barbara Heck finds its counterpart in the living energies of the Church she founded."

As we contemplate the lowly life of this true mother in Israel, and the marvellous results of which she was providentially the initiating cause, we cannot help exclaiming in devout wonder and thanksgiving, "What hath God wrought!" In the United States and Canada there are at this moment, as the outgrowth of seed sown in weakness over a century ago, a great Church organization, like a vast banyan tree, overspreading the continent, beneath whose broad canopy ten millions of souls, as members or adherents, or one-fourth of the entire population, enrol themselves by the name of Methodists, and go in and out and find spiritual pasture. The solitary testimony of Philip Embury has been succeeded by that of a great army of fifteen thousand local preachers, and nearly as many ordained ministers. Over two hundred Methodist colleges and acad-

emies unite in hallowed wedlock the principles of sound learning and vital godliness. Nearly half a hundred newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals, together with a whole library of books of Methodist authorship, scatter broadcast throughout the land the religious teachings of which those lowly Palatines were the first representatives in the New World.

In these marvellous results we find ground not for vaunting and vain glory, but for devout humility and thankfulness to God. To all who bear the name of Methodists come with peculiar appropriateness the words of Holy Writ: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called : but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are : that no flesh should glory in His presence. . . . He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."



VII.

Francis Asbury.





## VII.

### FRANCIS ASBURY, THE PIONEER BISHOP OF AMERICA.

“**W**HOSOEVER will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” Such were the words with which the Son of man, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many, rebuked the worldly ambition and self-seeking of His disciples. The modern Jove, who sits in Cæsar’s seat, surrounded by halberdiers, or borne aloft in state, receives the homage of princes and asserts dominion over the souls of men, subscribes himself, even in his most imperious edicts—*Servus Servorum Dei*—“The servant of the servants of God.” Those words, which only in the strongest irony could be addressed to the great spiritual despot of Rome, describe in sober truth the character of Francis Asbury, the pioneer bishop of America.



At the mention of that name there rises the vision of an aged man, with snow-white hair and benignant aspect, worn with toil and travel, brown with the brand of the sun and with exposure to the vicissitudes of fair and foul weather. His brow, the home of high thoughts, is furrowed by the care of all the churches coming upon him daily. No prelatial lawn, like "samite, mystic wonderful," invests with its flowing amplitude his person. Clad in sober black or homespun brown, he bestrides his horse, his wardrobe and library contained in the bulging saddle-bags which constitute his sole equipage. Instead of lodging in an Episcopal palace, he is glad to find shelter in the hut of a backwoods' settler, or to bivouac in the open air. With much of their original force he might adopt the words of the first and greatest missionary of the cross and exclaim: "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils in the wilderness, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." With no less truthfulness than Saint Paul himself might he declare, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." He was a heroic soul in a heroic age. He united, in a rich garland of graces, the fervour of an apostle, the boldness of a con-

fessor, the piety of a saint, the tenderness of a woman, and the self-sacrifice of a martyr. His life and labours will well repay our study for a time.

Francis Asbury was a gift from the Old World to the New, from the mother to the daughter-land. He was born in Staffordshire, near Birmingham, in 1745, the year of the Scottish rising in favour of the Pretender. He was early sent to school, but suffered much from the petty tyranny of the pedant pedagogue who, "clothed with a little brief authority," made the lives of his pupils bitter unto them. But even as a child he carried his troubles to the throne of grace. He records that "God was very near to him, a very present help in time of trouble."

In his fourteenth year he left home to-learn a trade. His religious impressions deepened, and hearing the Methodists spoken against as a people righteous overmuch, he sought their acquaintance. His desire was soon gratified. He expresses some surprise that the service was not in a church. It was probably in a private house or barn. "But," he records, "it was better than a church; the people were so devout; men and women kneeling and all saying 'Amen.'"

This simple spiritual worship took hold of his soul. He engaged with zeal in religious work,

holding prayer-meetings on heath and holt, in cottage and on common. He was rewarded by seeing many converted from their sins. He was soon licensed as local-preacher, and held forth the word of life in the Wesleyan chapels of the vicinity to "wondering, weeping thousands." Multitudes were attracted by his extreme youth, he being then not more than seventeen years of age. Besides his Sabbath services, he often preached five times during the week, faithfully attending meanwhile to his daily labour. In his twenty-first year he was received into the Wesleyan Conference and appointed to circuit work. As an obedient son in the Gospel he laboured faithfully on his several circuits. At the Bristol Conference in 1771, John Wesley called for volunteers for the work in America. His heart still lingered on the shores where he had laboured and endured great trial of affliction a quarter of a century before. Whitefield, with tongue of fire and heart of flame, had traversed the continent like an angel, trumpet-tongued, calling on men everywhere to repent. Philip Embury and Captain Webb had begun to organize Methodist societies in the New World. And thither Pilmoor and Boardman had been sent two years before. Among the first to respond to Wesley's call was Francis Asbury, unknowing of the toil and trial

he thus espoused, or of the glorious reward and abiding renown that he should win.

With tears and many prayers he took leave of his beloved parents, whom he was never to see again. His outfit was of the slenderest kind, and on shipboard he was obliged to sleep on the bare planks. Full of burning zeal he preached to the sailors when it was so stormy that he had to seek support from the mast. His heart yearned for the multitudes wandering in the wilderness of the New World, as sheep having no shepherd.

After a weary eight weeks' voyage he reached Philadelphia. He engaged forthwith in active work, and his labours were followed by a "great awakening." He had thoroughly imbibed the Wesleyan doctrine, "to go to those who needed him most." From an entry in his journal we learn what manner of man he was. "My brethren seem unwilling to leave the cities, but I will show them the way. I have nothing to seek but the glory of God; nothing to fear but His displeasure. I am determined that no man shall bias me with soft words and fair speeches; nor will I ever fear the face of man, or know any man after the flesh, if I beg my bread from door to door; but whomsoever I please or displease, I will be faithful to God, to the people, and to my own soul." There spoke the hero soul. In this man dwelt the spirit

of John Knox, or of John the Baptist. He was evidently a God-appointed captain of Israel's host, and true over-shepherd of souls.

Forthwith Asbury began to range through the country, everywhere preaching the Word. At New York he preached to five thousand people in the 'race-course, and exhorted the multitude to run with patience the race set before them.

In 1772 Wesley appointed Asbury Superintendent of the Societies in America, which had considerably increased in number. The next year the first Conference was held in Philadelphia. So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed, that for several years the membership was nearly doubled annually. Great revivals took place, especially in Maryland and Virginia. Multitudes were stricken to the earth as by a supernatural power, and rose to praise God.

The unhappy conflict with the mother country now broke out. The bruit of war was abroad in the land. Some of the English preachers felt constrained by their loyalty to old England to return home. But Asbury declared, "I can by no means leave such a field for gathering souls to Christ as we have in America; neither is it the part of a good shepherd to leave his flock in time of danger; therefore I am determined, by the grace

of God, not to leave them let the consequence be what it may."

During a fit of sickness in 1776, he went to recuperate at Warm Sulphur Springs, Virginia. His lodgings, he said, though only sixteen feet by twenty, contained seven beds and sixteen persons, besides some noisy children. His plan of duty as an invalid was this: "To read a hundred pages a day, pray in public five times a day, preach in the open air every other day, and lecture in prayer-meeting every other night." Under this regimen, with the blessing of God, he soon recovered his health.

Suspected, apparently, of sympathy with the mother country, he was required to take the oath of allegiance to the State of Maryland. Its form, however, was such that he could not conscientiously accept it. He was, therefore, obliged to leave the State, and take refuge in Delaware, where the State oath was not required of ministers of religion. He found an asylum for a time in the house of a friend. He soon discovered, however, that he must seek safety elsewhere, and he went forth as a fugitive not knowing whither he went. He had not gone many miles before he met a funeral. Although it increased his danger, he did not hesitate to stop and give an address full of Christian sympathy. He was

compelled to take refuge in "a wild and dismal swamp," which he likened to "the shades of death." Three thousand miles from home and kindred, regarded as an enemy to his adopted country, and, worst of all, obliged to remain in hiding when the Word of God was a fire in his bones, and his soul was yearning to range the country and proclaim everywhere the free salvation of the Gospel to perishing multitudes, his heart was much depressed. Yet did he sing his "*Sursum Corda*" in the wilderness, and, under the special protection of the Governor of the State, who knew and honoured his worth, he was allowed to come forth from his hiding and engage without hindrance in his work.

And this work was no holiday amusement. The following extracts from his journal will indicate its character: "We set out for Crump's over rocks, hills, creeks, and pathless woods. The young man with me was heartless before we had travelled a mile. With great difficulty, after travelling eight or nine hours, we reached the settlement, the people looking almost as wild as the deer in the woods. I see little else in these parts but cabins built with poles. I crossed the river in a ferry boat, and the ferryman swore because I had not a shilling to give him." Swimming his horse across another river he found

shelter in the cabin of a friendly settler. "His resting-place, however," says Strickland's record of his life, "was on the top of a chest, and his clothes his only covering. This, however, was better far than he often had. Frequently, when benighted in the wilderness, he slept on the ground, or on rocks, or on some boards in a deserted cabin, with nothing to eat." Day after day he travelled over the broken spurs of the Alleghanies without food from morning to night. His mind was raised to loftiest contemplation by the sublime scenery, and his heart was cheered by his opportunities of breaking the bread of life to the lonely mountaineers.

A change in his relations to the Church was now to take place. "Fifteen years," says Dr. Strickland, "had elapsed since Asbury began preaching in America. He was now forty years of age, and more than half of his life had been spent in preaching the Gospel, yet up to this time he was an unordained man. No ordinances of the Church had ever yet been administered by his hands, and he consented, with the rest of his brethren in the ministry, to receive the Sacrament at the hands of the Episcopal priesthood. There were now in America one hundred and four Methodist ministers, and the membership had risen to fifteen thousand."



It was felt that the time had come when the anomalous condition of these men should cease. John Wesley, therefore, wrote a memorable epistle, often quoted, to the American societies, from which we make the following extracts :

“ Lord King’s account of the Primitive Church convinced me many years ago that bishops and presbyters were the same order and, consequently, had the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right by ordaining part of our travelling preachers, but I have still refused, not only for peace’ sake, but because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church to which I belong.

“ But the case is widely different between England and America. Here there are bishops who have legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, and but few parish ministers, so that for some hundred miles together there is none either to baptize 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.

“ I have, accordingly, appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint Superintendents over our brethren in North America ; as also

Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as Elders among them, by administering baptism and the Lord's Supper.

"If any one will point out a more rational and Scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have adopted.

"As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive Church. And we judge it best they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free.

"JOHN WESLEY."

This document exhibits at once the wise judgment and lofty Christian expediency of the founder of Methodism. His challenge to be shown a more excellent way of dealing with the question has not yet been accepted. We cannot but regard it as a providential blessing that the Bishop of London declined to ordain Dr. Coke as a bishop for America, thus breaking forever the superstitious bond of so-called apostolic succession, so far as concerned the free Methodism of the New World. In the gathering of itinerant

preachers assembled at Baltimore in December, 1784, this figment of priestcraft, which makes validity of ordination depend on a shadowy succession through the Dark Ages from the corrupt Church of Rome, as the only vehicle of apostolic grace, was boldly repudiated. It was felt that the true anointing was that of the Holy Ghost—that the real successors of the Apostles were those who received their inspiration and authority from the same Master and Lord.

This Conference, therefore, organized itself into "The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States," and Dr. Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury were elected the first bishops thereof. As Asbury was up to this period an unordained man, he was first, on Christmas day, ordained by Dr. Coke, deacon; on the twenty-sixth, elder; and on the following day, bishop, or "Superintendent" as he is called in the official document.

Such rapid ecclesiastical promotion is, we believe, unprecedented since the days of St. Ambrose, who, notwithstanding his vigorous *Nolo Episcopari*, was, though but a catechumen, elected bishop of Milan A.D. 374.

The new title of Asbury, however, increased neither his power nor his influence among his brethren. He already ruled by love in all their hearts. His elevation of office gave him only

pre-eminence in toil. The day after the Conference he rode fifty miles through frost and snow. The next day he rode forty more, and so on till the Sabbath, when he halted for labour, not for rest. This was his initiation into the office of bishop.

True to its original genius, American Methodism promoted zealously the cause of higher education. With much effort Cokesbury College was established in the lovely valley of the Susquehanna, overlooking the broad Chesapeake Bay. The curriculum was comprehensive, embracing English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and German. To preachers' sons and indigent students tuition, board, and clothing were free. Others were expected to pay a moderate fee. The "recreation" of the students consisted of agricultural labour and building—"both necessary," it is remarked, "in a new country." After a useful and successful existence for ten years, it was burned to the ground. A heap of smouldering ruins was all that marked its lovely site. Asbury, on whom devolved the chief toil of finding funds for its maintenance, thus writes, date 1796: "Cokesbury College is consumed to ashes, a sacrifice of £10,000 in ten years," (an immense sum in those days.) "If any man would give me £10,000 per year to do and suffer again what I have done for that house I would not do it." His salary at this

time was sixty-four dollars a year. It was evidently, therefore, not for the emolument that he "did and suffered" all this.

Undaunted by disaster, the Methodists of Baltimore purchased, at a cost of £22,000, a building in that city, and established Asbury College. The change of name, however, brought no change of fortune, and it, too, was soon destroyed by fire.

A Methodist Academy was also established in Georgia, and another in the West, but the difficulty of maintenance was great. "We have the poor," writes Asbury, "but they have no money, and the wicked rich we do not wish to ask."

Asbury's labours during this period were excessive, his lodgings often wretched, and his fare meagre and poor. He and Dr. Coke sometimes rode three hundred miles a week, preaching every day. Asbury's journal recounts riding seventy-five miles in one day; reaching a cabin at midnight, and leaving at four in the morning. Sometimes he slept in the woods, sometimes on the floor of a cabin, whose walls were often adorned with coon or wildcat skins, and sometimes he fared even worse, for he writes, "O how glad should I be of a plain clean plank to lie on as preferable to the beds!" It was his misfortune to have a delicate skin and a keen sense of smell. It was often a lucky day when he dined on raccoon or

bearsteaks, cooked by a fire that the wind and rain often extinguished.

In some of his distant missionary excursions—sometimes travelling fifty miles without seeing a house—for protection against wild beasts and wilder men Asbury used to travel with armed bands of mounted hunters. It was a time of Indian massacres. The fate of the victims was most tragical. One wretched survivor was four days dragging herself a distance of only two miles. Sometimes Asbury's party were pursued by bands of infuriate savages, to escape from whom they had to travel all night through the tangled wilderness.

Asbury never married. In his quaint journal he gives the following reasons for what could scarcely be called his choice: "Among the duties of my office was that of travelling extensively, and I could hardly expect to find a woman with grace enough to enable her to live but one week out of fifty-two with her husband. Besides, what right has any man to take advantage of the affections of a woman, make her his wife and by voluntary absence subvert the whole order and economy of the marriage state by separating those whom neither God, nature, nor the requirements of civil society permit long to be put asunder. It is neither just nor generous. I may add to this that

I had but little money, and with this I administered to the necessities of a beloved mother till I was fifty-seven. If I have done wrong I hope God and the sex will forgive me."

"He often impoverished himself," writes his biographer, "to relieve the wants of others. At one time we find him with only two dollars in the world, and his poor preachers ragged and destitute. First his little purse was drained, and then followed his cloak and watch and shirt." His own clothes were often thread-bare and faded, and he has been known to start on a journey of two thousand miles with an outfit of only three dollars. He was almost as dependent on the providence of God as Elijah when fed by ravens. These were no times for marrying or giving in marriage. He who did so was almost invariably compelled to "locate" in order to earn a living for his family. "We have lost the labours," writes Asbury, "of two hundred of the best men in America from this cause."

As a discreet unmarried man, who was destined by his own choice to live and die in celibacy, Asbury, when he could do so, avoided the society of young ladies. But sometimes he could not do so. Dr. Strickland relates one instance in his biography, which we give largely in his own words:—He was travelling in a wild Western

country and was in danger of missing his way and becoming lost in the woods. The daughter of his host proposed to pioneer him through the wilderness. He did not positively decline the offer of his fair guide, though it would have suited his notions better to have gone alone, even if he had missed his way. Roads there were none, nothing but blind or blazed paths. The horses were soon ready and the bishop in his saddle. With the celerity for which the Western girls were famous, Mary sprang to the back of her spirited steed and was at once by his side. They soon entered the forest and were lost to sight. Mary knew the route and led the way. They came at length to a deep and narrow ravine, whose rugged and precipitous banks seemed to forbid a passage. The bishop at beholding it felt relieved, as he thought he had arrived at a Rubicon which his fair companion could not pass. Spurring his horse he cleared the ravine at a bound. He congratulated himself that he was now rid of what he felt rather an encumbrance, as he had considerable qualms of conscience about going to the appointment, where he was a stranger, in company with a young lady. Turning on his horse he was about bidding her good-bye, with the exclamation, "Mary, you can't do that"—a most unhappy suggestion for him to make to a proud-



spirited Western girl. "I'll try," was her prompt and fearless response, and suiting the action to the word horse and rider were in a moment at his side. Faithful to her task, she accompanied the bishop to the end of his journey, and after the preaching returned with him to her father's house.

Asbury was the father of missions in American Methodism, sending out preachers to the destitute settlements, and soliciting funds all over the country for their support. He also established the "The Preachers' Fund," for the aid of superannuates, widows, and orphans. He organized the Book Concern which has been such a source of diffusion of religious light and knowledge. He was the first man in America to introduce Sunday-schools, 1786. The schools, according to the Discipline of 1792, were held "from six in the morning until ten, and from two in the afternoon until six," where it did not interfere with public worship.

The early years of this century were times of great religious revival, especially in the Middle and Southern States. The immense gatherings known as camp meetings took their origin from the open-air sacramental services held by the Presbyterian ministers, which lasted several days. Sometimes from ten to fifteen thousand persons were assembled, and the Presbyterian and Meth-

odist ministers laboured side by side in their work of faith. So vast was the crowd that several preachers, from different stands, proclaimed at the same time the Word of Life, and hundreds, if not thousands, might have been seen prostrate on the earth, or wild with joy, shouting the praises of God. Sometimes thirty preachers were present and four hundred persons were converted.

Toil, travel, and exposure wore down Asbury's strength, yet he gave himself no rest. In his fifty-seventh year he crossed the rugged Cumberland Mountains for the fiftieth time. He was suffering from acute pain in his whole body and with swelling of his knees, which he attributed to sleeping uncovered in the woods. By the aid of laudanum he got two hours' sleep in the forest beneath a blanket stretched out like a tent. His companions slept beneath a cloak thrown over a branch. He had to be lifted on his horse like a child. Scarce able to refrain from crying out in his agony, he writes "Lord, let me die, for death hath no terrors." Yet the heroic soul so sustained the frail body that through mountains and forests he completed his usual annual journey of six thousand miles. He deeply commiserated the wretched emigrants journeying by hundreds over the mountains—almost foodless, shelterless, clothless, toiling along on foot, those who were best off

having only one horse for two or three children to ride at once. Yearning over these lost sheep in the wilderness, he writes in his journal, "We must send preachers after these people."

Methodism in those days was to many an object of intense aversion. Let one example of this, as given by Dr. Strickland, suffice: Dr. Hinde was the military physician of General Wolfe. At the close of the French war he settled in Kentucky. His wife and daughter joined the Methodists. The latter he banished from home. The former he put under medical treatment for what he feigned to regard as insanity. His remedy was a blister plaster extending the whole length of the back. The fortitude and meekness with which the Christian wife bore her persecutions resulted in the doctor's conviction and subsequent conversion. He became one of Asbury's best friends. "He will never again," wrote the bishop, "put a blister on his wife's head to draw the Methodism out of her heart."

In his sixty-third year the indomitable pioneer writes, "I am young again and boast of being able to ride six thousand miles on horseback in ten months. My round will embrace the United States, the Territory and Canada." At this age he frequently rode three hundred miles a week. On his "round" he was attacked with inflamma-

tory rheumatism. But he provided himself with a pair of crutches and rode on through a shower of rain. He had to be lifted from his horse and carried into the house. He was now compelled to take to a carriage and this is the way the grand old veteran writes: "We are riding in a poor thirty dollar chaise in partnership, two bishops of us (himself and Bishop McKendree), but it must be confessed it tallies well with our purses. What bishops! Well, but we have great times; each Western, Southern, and Virginia Conference will have a thousand souls truly converted to God, and is this not an equivalent for a light purse, and are we not well paid for starving and toil? Yes, glory to God."

Yet he felt the weight of years and travail. A little later he writes, "I am happy; but I am sick and weak and in heaviness by reason of suffering and labour. Sometimes I am ready to cry out, 'Lord, take me home to rest.' Courage, my soul!"

His labours seemed to increase as his time for toil grew shorter. In his seventieth year he travelled six thousand miles in eight months, met nine Conferences and attended ten camp-meetings, and at these meetings he laboured above measure, often sleeping but about two hours out of the twenty-four. Even when he had to be carried into the church, he would preach with unquench-

able zeal. From one of these services he was carried to his lodgings and "thoroughly blistered," says the record, "for high fever." Two days after, he rode thirty miles through the bitter cold, the next day thirty-six more, when he was again carried to the pulpit to preach the Word of Life. But the frail body was borne up by the strong will that seemed as if it would not let him die.

But the end was approaching. In his seventy-first year he attended his last Conference. Like a faithful patriarch, leaning upon his staff, says his biographer, whose words we largely adopt, he addressed the elders of the tribes of the Methodist Israel, being assured that he would ere long be called away from their councils. A sense of loneliness came upon him as he remembered the friends of other days who had passed away. Five and forty years of toil and travail in cities and villages, in the log-cabins and wildernesses of the Far West and South, travelling round the continent with but few exceptions every year—he crossed the Alleghanies sixty times—subject to every kind of itinerant hardship and privation, wasted away the frail body but left his indomitable spirit strong in immortal youth, preening its wings for its everlasting flight to that land where they grow not weary evermore, and rest not day nor night from the rapturous worship of the Most High.

When unable longer to stand, he sat in the pulpit and poured out the treasures of his loving overflowing heart to the weeping multitude, who sorrowed most of all at the thought "that they should see his face no more." He writes at this time in his journal, "I die daily; am made perfect by labour and suffering. There is no time nor opportunity to take medicine by day-time, I must do it at night. I am wasting away."

By slow and difficult stages, continues Dr. Strickland, whose account we condense, he passed through South and North Carolina till he reached Richmond, Virginia. "I must once more deliver my testimony in this place," he urged in reply to remonstrance. It was a bright Spring Sabbath, glorious with all the beauty of the South. The venerable bishop with his silvery hair flowing down his shoulders, announced in tremulous tones his last text: "For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness." He seemed like one who was waiting for the summons of the Bridegroom. From time to time he was compelled to pause from sheer exhaustion. Nevertheless he preached for nearly an hour, during which time, says the narrator, a deep and awful stillness pervaded the entire assembly, broken only by the sobs of sympathetic hearers. The spectacle was one of moral sublimity.

Eager to attend the General Conference at Baltimore, he pressed on. But near Fredericksburg, on ground since deluged with blood shed in fratricidal war, he reached his last earthly resting-place. He was carried into the house which he was never to leave till his worn and weary body should be carried to the tomb. On the last Sabbath of his life he called the family together for worship. The twenty-first chapter of Revelation was read; and doubtless by the eye and ear of faith he beheld the Holy City coming down out of Heaven and heard the blessed assurance that God would wipe away all tears forever. As the service closed the spirit of the patriarch passed away and thus—

Like some broad river widening toward the sea,  
Calmly and grandly joined eternity.

Beneath the pulpit of the Eutaw Street Methodist Church in Baltimore, which he had so often occupied in life, sleep the remains of the pioneer bishop of America. In labours he was more abundant than even the apostolic Wesley himself, since the conditions under which he toiled were so much more arduous. He ordained upwards of three thousand preachers. He preached seventeen thousand sermons. He travelled 300,000 miles—from the pine-shadowed Aroostook to the savannas of Georgia, from the surges of the Atlantic to the

mighty Father of Waters—through pathless forests, over rugged mountains and across rapid rivers. He had the care of a hundred thousand souls and the appointment of four hundred preachers.

His character was one of the most rounded and complete, and his life one of the most heroic recorded in the annals of the Church. Says one who knew him well: "He was great without science and venerable without titles. He pursued the most difficult course as most men pursue their pleasures. The delights of leisured study and the charms of recreation he alike sacrificed to the more sublime work of saving souls. Prayer was the seasoning of all his avocations. It was the preface to all business, the conclusion of whatever he undertook. He never suffered the cloth to be removed from the table till he had given thanks to God in prayer."

His preaching was attended with a Divine unction which made it refreshing as the dew of Heaven. His words were at times "a dagger to the hilt at every stroke," and at times so tender that they made the hearts of listening thousands

"Thrill as if an angel spoke,  
Or Ariel's finger touched the string."

He was a man dead to the world, a man of one work. The zeal of the Lord's house consumed



him till he wore out in the work and died at his post. "If I can only be instrumental," he was wont to exclaim with streaming eyes, "in saving one soul in travelling round the continent, I'll travel round till I die."

His devotion and tenderness towards his parents was exceedingly beautiful. In their old age he regularly remitted to them a portion of his meagre income. "My salary," he writes, "is sixty-four dollars. I have sold my watch and library and would sell my shirts before you should want. I spend very little. The contents of a small pair of saddle bags will do for me, and one coat a year. Had I ten thousand pounds per year, you should be welcome, if you needed it." To his aged and widowed mother he wrote, with tender recollections of his boyhood, "Were you to see me and the colour of my hair—nearly that of your own—my eyes are weak even with glasses. When I was a child and would pry into the Bible by twinkling firelight, you used to say 'Frank, you will spoil your eyes.' Hard wear and hard fare, but I am healthy and lean, gray-headed and dim sighted. I wish I could come to see you, but I see no way to do it without sinning against God and His Church."

Asbury could not be called in the strictest sense a scholar. He never enjoyed the University

training of the Wesleys, Fletcher, and Coke. But he was better read than many a college graduate in theology, Church history and polity, civil history and general literature. In his saddle bags he carried his Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament, and in his long and lonely rides, and in the smoky cabins of the wilderness, he diligently studied the oracles of God in their original tongues. His journals give evidence of his shrewd observation, keen wit, and strong idiomatic English. "Be the willing servant of slaves," he was wont to say, "but the slave of none." At the Virginia Salt Works he writes, "Alas! there is little salt here, and when Sister Russell is gone there will be none left." He describes a journey in New Jersey as "over dead sands and among a dead people." Yale College in his day was considered the "seat of science and sin." Yet with all his wit did he never in the pulpit stoop

"To court a grin when he should save a soul."

His keen sense of the beautiful in nature is shown in his sympathetic descriptions of the "noble Hudson," the "lofty Catskills with their towering cliffs," the "beautiful Ohio," the "wild Potomac," the "lovely Shenandoah," the "thundering Niagara," "the interminable forests," and the "broad prairies," with whose varied aspects he was so familiar.

Bishop Asbury had an intense moral antipathy to the drinking customs so rife in the community, which he denounces as the curse of the country. The vile whisky of the day he denominates "the devil's tea." He describes the drovers and their herds whom he met on the roads, as "beasts on four legs and beasts made by whisky on two." "Keep whisky out of your cabins," he was wont to exhort the settlers, "and keep them clean, for your health's sake and for your soul's sake; for there is no religion in dirt, filth, and fleas."

Few men were more revered and beloved. Beyond the sea as well as at home his character was honoured, and the British Conference requested him to visit that body, engaging to pay all the expenses of his journey. Few have ever had so many children named after them. Many of these became his sons in the ministry. To all who bore his name he left by his will a handsome copy of the Scriptures. Without wife or child the Church of God was his spouse, which he loved and cherished better than his own life, and a great multitude of spiritual offspring rose up to call him blessed.

The record of such a life is an inspiration to duty; a summons, like a clarion call, to blessed toil for the Master and to increased zeal in His service. It is a scathing rebuke to self-seeking.

or apathy, or indolence in the most glorious of callings. Asbury has lived out his threescore years and ten on earth, but his work, behold it, remaineth forevermore !

The struggle and grief are all past,  
The glory and worth live on.

On the Methodism of this broad continent, from the region beneath the Northern Bear to that which sees the Southern Cross, from the crowded cities on the Atlantic to the far off lonely regions

Where rolls the Oregon and hears no sound  
Save his own dashings,

he has impressed the stamp of his powerful mind, his mighty faith, his unconquerable will. And down the ages the tide of his influence shall roll in ever increasing volume, till the angel of doom shall stand with one foot upon the sea and one upon the land and swear, by Him that liveth forever, that time shall be no more.



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