

A portrait of John Wesley, an elderly man with long white hair, wearing a black clerical robe with a white cravat. He is seated, gesturing with his right hand while his left hand rests on an open book. The background is dark and textured.

CHRISTIAN HEROES

John
WESLEY

THE CHRISTIAN HERO

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JOHN WESLEY

The Christian Hero

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John Wesley

Introductory

John Wesley is one of the brightest stars in the history of the Christian church. His country honored his greatness, England placed to his memory a tablet in Westminster Abbey; the followers of Christ honor his greatness by perpetuating the memory of his remarkable life in the pages of Christian biography.

Christian biography is one of the most fruitful sources of interesting and inspiring reading to be found. It not only informs, but it also instils in the minds of the young people worthy and noble ideals, and creates in their hearts a desire to be like the godly people of whom they read. For older people, such reading provides encouragement and comfort, helping them upward and onward in the path of life. This book has as its design the accomplishing of these very things. It was written with the younger people in view, the author recognizing that the older minds will condescend to the needs of the younger, whereas the younger readers could not ascend to the style of their elders. The book is dedicated to our wealth of bright young people.

The Publishers

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Chapter 1

Glimpses of His Boyhood Home

Great and noble lives have always had a lowly beginning in a cradle somewhere. And, much as we enjoy hearing about the wonderful deeds which great people have accomplished, still our curiosity prompts us to pause long enough at the beginning of their life-story to take a peep at the cradle where their noble career was launched.

John Wesley's cradle was a part of the nursery furnishings at the rectory where his parents lived, in Epworth, a village of England. Nor was he the first baby to be rocked in that cradle; for there had been fourteen children before him! Rather a large family, was it not? But large families were not uncommon in those days; four more children came to bless the Wesley home before John grew to manhood. So really there were nineteen children in all, though less than half that number lived till they were grown up.

In this large family there were only three boys among those who grew up—Samuel, the eldest child; John, the fifteenth; and Charles, the youngest brother. The hope of the fond parents was tightly bound up in those same three boys; for girls in that age did not share the opportunities for achievements which came to their brothers.

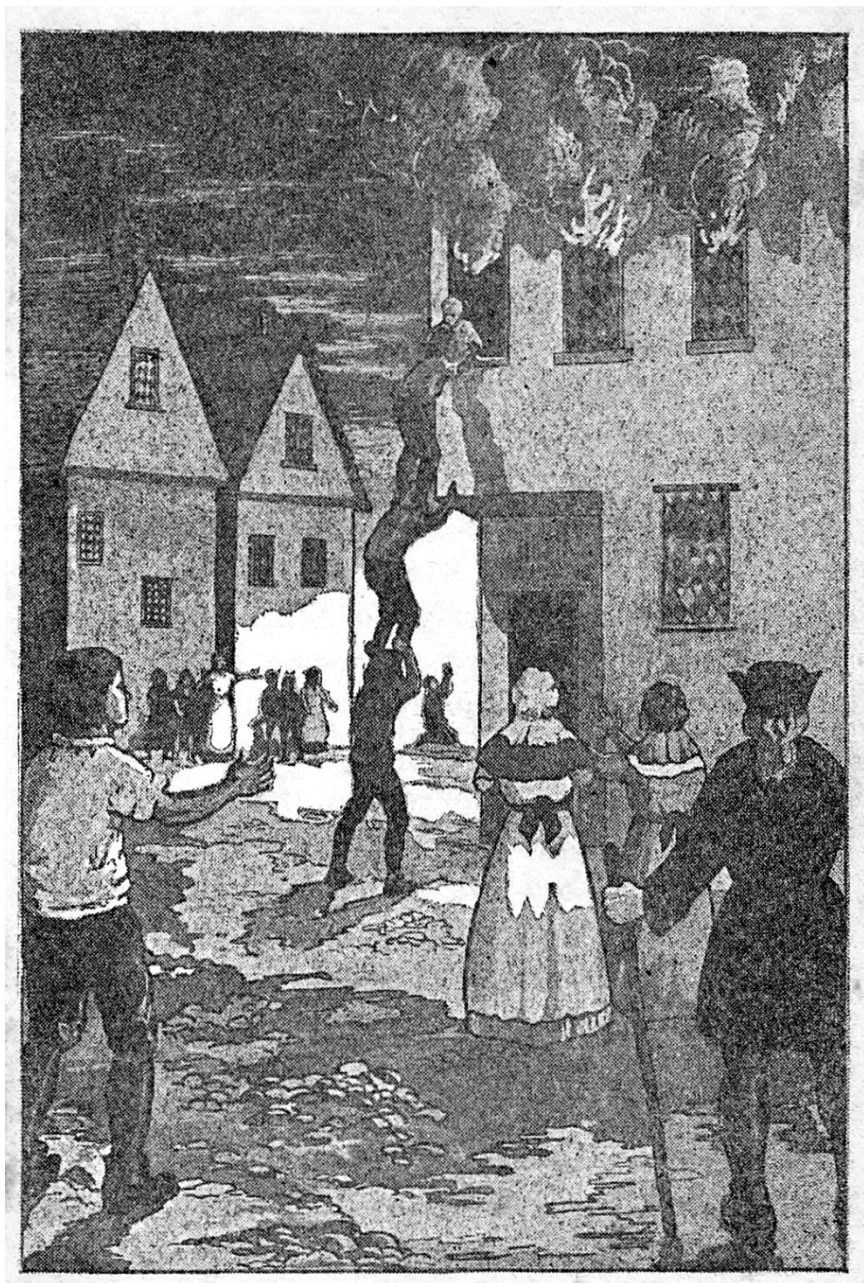
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I told you that John Wesley's childhood home was the rectory in Epworth. This rectory was the village dwelling in which the minister lived; for John's father was the minister of Epworth. There was only one church in the village—the Church of England—for churches were not so numerous then as now. The people who lived in Epworth were not interested in religion, and few of them attended church services at all. Many of them disliked the minister and behaved very unkindly towards him. They were a coarse, rough people, and but few of them could read or write.

One wintry night when John was five years old the family were awakened by cries of, "Fire!" Their house was ablaze, and every one began to scramble out of bed and hasten into the garden—everyone except John, who was lying fast asleep in the nursery upstairs just under the blazing roof. In the excitement John was quite forgotten, until his cries were heard coming from the nursery. His father tried, but could not get to him. Then John's little white face appeared at the window. No ladder being available, there seemed to be no hope for the boy's rescue. Down in the garden below the stricken father knelt to commit his child to the mercy of God. Just then some strong men formed a human ladder and, climbing to the window-sill, reached the frightened child and carried him down to safety just before the roof fell in. In later years John Wesley referred to himself as "the brand plucked out of the burning," in memory of that narrow escape from death.

But we prefer to pass hastily over the misdeeds of these ignorant village folk who were responsible for the burning of the rectory. We know that John Wesley's parents made the best of this unhappy circumstance and gathered their family together under a new roof as quickly as they could. Nor did they desert that wicked community;

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Rescuing Little John Wesley

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more than ever now the minister realized how much an example of Christian living was needed in that very place.

One thing in the house-hold at the rectory which bound the family circle together was prayer. Devotions, called family worship, were never omitted from the daily program. At that hour all work was suspended, and even the servants assembled with the family to worship God. Whenever duties called the father away from home, Mrs. Wesley led in the family devotions. So capable a leader was she that groups of more kindly disposed neighbors begged permission to attend these prayer-services on Sunday evenings. Sometimes the large kitchen was well crowded with eager, respectful listeners. And afterwards these people became more willing to attend services at the church.

Mrs. Wesley was careful to see that her boys and girls should not be allowed to learn nor imitate the rude behavior of the village children. She kept them strictly, and taught them good manners at home. Even to the servants they were trained to be respectful and courteous, and always they were to regard the rights of each other. In that house-hold no wish was ever granted to a child who whined or cried; first that one must learn to ask politely for the desired object. We are not surprised that with such training John Wesley grew up to be a kindly man, with manners so very gracious that he was welcomed in the best of society.

After the burning of the rectory, or parsonage, Mrs. Wesley felt that God had spared her little son's life for some noble purpose, and she prayed earnestly that she might train him to be a Christian gentleman. To each one of her several children she gave one hour of her time every week for a quiet, heart-to-heart talk. During that hour, left alone with them, she sought to help them overcome their weaknesses and to lead them to God. John's hour alone with his

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mother occurred on Thursday evening. And so sacred did that special season become to him that long afterwards, when he was far from home undergoing the temptations of the world, he wrote to his mother asking her to please spend that usual hour in prayer for him, because he needed so much the strength which came from her earnest prayers.

Chapter 2

School-Days in Epworth and London

School-days began for John Wesley when he was five years old. His mother had established a custom with her children to teach them the alphabet, all of it, on the very first day they entered school. This she managed to do by assigning to herself the task of school-mistress, and seeing to it that her pupils stayed with their lessons until they learned them. Only one or two of her pupils failed to learn the entire alphabet in one day. Sometimes much patience was required on her part; but never did she give up without having done her best to accomplish what she had set out to teach.

One day there was a visitor in the schoolroom at the rectory. This visitor was Mr. Wesley, the children's father. No doubt he often entered that schoolroom; but on this particular day he watched the pupils and their teacher very thoughtfully. Finally, he said to Mrs. Wesley: "Sukey [her name was Susannah], I wonder at your patience. You have told that child twenty times the same thing." "Had I satisfied myself with mentioning the matter only nineteen," replied the patient teacher, "I should have lost all my labor. You see, it was the twentieth time; that crowned the whole."

Perhaps the reason why the little Wesleys went to school at home was because school advantages were very unsatisfactory in

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Epworth. Few of the poorer class were educated or seemed to care about knowing how to read and write. Books, magazines, and newspapers were not so plentiful in those days as they are now. You may smile when you hear what Mrs. Wesley used for her beginners' textbooks in that home schoolroom. On the next morning after her new pupil had mastered the alphabet, she assigned for his reading lesson the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis! Yes, the Bible was one of her textbooks, and a very good one at that. Then she also taught them from the catechism, that they might early understand the teachings of the church.

John Wesley was a thoughtful, studious child, always asking a reason for everything he was told to do. Sometimes his elder brother grew impatient with him; but his father would say, "Never mind; you can be certain that Jacky will never do anything without giving a reason for doing it." This habit of persistent inquiry into the "why" of things, aided John in his studies; he advanced rapidly as a scholar.

The problem of how to continue the education of their sons caused the Wesley parents some anxious thought; for money was scarce in that house-hold and it was with difficulty that even the children's bodies were clothed and fed. Buying books and paying tuition in boarding-schools seemed almost out of the question. But "where there is a will there is a way," and so in this matter when John was in his eleventh year his father succeeded in entering him as a student at the Charterhouse, a great public school in London.

Far from home and from the wise counsel and warm love of his mother, John began upon a new adventure. Life at the Charterhouse was vastly different from the life he had known at the rectory in Epworth. Here he came in contact with older students who certainly had not known the careful training of such rare mothers as Mrs. Wesley. Those same rude boys made a practice of stealing from the

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younger students, and snatching away their portion of meat as they returned from the cookhouse where their food was handed out. For the greater part of the six years that John Wesley spent at the Charterhouse School he daily suffered this theft, so that his diet consisted principally of bread. But always he had the keenest appetite for bread; for he was careful to observe his father's injunction to "run three times round the Charterhouse garden every morning." This exercise, his father had said, would give him an appetite, and would help him grow up to be a strong man. With such light diet he hardly needed that exercise to create an appetite; but in later years, when he had grown old, he attributed his long life and good health partly to the fact that he had in early years formed the habit of taking exercise in the morning air.

Not all of John Wesley's experiences at the Charterhouse School were unpleasant. He applied himself so diligently to his studies and behaved himself so gentlemanly that he attracted the attention of the head-master, Dr. Walker, and won for himself an enviable reputation. When, in his seventeenth year, he finally left London to enter upon his college life at the university city of Oxford, he took with him the honor of a scholarship from the Charterhouse School.

Chapter 3

College Life at Oxford

A lad of seventeen, John Wesley entered the Christ Church College at Oxford in the autumn of 1720. Here the pious training of his early youth doubtless helped him to resist the temptations to drift far from God; for many of his fellow students were worldly-minded and reckless, caring not at all for religion. Through the period of his association with them he continued to attend church services regularly, to read the Bible, and to repeat his prayers both morning and evening. Thus he carefully maintained the form of religion which his mother had taught.

The same diligence which marked him as an unusual scholar at the Charterhouse now brought him to the head of his classes in college. He entered into his studies with as much enthusiasm as many young folk manifest in their play, and persistently kept at them.

Until this time in his life, John Wesley seems to have given little thought to his future work. But as he approached manhood he began to think seriously about this subject. His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather before him had been ministers of the gospel, and their calling in life appealed strongly to him. He thought he should

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like to become a minister also, and wrote a letter to his parents at Epworth, telling them of his desire.

The contents of that letter brought joy to Mrs. Wesley's heart; for she had prayed so earnestly that her son might become a noble, Christian gentleman. His father, however, was slower to express his feelings of pride concerning the choice of life-work which John had made. He urged John to wait a while and pray more about the matter before finally deciding to take such an important step. But later on he, too, rejoiced to welcome his thoughtful son into the ministry.

Ever since his early childhood, John Wesley had shown an interest in religion; but now that he decided to become a minister of the gospel he began to think more seriously about the things which please God. He read religious books, and set apart at least one hour each day to spend in reviewing the condition of his own heart and in reading the Bible and praying. He tried very earnestly to quit his sins, and was careful of his words and actions. But as yet he knew nothing about the joy which comes to those who know their sins are forgiven.

About this time John Wesley moved from Christ Church College to Lincoln College, in Oxford. Here he determined to be very particular about his choice of friends, and to associate only with such persons who might help him on his way to heaven. He made strict rules for himself and followed them closely. After a while he became a teacher of Greek in this college, and held other important positions. He also had the honor later of becoming a fellow of Lincoln, which office entitled him to a small yearly income.

A long time had now passed since John had visited his parents, and so he went home to spend his summer vacation with them. Before going, he was ordained as a minister of the Church of England. A year or two later he returned home again, and this time

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he stayed for a while to help his father, who was now growing old. He agreed to take charge of one of the churches where his father preached. This church was in a small village called Wroote, not very far from Epworth. The people who lived there were rough and uneducated, and they did not like the polite manners of the young minister who had come to preach to them. Neither did he like their rude ways, and no doubt he often felt homesick to return to Oxford. When two years later a letter came, urging him to return to Lincoln College and continue his work there, he was glad to bid good-bye to his acquaintances in Wroote and hasten back to the beautiful city which he loved.

On his return, Mr. Wesley found that his younger brother, Charles, was now one of the University students. He, too, was deeply interested in religion, and the two brothers were often together. They and a few of their friends met on Sunday evenings to read and to discuss religious matters. Finally, they met oftener, and discussed other important subjects also.

One of these young men, Robert Morgan, chanced to visit a condemned murderer lying in the Castle, or city jail, and while there he talked with other prisoners and saw how eager they were to have someone show an interest in them. So he began to make regular visits to the prison. When he told the Wesley brothers what he was doing, they, too, became interested and went with him to talk to the prisoners. Mr. Morgan's sympathy was not entirely bound up in the needs of the prisoners; he thought also about the poor sick folk who lived in that city and who had so little pity shown them. These also he visited, and urged the Wesley brothers to join him in this good work.

At first John Wesley was not sure he would be acting wisely to engage in this kind of work. He wondered what his father's advice

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would be; so he wrote a letter home, explaining matters and asking his father whether he should undertake the work. Then came the reply, and not an unpleasant one at all; for the Wesley brothers learned from it that their own father, when a college student at Oxford many years before, had visited the prisoners at the Castle just as they had done with their friend, Mr. Morgan. And now the aged father rejoiced to hear that his two sons were also trying to help unfortunate people.

With this encouragement from the elder Wesley, the young men were ready to begin their charity work in earnest. They formed a plan for systematic effort, and extended their labors still further, reaching out to the poor children who lived in villages nearby and forming classes in which to teach them about God.

One thing which threatened to hinder the success of the young men's plans was their lack of money. They needed money to help the poor sick people, and they needed money to relieve the needs of the prisoners. Among themselves they had barely enough to meet their own living-expenses and get on with their college work. But always "where there is a will there is a way," and in this perplexity the young men decided to deny themselves of everything which they did not actually *need*, and to use the money which they should save in this manner to carry on their work. Here it was that Mr. John Wesley began his life-long habit of giving away all he could save.

However praiseworthy the efforts of these earnest young men were, some people found fault with them and poked fun at their strict manner of living. Jokingly they called them such names as the "Godly Club." "Bible Moths," and finally "Methodists" because of the careful methods which the young men followed in their work and study. Rising every morning at five o'clock, they kept strict account of every minute of the day. Twice each week they fasted,

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and saved the money which they would have used for food to help in their charity work. What sincere young men they were! We cannot wonder that some of their worldly-minded acquaintances made them the subject of their jokes.

Chapter 4

Missionary to the American Indians

The six years which the Wesley brothers and their earnest young friends spent in doing charity work at Oxford did not bring rest to the troubled mind of Mr. John. Even though a minister, he did not feel sure that his sins were forgiven. Few people seemed to understand at that time how one can really know of God's salvation. Many of the ministers did not even pretend to teach about salvation; so we need not wonder at the state of Mr. John's perplexity.

By this time the aged rector of Epworth was nearing the end of his life, and he wished that John would come home and take charge of the work he must leave unfinished. But John did not want to become rector of Epworth. He did not want to go back to that dreary village to live among those ignorant people. He made many excuses to his father, and, sad to say, nearly everyone was selfish! He thought it would be more difficult to try to do right in Epworth than in Oxford, and he was trying so hard to save his own soul! Finally, after his father had died, he consented to take up the work; but then it was too late, for the pastorate had been given to another.

Not long afterwards Mr. John went to London on business, and there he met General Oglethorpe, the founder of the colony in Georgia. The General wished to take with him a clergyman when he

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returned to America; for he had no one in his colony to preach to the settlers and to the friendly Indians. He asked Mr. John to go. Shortly before his death Mr. John's father had written a letter to the General, expressing his interest in the Georgia colony and stating that if he were ten years younger he would offer himself as a missionary to that place. Now the General thought that the son of such a zealous old soldier of the cross would be the very man he was looking for.

At first Mr. John said he could not go, giving for his excuse that he must care for his widowed mother and could not leave her. The General, however, would not take this excuse, and asked whether Mr. John would go if his mother were willing that he should. The young minister replied that he would, and set out for Epworth to settle the question. Perhaps he thought his mother would never give her consent; but in this he was quite mistaken, for she said, "If I had twenty sons I should be glad to give them all up to such a noble work, even though I might never hope to see them again."

When the General finally started on his return voyage to America, he took with him, not only Mr. John Wesley, but also Mr. Charles Wesley, who had decided to go as the General's Secretary. Two other young men, who were friends of the Wesley brothers, accompanied them.

On board the ship these young men found a company of Germans who were also going to Georgia. These Germans were very religious, too; but they seemed to enjoy their religion. Mr. John watched them with great interest, and finally decided to learn their language in order to talk with them. He and his companions kept up their strict habits, formed while they were at Oxford. Each morning they rose at four o'clock and spent one hour for prayer, then they read and studied the Bible together for two hours. After breakfast they had public prayers for everybody on the ship who would attend.

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When this service ended they were ready to begin their daily tasks—of study, writing, or of teaching the children who were numbered among the passengers.

During the long voyage—for ocean travel in those days was very tedious and slow—one time they encountered a fierce storm. The great waves rolled high and broke over the ship, flooding the rooms and passageways with water. Everybody thought they were in danger of being drowned, and many of the passengers cried out in fear. Mr. John was also afraid, for he did not feel that he was prepared to die. But he observed that the Germans remained calm, and that they showed not the least sign of fright. Not even the children among them seemed to be afraid. After the danger had passed, Mr. John spoke to one of the men and asked whether they really were not afraid during the storm. “I thank God, no,” came the reply.

“But were not your women and children afraid?” he questioned further.

“No,” the German answered, “our women and children are not afraid to die.”

This unusual bravery impressed Mr. John, and he wondered what there could be about the religion of these humble people that made them seem different from other Christians he had known. He longed to share their experience in his own heart.

At last the weary voyage across the Atlantic came to an end, and the ship entered the Savannah River to cast anchor near the shore. The passengers were grateful to step on dry ground once more, and the first thing they did after landing was to climb to the top of a hill nearby and kneel down to thank God for bringing them safely to that new, strange land.

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These German Christians found some of their own people in the Georgia colony. While Mr. John Wesley and his helper were having a house prepared for them they also stayed in the German settlement. Here they watched the simple ceremonies of these earnest Christian people, and more than ever Mr. John longed to be like them. He said they reminded him of the early Christians who lived during the days of the apostles.

But Mr. John had come all the long way from England to be a minister for the English-speaking people of the colony and to be a missionary to the Indians. So as soon as their house was finished, he and his helper left the German settlement and set to work.

I am sure we should enjoy a glimpse of that little colony where this missionary effort began. We should see “only about forty houses, besides a church, a prison built of logs of wood, and a mill where everybody took their corn to be ground.” We should see a wilderness of trees hemming in this cluster of houses, and a broad river in front, moving majestically forward to meet the sea. A blue sky overhead, bending over this new world just as familiarly as over old England—this is the scene which greeted the new arrivals at Savannah, Georgia.

Not far from Savannah was an Indian village, where friendly red men lived. The chief from this village came to visit Mr. Wesley soon after he arrived at Savannah. Arrayed in his war paint, his great feather head-dress, his beaded moccasins, surely he presented an interesting spectacle to the new minister. This chief’s name was Tomochichi. Of course he could not speak in the English language; so an interpreter told Mr. Wesley what he said, and then repeated in the Indian language all the words that Mr. Wesley spoke. We are told that the chief’s wife, or squaw, accompanied him on this visit,

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and that she brought a jar of milk and another of honey to present to the missionaries.

But General Oglethorpe discouraged missionary effort among the Indians. He said it was unsafe for Mr. Wesley and his helper to venture far from the settlement, and that they should devote most of their time to the white people of the colony. This was disappointing to Mr. Wesley; but he found that the Indians whom he met did not seem eager to receive his teachings. He could not explain to them what he did not understand himself—how to find Christ as the Savior of the soul.

The white people of the colony were not so enthusiastic about religion as was their young minister, either. Some of them found fault with him because he was so strict. And indeed his manner of living did not look attractive to them, for he continued to practice self-denial as he had done while at Oxford, and he expected them to live according to his ideas.

One day during his stay in Georgia his helper, who was teaching one of the schools, came to him for advice. Some of the boys in that particular school were causing trouble by tormenting the poorer children who had no shoes or stockings. Mr. Wesley listened to the teacher's tale of woe, and then he said, "I'll change schools with you for a while and see if I can cure those boys," So they agreed to change, the worried teacher taking charge of the children whom Mr. Wesley had been instructing, and he going to the other school. A peculiar method it was which Mr. Wesley adopted to cure those rude boys, for he went to the schoolroom each day barefooted! At first the children were very much surprised, of course, to see a new teacher in the schoolroom wearing neither stockings nor shoes. But after a week's time they were well enough cured of their vanity for Mr. Wesley and his helper to return to their own schoolrooms again.

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Mr. Charles Wesley did not remain long in America. He had been stationed at a town called Frederica; but the people there did not like his teaching. They were quarrelsome and difficult to get along with. General Oglethorpe, too, was not easy to please; so the discouraged young man sailed back to England after spending only six months in America. After his departure Mr. John visited Frederica several times, but without success.

Finally, the older brother had to admit that his labors in America were far from being successful, and he turned sadly back towards his homeland. As yet he had not found peace for his troubled soul. "Thinking to convert the heathen Indians," he said of himself, "I came to America; but oh, who shall convert me?"

Chapter 5

How A New Friend Helped Mr. Wesley

The John Wesley who returned to England after an absence of more than two years felt himself a failure in spite of his diligent zeal in the work of the Church. Four days after he arrived in London he met a young minister from Germany, named Peter Bohler. This young man was on his way to America to do missionary work in the Carolinas, and was stopping in London to visit the German Christians of that city.

The discouraged young Wesley was not long in discovering that Mr. Bohler shared the same religious experience of those Germans in the Georgia colony, and now he was eager to entertain this stranger and ask him many questions about his faith in God. He found for the stranger a lodging in the city among his own friends, and after a short stay there took him to Oxford, where the two men spent several weeks together. Although Mr. Bohler was several years younger than John Wesley, he at once took the place of teacher, and Mr. Wesley became the humble learner. Patiently Mr. Bohler tried to explain to his puzzled friend what it means to have faith in God, the simple faith which brings the assurance of sins forgiven through the blood of Christ. Still it seemed that Mr. Wesley could not understand, and he felt so unhappy that he thought he ought to quit preaching altogether. Mr. Bohler told him not to do

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that but to preach faith and keep on preaching faith until he should realize the experience of faith in his own heart.

Returning to London from Oxford, Mr. Bohler visited with Charles Wesley, who was also seeking the experience which his older brother craved. And before many days passed Mr. Charles felt the peace of God fill his soul. He was eager to tell his brother about the glad joy which he now experienced, and hearing this, more than ever Mr. John longed to know that his sins were forgiven. He had come to see that all his good works could not bring peace to his troubled soul, that good works alone cannot save any one. So, following Mr. Bohler's advice, he began to teach faith to others, and all the time he prayed earnestly that his own faith might be increased.

At last the day came when Mr. Wesley felt that his prayers were soon to be answered. The very air seemed to be full of whispers of assurance to his longing soul. That evening he attended a religious meeting where the speaker read Luther's description of the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, and, listening to those words, Mr. Wesley's heart felt glad, for he knew that at last he understood what it means to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved from sin.

So rejoiced was Mr. John and his friends that they hastened at once to tell the good news to Mr. Charles, who was lying ill in his room. And together the young men rejoiced and praised God with songs and prayer.

After that memorable night Mr. John Wesley became a different person. Now all his old doubts and fears were gone, and peace flooded his soul. He, too, had found a religion which brought joy such as the German Christians, called Moravians, experienced, and he longed to tell others.

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But not everyone seemed glad to hear of the change which had come to Mr. John. Some of his friends thought he had become too excited about religion. One elderly lady whom he told about his recent conversion said, "If you have not been a Christian ever since I knew you, then you were a great hypocrite, for you made us all believe that you were one." His elder brother, Samuel, was greatly distressed; for he thought that surely "Jack is losing his mind!"

Three weeks after his conversion Mr. John started for Germany, to visit the Moravian Christians there. On this visit his faith was much strengthened, and he returned to England full of zeal to work for God. No longer was religion just an experiment to him; for now, it was an actual reality. And his preaching and teaching rang with this assurance, convincing his hearers that a change had really taken place in his heart

I told you before that few ministers at that time seemed to understand how people can be saved from sin. They believed that such teaching was unreasonable, and therefore were not pleased with Mr. John's sermons. One after another these ministers refused to allow him to preach in their churches, and before a great while nearly all the churches in the great city of London were closed against him. But God had a greater work for this minister of the gospel to do, a work that Mr. Wesley would never have attempted if he had never been refused a place in the church pulpits.

The two Wesley brothers and the German Moravian Christians in London were not the only ones who enjoyed salvation in that part of England. A little company who shared the same belief often met together to pray and to worship God. They formed a Christian society, and some of the members were gentlemen who had been fellow students at Oxford with the Wesley brothers when they were called "Methodists." Besides teaching the Scriptures in this society,

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Mr. Wesley spent many hours teaching earnest-hearted people in their homes, visiting the prisons and workhouses, and doing good wherever he found opportunity.

Chapter 6

Answering the Call from a Strange Pulpit

One of the college friends of the Wesley brothers was a young man named George Whitefield. Mr. Whitefield secured for himself quite a brilliant reputation as a preacher during the absence of Mr. John in America. The churches where he preached in Bristol and London were crowded to their utmost capacity by eager listeners, and everywhere this gifted young speaker went throngs gathered to hear him.

Just as Mr. John returned to England, Mr. Whitefield was setting out on his voyage to America. Mr. John was so greatly discouraged by his own failure in the American colony that he urged his young friend not to go; but Mr. Whitefield was not persuaded to change his plans. During his six months' stay in Georgia he met with great success; for he did not try to impose his own views upon the people as Mr. Wesley had tried to do.

While Mr. Whitefield was absent in America, the great change came into Mr. Wesley's life; and when the noted young preacher returned again to England, Mr. Wesley hastened from Oxford to London to meet him and tell him the good news. The Christian society in London gave Mr. Whitefield a hearty welcome, and he spent some happy seasons with his friends there.

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It was not long, however, before Mr. Whitefield discovered that a change had taken place in England during his absence. Now the churches where he had preached such wonderful sermons were not so eager to give him a glad welcome. The pastors of these churches had closed their doors to the Wesley brothers, and because Mr. Whitefield was a friend of the Wesleys and taught much as they did these pastors were not willing for him, either, to occupy their pulpits. After a few months, everywhere he went the ministers made some kind of excuse to prevent him from preaching in their churches.

This change, Mr. Whitefield observed, had taken place in the ministry only; for the people seemed as eager as ever to hear him. But now, with pulpits closed against him, this fiery young preacher was left to invent a pulpit for himself. And this he set about to do at once.

Four miles northeast of the city of Bristol was a rough tract of country called Kingswood. At one time this had been a forest where the kings of England engaged in the sport of hunting wild game. But now the trees had been cut down and coal-mines had been dug here and there over the country. An ignorant class of people lived there, people who had never been inside a church in their lives. Some of them had doubtless never seen a church-building, and knew nothing about religion.

We must remember that Mr. Whitefield himself was one of the black-gowned ministers of the Church of England; and never had such dignified men thought of preaching in the open air in that country. But this thought suggested itself to his mind, and he reasoned that since Jesus, the greatest teacher, often preached in the fields and on the hillsides, he, too, could do that very thing. So out to Kingswood he went, and there he found an open space called Rose Green, where he decided to conduct his preaching-service.

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News spread rapidly over the rough countryside that a black-gowned minister had come from the city to preach, and people came from every direction. He was a curiosity in their midst, and they were not so eager to hear what he might say as to see him. But when he began to speak, silence fell over that crowd of two hundred strangers to the love of God, and every one of those rough colliers, as they were called, listened respectfully to Mr. Whitefield's sermon.

Encouraged by this experiment, Mr. Whitefield returned the second time to his "field pulpit," and this time he was surprised to see instead of two hundred people about ten times that number. Again and again he returned to Kingswood, and every time the waiting crowd was bigger than before, until finally he preached to as many as twenty thousand. And all these people had been ignorant about God before Mr. Whitefield preached to them. Now as they listened the tears streamed down their cheeks, making white streaks on their coal-blackened faces; for they came, unwashed, from the mines.

During this time Mr. John Wesley and his brother were very busy working for God in London, even though they were not allowed to preach in the city churches. Then one day a letter came from their friend Mr. Whitefield telling about his work at Kingswood and asking Mr. John to come at once to help him. The Wesley brothers were shocked at the idea of preaching in the open air. This seemed to them like making religion common instead of a holy, godsent blessing. They took the letter to the Christian society and told their friends what Mr. Whitefield had written. Some of their friends thought it would be wise for Mr. John to go to help Mr. Whitefield; but others considered it quite improper to preach the gospel anywhere except in a church.

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At last, after giving the matter much anxious thought, Mr. Wesley decided to join his friend and see for himself what was being done at Kingswood. So he went and before many days passed he, too, was standing on a grass-covered mound outside the city, preaching earnestly to about three thousand listeners. This experience marked the beginning of a new line of work for Mr. Wesley, a work which was destined to make him famous all over the British Isles.

Chapter 7

Wesley Takes Whitefield's Place at Kingswood

On the first day of April, in 1739, Mr. John Wesley witnessed for the first time in his life the impressive scene of “field-preaching” in England. This impressive scene did not appeal to his fine sense of propriety at all! It seemed out of keeping with all his former teaching concerning religion; for, until this time, he had thought it almost sinful for a person to preach the gospel outside of a church-building.

But when, on the following afternoon, a crowd of about three thousand ill-clad, rough-looking miners assembled in the field outside Bristol, they were surprised to see a stranger take the place of their usual speaker. This stranger was John Wesley, and he preached to them as earnestly as did Mr. Whitefield, using for his text these words from the prophecy of Isaiah as recorded in Luke: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

The reason why Mr. Wesley consented so quickly to do field-preaching is not because he lost his distaste for it immediately but

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because he knew that those poor, ignorant people needed to hear about Jesus and that the only hope of bringing the gospel to them lay in this manner of preaching. So, disregarding his personal feelings in the matter, he quietly and prayerfully undertook this great work for the Master, and soon Mr. Whitefield gave to him the entire responsibility of the work in that place.

No doubt we should like to have at least one glimpse of this field-preacher in his strange, out-of-doors pulpit. One of his converts gives us just such a glimpse. This is what that convert tells us: "As soon as he [Mr. Wesley] got upon the stand, he stroked back his hair and turned his face towards where I stood, and, I thought fixed his eyes upon me. His countenance fixed such an awful dread upon me, before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock; and when he did speak, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me. When he had done, I said, 'This man can tell the secrets of my heart; he hath not left me there; for he hath showed the remedy, even the blood of Jesus.' I thought he spoke to no one but me, and I durst not look up, for I imagined all the people were looking at me. But before Mr. Wesley concluded his sermon he cried out, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' I said, 'If that be true, I will turn to God today.' "

Preaching to the miners, or colliers, of Kingswood became a frequent afternoon task while Mr. Wesley remained at Bristol. Every morning he preached at a place called Newgate. Besides doing this he visited the societies in Bristol where Christian people met in the evenings to study the Bible, and explained the Scriptures to them. On Sundays he usually preached five times, rising early in the morning and often beginning his first service at five o'clock. We

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wonder that people would assemble so early to hear him; but always he had an audience of eager listeners.

Before Mr. Whitefield left Bristol he thought much about establishing a school at Kingswood for the neglected children of the poor miners. Mr. Wesley heartily favored this plan and set about raising money to build the school. Then, when the building was finished and the school opened, he found among the miners some who desired very much to learn how to read. These men had accepted Jesus as their Savior, and now they longed to know how to read the Bible. So Mr. Wesley made arrangements for the school to conduct early morning sessions and study periods in the evenings, that these hard-working men might have a chance to gain the knowledge which poverty and misfortune had heretofore denied them.

Besides building this school, Mr. Wesley raised money to build a chapel in Bristol large enough to accommodate the eager crowds who assembled there to hear him preach. This chapel became the headquarters for his work in Bristol.

Near Bristol is a pleasure resort called Bath, noted for its mineral waters. Many worldly-minded people were included among the frequent visitors there, and Mr. Wesley decided to preach to them. Again and again he went. Here his listeners included rich and fashionable people, very unlike his vast audiences in the mining regions. But at heart they were just as much in need of the power of the gospel as were the ignorant miners. Mr. Wesley recognized this fact, and he spoke very frankly to them, telling them how God hates sin and that it is impossible for a sinner to enter heaven. Some of his hearers were much offended, and considered him rude and ill-mannered because he spoke so plainly. They did not like to be called

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sinners, and classed with those whom they considered their inferiors.

One day when Mr. Wesley was starting for Bath, some of his friends came to him and urged him not to go. They had heard that a noted visitor at Bath, a gambler named Beau Nash, was planning to make a disturbance at the meeting and they feared that Mr. Wesley might get into serious trouble. But this brave preacher did not fear to meet his enemy; for he believed God was on his side and would help him out of every difficulty.

Arriving at the usual meeting-place, Mr. Wesley saw that a larger crowd had assembled than he had seen there before. Many of them were friends of the gambler, and they had come to “see the fun.” But Mr. Nash, the trouble-maker, had not yet appeared on the scene.

Without the least hesitation Mr. Wesley began his service, and a seriousness crept over the assembly as he told the people that the Scriptures classed them all as sinners—high and low, rich and poor, together. While he was speaking thus, a splendid carriage approached, drawn by six horses and accompanied by footmen and coachmen, as if some very important personage were riding within. This was no other than Beau Nash, and he pressed his way close to Mr. Wesley, intent on breaking up the meeting and having an argument with the preacher. He began to accuse Mr. Wesley of acting contrary to law, and creating public disturbances among the people. “Did you ever hear me preach?” asked Mr. Wesley, looking straight at him. “No,” answered his opponent, “but I have heard that you do this.” Mr. Wesley then asked him if his name were Nash, and when he replied that it was, Mr. Wesley said, “Well, sir, then I suppose I must judge you by what I have heard of you.” This answer did not sound very flattering to the vanity of Mr. Nash. Besides this,

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at once an old lady rose up and began to tell in a loud voice what she thought of him. At this the opposer slunk back into the crowd and disappeared.

Instead of getting Mr. Wesley into trouble, this enemy of righteousness got himself into disgrace, and the result was that many more people became interested in the fearless preacher who showed so much love for their souls.

The changes which resulted from the preaching of the gospel at Kingswood were very noticeable. For many years the people of that country were considered hopelessly ignorant and even dangerous. They had no knowledge of God and little respect for man, doing very much as they pleased. When Mr. Whitefield's preaching in the churches of England first began to arouse opposition, his enemies said, "Why does he not go to the colliers of Kingswood if he wishes to convert the heathen?" In the public mind those poor people at Kingswood were generally classed with the heathen, and left as utterly alone to their own fate.

Less than a year later Mr. Wesley, writing of the work at Kingswood, said: "The scene is already changed. Kingswood does not now, as a year ago, resound with cursing and blasphemy. It is no more filled with drunkenness and uncleanness, and the idle diversions which naturally lead thereto. It is no longer full of wars and fightings, of clamor and bitterness, of wrath and envyings. Peace and love are there. Great numbers of the people are mild, gentle, and easy to be entreated." Their usual evening pastime, said he, was now singing praise unto God their Savior. To this remarkable extent the power of the gospel had transformed the lives of the despised colliers at Kingswood.

Chapter 8

A Glimpse of Mr. Wesley's Work in London

Mr. Wesley often found it necessary to leave his work at Bristol and Kingswood in charge of his helpers there while he made visits back to London. In London, we remember, he had begun his first preaching after the great change had come into his heart. And here a considerable company of believers had been raised up. Of these he had formed a Christian society, called the United Society. They met together regularly for religious instruction in a large room which they secured for that purpose. And their number continued to grow even after Mr. Wesley left them to go to Bristol; for other ministers were with them to instruct and help them in the Christian life. But always they considered Mr. Wesley their leader, and they expected him to help them when they needed special advice.

On one of his visits back to London, Mr. Wesley found that some of the members of the United Society were out of employment and were facing poverty and distress. Winter was coming on, and the winters were severe in London. These people would need clothes, food, and coal to keep them from freezing to death. But they had no work, and had no money with which to provide for themselves and for their families. What should they do?

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Mr. Wesley was always ready to help the needy wherever and however he could. When there seemed to be no way, he immediately set about to make a way. In this case he saw the poor people could really find no work; so with others he began to plan what to do. Finally, they decided to hire twelve of the poorest to card and spin cotton. They employed a teacher, and fitted up the society-room for this work, then engaged the men at once. And the plan was a success, for the men kept busy during the whole winter, and enough money was raised in this way to provide for their own and for their families' needs.

By the following spring conditions had not improved in London, and still there was much need and suffering among the poorer class. Mr. Wesley's heart was always touched with compassion for the poor, and he gave freely of his own means to relieve their distresses. But he had not much to give; and after doing all he could, still many were left unaided.

We see that Mr. Wesley was careful to set a good example before the people, and then it was easier to teach them to do good. Now when he had done his very best to relieve the poor, he told the members of the United Society what he had been doing, and asked those who were able to help in this good work also. This is a part of what he said: "Many of our brethren and sisters have not needful food; many are destitute of convenient clothing; many are out of business, and that without their own fault; and many are sick and ready to perish. I have done what in me lay to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to employ the poor, and to visit the sick; but I am not, alone, sufficient for these things. Therefore I desire all those whose hearts are as my heart (1) to bring what clothes each can spare to be distributed among those that are most in want; (2) to give

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weekly a penny, or what they can afford, for the relief of the poor and the sick.”

This was not all; he planned further to employ all the poor women who were out of business, in knitting, and to give them the common price for their work, then he would appoint persons to visit the sick and relieve their needs as much as possible from the general fund. Each of the visitors would be assigned a certain district, and they would be supposed to visit all the sick ones in their district every other day, then report at the Tuesday evening meeting what they had done. In this manner everyone who could do so would have a chance to help.

Not long after this time Mr. Wesley became ill with a fever. He was compelled for a while to quit his work and take his bed; but on the following Sunday evening he again preached. After the service was dismissed, another service, called a love-feast, was held, and Mr. Wesley remained for that. But during the service his suffering returned, and while engaged in prayer he was seized with a violent attack of coughing and could scarcely speak. Then, like a flash these words of Jesus rushed into his mind: “These signs shall follow them that believe.” Mr. Wesley knew the signs to which Jesus referred included the healing of the sick, and he began to call aloud for God to increase his faith and manifest the divine power to heal in his suffering body. While he was praying, the pain ceased, his fever left him, and strength entered his body at once. And from that very moment he was well.

In London as well as at Bristol and Kingswood Mr. Wesley preached in the open air, and large crowds gathered to hear him. Mr. Whitefield had first begun the open-air meetings in London, as at Kingswood; and later Mr. Charles Wesley, as well as his elder brother John, followed Mr. Whitefield’s example.

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Not all who gathered to listen were friendly towards the teaching of these unusual preachers, and sometimes the unfriendly folk tried to disturb the meeting. One Sunday afternoon while Mr. John Wesley stood in Charles' Square, London, preaching very earnestly to a large crowd, suddenly a disturbance began among the people. Mr. Wesley saw some of his enemies trying to drive an ox through the congregation to break up the meeting. But the ox was stubborn, and refused to go where the men wanted it to, and finally it broke away from them entirely and ran away, leaving Mr. Wesley and his friends to rejoice and praise God.

At another time while Mr. Wesley was preaching in a different part of London, this time in a house, some wicked people in the audience became offended at his words and began a lively disturbance. Finally, they rushed outside and began to throw stones at the building, endangering the lives of those assembled. Mr. Wesley warned them that they were making themselves liable to punishment by law for such an offense; but they gave no heed to his words. Then he requested three or four strong men to go outside, secure a constable, and take the leader of the mob in charge. This they did, and at Mr. Wesley's further request they turned the furious man over to the justice, who put him in jail.

During this time two others who had been taking an active part in the disturbance, a man named Richard Smith and a wicked woman, became deeply convicted of their sins. They both made their way through the crowd into the house and fell down on their knees to seek forgiveness and to acknowledge that God had touched their hearts. Afterwards the meetings in that part of London suffered no more serious interruptions from mobs.

Chapter 9

The “Kingswood of the North”

The time came when Mr. Wesley felt that he could leave the work in London and at Bristol for a while and visit other parts of England. Thus far he had preached only in the southern part of the kingdom, and he knew there were thousands of people in the northern part who had never yet heard of the great religious awakening which was stirring men’s hearts. So he planned a trip north.

The mode of travel in those days was either by stage-coach or on horseback; for as yet there were no railroads. But Mr. Wesley was not at all discouraged with the prospect of having to travel in that fashion for weary miles over the very worst roads in the kingdom.

Far to the north is the city of Newcastle. This city, like Bristol, is near a mining region where very rough, ignorant people lived. Because these people were so neglected and wicked, Mr. Wesley and his helpers called their country the “Kingswood of the north.”

Daylight was just breaking when Mr. Wesley and his companion rode into Newcastle, and after eating breakfast they decided to walk about and view their new surroundings. Here they found much evidence of sin—drunkenness, cursing, and swearing.

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Even the little children who ran about in the streets used such shocking language that Mr. Wesley's heart was pained.

At seven o'clock the two visitors walked down to the poorest, dirtiest part of the city, called Sand-gate, and here they stopped and began to sing a psalm. Three or four people at once came out to see who the singers were. No one living in that part of town sang such sacred melodies. Soon others came, and still others, until the crowd increased to four or five hundred. Then Mr. Wesley announced his text and began preaching. All the while his audience grew and grew, and when he ceased speaking more than a thousand people stood gazing wonderingly upon him. Who was he? where had he come from? what did his strange words mean? were questions which filled their minds. Observing their astonishment, Mr. Wesley said, "If you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five o'clock this evening, with God's help, I shall preach here again."

By five o'clock the hill on which he had stood that morning was covered from top to bottom with eager-faced men and women. Never, said Mr. Wesley, had he seen so large a number of people in the open-air meetings of London. To these he spoke from the Scripture text: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." When he had finished speaking, the people flocked about him in such throngs that he could scarcely get away from them. They insisted that he preach for them again on the next day, and on the next; in fact, they wanted him to remain with them for a while. So earnestly did they plead that Mr. Wesley was very sorry to deny them; but he had promised to journey on to another city to preach there on a certain day, and, being a man of his word, he could not tarry longer in Newcastle and fail to keep his appointment.

But Mr. Wesley and his helper did not forget about the urgent request of the poor people of Newcastle, and as soon as possible they

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sent someone to that city to teach the people about the power of God to save them from sin. And after a few months passed by Mr. Wesley returned himself for a second visit. This time he was pleased to find a number of Christians there to welcome his coming.

Their number continued to grow, and from this time Newcastle became the center of Mr. Wesley's work in the north part of England. Now he made regular journeys from London to Bristol and on to Newcastle, then back again to London, traveling the long distance through all kinds of weather, on horse-back or riding in a chaise or stage-coach. Often he stopped at other towns along the way to preach, and soon his teaching spread far and wide.

A little village called Placey, not far from Newcastle, was inhabited by colliers only and had the reputation of being extremely wicked. Sunday was their general day for public gatherings, not to worship God, but to dance, fight, curse and swear, and play whatever rough games they knew. Mr. Wesley heard about conditions in Placey, and at once he felt a desire to talk to the people there about God. So he chose to go one April morning, and set out in spite of the strong north wind which blew sleet directly into his face. After a ride of ten miles, facing the wind and sleet, the energetic little preacher could hardly stand; but he needed only a short time for rest and he was ready to carry out his purpose.

The people of this little village were glad to hear a sermon, and they listened attentively while Mr. Wesley spoke to them about Jesus, the Savior of men. Again that afternoon, in spite of the wind and snow, they assembled to hear another sermon.

While in Newcastle Mr. Wesley was often grieved at the indifference which many of the people manifested in religion. On Sunday afternoons he observed that throngs sauntered about aimlessly, not respecting the Lord's day at all. One Sunday

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afternoon he decided to find better pastime for them, so as soon as the service was dismissed at the church he walked over to Sandhill, the place which hosts of those restless, pleasure-loving folk frequented, and there he announced a song. In a few moments he had drawn sufficient attention to himself to assemble a crowd of several thousands; but these people had no desire to be entertained by a minister, and they kept in such an uproar that he found no opportunity to preach at all. After spending about an hour there, singing and praying, he returned again to his room.

Christianity has never been popular with people who love pleasure supremely, and who set aside all nobler principles of living in their pursuit of pleasure. Among these people Mr. Wesley won no worthy friendships; for they did not like his plain preaching, and he felt no sympathy for their reckless, idle manner of living. Still he felt it his duty to “preach the gospel to every creature,” as Jesus commanded before he went away.

For many years Mr. Wesley continued his visits to Newcastle, and on one occasion he said of this place: “Certainly if I did not believe there is another world I should spend all my summers here; as I know of no place in Great Britain comparable to it for pleasantness. But I seek another country, and am therefore content to be a wanderer upon the earth.”

Chapter 10

A Tombstone for a Pulpit

On his return from the north, Mr. Wesley chose the route which would take him through his birthplace and childhood home. Years had passed since his last visit to Epworth, and he knew many changes would have occurred during those years. He wondered whether there would be any one to welcome him, or whether the people of this village had been prejudiced against his manner of teaching. With these thoughts in mind he rode to the village inn and dismounted.

Soon the news spread that a visitor had come to town, and was stopping at the inn. On inquiry the curious-minded learned who the visitor was—one of the Wesley brothers. Well did the village folk remember the Wesleys; for had they not lived in that community for nearly forty years? And at once an old woman hastened to the inn to greet John Wesley, bringing with her two or three others. She had long been a servant of his father's at the rectory, and rejoiced to see one of the family again. Mr. Wesley asked her whether there were any in Epworth who were in earnest to be saved, and she replied, "I know I am saved through faith."

"Have you then the peace of God? and do you know your sins are forgiven?" he asked.

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“I thank God, I know it well,” came the confident reply from this old servant. “And many here can say the same thing,” she added, earnestly.

Mr. Wesley rejoiced to find some true Christians in Epworth, and the next day, being Sunday, he called on the pastor a little while before the morning service and introduced himself as the son of the former pastor in that place. He offered his assistance, hoping the pastor might invite him to preach. But in this he was to be disappointed; for the minister now in charge had heard about the great stir which the Wesley brothers and their friends had created in the religious world, and he did not approve of their manner of preaching nor of the doctrine which they taught. So he refused to let Mr. Wesley occupy the pulpit from which his father had preached for many years.

The church was well filled for the afternoon service that day, as many had come expecting to hear John Wesley preach. When they saw they were disappointed, one of their number sought him out and learned that he would preach in the churchyard that evening if they so desired. At the close of the afternoon sermon this gentleman stationed himself outside the door and announced to the people as they left the building that Mr. Wesley would preach in the churchyard at six o'clock.

When the appointed hour drew nigh, Mr. Wesley was surprised to see the largest crowd assemble in the churchyard that he had ever beheld in Epworth. Choosing for his pulpit the tombstone of his own beloved father, who had often addressed these people in days gone by, Mr. Wesley preached earnestly to them about the kingdom of God. What an impressive scene this was!

Although denied the privilege of preaching in the church, Mr. Wesley found himself being pressed by the urgent people to remain

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for a while and continue his services out-doors. This he decided to do, and every evening for a whole week he spoke from the tombstone pulpit to crowds of earnest listeners. And not without good results; for here souls were converted to God, and stony hearts were touched which for long years had refused to give the least attention to religion.

During the daytime Mr. Wesley visited the villages and country places nearby, and preached wherever he had opportunity. He accepted an invitation from his brother-in-law, who was then pastor of the church at Wroote, to visit that place one day and preach to his congregation. No doubt Mr. Wesley recalled the time when he had labored there as pastor, and he was glad for an opportunity to return to those people with a message of truth which could transform their lives.

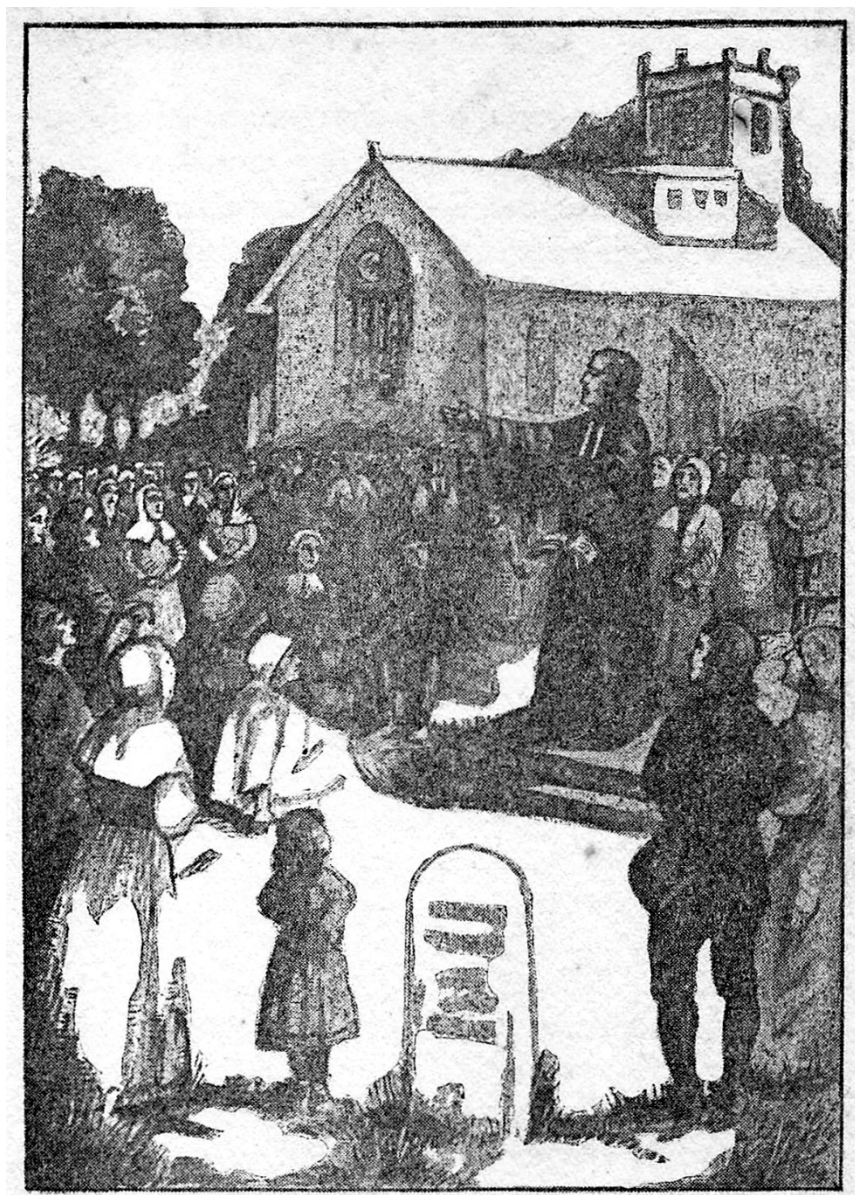
But there were some in that surrounding country who did not like Mr. Wesley's teaching. They found fault with the "new religion," and persecuted the converts. One day they dragged into court a wagon-load of the "heretics," and brought them before the judge. "What have they done?" demanded the judge, and a deep silence followed. The accusers had forgotten to prepare a charge against them! Finally one ventured to say, "They pretend to be better than other people; and, besides, they pray from morning till night."

"Is that all?" asked the judge.

Then an old man spoke up. "No sir, that is not all," said he, "for they converted my wife! Till she went among them she had such a tongue, but now she is as quiet as a lamb."

At this the judge cried, "Carry them back home, and let them convert all the scolds in town!"

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John Wesley Preaching From His Father's Tombstone

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Mr. Wesley's last service in the Epworth churchyard continued for three hours. People had gathered from all around the country to hear him, and they could hardly consent to bid him good-by. On leaving town the next day Mr. Wesley wrote in his Journal these words concerning his father's years of labor in that place, "Oh, let none think his labor of love lost because the fruit did not immediately appear!" This devoted son realized that he was only now reaping the fruit of his father's years of hard and earnest toil. And how glad he must have been to inform his aged mother of the success of his week's preaching in the old home town!

Chapter 11

An Open Grave and a Wonderful Sermon

The best earthly friend in Mr. Wesley's life was his mother. From childhood it had been she to whom he turned for advice when he was perplexed. And always he valued her wise counsel, her sympathetic understanding, and her warm love. He thought for a while that he could not live without her, and wished that his time to die might come first!

But we know the very best of people will grow old and feeble. Their strength will fail and their days of active service will end. And so the time came when Mrs. Wesley no longer was able to minister to other people's needs, as she had done all her busy lifetime. After her eldest son, Samuel, had died, she came to live in the rooms which Mr. John and Mr. Charles provided for her in London. Here she spent the last days of her life.

One day not long after Mr. John Wesley's visit to Epworth a message came to him in Bristol stating that his mother was very ill. He hastened to London at once, and found her on her death-bed. For several days she lingered; and then one afternoon without a struggle or sigh her spirit slipped away into the eternal world. Her last request had been, "Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God." So Mr. John Wesley and his five sisters stood around the

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bed and sang the psalm which she had desired. Mr. Charles Wesley was in the north of England and did not receive notice of his mother's illness in time to reach her bedside before she passed away.

The funeral service of this aged saint was an impressive scene, witnessed by thousands. Here by the open grave where the body of his mother had been lowered, Mr. Wesley preached to the most solemn assembly he had ever addressed, taking for his text this portion of Scripture from the Book of Revelation: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

Afterwards Mr. Wesley wrote a beautiful poem in memory of his mother, which he had inscribed on her tombstone. Then in his Journal he wrote several pages, telling what a wonderful person she had been. No one else could take the place in his life which she had filled. Commenting on her life, he said, "I cannot but observe that even she (as well as her father, her grandfather, her husband, and her three sons) had been, in her measure and degree, a preacher of righteousness."

Among his treasured manuscripts Mr. Wesley found a letter which his mother had written to his father many years before, explaining why she had taken the liberty to conduct religious services in their home during his absence. Well did Mr. Wesley recall those scenes, when the neighbors gathered in, filling the large kitchen to its utmost capacity, while others, unable to find standing-room, were compelled to remain outside. Sometimes her audience numbered as many as two hundred! Mr. Wesley was then a small

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boy, possibly nine years old; but the glimpse he caught at that time of his mother's ardent zeal and love for God never faded from his memory.

Still a needy world was lying all around him, and Mr. Wesley felt that even in a time like this he must not tarry long to mourn and grieve about the loss of his dearest earthly friend; so with steadfast purpose of heart he set about once more to proclaim the glad news of salvation to all who would hear and believe.

Chapter 12

“To the Poor the Gospel is Preached”

After the death of his mother, Mr. Wesley spent more time away from London, visiting new places and preaching to new congregations. Now he began in earnest his busy life of travel, riding on horseback for hundreds of miles and visiting out-of-the-way places where people had no opportunity of hearing the pure gospel preached. Everywhere he went he endeavored to form Christian societies, where the members could meet together often to read the Bible and pray. In this way they would be kept from drifting back into sin, he hoped, after he should leave them to go on to other needy places.

At the extreme southwest coast of England is a place called Land's End. Near this place were several towns which Mr. Wesley frequently visited in his travels. At Sennan, one of these towns, he preached one evening at six, and announced to the small congregation, consisting chiefly of old, grey-headed men, that he would preach again at five in the morning.

The next morning, however, he was awakened between three and four o'clock by these eager old people; so he rose and joined them in their service, which was held nearly an hour earlier than he had announced!

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After breakfast he went with some friends, as far as he could go safely, towards the point of the rocks at Land's End. Here he stood for some time, watching the boiling sea below. Scenes like this always stirred within his soul a feeling of awe and reverence, and brought to his mind thoughts of God.

But the watchers did not linger long at this place; for Mr. Wesley had an appointment at another town nearby, called St Just. Not in a church there, but on the grassy plain outside the town between eight and nine o'clock he met and preached to the largest congregation that had been known to assemble in that place. While he talked to them from the scripture, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" the people trembled, and not one stirred from his place. Never before had the people in that part of England shown such close attention; and Mr. Wesley was much encouraged to believe that God's word was sinking into their stony hearts.

Some little distance from this part of the coast of England lie the Scilly Isles, out in the Atlantic Ocean. Mr. Wesley often wished to visit these islands and preach the good news of salvation there, also. Now his friends made arrangements for him to go, and in a short time he set out with several others in a fisher-boat, which they had borrowed from the mayor of the town.

Some distance out from land the waves began to rise and swell, tossing the little boat to and fro. But instead of being alarmed, Mr. Wesley and his companions began to sing:

"When passing through the watery deep,
I ask in faith his promised aid;
The waves an awful distance keep,
And shrink from my devoted head;
Fearless their violence I dare:
They cannot harm—for God is there."

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Early in the afternoon they arrived at St. Mary's, most important of the inhabited islands in the group. Here they immediately called on the governor, giving him the customary present, which was a newspaper. Mr. Wesley also gave him some religious literature.

The minister refused to give Mr. Wesley permission to preach in his church; so once more this dauntless preacher of righteousness chose his pulpit under the broad canopy of heaven and began a service in the streets. And a remarkable service this proved to be; for nearly all the town assembled—workmen, soldiers, and sailors—to hear the word of God. So attentive did they seem that at the conclusion of the service Mr. Wesley distributed among them some religious booklets and hymns which he had brought. These they received with much eagerness.

The next morning at five o'clock Mr. Wesley again preached, and afterwards he talked privately to numbers of the people who inquired about the way of the Lord. Then he bade them good-by, and with his companions set sail for the mainland, feeling that his brief visit had not been in vain.

Having an appointment at a place called Gwennap, Mr. Wesley and his helper mounted their horses a few days later and rode away. It was nearly six o'clock in the evening when they reached their destination, and here they found the plain covered from end to end with a vast throng, eager to hear the word of God. These people gave such good attention that Mr. Wesley found it hard to conclude his sermon, and not until after nightfall did he finally dismiss the meeting. Gwennap became famous for its large audiences, sometimes numbering thousands and thousands of poor people, outrivaling even the throngs which gathered at Kingswood to hear the first field-preaching in England.

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That the people in this part of the kingdom were hungry for the gospel was demonstrated to Mr. Wesley again the next morning, when between three and four o'clock a large company of tinnern, fearing they might be too late for the early morning service, assembled outside the house where he was still lying asleep. Finding that they were in plenty of time, they raised their voices in songs of praise to God, and this noise of course aroused the slumbering minister from his pleasant dreams. At five o'clock he preached to them from the text: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Chapter 13

A Persecuted Preacher and People

Two great forces—good and evil—have been at war with each other ever since sin entered into the world. God, who is the author of good, so loved the world of lost sinners that he gave his only Son to save them. But Satan, who is the author of evil, becomes greatly displeased whenever a sinner turns to God. At once he tries in every way he can to create a disturbance and to draw that person away from God.

We are not surprised, then, to find that when Mr. Wesley preached so fearlessly the good news of deliverance from the power of sin, Satan was greatly displeased because so many of his captives found deliverance in Jesus, their Savior. At once Satan began to oppose the good work of preaching. He caused wicked people to say many unkind things about Mr. Wesley and the other preachers of righteousness. He caused the people who accepted this “new religion” to be persecuted “for righteousness’ sake,” as the Bible says they shall be. He did everything he could to try to destroy the good work which these earnest preachers were doing for God in England.

One of the names by which the Wesley brothers and their friends were jokingly called in their college days still clung to them.

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That name was “Methodists.” Now everywhere Mr. Wesley preached his followers were called by that name. And because these people were earnest, and diligent in their service to God, their enemies often persecuted them bitterly.

In certain parts of the country this persecution was more severe than in other parts; however, Mr. Wesley’s followers were more or less spoken against everywhere. But always Mr. Wesley showed no fear of his enemies, and never was he injured seriously by them.

In the towns of Darlestone, Wednesbury, and Walsal the persecution waged most bitterly. Here these Christians suffered much distress from their enemies. The windows of their homes were smashed, and their furniture was dragged into the streets and broken up or burned. The men were attacked at their places of employment; sometimes they were beaten senseless and thrown into the gutters. Their wives and daughters were terrified by threats of murder, and in a few instances even the women were beaten with clubs. Still they refused to give up their faith in Christ Jesus.

Mr. Wesley was in London when news of these happenings reached him. As quickly as he could arrange his affairs there he mounted his horse and rode away to visit and comfort these persecuted people. But on his arrival he found that it would be unsafe to conduct public services; for the officials of the towns had no sympathy for Mr. Wesley’s followers, and refused to protect them. However, he visited among them in their homes, and encouraged them to keep true to the Lord.

The following autumn he again visited this part of the country, and at Wednesbury he preached in the market-place to an unusually large crowd. No one attempted to molest him, and he supposed that the worst storm of protest from their enemies might be over. But in this he was mistaken.

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About four o'clock in the afternoon a mob gathered round the house where he sat writing. Knowing they had come for no good purpose, he and his friends knelt and asked God to send them away. In a short time, the people began to scatter without having created the least disturbance, and half an hour later they were all gone.

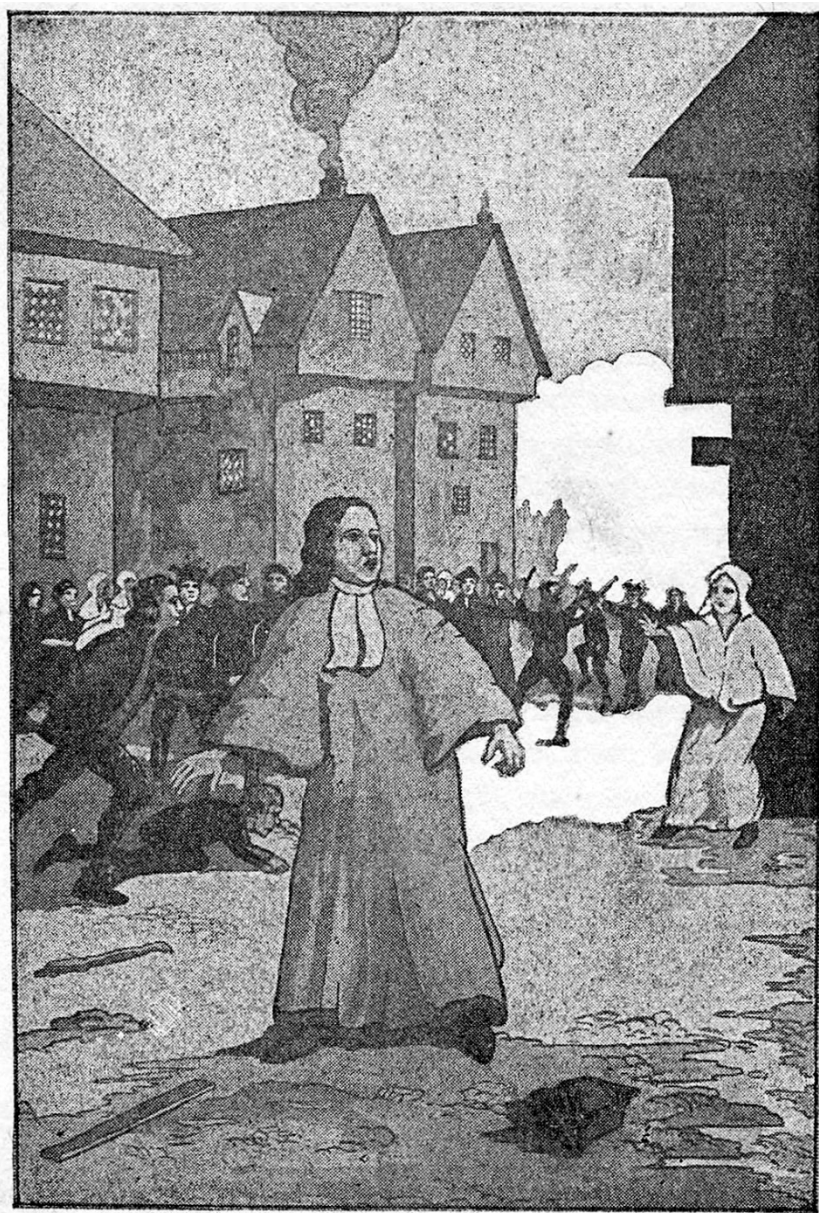
Mr. Wesley believed it a good time for him to take his quiet leave also, before further trouble should result from his presence there. But his friends insisted that he remain longer with them; so once more he sat down to write.

Not long afterwards the mob returned with increased numbers, shouting, "Bring out the minister! Bring out the minister!" Instead of doing this, Mr. Wesley's friends listened to his advice, which was, "Bring in the ringleader." They found the man who seemed to be leading the crowd, and brought him, furious and determined to make trouble, into the presence of the plain little preacher. Here his wrath quieted, and his evil intentions seemed to leave him entirely. Then Mr. Wesley requested that two more of the leading men be brought inside. These also grew calm when they came face to face with the man whose life they were threatening.

Now Mr. Wesley was ready to go outside. Standing on a chair in the midst of the crowd, he asked in a quiet, fearless manner what they wanted of him. "We want you to go with us to the justice!" they shouted; and he replied in the same quiet, fearless manner that he was ready to go at once. This courage on his part quite unarmed some of them, and they began to admire his pluck. Others, however, remained insistent, and so the march began down the street, through the pouring rain and gathering night, to the home of the justice, two miles distant.

Just a few days before this occurrence the justice had issued a proclamation, commanding the seizure of Methodist ministers on

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Mr. Wesley In The Riot

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the charge that they were going about raising riots and otherwise disturbing the peace of the public. Now when the mob stopped at his door this justice had no desire to see them or their prisoner, and sent word that they should carry Mr. Wesley back again to Wednesbury.

This unexpected event brought the mob to a standstill. They felt unwilling to be so completely defeated in their purpose, and decided to go on to the next town to consult the justice there. So on they went, through the mud and dark, only to find that this justice also would not pay any heed to their claims. Twice defeated, they were ready to turn homeward; and about fifty of their own number formed a body-guard to protect their prisoner on the way.

But the homeward journey brought new perils to Mr. Wesley. Soon a fresh mob came from the adjoining town of Walsal and seized him, dragging him along with them. His body-guard was outnumbered by this mob, and soon they fell back, leaving him to the mercy of these wicked people.

Through the streets of their town this mob dragged him, crying, “Knock him down! Knock his brains out!” And though they tried to trip him along the slippery path downhill, he managed to keep his foothold and never take a misstep. All the while the mob kept an uproar of shouting and screaming, both men and women. And twice they struck him violently, first on the breast and then in the mouth until the blood gushed out. But neither time did he feel any pain, and through all the dreadful experience not once did he manifest any fear. His quiet manner shamed some of his enemies, while others were merely enraged by it and more determined than ever to do him harm.

At last, worn out by the long, weary tramp through the mud and rain, Mr. Wesley stopped and began to speak to the people. But after a few words his voice failed, and the mob began their noisy shouting

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again. Then he began to pray, and at once a change came over the captain of this rough crowd. Turning to Mr. Wesley, he said, "Sir, I will spend my life for you. Follow me, and not a soul here shall touch a hair of your head." True to his word, this brawny prize-fighter began to defend Mr. Wesley, turning fiercely on his companions and making a way through their midst for the minister to pass unharmed. All the way back to his lodging at Wednesbury this rough man accompanied him.

We should naturally suppose that a very much battered gentleman, answering the name of John Wesley, returned to his anxiously waiting friends that night. But such was hardly the case; for in spite of all the missiles which were thrown at him, and the hard blows which were aimed at him, very few struck him at all. And though so many people were trying to seize him and tear him in pieces, even his clothing was only slightly torn. Of course it was bespattered with mud, and very much rumpled.

In relating his experience that night, Mr. Wesley told how one man came rushing at him with his arm raised to strike, when suddenly he stopped and slowly lowered his arm, merely stroking Mr. Wesley's hair with his hand and saying, "What soft hair he has!" All through the experience Mr. Wesley was conscious of God's kind protection, and he did not feel unwilling to suffer this ill treatment for Jesus' sake.

None of the several friends who had accompanied Mr. Wesley through the mob were seriously hurt, though one man was knocked down and dragged away. These loyal Christians determined to stay with their minister, if possible, and to die with him if he should be killed. But through the mercy of God none of them became martyrs for the cause which they loved.

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The following morning Mr. Wesley was able to start out on his journey again, and as he rode through the streets of the town he was surprised to note the change which had come over the people. Now they expressed much sympathy and love for him; for he had by his courage and mild behavior won their confidence and respect.

Five days later the prize-fighter from Walsal who had brought him safely back to Wednesbury became a Christian himself! For fifty years he lived to be a loyal defender of the faith. One time when Mr. Charles Wesley was visiting in those parts he met this man and asked what he thought of his brother. "Think of him!" the man replied, "why, I think he is a mon of God, and God was on his side when so many of us could not kill one mon!"

Chapter 14

More Persecutions

Troubles did not end for John Wesley when he rode away from Wednesbury that autumn day. Enemies of true Christianity were not confined to that part of England, and it seemed that everywhere the opposers were trying to do their very worst.

In various places the young ministers who were assisting Mr. Wesley in his great work were being seized and forced into the army. Mr. Wesley himself was seized for a soldier; but he was not held as were the others. God's work for him was not to be carried on in the army. Those of his followers who were soldiers, however, became noted for their loyalty to their country as well as for their loyalty to the cause of Christ. And everywhere they went they preached the gospel to their fellow men. Thus the influence of this mighty revival of religion swept far and wide.

In the seacoast town of Falmouth, Mr. Wesley encountered another mob attack. Here the mob broke into the house where he was visiting a Christian woman who was ill. From all appearances there was no possible way for escape; but once more God graciously protected his trusting servants.

When the bolted door fell in Mr. Wesley stepped forward to meet the leaders, saying, "Here I am. Which of you has anything to

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say to me? To which of you have I done anything wrong? To you? or you? or you?" He continued talking thus until he came, bareheaded, into the street, where the people could see his face. Then, lifting his voice, he said, "Neighbors, countrymen! do you desire to hear me speak?"

At this they cried, "Yes, yes! He shall speak. He shall. Nobody shall hinder him!"

At once Mr. Wesley began to talk, and as far as his voice carried the people were still. But having nothing to stand on he could not be heard very far over the crowd. Finally, a minister of the town approached and, calling to the people, said, "Are you not ashamed to treat a stranger thus?" Two or three other gentlemen and one of the town officers also befriended Mr. Wesley. These men conveyed him safely to his lodging-place and advised that he leave town secretly. So instead of riding away on horseback as he had come, Mr. Wesley made his escape in a boat, the sea running close by the back door of the house where he was stopping.

This manner of departure saved him from further encounter with the enraged people of the town. Some of them, however, seeing that he had escaped out of their hands, ran along the shore to await him at the landing-place. But here he walked boldly up the steep, narrow passage from the sea and, looking the ruffians in the face, said kindly, "I wish you a goodnight!" Then he mounted the horse which had been sent out for him there and rode away unharmed.

But it seemed that he was merely riding out of one danger into another. As he approached the next town, where he had an appointment to preach that evening, some friends came running breathlessly to meet him and to warn him not to carry out his intentions. At the top of the hill near the town, they said, a company of the most prominent men—churchwardens, and constables, and all

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the heads of the parish—were waiting with a special warrant from the justices at another town to take him in charge and deliver him into their custody.

This information did not seem to alarm Mr. Wesley in the least. He felt that it would be wiser to meet these opposers than to try to avoid them; so he rode on. At the top of the hill he saw a few men on horseback, waiting by the roadside. He approached them unhesitatingly and introduced himself as Mr. John Wesley. Once more his courageous attitude took his enemies by surprise. Their leader became angry, thinking he was only pretending to be the minister for whom they were waiting. But presently a man rode up who had known Mr. Wesley at Oxford, and he convinced the leader of his mistake. After this, much discussion followed; but finally the men rode away, without even mentioning the special warrant.

Later Mr. Wesley learned that these men were accusing him of being a traitor to his country, and were trying on this charge to get him into serious trouble and stop his preaching. But God did not permit them to carry out their evil intentions.

From this place Mr. Wesley rode with his companion back to Gwennap, where he found much excitement among the people. They had heard that a company of wicked men were making themselves drunk on purpose to come to the meeting and do terrible things. Believing this report, many of the people hurried away from the place of meeting, though Mr. Wesley had tried to calm their fears. To those who remained he preached from the text, “Love your enemies.” After all, none came to disturb the meeting and the report was proved false.

The following morning Mr. Wesley preached at five o’clock to a quiet congregation, then rode on to another town, where he preached at eight. Again taking his saddle he rode with his

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companion for several hours, arriving at their next stopping-place in the evening. Here his friends greeted him with the information that a mob was beginning to gather to disturb the night service; so he began his service at once, to outwit them. Choosing a high wall for his pulpit, Mr. Wesley stood above his congregation and had no difficulty in speaking so that all could hear.

Presently some ruffians approached on horseback, riding up to the wall and beginning a disturbance. Mr. Wesley looked straight at them with his piercing eyes, and soon they calmed down. Their leaders, observing this, crept behind the wall and suddenly pushed Mr. Wesley off. Instead of tumbling down headlong, as they had hoped, this slim little preacher landed on his feet near one of the horsemen. Seizing this man by the hand he began to talk earnestly, and while he did not succeed in convincing the ruffian of his folly he did at least bring about a civil parting.

After visiting several other small towns in that part of England and meeting more or less opposition in them, Mr. Wesley returned once more to Bristol for a rest.

Chapter 15

Varied Experiences of the Traveling Minister

The winter snows still covered the rough mountains of the north when Mr. Wesley decided one spring morning to visit a mining district about twenty miles from Newcastle. His road led through a winding valley between these snow-covered mountains, and followed the River Derwent. Finally it brought him to the little town, called Blanchland, which he observed to be not much better than a heap of ruins.

But in the midst of those ruins Mr. Wesley found evidences of the fact that once this community had been prosperous. Once it had been peopled by citizens who ranged with the better class. Now, however, the population consisted chiefly of lead-miners and their families, and to these Mr. Wesley had come with his message of salvation from sin.

News of Mr. Wesley's arrival spread quickly throughout the mines, and many of the workmen were eager to hear him. At the hour appointed for service the people assembled in the churchyard of what had one time been an immense cathedral, while Mr. Wesley stood upon a large tombstone sheltered by one of the vast walls which remained standing. Round about him the people gathered in

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clusters, many having come from another town several miles away. Under the opposite wall from that which sheltered Mr. Wesley sat a row of little children, who remained quiet throughout the service. During prayer all the grown people knelt down on the green grass in a very devotional attitude, and while Mr. Wesley preached they gazed at him so earnestly that he felt they were drinking in every word he uttered. Preaching under such conditions as this always gave him pleasure, and he longed for the time to come when these people, too, might know the joys of salvation.

However much Mr. Wesley might enjoy lingering in a community where people were so eager to hear the gospel, he felt that duty called him to other places where preaching was not always received so gladly. So he bade the lead-miners good-by and set out again on his travels.

At the town of Plymouth, he found another mob already gathered to meet him. He had been advised to avoid this multitude by taking the back way to the house where he usually stopped. But he and his companion chose rather to ride straight into the midst of the mob, which they did. At first they were greeted by several wild cries; but when Mr. Wesley alighted and began talking to the trouble-makers, they grew quiet. Later in the evening the mob tried again to make a disturbance; but failing to accomplish their purpose, they finally departed.

The next evening, when the service began, at six o'clock, another mob collected. This was led by an army officer, who brought his company of soldiers to have some fun. With drum-beating and loud shouting the mob created so much noise that it was impossible to go on with the service. Mr. Wesley realized this fact, so he pressed his way through the crowd and found the leader, whom he kindly took by the hand. Again God touched the heart of a mob-leader; for

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the man changed his behavior at once and said, "Sir, I will see you safely home. Sir, no man shall touch you. Gentlemen, stand off! give back! I will knock the first man down that touches him"

A gap began to open through the crowd immediately, and down this narrow lane the captain of the mob led Mr. Wesley. Every few minutes he turned around to look about to see if any were behaving rudely. The crowd followed all the way to Mr. Wesley's lodging; but now they were subdued by the sudden change which had come over their leader. And even after the leader bade Mr. Wesley a tender farewell and departed, the people remained, silent, crowded about the doorstep on which the minister stood. So now he talked to them very earnestly for about half an hour; and when they finally departed they seemed in the best of humor.

The next day being Sunday, Mr. Wesley preached at five o'clock in the morning to a well-behaved, earnest congregation, and again at eight o'clock to a congregation much larger and equally attentive. Both these services he conducted outdoors. No more traces of disturbing mobs were seen, and he was free to come and go at his own pleasure.

Chapter 16

The Hitter Who Was Hit

Not everywhere he went did Mr. Wesley meet with such violent opposition, and sometimes several months passed by with scarcely any disturbances being raised by wicked people. But there continued to be occasional outbreaks among the rougher, lawless class who were always looking for trouble.

One of these outbreaks took place in a town called Shepton. Mr. Wesley was expected to arrive at this town on a certain date, and knowing of his coming, some town ruffians hired a mob to come also and be prepared to do their very worst.

The day finally arrived, and so did Mr. Wesley. He observed at once that his friends manifested much uneasiness. At their first opportunity they told him of the rumors concerning the mob. But as the day wore on, no evidences of a pending upheaval disturbed their peace, and Mr. Wesley preached in the afternoon without the least interruption. He and his friends began to wonder what had become of the mob.

They were not left long to wonder, however, for at the close of the service the mob arrived in full array. They had been waiting for some time at the house where Mr. Wesley usually lodged when he visited Shepton; but this time he had stopped at the other side of

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town, and so they had missed him. Growing impatient from long waiting, they finally decided to go to the meeting-house, where they arrived too late to prevent the service as they had planned to do. Now they swarmed around the little band of worshipers who left the building, and began to hurl stones, dirt, and clods at them. But with all their mad behavior they failed to injure any one.

The captain of the mob was determined that the preacher should not escape from him; so he followed him very closely. When Mr. Wesley and his friends came to the house where he lodged, the captain pressed his way inside the door, too. He expected the mob to follow; but the door was quickly shut and bolted behind him, leaving all his rough companions outside. In spite of his threats and pleadings, no one would let him unfasten the door and join the mob, which soon began a furious uproar.

Great stones were hurled at the door in the attempt to break it open; smaller stones were showered in at the windows; and finally the tiles were broken on the roof and stones came tumbling down from above. Now the imprisoned mob-leader was very much frightened, and he kept as close to Mr. Wesley as he could, thinking that would be the safest place. But in spite of this precaution a large stone struck him on the forehead and the blood gushed out like a stream. Thoroughly frightened at this, he cried out, "O sir, are we to die tonight? What must I do? What must I do?" Mr. Wesley told him to pray, for God was able to deliver him from all danger. And pray he did, as earnestly as anyone ever called on God for such deliverance.

Mr. Wesley and his friends realized that they were indeed in danger and they also prayed. After prayer, Mr. Wesley thought they should leave the building at the rear entrance immediately. "How can we?" questioned his friend; "for if we attempt to cross the room

the flying stones may strike and kill us.” But Mr. Wesley did not wait to reason about the matter, and set out at once across the room, his friend following. Not a stone was thrown till they reached the rear door, and just as they passed outside, the mob broke open the front door and rushed in.

Taking no notice whatever of the minister’s departure, the ruffians crowded in and filled the rooms, proposing at once to set the house on fire. This they doubtless would have done if one of their number who lived next door had not persuaded them to be otherwise minded.

After their escape from the house, Mr. Wesley and his friend hurried to the other end of town, where a man of their acquaintance agreed to guide them through the darkness to the next town. As they were riding along the lane leading out of Shepton, suddenly their guide called to Mr. Wesley to come down from off the bank where he was riding. Now it happened that the bank was very high at the place which he had reached, and the side was very nearly perpendicular; but in the darkness Mr. Wesley could not observe this, and so when he turned his horse about they both came down with unexpected swiftness, tumbling over each other. But neither he nor his horse were hurt seriously, though the accident might have proved fatal to both.

Chapter 17

Mr. Wesley Visits Ireland

The revival flame which had been kindled in England by Mr. Whitefield and the Wesley brothers swept rapidly over the British Isles, even penetrating the far-off nooks and corners. Mr. Charles Wesley crossed over to Ireland and won the hearts of many of those people by his sacred music; for he was famous as a song-writer and musician. He also succeeded in forming several Christian societies among the Protestants, and some of his listeners were genuinely converted.

Two years later Mr. John Wesley decided to visit Ireland, and his experiences while there were both profitable and interesting.

The people of this large island Mr. Wesley found to be of a different temper from the English among whom he was accustomed to labor. However, he found the same human tendencies manifested in them, the same evidences of heart-hunger for the Word of God, and the same warm affection for one who would fearlessly speak to them about salvation from sin. Yes, and he also found that the same spirit of opposition to true Christianity prevailed in Ireland as in England.

On Easter Sunday, in April, 1748, he preached to a large congregation at a town called Athlone. Here many Catholics,

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regardless of the threats of their priest, gathered to hear him. The priest, seeing that his threats had availed nothing, came himself and drove them away like a flock of sheep.

Two days later Mr. Wesley rode into a town called Clara, where he was informed that the people were already gathering from over the countryside to witness a famous cock-fight. Hoping to engage at least some part of them in better employ, Mr. Wesley began preaching in the street as soon as possible. One or two hundred stopped to listen, then pulled off their hats and remained for the entire service, seemingly forgetting all about the fight which had drawn them to town.

In the evening of the same day Mr. Wesley preached at another town, several miles away. Here a large crowd gave good attention to his sermon, although during the latter part of it a hail-storm broke upon them. Many of them stood bareheaded, and refused to put on their hats or move away to a place of shelter until the sermon was finished.

After visiting various towns, Mr. Wesley returned again to Athlone. His coming had been announced; but he arrived earlier than he had expected. Nevertheless, he was met by many of his friends, who gave him a warm welcome into their midst again.

Here we catch a glimpse of his friendly attitude toward children, for about a dozen little boys had run two miles into the country, bareheaded and barefooted, to meet him. If he had not shown a kindly interest in them, of course they would not have been so eager to be the first ones to welcome him back.

Living in the town of Birr, about twenty miles from Athlone, was another company of his followers, and Mr. Wesley visited them also. But when he arrived they could not find the key to the door of

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their meeting-house; so he preached in the street. Here a large crowd gathered out of curiosity to hear the preacher from England. Many of them were irreligious, and paid little attention to the sermon; some laughed a great deal; while others left abruptly. This crowd consisted of a mixture of Catholics and Protestants, who were constantly ill willed toward each other. While Mr. Wesley was preaching a Catholic cried out, "You lie! You lie!" The zealous Protestants became angry in an instant, and cried, "Knock him down!" which was no sooner said than done. But all this took place without interrupting the minister, and not until afterwards did Mr. Wesley learn what had occurred.

In parts of Ireland Mr. Wesley's followers were much persecuted, and at one place, called Wexford, they were compelled to hold their meetings secretly in a barn. An amusing incident, we are told, occurred during one of these services, when an opposer, learning of their meeting-place, planned to take them by surprise. He informed his rough companions of the barn-meeting to be held that night, and told them to come and help him make trouble. He himself would hide in the barn, and when the service should start off nicely he would slip from his hiding-place and unbolt the door, admitting them. All this sounded very well, so they prepared to act it out.

Accordingly, when evening came this mischief-maker slipped into the barn, and, finding a large sack inside, crawled into it and lay very still. Presently the devout worshipers began to arrive by one's and two's and three's, until all their number had assembled. Then they closed and bolted the door, and proceeded to begin their service.

The music of the opening song quite charmed the occupant of the sack, and he decided to wait until the service had continued a

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while before making his presence known. Then the prayer which followed struck conviction to his heart, and he felt himself the greatest sinner in Ireland. So intense grew his misery that he began to groan aloud, squirming to get out of the sack. At this juncture the worshipers became alarmed to see what looked very much like a sack of potatoes moving about and emitting painful groans. On investigation they discovered the miserable creature inside who confessed at once his wicked intentions, and said that God had stopped him from carrying them out. Now he begged them to pray for him, and the service turned into a prayer-meeting in which this poor sinner was saved. Afterwards he became one of the most devoted Christians at Wexford.

In the city of Cork, Mr. Wesley came face to face with the mob element of Ireland. Here the mayor of the city sided with the persecutors, and did nothing to prevent them from acting their worst. He forbade open-air services, and when Mr. Wesley retired to a house to preach he sent the town-drummers and sergeants down to the house on the pretense of keeping the peace! Of course a mob attended them, and in a little while broke up the meeting.

Thinking it unwise to remain in the building, Mr. Wesley and his audience vacated at once. The mob took possession of the house, carrying out the benches, tearing up the floor, and pulling down the window frames, the door, and whatever of the woodwork they could remove. Much of this they took home to use for themselves, and what remained they burned in the street.

In the meantime, Mr. Wesley and his friends were making their way through the crowd to the home of an acquaintance. As they passed along, missiles of various descriptions were hurled at them and many of them were struck. One of their number barely escaped with his life. Still the crowd parted before them and then turned to

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follow, like a pack of wild animals. At the door of the gentlemen's house where Mr. Wesley stopped, a Catholic woman planted herself directly in front of him to prevent his entering; but one of the mob, striking at Mr. Wesley, missed his aim and knocked the woman down. At this Mr. Wesley passed, unharmed, into the house.

As soon as possible Mr. Wesley left the city, knowing that his presence there only increased the wrath of his enemies and endangered the lives and property of his friends. After he had gone, the mob marched in grand procession through the streets for several hours and finally burnt him in effigy. Two days later they were still patrolling the streets and threatening to murder his friends and pull down their houses if they did not give up their religion.

At Bandon, the town to which Mr. Wesley went, conditions were very little better. While he was conducting a street-meeting here, a priest attempted to cause a disturbance, but was seized by three stout women who dragged him unceremoniously out of the crowd, through a house, and deposited him in a garden. Two others tried to disturb the meeting, but without success; one of these was knocked down by a butcher.

Before returning to England, Mr. Wesley again visited Cork and preached in the open air, this time near the soldiers' barracks. Although a mob came out to the service, they raised no disturbance there, and a whole troop of soldiers conducted him safely back to his lodging.

The next day Mr. Wesley attended an Irish funeral, where he was called upon to preach to the large crowd assembled from the countryside. During the service he was shocked at the custom of this people, who hired certain ones to set up a dismal yell, called the "Irish howl," at the grave.

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From this time Mr. Wesley included the Christian societies of Ireland on his regular visiting-list, and he crossed over the channel from England about fifty times to encourage the Irish Christians and preach to their unconverted neighbors.

Chapter 18

Experiences in Scotland

The serious-minded people of Scotland heard of the fame of the great revivalist who was stirring their neighboring country from end to end. Later they heard that he was coming to preach to them.

In Scotland as well as in other countries, Mr. Wesley took advantage of every opportunity to speak a word for Christ. Always he felt that his message was intended as much for one class of people as for another, and he preached alike to the rich and to the poor, to the learned and to the ignorant.

We find him once in the courtyard of the poor-house at Glasgow, with his makeshift pulpit facing the infirmary, whose windows were crowded with patients, some of them leaning out as if eager to catch every word he uttered. Not far away stood the hospital for the insane, and some of those unfortunate people also were numbered among his listeners.

A few days later he took his stand in the market-house of another town. But not a soul stopped to hear him until he began to sing a familiar Scotch hymn. Then the passers-by paused to listen; for the singing of hymns on the street was a most unusual occurrence. Securing their attention in this manner, he proceeded

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with his service, his listeners meanwhile keeping at a respectable distance as if afraid of him.

Later this same earnest preacher mounted a table in the yard of an inn and there preached to a wild-looking crowd of Scotchmen who possibly had never before listened to a sermon. But they gave good attention, wondering no doubt who this fearless, black-gowned preacher of righteousness might be. Certainly not a Scotch churchman! Next we find him in Aberdeen, now in the midst of a thoughtful, educated people. Here the college grounds become the scene of his open-air meeting until a rain drives him and his large audience into the assembly hall.

On the following day he preaches from the steps of King's College to a group of young students who request this favor. How eagerly they drink in his message! With a prayer that his words have not been spoken in vain he passes on.

Now we find him visiting another college of the town. A lover of knowledge himself, he takes delight in visiting institutions of learning. Here in the library of this college he meets the principal and also the divinity professor, who give him a warm greeting and later entertain him privately at their lodgings. A night service follows, which is attended by such eager throngs that the people almost trample each other underfoot to get near the speaker. These are glimpses of his work in Scotland.

Going about from one place to another, always on horseback and frequently attended by a companion. Mr. Wesley, in his travels through Scotland, covered many miles. Past many a ruined castle he rode, pausing long enough to view the ruins and to connect the place with some historical event, if possible.

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The people of this country he found to be lovers of religion, serious-minded, hospitable, and not unfriendly towards his manner of teaching the word of God. While in this country he encountered no mob uprising, for a while so common in England and Ireland. The ministers of these towns were not unwilling for Mr. Wesley to preach in their kirks, or churches, and many of them showed him much kindness. But of this same warm-hearted people he wrote, "The misfortune is, they know everything; so they learn nothing."

Chapter 19

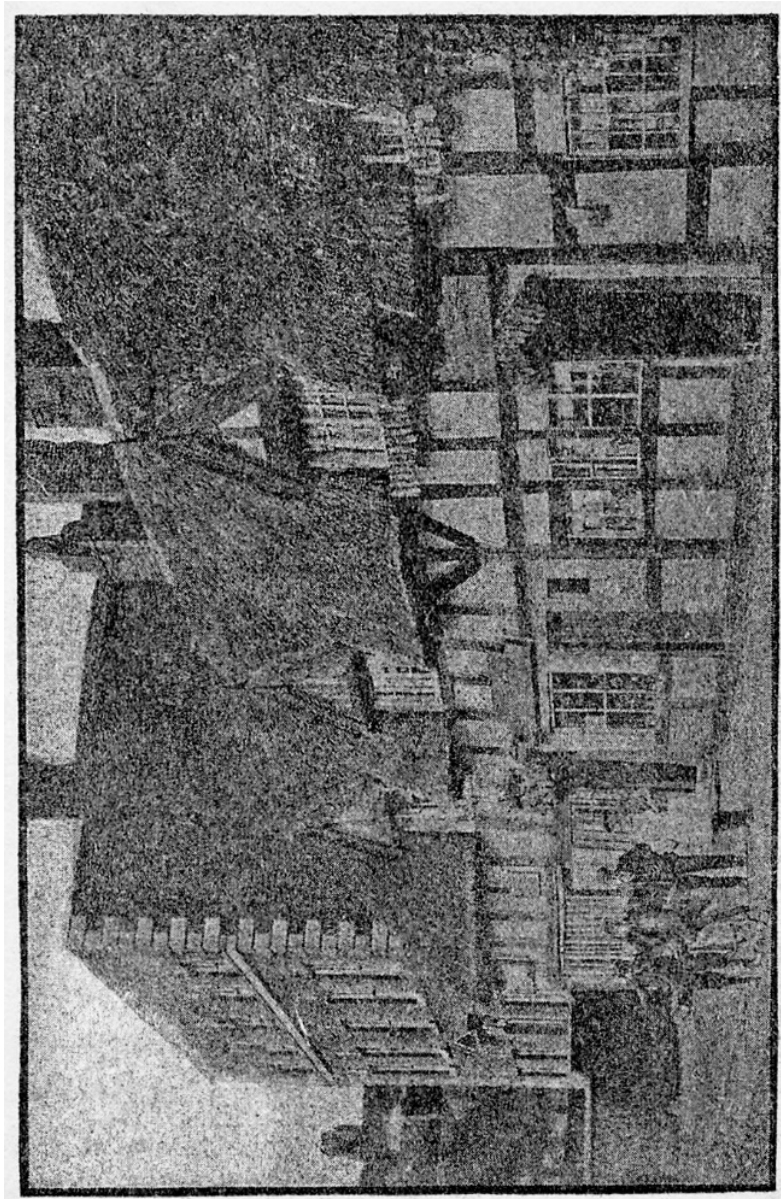
How Mr. Wesley Obeyed the Last Command of Jesus

Before our Savior left this earth to prepare a place in heaven for the righteous, he gave as a last command to his followers these words: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” He gave with this last command the blessed promise that he would be with his followers “even unto the end of the world.”

The end of the world has not yet come, and these words of Jesus still belong to all who believe in him and who follow his teachings. John Wesley realized this, and he set out to obey the command with all his heart. While he could not possibly go into all the world himself (Jesus did not expect one person to do this), he determined to go as far as he could, and to preach the gospel to every creature who would listen.

Sometimes people excuse themselves for not doing their duty because unfavorable conditions hinder them. But John Wesley did not allow unfavorable conditions to block his path when he heard duty calling him from any direction. He set out to respond as promptly as he could, and when he found the way closed before him he made an opening or passed around the obstacle. Ever on he went,

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Old, Thatched Houses Where John Wesley May Have Preached

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obeying the last command of the Savior, who died for him that he might be saved and tell others of this great salvation.

Traveling-methods were not of the most agreeable sort in those days, as we know. And yet Mr. Wesley records in his Journal that once he traveled two thousand and four hundred miles in seven months' time, on horseback. Day after day he rode from one town to another, preaching often in at least three towns the same day. While passing along familiar country roads he engaged his time in reading new or favorite books; for his saddle frequently became his "study-room."

Nor must we suppose that he traveled only when the weather was fair and the roads were in good condition; for often he rode through pelting rain and sleet or through blinding snow. Often his horse had to swim across swollen streams, or wade through marshy bogs, and yet this earnest preacher pressed on and on.

For the most part of the fifty years that Mr. Wesley traveled about preaching the gospel he enjoyed good health. Sometimes, however, he felt worn and tired and unable to go farther. Sometimes he suffered from severe headaches and from burning fevers. But not until his strength completely failed him would he consent to rest for a while.

In his Journal, Mr. Wesley gives us a few glimpses of himself as the tireless traveler that he was. He tells of long rides, sometimes covering ninety miles in one day's journey, changing horses several times. He tells of perilous experiences at river crossings, of treacherous quicksand passes, and of frequent rough voyages across the channel to Ireland.

One midsummer day in 1764, when Mr. Wesley was entering his sixty-second year, he began his horseback journey at a little after

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four o'clock in the morning. A forty-three-mile ride brought him to his first stopping-place, at 2 P. M., where he preached, and then an hour later took his saddle again. His road now led through the mountains to a village called Fountainhead, where he desired to stop for the night. But his companion wished to reach their next appointment before stopping; so after resting for a while in this mountain village, they again rode on.

Now, tired as they were from the long day's ride, they began on a series of annoying experiences. First they were wrongly directed and rode for an hour before discovering the mistake. Then, trying to cross over to the right road, they took a path which ended in a swamp. But seeing a light in the distance, they pressed their way through the swamp to a little house beyond, where a man kindly agreed to bring them to the main road. Mounting his horse, he galloped before them, uphill and down, until he brought them into a road which he said would take them to the town they wished to reach that night.

Thankful to be directed rightly, they bade the man good-by and rode on. But soon they met another stranger who told them they were riding away from their destination instead of towards it! So they turned about and made their way to the next village, where again they were directed on the wrong road. Here they wandered about for an hour on the mountains, through rocks, and bogs, and on precipices, and finally made their way to a house near a bridge. Hoping to find lodging for the night they stopped at this house, but were disappointed to find it filled with drunken, noisy miners.

Nothing remained now for them to do but find the right road and go on. So they hired one of the miners to go with them and show them the way. He was so miserably drunk that he made a very poor guide until he accidentally fell into the middle of a stream they were

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fording, and this sudden bath brought him to his senses. About midnight they came to the inn of the village which they wished to reach, and here they found lodging.

Some of Mr. Wesley's travels led him across "the sands," which were long stretches of drifting sands interspersed with streams of quicksand. Here was danger for a traveler unacquainted with the road, and at such places Mr. Wesley preferred to have a guide. He tells in his Journal of one ten-mile ride across the sands where had he and his companion been without a guide they might have lost their lives.

On another journey a few years later Mr. Wesley and his companion were directed to take a short cut which proved to be an unhappy short cut for both horses and riders. They found themselves plunging into soft mud which threatened to swallow them up. Mr. Wesley's horse sank shoulder-deep into the mire, and, struggling to get out, threw him off. Both he and his horse managed to scramble out to solid ground; but he was covered with mud from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. We are sure he did not look much like a dignified preacher when a short time afterwards he stopped at a house to clean up.

One wintry morning Mr. Wesley and his companion set out at daybreak to fill an appointment in another town some distance away. The roads were buried deep with snow and a strong north wind was blowing. Finally, they took to the open fields and rode across the country, thus avoiding some of the greater snow-drifts. But before they reached the next town a violent storm of rain and hail broke upon them, the rain driving through their coats and boots as it fell. They were benumbed with cold when they reached the next inn, where they stopped only long enough to thaw out and rest for a while. The remainder of their journey that day led through

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snowdrifts almost deep enough to bury them completely. On the next morning Mr. Wesley's attendant thought traveling would be impossible; for more snow had fallen during the night. But the unwearied preacher replied, "If we cannot ride, we can at least walk twenty miles today; and lead our horses. Then we will be that much nearer our destination." So once more they set out sometimes riding and sometimes leading their faithful horses along the untracked way.

As Mr. Wesley grew older he frequently took a post-chaise for traveling instead of going on horseback on his long journeys. One time while in Ireland, during his seventieth year, his chaise was upset in the river as he and his companions were crossing on a ferry-boat. The sailors worked for about an hour before they managed to fish the chaise out of the water; and the travelers lost time by this delay. At the next change Mr. Wesley could not secure another chaise in time to reach his appointment, so he walked on, a distance of about six or seven miles, and arrived just at the beginning of the service. Here, with no opportunity for rest, this elderly man stood up and announced for his text these words of Jesus: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Surely if his heart had not been filled with the love of God he might have felt like complaining about his hard lot!

One time Mr. Wesley was in a very exciting runaway. He was then past seventy years old, and was riding in a post-chaise with his step-daughter and her two little girls. Suddenly the horses became frightened and started down a hill at full speed, throwing the coach-driver off his seat. On they went across a narrow bridge at the foot of the hill, then up the next hill as fast as they could go. They would run near the edge of the ditch first on one side of the road, then on the other, but never did they get too close. At the top of the hill a gate stood open, leading into a farmer's yard. Here they turned short,

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but passed through without upsetting the chaise and ran across the yard to another gate, which was shut. Mr. Wesley thought this would stop them and bring the runaway to an end; but the horses plunged through this second gate as if it had been a spider's web and galloped across the corn-field. Now the frightened little girls cried out, "Grandpapa, save us!" This Mr. Wesley could not do, but he told them not to be afraid, for God was watching over them. At the farther end of the field was a steep precipice, and just as they neared this place a man came galloping along and overtook them, stopping the frightened horses just in time to save all from tumbling down to certain death.

Nearly ten years later, when Mr. Wesley was past eighty years old, he was still traveling about preaching the gospel. On one of his journeys during that year he and his companion walked twelve miles and a half through a heavy rain in Scotland, and he preached that night. Thus the wonderful old man toiled on uncomplainingly till the very close of his lifetime, through all kinds of weather and in every possible circumstance. How faithfully he did his part towards obeying Jesus' last command!

Chapter 20

Mr. Wesley and the Children

In our imagination we have been watching the movements of one of the greatest and one of the busiest men who lived during the eighteenth century. We have concluded that this same great man, John Wesley, had little time to think about his own enjoyment, which is all very true.

But John Wesley was not a stern, solemn-looking gentleman; not at all. His face radiated that pleasing quality which we think of as “human sunshine.” He knew how and when to smile.

There is something about a genuine friendly smile which never fails to awaken a response in children. It is contagious, you know, somewhat like the smallpox or the measles, only it does not bring trouble and pain to those catching it. Smiles help so much in creating friendships, and as Mr. Wesley traveled from one place to another he met many children and won many warm friends among them. He visited in their homes and became better acquainted with them. We are told that he saved his bright pennies on purpose to give them to his little friends.

One time Mr. Wesley was stopping in a home where a little girl lived of whom he was very fond. Often when he had stopped there before he had given her pennies, and instead of spending them at

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once for candy she had always put them into her savings-bank. During this visit Mr. Wesley told the people about a certain place in his work where the poor Christians were needing money very bad, and he asked them to make up an offering and send it to that place. On arriving home from the service this little girl asked her mother if she might give her money back to Mr. Wesley to help those poor people. Of course her mother was quite willing that she should, so she emptied her savings-bank and counted all her bright pennies before going to bed that night. Early the next morning she rapped at the door of Mr. Wesley's room, bringing her offering to help the poor. When the kind-hearted old man saw what she had brought to him, the tears filled his eyes, and he picked her up in his arms and tenderly kissed her. Then he thanked her for her offering and prayed that God's blessings would always rest upon her.

At the Kingswood school which Mr. Wesley had raised money to build for the poor miners' children he was often a visitor. When he was tired, he enjoyed a few days' rest at this school, where he might be with the children and hear them recite their lessons. During his travels he had used some of his spare time to arrange easy lessons in grammar and history for these children.

One time, when Mr. Wesley was an old man, he visited a minister who with his wife conducted boarding-school for children. Two of the pupils became quarrelsome while he was there; so at lunch-time the teacher brought them to Mr. Wesley and asked him please to settle the dispute. We may expect that he chose to do this in a very unusual manner. First he acted surprised that two little boys should disagree and finally quarrel and fight. Then he talked very kindly to them, showing them how unmanly it is to behave so hatefully towards each other, and he asked them to shake hands and be friends. They shook hands. Now he asked them to embrace and

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kiss each other. This was harder to do, but they obeyed. For the last act he took two pieces of buttered bread, folded them together, and told each boy to break a piece off and eat it. Then he gave them each a drink from his own cup! "Now," said he, "you have broken bread together, and you have drunk from the same cup. Hereafter you must be friends." Placing a hand on each head, he then prayed that God would bless these little boys and help them to behave rightly. At family prayers the next morning he looked about among the children and found these same two little boys. Again he prayed for them and blessed them. We are sure those lads never forgot Mr. Wesley. One of them grew up to be a magistrate, and he liked to tell his own children this story of his school-days.

The great English poet Robert Southey tells this story of his own childhood experience. One day he and his little curly-headed sister were visiting at a home where Mr. Wesley was also a guest. For a while the old minister quietly watched the children at their play. Later he overtook them at the stair-landing and caught the little girl in his arms to kiss her. Then he placed a trembling hand on Robert's head and prayed that God would bless him. That prayer and blessing were never forgotten through the years which brought to Mr. Southey a distinguished reputation as a poet.

In his travels through the country, Mr. Wesley came one day to a place where a whole crowd of children had gathered to wait for him. As he approached, they flocked around him, some clinging to his coat and others following behind, looking very much like so many little lambs following a shepherd. All the way to the meeting-house they went and they refused to go away after the service had dismissed until he had shaken hands with every one of them.

Mr. Wesley was glad to see the children give their hearts to Jesus. At one place thirty children sought the Lord. Mr. Wesley

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encouraged them to serve the Lord in their childhood; for he remembered the words of the great Teacher: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Chapter 21

The Preacher and His Pulpit

We remember that John Wesley had been educated as a minister of the Church of England. He had learned how to practice all the forms of religion which that church taught. And yet several years after he became a minister he admitted the fact that he had never been converted. He did not understand how to accept Jesus as his Savior.

Then when the glad light of salvation drove away the doubts and fears from his heart he was very happy, and at once he longed to tell others how to obtain the blessed experience of salvation from sin. Being a minister, he began to preach the gospel of salvation from every church pulpit which he entered. Now he believed that he had a message which would do men's souls good, and he found delight in giving that message to them.

But God had planned a greater work for John Wesley than he could possibly accomplish in the pulpits of the Church of England. There were thousands and thousands of people in the British Isles who would never enter such a church, and they needed to know about God's plan of salvation, too. So the time came quickly when the church pulpits closed against the teachings of John Wesley, and

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then it was that his young friend George Whitefield introduced him to the “field pulpits.”

Mr. Wesley never entirely overcame his dislike for field-preaching, and years afterwards he spoke of it as being his “cross.” But whenever occasion demanded his doing so, he “took up his cross” and preached as earnestly in the open fields as when he stood in a church pulpit. He realized that God was pleased to use such a means to get the gospel to mankind.

Field-preaching, then, was Mr. Wesley’s first long step away from the church pulpit. Afterwards we find him an open-air preacher in most unexpected places. No longer he asked for a church and a pulpit; now he simply asked for an audience and a place to stand where he might speak to them. “The world,” said he, “is my parish,” when the church pulpits closed behind him.

True religion, Mr. Wesley found, could be properly presented to earnest people from any kind of stand. Sometimes he preached on the streets of the towns and cities where he went; sometimes he preached in barns; sometimes in old, deserted buildings; but always he brought the same glad message of deliverance from the bondage of sin.

Whenever numbers of people were converted in one locality, Mr. Wesley urged them to conduct regular meetings, and usually they built a house of worship for this purpose. Of course he then preached to them from their pulpits; but he also went out on the streets of their towns and cities to preach to others who could not or would not come to a house of worship to hear the gospel. Never did he forget the needs of those who made no profession of religion and attended no place of worship.

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Wherever he went, Mr. Wesley looked for an opportunity to preach the gospel. This was the business of his life. When he took passage on a boat, as he frequently did, he spoke freely to his fellow passengers about the things of God; when he walked through a crowded market-place, he looked about for a convenient chair or table from which he might speak forth the message of his heart. Though it might be in the fish-market where the disagreeable odors almost overcame him, yet if the people were there and the opportunity was given him to speak to them, he willingly mounted the table and proclaimed God's wonderful plan of salvation.

Once we find him, now an old, old man, stranded on an island in the Irish Channel where his boat was nearly driven on the rocks. Here he must wait for a while before he can secure passage across to the mainland, and so he walks about, looking for an open-air pulpit. Finally, he stops on the beach, and there in the fast deepening twilight he announces a hymn and begins to sing. Soon a woman and two children join in singing, and others sauntering past stop to listen. A fair-sized congregation collects, and to them he preaches of the crucified Christ.

The time came at last when the church pulpits were again thrown open to Mr. Wesley. The proud people who had looked scornfully upon him and his noble work recognized before too late that he was one of God's chosen servants, and that he had accomplished much good in his irregular form of preaching. They were glad to welcome him back.

But never did the honors which people heaped upon him fill Mr. Wesley's heart with pride. Always he remained the same quiet humble man, seeking an opportunity to help someone in need. Near the close of his life he visited a town where years before a mob had tried to destroy his work. On this last visit the people lined the streets

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on both sides and waited to welcome him as he passed by, now a white-haired, feeble yet earnest preacher of the gospel. No more respectful welcome would they have given to the King of England himself! This man they knew personally, his messages they had often heard, and the effect of his preaching they had seen demonstrated in the godly lives of their neighbors and friends who had been converted in his meetings. Yet how few of them would ever have known him if he had never been willing to preach anywhere except in a pulpit of the Church!

Chapter 22

The End of a Noble Life

Time, we know, shows no respect to persons, however noble and useful they may have been during their busy lives. After years of service they finally grow feeble, and the very tools which they have used so effectually drop from their trembling fingers. One by one their lifetime friends and relatives are called away by death, and a feeling of loneliness creeps over their hearts. They, too, long to depart to be with Christ.

So it was with John Wesley. He had lived a long, useful life. He had seen his loved ones called away by death, and finally he knew that his own time to go was drawing near. Still he traveled about visiting the congregations which he had preached to for many years and encouraging them to be faithful to God. Especially did he urge the Christians to love each other.

One day tidings came to him that his brother Charles had died. Charles, we remember, was only a few years younger than he, and always they had been fond of each other. Now he felt the loss of his brother very keenly.

Everywhere among the followers of the Wesleys they sang, hymns which Mr. Charles Wesley had written. The custom was for the minister to read the hymn and then the congregation would join

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in singing. Three weeks after Mr. Charles had died, Mr. John Wesley announced in one of his services a hymn which his brother had written. He began to read the first stanza. But as he read his eyes filled with tears, his voice broke, and he sat down, burying his face in his hands. Many of the congregation wept with him.

The last open-air service which Mr. Wesley conducted was held in a churchyard at Winchelsea, just a few months before he died. He was then eighty-seven years old, and he conducted this service at the noon hour for the benefit of the workmen. They assembled in time to see him cautiously mount the large oak table which had been placed under the shade of an old ash-tree. There, supported by strong arms, he stood while he preached earnestly to them from the text, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." Tears flowed freely down their cheeks as they listened, just as whole congregations had been moved to tears in the earlier days when field-preaching first touched the hearts of these people.

Though now so old and feeble, Mr. Wesley continued to travel from one place to another, preaching and teaching the people. His voice became so weak that his words could scarcely be heard, yet his audiences were moved by the sight of his earnestness and faithful devotion to God. Nearly every service which he conducted he closed with his brother's hymn:

"Oh, that without a lingering groan
I may the welcome word receive;
My body and my charge lay down
And cease at once to work and live."

The prayer of this godly old man was that he might not live to be useless. As long as life lasted he longed to be active in Christian service. Three weeks before his death he wrote a letter to a friend, telling of places which he wished to visit the following month, if he

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still should live. But by mistake he failed to post this letter, and two days before his death he found it lying in his bureau-drawer. Taking a pen, he wrote across the envelop, "Feb. 28. This morning I found this in my bureau."

Just a few days before his death Mr. Wesley preached his last sermon, in the dining-room of a friend who lived at Leatherhead, a place about eighteen miles from London. He took for his text: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Two days later he was stricken down by his last illness, at his rooms in London.

Conscious that his end was drawing near, Mr. Wesley showed no signs of uneasiness, but rather rejoiced. To his anxious friends he talked freely and often broke out in songs of praise. Then when his voice would fail he would pause and wait for strength to sing again. Once he called for a pen, but when it was brought he could no longer use it. "What did you wish to write?" asked his nurse. "Nothing but that God is with us," he whispered in reply.

One of Mr. Wesley's favorite songs on his deathbed seemed to be:

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath.
And when my voice is lost in death
Praise shall employ my nobler powers.
My days of praise shall ne'er be past
While life and thought and being last,
Or immortality endures."

As the end drew near, Mr. Wesley's face shone with a heavenly light, and he whispered, "The best of all is, God is with us." Then he raised his arm as if to wave it, and cried aloud, "The best of all is, God is with us!" Throughout the night he spoke in broken accents of praise to God, and on the following morning he exclaimed aloud,

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“I’ll praise—. I’ll praise—.” But his voice faltered, and he entered the realms of paradise to complete that unfinished hymn.

