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REV. JOHN WESLEY PREACHING BEFORE THE MAYOR AND CORPORATION OF BRISTOL

By W. H. Y. Titcombe

See *Journal* 16 March, 1788. *Proceedings* xix, 33.

Published by the courtesy of the Director and Committee of the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.

EARLY METHODISM IN BRISTOL. WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JOHN WESLEY'S VISITS TO THE CITY.

VIII. WESLEY'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Speaking of Wesley, the Cambridge Modern History¹ says, "It is strange that a man whose objects were so disinterested, lofty and pure, should have had so firm a grasp of life, of business, finance, and administration. Wherever Whitefield passed he left memories of overwhelming passion and eloquence; wherever Wesley passed he left more enduring memories in the shape of schools, mission-rooms, meeting-places, and unions for prayer, for charity, and for self-help." We have already seen some of the ways in which these characteristics of Wesley were expressed during his Bristol ministry.

We must now take notice of how his vivid contact with the masses of Bristol people made his social and political influence more important than is usual with religious leaders.

In an earlier section we saw that the Room Wesley built in the Horsefair was not originally intended to be used for any other purpose than as a meeting-place for the exposition of the Scriptures to the United Society (i.e. the Societies formerly meeting in Nicholas Street and Baldwin Street). It was not long, however, before Wesley, with his enthusiasm for learning and education, had found another use for the Room. Whitefield had begun a charity school in the Nicholas Street room, and Wesley now found accommodation for teaching children in the Horsefair Room. So successful was this venture that four masters and a mistress were employed and the building was known for a time as "The New School-house in the Horsefair." This was Wesley's first educational establishment in Bristol, and was an attempt to continue the kind of work others had begun before him.

1. Cambridge Modern History, Vol. vi., p. 84

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In 1748 Wesley founded another school at Kingswood (transferred in 1851 to Bath) for the sons of his preachers. Whitefield had planned an earlier school for colliers' children. He had collected subscriptions and marked a site for the school. Wesley found a more suitable site for this school which continued to exist for sixty years. Wesley laid the foundation stone of the new school for preachers' sons on April 7th, 1746, and the school was opened in June, 1748. He distinguished it from the colliers' school by calling it the "New House." "Wesley's original plan extended to the very details of diet The course of study was encyclopaedic. The discipline was severe. But it was an advance upon any school in the kingdom for boys from six to twelve years of age in the range and quality of its teaching."²

Another early instance of Wesley's philanthropic activities was the opening of a dispensary in Bristol in 1746 where medicines were gratuitously distributed to the poor, and where with the assistance of a chemist and physician, Wesley himself gave consultations and dispensed remedies. The dispensary was not continued for long, however, owing to the difficulty of getting the medicines. The success and difficulties attending this venture are described in a letter Wesley wrote from Bristol to Ebenezer Blackwell in London on January 26, 1747: "Our number of patients increases here daily. We have now upwards of two hundred. Many have already desired to return thanks, having found a considerable change for the better already. But we are at a great loss for medicines, several of those we should choose being not to be had at any price in Bristol."³ Thus the free dispensary had to be discontinued.

No one who examines the rise of Methodism in Bristol can ever doubt that it was concerned with the bodily needs of men as well as with their spiritual wellbeing. In this respect it bears comparison with the Franciscan movement of the 13th century, when a "change of heart" had as a corollary a life of social service. In the early days of 1753 a serious riot occurred in Bristol. The dearness of bread provoked the Kingswood colliers to march on the city. They did extensive damage to persons and property, by pelting the constables and city guards, smashing the windows of the council-house, sacking a grain vessel on the quay, and would have done still greater mischief had not the Scots Greys arrived to quell the rising. The soldiers killed four colliers,

2. "A New History of Methodism," Vol. I., pp. 219-220.

3. Letters, Vol. II, p. 85

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took thirty prisoners, and dispersed the rest. The terror which this riot created in the Bristol people can be gathered from the following report in the *London Evening Post* for June 7, 1753. "Last Wednesday a great number of citizens, with several of the clergy, having come to a resolution, in the name of themselves and their fellow-citizens, to thank the Magistrates and Corporation for their care in suppressing the late riots, walked in procession from the Exchange to the Guildhall, where the Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriffs, and several Gentlemen of the Common Council were assembled, and William Berrow, Esq., addressed himself to the Mayor with a speech to which Mr. Mayor made a very genteel reply." This incident was followed by a procession of nearly 2,000 people to the Exchange, where the Mayor gave special thanks to citizens for defending the city. The report adds that 50 colliers were wounded in the fracas and likely to lose limbs. The citizens made a collection and sent a bountiful supply of provisions to the hungry prisoners and their families. And *Pawlyn's History of Bristol Methodism* reminds us that "while lying in the Bridewell, repenting at leisure their reckless lawlessness, the poor colliers sent for Wesley, who, prompt to every call, went and preached to them." This was on Tuesday, July 17, 1753.

But Wesley's social work was not without its difficulties and hindrances. In the month of August, 1753, he suffered much anxiety regarding the condition of Kingswood School opened in 1748. Writing on the 24th of his efforts to bring order into the management of the school he says, "I have spent more money and time and care on this than almost any design I ever had." However, the later success of Kingswood School is sufficient testimony to the untiring efforts of Wesley in these early troublous days.

On Monday, September 10 of this same year, Wesley, who was never slow to do anything in his power to help needy souls,— "il savait voir en tout être humain, si bas tombé qu'il fût, une âme à sauver,"⁴—preached to condemned malefactors in Bristol Newgate (probably confined there as a result of the riots earlier in the year), and was grieved to have to admit, "I could make little impression on them."

An article in *The Times* for May 22, 1925, reminds us that Wesley's "pen was ready in all political crises," and we may add that he was no less ready of speech when occasion seemed to him to demand it. On Wednesday, March 3, 1756, Bristol was in the

4. Guiton's "John Wesley : Esquisse de Sa Vie et de Son Oeuvre," p. 55

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excitement of an intense electioneering campaign. Wesley arrived to find the Methodists were as agitated as any of the citizens. Voting for the two candidates, Jarrit Smith, a Tory, and John Spencer, a Whig, was already taking place and lasted until March 16, when the poll was declared in favour of Jarrit Smith, who was elected by the narrow majority of 71. The following extract from a letter Wesley wrote from Bristol on March 4, 1756, to his faithful friend Mr. Blackwell, a London Banker, in whose judgment Wesley placed great confidence, gives us Wesley's own account of his part in the election. "Last night I desired all the freemen of our Society to meet me after the preaching, and enlarged a little upon His Majesty's character, and the reasons we had to spare no pains in his service. I believe all who had been wavering were fully convinced. But some had absolutely promised to vote for Mr. Smith, it having been confidently reported that both the candidates were equally acceptable to His Majesty. The whole city is in confusion. Oh what a pity there could not be some way of managing elections of every sort without this embittering Englishmen against Englishmen, and kindling fires which cannot be quenched in many years."⁵ It has been pointed out that Latimer is wrong in his Annals in saying Wesley "worked energetically on behalf of Mr. Smith."⁶ But Wesley's Toryism was always to the forefront at election times, and he appears to have influenced the Bristol Methodists on this occasion.

It was during this election that a triumphal arch, bearing a representation of the Royal Arms of the Stuarts, borrowed from All Saints, was erected in College Green. "This decoration being without the heraldic blazon of the Hanoverian family, was held to be a token of sympathy with the Pretender; it caused so much excitement that it had to be removed. The Young Pretender was supposed to have figured in this election. Dr. Josiah Tucker, a prebendary of the Cathedral and rector of St. Stephen's Church, writing to a friend, says: "I have been pestered all day with a lot of Methodist preachers who insist upon it that they have started and are now hunting a strange kind of game called the Young Pretender, and have fairly tracked him to Mr. Jarrit Smith's house at Ashton, where he is at present under cover." It was with difficulty that Dr. Tucker prevented his informants from making a deposition before the judges of assize.⁷

5. Letters, Vol. III, p. 165.

6. Simon's "John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism," p. 317.

7. Ibid, p. 318.

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But the excitement at Bristol at this election was typical of the feeling which ran high throughout the country. "War with France; Ireland ripe (so many believed) for rebellion; the American colonies in danger; the Franco-Papal invasion threatened,—such were the conditions under which Wesley intervened in two unlooked for ways. First, he tried the only way then open to him to influence an election; and secondly, he volunteered to raise a company of soldiers for service at home, that is to say for home defence."⁸

Wesley offered to raise a company of about 200 volunteers to be supported by contributions among themselves, and to be ready, in case of invasion to act for a year, if needed so long, at His Majesty's pleasure; "only within — miles of London. If his offer is accepted, Wesley asks for a loan of arms from the Tower and sergeants to train the corps of Methodist territorials."

Every student of the history of Methodism is familiar with the "Rules of the Society of the People called Methodists" drawn up and signed by the brothers Wesley in 1743. They embodied a veritable "code of everyday social service," and "affirmed that the desire of salvation," should be evidenced first, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that most generally practised; and, secondly, by being in every kind merciful, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible to all men."⁹

Before these Rules were imposed upon his followers, Wesley himself had been practising them. During the severe winter frost in 1740 Wesley made an evening collection among his congregation on Monday, January 21st for the relief of the poor who lived just outside Lawford's Gate, Bristol, and though unemployed, received no parish relief, and were reduced to the last extremity. "I made another collection on Thursday," he writes, "and a third on Sunday by which we were enabled to feed a hundred, sometimes a hundred and fifty, of those whom we found to need it most." The Moravian Letters show that Wesley often preached at the Lawford's Gate Poorhouse, which stood in what is now called Pennywell Road, and knew a great deal about the distress to be found there.

On Wednesday, March 12, 1740 Wesley "found a little time (having been importuned) to spend with the soldier in Bridewell

8. Journal, Vol. IV., p. 151 footnote

9. Methodism: Its Present Responsibilities. Addresses at the Bristol Congress, 1929. The Social Dynamic and the Methodist Movement by the Rev. Henry Carter, p. 203.

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who was under sentence of death." He continued to visit this unhappy prisoner once a day, "whereby there was also an opportunity of declaring the gospel of peace to several desolate ones that were confined in the same place." This is another instance of Wesley's social activity in Bristol, which was not without its influence upon his followers, for in the Conference of 1778 the question was asked, "Is it not advisable for us to visit all the jails we can?" The answer was, "By all means. There cannot be a greater charity." And we cannot help recalling in this connection the untiring prison and philanthropic work of Silas Told, a former Bristol mariner, and early follower of Wesley.

Again on New Year's Day, 1759, we find Wesley returning to Bristol in response to a pressing letter. We can only guess that the letter referred to the state of the Society in Bristol and to the distress amongst the poor. Wesley tells us that he came to Bristol "to examine severally the members of Society, and to provide for the poor." The result of the examination was satisfactory, and "this particular collection taken on Sunday, January 7, was more than double of what it used to be."

It was in October of this year that Wesley first went to Knowle to see for himself the conditions under which the French prisoners were living. It had been represented to him that they were living in filth, with nothing but straw to lie on, and rags for clothes. He was pleased to find that his informers had exaggerated in their report of the conditions, although there was room for improvement in the way the prisoners were cared for. After preaching in the evening on the text: "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt," Wesley took a collection for the prisoners, which amounted to £18, and was later increased to £24. On October 20 he wrote a letter from Bristol to the Editor of *Lloyds Evening Post*,¹⁰ which circulated from London, urging the needs of the prisoners. He pointed out that they had good space for exercising, their prison was cleaner and sweeter than any prison in England or elsewhere, they had good meat and good bread, the hospital was not overcrowded, for they enjoyed good health, and it was a good hospital. The one thing they lacked was clothing. "But will not the humanity and generosity of the gentlemen of Bristol prevent or relieve this distress? Did they not make a notable precedent during the late war? And surely they are not weary of well-doing. Tuesday night we did a

10. Letters, Vol. IV., p. 73.

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little according to our power ; but I shall rejoice if this be forgotten through the abundance administered by their liberality in a manner which they judge most proper” So great was Wesley’s social spirit and influence that many contributions were sent from London and other parts of the country, and the Bristol Corporation provided a large quantity of blankets and mattresses for the prisoners.

Another letter¹¹ to the the Editor of the Morning Chronicle and dated November 4, 1759, speaks of the collection taken at the New Room on Tuesday, October 16 and the next day, the proceeds of which were laid out in shirts and flannel waistcoats bought of Mr. Zephaniah Fry in the Castle. The check shirts and woollen cloth purchased from Mr. Fry amounted to £8 ros. 6d., and check linen bought from Mrs. Sarah Cole cost £5 17s. 6d. “The linen was immediately delivered to two or three poor women, who were to be paid the common price,” and to some others, who offered to make shirts for the prisoners for nothing. Wesley continues: “The money remaining I lodged in the hands of Mr. James Ireland of Horsleydown Street as he speaks French readily, and Mr. John Salter of Bedminster who had been with me both at the prison and the hospital. I directed them to give a waistcoat and two shirts to every one who was remanded from the hospital to the prison, and the other half to those they judge most needy or most deserving.”

But some people were so dubious about Wesley’s honesty that he wrote another letter quoted in the “Morning Chronicle” in March, 1791, answering “insinuations as to his appropriation of money collected for the French prisoners at Knowle.”

Another collection for the prisoners was taken on October 24, 1760 (only eight days after Wesley had preached in the afternoon at Newgate a charity sermon “for the use of the poor prisoners.”) On the previous day a notice appeared in the “Bristol Chronicle” saying “A charity-sermon will be preached at the New Room in the Horsefair on Sunday evening at 8 o’clock by the Rev. John Wesley for the use of the French prisoners at Knowle.” The collection taken at this service was ordered to be expended in the provision of linen and waistcoats.

In October, 1774, Bristol was again astir with another electioneering campaign. On Thursday, October 6, Wesley met those of the Bristol Society who had votes and “advised them (1) to vote, without fee or reward for the person they judged

11. Letters, Vol. IV, p. 78.

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most worthy; (2) to speak no evil of the person they voted against; and (3) to take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side." Wesley did not regard politics as within his province, but he uses "the privilege of an Englishman to speak his naked thoughts." Although we may question if Wesley was always unbiassed, we cannot doubt his disinterestedness. This was one of the most important and exciting elections Bristol had ever seen. The candidates were Henry Cruger, junior (Whig), Edmund Burke (Whig), Matthew Brickdale (Tory), and the Right Honourable Viscount Clare (Tory). Lord Clare withdrew on the second morning of the Poll, which was declared on November 3. This was Burke's first election, and it took place on the eve of the American War of Independence. The result of the Poll was: Cruger, 3,565, Burke, 2,707, Brickdale, 2,456, and Lord Clare, 283. The advice Wesley gave to his followers on this important occasion helped to create a steadying influence in a time of grave political crisis.

Wesley's concern for the social wellbeing of the people of Bristol is significantly illustrated by an entry in the *Journal* for Monday, September 9, when he alludes to the crowded housing conditions of people who were "by far the poorest about the city" and lived outside Lawford's Gate. Six or seven people lived in small dwelling-houses without modern sanitary arrangements both at Lawford's Gate and Redcliffe.

The year 1778 saw France's recognition of the independence of the revolted American colonies, and a naval power, second only to that of England, joined in the conflict between the colonies and Great Britain. Wesley visited Bristol to calm the Society which had been disturbed by partisans of the rebellious colonies. When he arrived in Bristol on Wednesday, March 4, Wesley says, "I found the panic had spread hither also, as if the nation were on the brink of ruin . . . I can compare this only to the alarm which spread through the nation in King William's time, that on that very night the Irish Papists were to cut the throats of all the Protestants in England."

For three days (September 14, 15, 16) during this year, Wesley examined the Bristol Society to see "whether there was any truth in the assertion that above a hundred in our society were concerned in unlawful distilling." But the result was that he found only two persons concerned therein.

Noticing in September, 1783, the extreme poverty of many Bristol Methodists, Wesley spoke to several who were in better

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circumstances, and received from them about £40 which he distributed amongst those who were in the most pressing want. As he visited these poor members from house to house he was glad to find "no murmuring spirits among them but many that were truly happy in God; and all of them appeared to be exceeding thankful for the scanty relief which they received."

The social and political influence Wesley exerted in Bristol during his ministry in the city was only a practical application of principles he fought hard to uphold through the press, in his own literary efforts, and above all in his preaching up and down the land. "Royalist and Tory as John Wesley undoubtedly was in sympathy, a mental revolution would have been necessary to win his assent to our present forms of democratic decision and rule; yet, by the limitless nature of his appeal, and the boundlessness of his faith in God and his hope for men, he opened the door of social opportunity to disinherited multitudes."¹² And what Wesley did in Bristol and the West of England, he repeated up and down the country. The importance of Wesley's social and political influence, so well illustrated by his activities in Bristol, lies in the fact that it gave his followers other interests and ideals beside the material, for while it was concerned with their bodily interests it was more concerned with their spiritual condition. Methodism fostered in the poor uncared-for citizens "self respect as citizens of another world, whose franchise was not confined to the well-to-do, and it provided them with a democratic religious and educational organisation of their own."¹³

As we look back upon the untiring ministry of Wesley in 18th century Bristol we can see in it singular evidence that, as a recent biographer has said, "his influence upon the social, industrial and religious life of the eighteenth century in England has to be reckoned with as one of the prime historical factors of that period, nor are we even yet in a position to measure its full extent."¹⁴

W. A. GOSS.

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12. Carter's "The Social Dynamic and the Methodist Movement," p. 205.
 13. Trevelyan's "History of England," p. 520.
 14. Vulliamy's "John Wesley," Preface, p. vii.

LETTERS FROM WESLEY TO DANIEL BUMSTEAD.

These letters, so far as we know, have never been published. They are in the possession of Dr. Henry J. Bumsted, great-great-grandson of the recipient, and are published with kind permission. The transcriptions are furnished by the Rev. F. M. Parkinson, who was indebted for them to the kind offices of the Rev. J. A. Gray, M.A., of St Luke's Presbyterian Church, St. Leonards-on-Sea.

Dr. Bumsted spells his name without the "a." In giving the particulars which are quoted the spelling used in the various sources is carefully followed.

Daniel Bumstead was born in 1742, and was brought up amongst dissenters in Colchester. He was converted, however, through the preaching of the first Methodists, and was called out to itinerate by Wesley himself, when he was about twenty years old.

In the first detailed list of Stations, published in 1765, he is in the list of travelling preachers and is appointed to Rye. His name stands first, but Mark Davis, whose name stands second, is said to be Assistant or Superintendent.

In 1766 his name is third at Birstal, in 1767 he is Assistant there with his name standing first, in 1768 he is down as third but is declared to be the Assistant. In 1769 and 1770 he is Assistant at Leeds; in 1771 and 1772 at Sheffield; in 1773 and 1774 at London. At the Conferences of the years 1773 and 1774 a paper was drawn up and signed by the preachers, agreeing to rules and regulations for the promotion of a closer union, and for promoting greater holiness and usefulness. The first signature on both papers was that of Daniel Bumsted. At the Conference of 1775 he desisted from travelling. (*Stevenson's History of City Road Chapel* says: The excessive labours of a Methodist preacher's life in those days, constantly travelling and preaching, with but little rest, broke down Mr. Bumsted's health, and he was obliged to retire from a work he so much loved. He commenced business as a wine merchant in Bishopsgate Street, and received the patronage of Mr. Wesley's followers. He supplied the Sacra-

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mental wine for use at City Road Chapel to the end of his days ; and as there was then a weekly Communion, and a large number of communicants, the wine bill made a considerable item in the Steward's accounts. He was a useful leader for many years at City Road, and greatly aided the cause in many ways. He died in peace, at the age of 55, on May 3rd, 1797, and the Rev. John Pawson, who knew him well, preached a funeral sermon in City Road Chapel for him there. . . . The family rendered important service to the City Road Society for many years. Two separate vaults in the ground are filled with bodies of the members of the family, twelve of whom are there interred. Daniel Bumsted was left a widower whilst he was in the itinerant ministry. An account of the sudden death of his first wife appears in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1786. Her name is not entered on the stone at City Road. Mr. Bumsted's second wife survived him for thirteen years.

The funeral sermon by Mr. Pawson was printed in the *Methodist Magazine* for 1798. It is based on 1 Cor. xv, 57. From very intimate personal acquaintance Mr. Pawson says of him : "He was a holy, upright, faithful man, zealous for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He was endowed with considerable ministerial gifts, and blessed with much success in his labours."

Myles : *Chronological History of the Methodists*, gives the date of Daniel Bumstead's entering the work as 1759 ; but Atmore : *Methodist Memorial*, says he commenced public labours in 1762. Atmore thinks that Bumstead made a mistake in retiring when he did. "He was tempted to relinquish the itinerant life on account of his family connections, and was prevailed upon to engage in *secular* things, and to settle in London."

There are several interesting references to Bumsted in the *Standard Journals*, for it seems practically certain that the person referred to in the following entries is Daniel Bumsted.

January 2, 1785, at brother Bumst [ed's].

December 6, 1786, 8 a.m., do. tea, conversed, letters.

December 17, 1790, 2 p.m., at brother Bumsted's, dinner, conversed, prayer.

Though no letters to Bumstead are given in the *Standard Letters*, he is mentioned several times. Writing March 29, 1768, to Christopher Hopper, about the collection for the debt, Wesley refers to Bumstead of the Birstal Circuit as one of the preachers who were not able to get the richer members to do their part. Hopper was commissioned to see what he could do.

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The Conference of that year moved Hopper to Birstal. Wesley wrote to him on January 5, 1769, "Now let us see what you can do in the Grand Affair, the Lord being your Helper. I shall doubt whether your name be Christopher Hopper if Birstal Circuit does not subscribe more this year than last. And take honest Tommy Lee and Daniel Bumstead [his colleague] by the hand. Go on, in the name of the Lord, Speak, and speak again. Take no denial."

In the account of Methodism which Wesley gave to Professor Liden, of Sweden, in November, 1769, he includes Daniel Bumstead in a list of those whom he considered to be his best preachers.

London

January 13. 1770

My Dear Brother

I am glad poor S. Hutchinson is safe landed. You sh^d procure a particular acc^t of her last words, as they might give much comfort to old Mourners, who are so apt to think they shall perish at the last. I think your dear Friends the Calvinists, are more & more angry with us. But is not the cause of anger, (if it woud do any Good) on our Part rather? This testimony was lodged with us forty years ago, "Without Holiness none shall see the Lord." Immediately the World opposed us: but they did it so awkwardly, that not many serious persons were moved. But then came y^e Calvinists, saying, "No! Not without Holiness: But without any Holiness *in ourselves*." And how many thousands have they turned back into the world?

I am, with Love to S. Bumsted

Your Affectionate Friend & Brother

J. WESLEY

To

Mr. Bumsted

At the Preaching-house

near

Leeds

London

Oct. 20, 1770

My Dear Brother

I rejoice to hear, that there is the same Revival of the Work of God at Leeds, which we find in several other Parts

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of the Kingdom. Now is the time, to use all Diligence & Activity : to be instant in season, out of season ; in public, & from house to house. And at such a time, one would be particularly earnest, in exhorting every one, young & old to give their whole Heart, and their whole Life to God.

I am, with Love to Sister Bumsted,
Dear Daniel,
Your Affectionate Friend & Brother
J. WESLEY

To
Mr. Bumsted
At the Foundery
London

Wednesbury
March 21. 1774

My Dear Brother

I am not much concerned about Mr. Crowther ; for I know not, whether I shall administer or no.

This Visiting, I have been convinced for many years, was the very thing that was wanting. It will above anything endear the Preacher to the People, & the people to the Preacher. And the Difficulties wch threaten at first, will soon appear to be only " Lions in the way."

I am,

Dear Daniel,
Your Affectionate Friend & Brother
J. WESLEY

Dr. Bumsted says that this letter bears on the outside of the folded sheet the traces of a postmark which appears to be Wolverhampton. The *Journal* shows that Wesley was at Wednesbury on Saturday and Sunday, March 19 and 20, 1774. On the 21st he preached at Darlaston at nine, and about noon at Wolverhampton. The letter therefore appears to have been written at Wednesbury in the earlier hours of the 21st, and posted later in the day at Wolverhampton. There is also a well preserved impression in red wax of a seal with the monogram J. W., and the words BELIEVE - LOVE - OBEY surrounding it.

Mr. Parkinson calls our attention to a letter written by Sarah Crosby, July 13, 1790: "Mr. Wesley left Leeds yesterday. I never heard him preach better, if so well. In every sermon he set forth 'Christian Perfection' in the most beautiful light. . . . I believe there has not been such a time in Leeds for many years. (See Tyerman: *John Wesley*, iii, 68).

JOHN WESLEY AND JOHN VALTON

London,
Oct. 8. 1785

My Dear Brother

I cannot advise you to marry anyone upon *those Conditions*. But surely either Yorkshire or Oxfordshire, might supply a person that would receive you upon your own Conditions, & that would be a blessing to you & to many. If you continue instant in prayer, I nothing doubt, but such a person might be found. But take care in the meantime, that you do not take upon yourself more work than you are able to do. I am much inclined to think, Henry Foster might yet live, if he w^d ride daily, & take no sustenance at all but bread and buttermilk (a spoonfull at a time at first) churned every day.

I am Y^r Affectionate Friend & Brother

J. WESLEY.

To

Mr. John Valton
In Bradford,
Yorkshire.

The Standard Edition of Wesley's Letters contains many letters addressed to a preacher who is called by the Editor one of the finest figures amongst the itinerants engaged in the work in Wesley's lifetime. By the kindness of Mr. E. S. Lamplough we are able to add the preceding. The printed letters range from 1764 to 1790. Valton's health is often referred to, and the question of marriage was spoken of as early as 1773. In that year Wesley advised his friend that marriage would not be good for him. In 1778 he said, "I must, if possible save Mr. Valton's life." Wesley had a very high opinion of Valton, writing to a correspondent in 1784 he said: "It pleases God to bless Mr. Valton wherever he turns his face; but his body sinks under him, and he is still hovering between life and death." In the course of this year Valton was silent for some months under medical advice. In the Stations for 1785 the name of John Valton, described as a Supernumerary, stands as the first of the three preachers appointed to Bradford.

This throws light upon the position of a Supernumerary in the early days, as discussed in *Proceedings*, xvii, 150. At the Conference of 1786, Valton tells us, "I was appointed assistant

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(we now say superintendent) of the Bristol Circuit; and yet with the grace to be a Supernumerary, which indulgently allowed me to preach just as much as I was able."

Valton's autobiography occupies a large part of the sixth volume of *Early Methodist Preachers*. Several sections of his manuscript journal, which was in the hands of the late Mr. George Stampe, were printed in the *Proceedings*, vol. viii. Mr. Telford made use of both these sources in his new edition of the *E.M.P.* called *Wesley's Veterans*.

John Valton was born in 1740 and died in 1794. The letter we now publish shows him as a bachelor of some forty five years of age, whose mind is evidently turning in the direction of matrimony. But he found his bride at last in neither of the counties named by Wesley.

In his earlier ministry in Bristol, Valton had "found the kindest of Christian friends in Mr. and Mrs. Purnel,¹ who lived at the Fort. They had also a country house at Almondsbury, seven miles north of Bristol. Mr. Purnel was now dead . . . The widow now lived entirely at Almondsbury, with a view to foster the infant cause in that parish. She, and Miss Johnson, and Mrs. Wait, of Belton, were reckoned three of the most pious women among the Methodists in the west of England." (Note by Joseph Sutcliffe, *E.M.P.* vi 120) Valton chose wisely. His wife proved a most worthy helper in ministerial work. She passed away not long before her husband.

He was spared, however, long enough to write *An Account of Mrs. Valton* which was published in the *Magazine*, March 1794. The following paragraph shows the kindly interest which the leaders of Methodism took in Valton.

It is about nine years since I had, by loud and long preaching, in a glorious revival of religion near Leeds, brought myself near to the grave. I was under the Physician's hands for some time, and was reduced so low that I was not able to preach. While I was in that situation, I received a condoling letter from that man of God, now in Abraham's bosom, Mr. Fletcher. He therein told me, he thought a nurse, in the quality of a wife, might be a blessing to me, and hinted to Mrs. Purnell who had some time before been a tender nurse to him. Accordingly after much prayer, I wrote a letter to her on the subject. In her answer, she did not refuse, nor would she consent to travel. As I was determined

1. So *E.M.P.* and *Proceedings viii* 68, but *Standard Letters* gives Prunell.

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to take a circuit, as soon as I should be able, I gave up all thoughts of a union between us. About two years after I was appointed a Supernumerary in the Bristol Circuit. Finding that I was not likely to take a Circuit again as an effective man, and being told by Dr. Whitehead, that if I would preach less, I might be able to continue for some years ; I concluded that my Call now was to act only as a Supernumerary, and which, to this day, is all that I can safely do. I now thought of renewing my application to Mrs. Purnell, and having consulted Mr. Charles Wesley he heartily concurred, and strongly enforced it. Mr. John Wesley at first objected, but afterwards fully approved of it The Lord removed all impediments, and with the concurrence of every disinterested person, we were solemnly united at St. James Church, Bristol [December 1st, 1786]. Our reciprocal love, I believe, increased to the last.

Very shortly after Valton entered into matrimony Wesley wrote dietetic directions in a letter, and says, " My dear friend Sister Valton " is to carry them out.

In the last letter in the long series Wesley sends his kind love to Sister Valton.

Henry Foster is referred to in one of Wesley's letters as " a weak man, but not a weak preacher." He was one of three preachers appointed to Bradford by the Conference of 1785.

F.F.B.

SIDE-LIGHTS ON MANX METHODISM EARLY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Ramsey, 28 April, 1819.

My dear Bro.

I have not one word to say in my own defence, so that unless you are disposed to pardon, I must suffer the penalty which you may see good to inflict upon me. I received both your kind letters, and can assure you that the satisfaction which I received in reading them was more than my pen can describe or my tongue declare. I hope that you will continue to be a burning and shining light in the Church of Christ when I am laid in the Dust.

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You may believe me, dear brother, that I was not aware of your situation being so uncomfortable as you describe it in your first letter, or I would have done all in my power to have got you a better. However, I have sometimes thought that the difficulties which you have met with are a sort of punishment inflicted upon you for leaving the island as I still think your providential call was to Ramsey. Well, well, we sometimes see our folly when it is too late to mend it. There is no man upon earth I wish so much to travel with as you, and hitherto I have been disappointed. But I have so long been enured to difficulties and disappointments that they are become quite familiar; and I always find the Grace of God quite sufficient to help me; so that I am kept upon an equal Balance.

In several respects the Methodist Preachers have trials which none know of but God and themselves. But their trials are always mixed with mercy. So that in some respects their situation is preferable to almost every other. For if we have a very comfortable Circuit, we know it is not our *rest*, and therefore we are prevented from setting our affections upon it. If we meet with a very poor circuit, we know our stay in it is short, and therefore we may live in hope of a better situation.

Many things have transpired in the island since you left us. Some agreeable and some disagreeable. Among the agreeables is, the Good Work which the Lord has begun in Peel and the neighbourhood. Within the last three months has been about 30 added at Lergydho, and about twice the number at Peel. And the work still goes on very rapidly. We have no particular increase in any other part of the Circuit. We have at last begun to give Tickets to none but those who come for them, except those who can not possibly attend. And we already find some good resulting from it both temporal and spiritual. If the Preachers one after another would pursue the same plan, I have no doubt but in a few years time *discipline* would be restored and the work of the Lord would flourish.

Most likely you know how things are going on in the Douglas Circuit as well as I can tell you. The Horse fell with Mr. Riley some months ago, and so completely lamed him, that he has never been able to walk since, but by the help of two crutches. He is either gone or going to Whitworth Doctors, but I fear it will be labour in vain. His

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affliction has put us to a great deal of inconvenience but it is worse for himself and family. Douglas New Chapel is going on well, and it is to be opened on the first Sunday in July. We wrote to Dr. Clarke to come over and open it; but tho' we have got his answer, we have not yet got his consent. Some of the Friends in Douglas talk of going to Liverpool to try what can be done, but fear we shall not be able to prevail.

Now I hope you will write to me very soon and tell me how you are both in body and mind! How the work of the Lord prospers in your Circuit? Whether you intend to stay another year or not, or where you would wish to be? When your District Meeting will be held and where? Whether you intend to go to Conference to be received in Form, or to await a more convenient opportunity. And above *all*, tell me when you intend to come to the island to tie a knot with your Tongue that you cannot loose with your teeth? With every other information which you think proper to communicate.

I have only seen *her* once since you left us, and had not an opportunity of asking after you as it was in Mr. Wilson's Shop in Douglas. I expect to be at her house in a fortnight's time, as Mr. Hemp and I are going to change a few places, and then I expect to hear all about it.

Thro' Mercy myself and Family are well. The Lord be with you, is the sincere prayer of your's very affectionately.

JOHN MERCER.

Rev. Ralph Gibson
Methodists' Chapel
Wigton
Cumberland.

By the courtesy of Mr. H. Cubbon, Curator of the Manx Museum in Douglas, I have been permitted to copy the above letter, sent by the Rev. John Mercer, Chairman of the Isle of Man District, to the Rev. Ralph Gibson, a Probationer stationed at Wigton, Cumberland.

Rev. John Mercer was born at Farndale, then in the Pickering circuit, in 1770: joined the Methodists in 1794, and became an itinerant preacher in 1800. In 1802 he was appointed to the Douglas Circuit and remained three years on the island. He returned in 1813 and for eight years filled the position of Chairman of the District. As St. Paul wrote of Persis, he "worked very hard in the Lord."

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Here is a Sunday's labours in June 1820. "Preached at Ballasalla at nine a.m., and gave tickets: afterwards met the teachers of the Sunday School and appointed a Superintendent. At eleven o'clock preached at Castletown; met the class at three; preached again at six o'clock and met the society; and attended a prayer meeting at eight." Again he writes—"I have had very much labour for the last six days, but I have found body and mind strengthened for the occasion. . . . I shall have time enough to rest in the grave."

But perhaps his most valuable work was in, tactfully and resolutely, tightening the reins of discipline which were inordinately slack in some of the societies. The Wesleyan Magazine for 1841 bears testimony. "In the year 1802, he was removed to the Isle of Man, where he spent a considerable portion of public life, and formed connexions of most endearing and lasting character. The labours of Mr. Mercer in this island were highly acceptable and useful. He was mainly instrumental in introducing among the societies of this district, some important parts of the Wesleyan discipline, which before had been overlooked or neglected." He was compelled to become supernumerary in 1833, owing to a seizure, and died at Birstal in 1839.

Rev. Ralph Gibson was born at Weardale—that noted nursery of preachers—in 1791 and entered the ministry in 1815. His first appointment was to Ramsey and at the following Conference he was moved to Castletown, where he remained two years. In 1818 the Chairman wished him to go to Ramsey again as his colleague. But the young man desired otherwise and was sent to Wigton, Cumberland, which was then a single station. Apparently he had not a happy time there. He had formed an attachment on the island which had its natural sequel after his ordination in 1819. In the Manks Advertiser for August 12, 1819, appears the following quaintly worded marriage notice:—"On Tuesday se'n-night, at Kk Christ, Rushen, by the Rev. Joseph Qualtrough, the Rev. Ralph Gibson, preacher in the Methodist Connection, to Miss Clucas of Port Iron." He continued his ministry till 1848, when he was called to higher service at the age of 57.

Rev. Calverley Riley was ordained in 1810, by Dr. Coke and some others. He went to the West Indies and spent six years in missionary work, then returned to England. In 1818 he was appointed third minister in the Douglas circuit. During the prosecution of his work he fell off the circuit-horse and was so seriously injured he had to become supernumerary. He lived to the age of 75, but was never able to resume the active ministry.

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The "Douglas New Chapel" referred to was opened not in July but in August. The Manks Advertiser for August 12, 1819, announces "the Douglas New Chapel will be opened on Sunday Aug. 22nd. This chapel is situate about the centre of the town and will, it is supposed, accommodate more people than any other place of worship in the island In the gallery there are eighty-eight pews, which will contain about six hundred people, and in the lower part of the chapel there are fifty pews and thirty-six free seats, which will admit of six-hundred more—in the whole about twelve hundred." A fortnight later, August 26, the same paper reports :—"On Sunday last the Methodist New Church in this town, was opened for public worship. The Rev. Messrs Garrett and Midgeley from Liverpool preached on the occasion, and the sum of £60 was contributed towards defraying the expenses of the building." In the advertisement columns in the same issue appears the following.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The undersigned Trustees of the Douglas Methodist New Chapel, return thanks to their Friends and the Public, for their kind and liberal support on Sunday last, at the opening of the chapel. The collections amounted to £60.

R. Cammell
M. Harrison
W. Claque
J. Wilson
W. Kerruish

T. Callon
J. Cowell
W. Quiggin
D. Kane

After 116 years the chapel is still the leading Nonconformist place of worship in Lower Douglas. J. W. SELLER.

THE SALE OF A PEW.

By the kindness of a friend there has recently passed into the possession of the W.H.S. the curious old document herein described.

The deed is endorsed as follows, on the outer fold :—

Dated 16th October 1824

Messrs Kevan and others Devises in Trust and Executors of the will of John Kevan deceased to Mr. Peter Kevan Assignment of a Pew in the Methodist Chapel in Leeds Street Liverpool.

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The Executors were Nathan Kevan of Liverpool, Pawnbroker, John Leece of Liverpool, Bookkeeper, and William Reynolds of Liverpool, Gentleman

In exercise of the trusts reposed in them by the Will the Executors "caused the Seat or Pew hereinafter described (with other premises) to be offered for sale by public auction pursuant to advertisement at the house of Mr. Richard Roberts the Sign of the Grapes in Plumbe Street in Liverpool aforesaid on the Eighteenth day of June last when the said Peter Kevan having bid the sum of thirty nine pounds for the same was declared to be the Highest Bidder for and purchaser of the same at that price."

The property is described as "all that Seat or Pew situate and being in the front of the Gallery of a certain Building or Preaching House now used as a Methodist Chapel and situate standing and being on the South Side of Leeds Street in Liverpool aforesaid and which said Seat or Pew was formerly marked or numbered with the figures 69 but is at present marked or numbered 55 And the sole and exclusive right title and privilege of sitting standing and kneeling therein for Public Worship and for hearing Divine Service and Sermons in the said Building or Preaching House together with all and singular ways entries and passages liberties privileges and appurtenances to the said premises hereby or hereby intended to be assigned belonging or in anywise appertaining"

The period for which the pew was assigned was defined as "from the making hereof for and during all the rest residue and remainder now to come and unexpired of the said term of one thousand years created and commencing as aforesaid

[This refers to an Indenture of 14th April 1800, when the Seat or Pew were granted and demised to John Kevan "for and during the term of one thousand years from thence next ensuing. The lessors were Joseph Dutton, Thomas Wilson, John Jones, James Forshaw, John Browne, Peter Sowerby, Thomas Marrow, John Hope and the said John Kevan]

By and under payment of the yearly Rent of Five shillings and sixpence on every the Fourteenth day of April in each, and every year of the remainder of the said term.

Peter Kevan covenanted to pay the rent, and further agreed to "well and sufficiently repair uphold amend maintain and keep the said Seat or Pew hereby bargained and sold in and with all and all measure of needful and necessary reparations when and as often as occasion shall require" He also covenanted that neither he nor his heirs should "at any time or times hereafter

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raise or make higher the sides back or front of the said Seat or Pew . . . nor make any elevation or elevations alteration or alterations of any kind or nature whatsoever in or about the same Seat or Pew from the present form or model in which it is now constructed so as to cause any obstruction of view or bearing injury or inconvenience to the Proprietor or Properties of any Seat or Pew or Pews in the same Gallery.

The Document is executed by Nathan Kevan, John Leece, William Reynolds and Peter Kevan. Witness to the four signatures, John Thompson, Clerk to Mr. Gregory, Sol^r, Liv^l. A receipt for the purchase money, £39, is endorsed upon the Deed and signed by the Executors.

The following particulars elucidatory of the indenture are gathered from a most interesting article contributed to the *Methodist Recorder* on March 31, 1904 by the Rev. William Backhouse.

Great Homer Street, says he, is commonly regarded as the successor of the old Leeds Street Chapel; but strictly speaking it is not the successor of Leeds Street, it *is* the Leeds Street Chapel. This was a case of removing a Chapel from one locality to another, the same materials being used in re-erecting it on a new site. The Leeds Street Chapel was built in 1800, near the Docks. Two leading Methodists of that day, John Hope and John Kevan, conveyed the site, consisting of 1436 yards to seven trustees. It was really a free gift, although described as sold for ten shillings, with an annual rent of one pepper-corn. Upon this site were built the Chapel and School; also a Minister's and chapel-keeper's house, with a burial ground attached. Funds for building were largely obtained by the sale or rather the lease of pews. The original deed gave power to sell or lease pews in this manner. The trustees leased pews to individuals for a term of one thousand years, for a fixed sum paid down, ranging from £26 to £45 per pew with an annual payment varying between four and six shillings as a kind of ground rent, the higher amounts being for pews regarded as superior. The Deed of Lease was a lengthy document in full legal form, using the same technical phraseology as if a large estate were concerned. Each Deed, eighteen of which appear to have been preserved at the time Mr. Backhouse wrote, cost £3. When a pew was re-sold the transfer was made by a document in the same legal form. As an instance of this Mr. Backhouse quotes the indenture which has now come into our hands.

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Exchanges of pews took place between individuals, the one who obtained a better pew paying a sum of money for the exchange. In these cases again the transaction was effected by the same kind of costly legal document. When the Chapel was taken down in 1837 many pewholders claimed compensation for being disturbed in their possession before the thousand years lease was expired; and the trustees granted these claims, paying sums varying from £30 to £40 for each pew. It is worthy of note that all these sales and transfers relate only to pews in the gallery. In those days the gallery was the select portion of the building; the lower area being either partially or entirely without pews, and chiefly provided with forms as free seats for the poor.

This is not the place to set forth the history of the Leeds Street Chapel, but to complete the present article it may be noted that for many years it was in a flourishing condition. The affairs of the trustees were prosperous until 1830, when difficulties began to arise through changes in the neighbourhood and other causes. In 1837 finding themselves burdened by a very heavy debt the trustees resolved to take the Chapel down and re-build it in Great Homer Street, selling the ground in Leeds Street for building. The removal was carried out, but the sale of the land proved unexpectedly difficult. The schools were sold in 1844 but the other land remained unsold until acquired by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway in 1881. The site of the old chapel is now covered by the Exchange Station. The purchase money cleared up a very difficult situation.

Our document, it will be seen, relates to a resale. In the original Deed, we learn from Mr. Backhouse, the trustees promise that the purchaser and his executors shall peaceably hold, use, occupy possess and enjoy, without let, stop, trouble, disturbance, molestation or eviction, provided that no right or authority be claimed to use the said pew for any other purpose than public worship, or to interrupt or interfere with the doctrine and discipline of the people called Methodists.

One wonders what Wesley would have thought of these documents. He was very critical of the "wonderful deed" of Pitt Street Chapel, Liverpool, which he thought to be "verbose beyond all sense and reason."

F. F. BRETHERTON.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

743. **MARRIAGE CEREMONY CONDUCTED BY JOHN WESLEY.**—The late Mr. W. D. Allott, in the course of his examination of the Registers at Birstall Parish Church, found an interesting record relating to the marriage of one of the preachers by Wesley.

Thomas Johnson of Birstall, and Rosamond Wade, both of this Parish, married by Licence, 30th July, 1775 by John Wesley, in the presence of William Edwards and Parson Greenwood.

The *Minutes of Conference* show that Thomas Johnson and Parson Greenwood were appointed to the Birstall Circuit in 1774 and 1775. This is remarkable in view of a statement made by Wesley in a letter written on July 28th, 1775, "Two preachers never stay two years together in one place, unless one of them be a Supernumerary." The day of the wedding was a Sunday. Wesley spent a busy day, preaching "under Birstall Hill," and in the evening at Leeds. The Conference began at Leeds on August 1.—*F.F.B.*

744. **PHOTOGRAPH OF A WESLEY LETTER.**—The *Belfast Telegraph*, 8 November, 1934, published a photograph of one of the latest of Wesley's Letters. It was written from London, January 19, 1791, to "Brother Torrie." For its contents, and some notes, see *Standard Letters*, viii 257. The original is the property of Mr. Barry Meglaughlin of Knock, Belfast. We are glad to have a copy of the reproduction, and notes relating thereto, kindly furnished by Mr. Francis J. Cole of Greenisland. Though signs of old age clearly appear the letter is by no means difficult to read.

RIDGWAY GATES, BOLTON.

The Rev. Thomas Hannah will be very grateful if any member of the W.H.S. can lend him any material elucidatory of the history of the Sunday School founded there in 1785, and frequently mentioned in Wesley's *Journal*.

This School, now re-built as The Walker Memorial School, is celebrating its 150th Anniversary next June. A brief history of the School, and of early Methodism in Bolton, is now being prepared in order to aid its celebration.

WESLEY DAY, MAY 24.

Arrangements are in hand for a celebration at Leatherhead, Surrey, where Wesley preached his last sermon. Our readers should look out for notices in the public press.