

ERAS OF NONCONFORMITY.

Edited by

Rev. C. SILVESTER HORNE, M.A.

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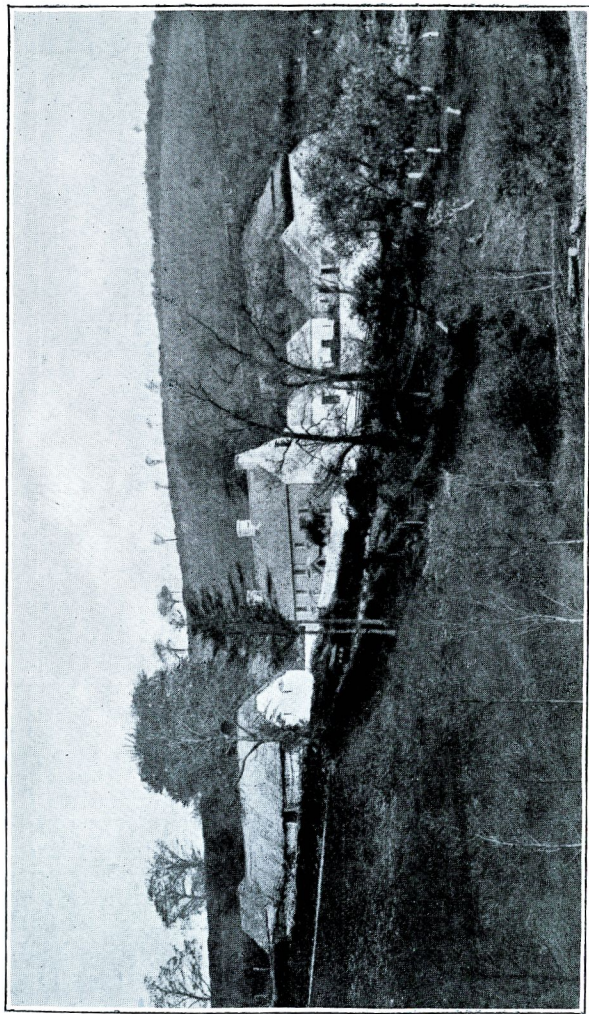
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ERAS OF NONCONFORMITY

IV

NONCONFORMITY IN WALES



PANTYCELYN.

(Home of Rev. William Williams, "Sweet Singer of Wales.")

NONCONFORMITY IN WALES

BY

H. ELVET LEWIS

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES

London : Thomas Law, Memorial Hall, E.C.

MCMIV

INTRODUCTORY



THE extent of years covered by this volume has made it necessary to deviate somewhat from the plan of the other volumes in the series, covering, as they do, a shorter period. It was deemed unadvisable to multiply the names of places and persons : typical instances have been for the most part taken to represent the rest.

Much assistance in preparing it has been obtained from Dr. Thomas Rees's history of Welsh Nonconformity ; but we have ventured to form our own conclusions on some of the questions involved. Recent researches have tended to modify some of his inferences ; and we have made use of what has been published on both sides. Into the inner controversy we have not unnecessarily ventured.

We have endeavoured to go back in each

instance to original sources. Autobiographical or contemporary witness has been advisedly used and incorporated. We feel the bias of "personal equation" in these testimonies: but they are vivid; and the prudent can rightly value the equation.

We should have liked to give more space to the story of Nonconformity in Wales during the nineteenth century; but we felt that origins were more important for the purpose of this series than organisation.

It will help the reader of this—and, indeed, of any—history of Welsh religion, if he keeps in mind that the term "Methodist," standing by itself, always signifies "Calvinistic" and not "Wesleyan." Calvinistic Methodism is more akin to Presbyterianism in its organisation than to Wesleyanism.

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I

DEATH OF A MARTYR AND BIRTH OF A BOOK

IN Wales it was a case of the "Reformation tarrying." When the religious houses, which had to the last afforded some encouragement to native literature and some shelter to national education and religion, were by royal warrant rifled and dismantled, the Principality was left bare. The abbot who loved wine and books, went ; the bishop who took his place plundered the diocese to provide dowries for his daughters. The priest of the old faith was silenced or banished ; his successor, in most cases, either could not preach at all or could only preach in English. Henry VII., Welsh though he was and conspicuously helped to the throne by Welsh auxiliaries, had no mind for the individual preferences and separate ideals of an "old and haughty nation, proud in arms."

His son and his grandchildren held to the same policy of mixing their favours to Wales with a uniform idea of making the people live under English laws, use English speech, and practise the forms and accept the creed of English religion. These enactments, while they impoverished the people's faith, broadened their general life in many directions. Young men of promise found open doors to university and court; and by the time of Elizabeth there was scarcely a parent, however poor—according to a contemporary's witness—that did not somehow find means to fit the choicest of his sons for high honours in civil or ecclesiastical law, in the service of the nobility, and prominent offices of State. The glory of the world shone alluringly before them; but their soul was famished.

The people clung to the last shadows of the passing faith—its images and relics. The hunting and collecting of these became a trade; and the seizing of the chief of them, the huge armoured image of Dervel Gadarn in the valley of the Dee, gives Thomas Cromwell's agent an opportunity of sending his master a glowing report as of a closing triumph. That very month of April, 1538, in which the monster was captured—to be finally used in the fire,

which burnt a friar for denying the King's supremacy over the Church—some five or six hundred pilgrims had come to pay homage to it, "some with kine, others with oxen or horses, and the rest with money." It was believed by them that an offering might win Dervel's favour and aid to deliver them, in case of need, out of hell itself.

The Marian persecution reveals how ineffective, generally, the Protestant movement had been in Wales. Only three won the honour of martyrdom; and of the three — Bishop Ferrar at Carmarthen, Rawlings White at Cardiff, and William Nichol at Haverfordwest—it is doubtful if one of them was Welsh by speech. Almost the only sign of native sympathy is furnished by a Welsh poem (*cywydd*)—contemporary, or nearly so—on the burning of Ferrar; the poet relating as a didactic incident of the execution that a blacksmith who had struck the bishop died himself of the blow: precisely how, the poet does not explain. Still earlier, a poet had written two or three poems, interceding for the release of two prisoners of conscience for their Puritan faith, confined in Swansea Gaol. But what perhaps is more suggestive is that the localities where these men suffered and

died became the birthplaces of Nonconformity. Carmarthen, Swansea, and Cardiff, as we shall relate, seem to have kept alive the solitary fires kindled by the martyrs' courage till others came to make it glowingly burn and widely spread. Persecution, then as always, became the unwilling foster-mother of its victims' faith.

Tudor Protestantism came to Wales in foreign guise; the old faith, corrupt as it was, had at least a homely native tongue. Some of the most devoted patriots of Wales in Elizabethan days were banished priests. Dr. Griffith Roberts, Rhosier Smith, Morris Clynnog, and Hugh Owen knew how to write exquisite Welsh; and they found printing-presses in Milan or Rouen to issue their forlorn little volumes in defence of the Catholic faith; while at home the new faith was too much in the charge of English-speaking bishops and non-preaching incumbents. An Act passed in 1564 confesses that Her Majesty's most loving and obedient subjects in Wales remained "in the like, or rather more, darkness and ignorance than they were in the time of papistry." Twenty-two years later it is reported of the county of Brecknock: "The livings are nearly all improprieate, with no preachers, but ignorant

and unlearned ministers. Seldom or never is there Evening Prayer." But while this might be true of the outward aspect of things in most parts of Wales, there had been silent energies at work, between 1560 and 1580, which were now to bring about entire change. Some of her own sons had learnt to pity her desolation and listen to her cry of need.

A young man, who had left his native hills in Brecknockshire a child of the dying faith, came in Cambridge under the new
1587 influences. He passed through severe intellectual struggles, and came out of them a whole-hearted patriot and something more than an Elizabethan Protestant. In 1587 John Penry published his *Treatise containing the Aequity of an Humble Supplication*, in which he pleaded with Her Majesty and her Parliament for some order to be taken for the preaching of the Gospel in Wales. He was only 28 years of age, and all the fire of faith is in his awakened sorrow and passionate pleading. "This I dare affirm," he writes, "and stand to, that if a view of all the registries in Wales be taken, the name of that shire, that towne, or of that parishe, cannot be found, where for the space of six yeres together within these 29

years, a godly and learned minister hath executed the dutie of a faithful teacher, and approved his ministry in any meane sort."

His "humble supplication" landed him in prison, where he remained a month waiting for his examination. When his declaration, that no clergyman who did not preach could be a true Christian minister, was pronounced to be an intolerable heresy, Penry replied, "I thank God that I ever knew such a heresy, as I will, by the grace of God, sooner leave my life than leave it." After a further imprisonment he was set free. But persecution had helped him to taste the joy of a good conscience; and as soon as he was free he gave himself anew to his country's cause. In 1588 he published two tracts, one addressed as before to Parliament, the other directly to the people of Wales—the latter an "Exhortation" to help themselves by contributing of their own free will towards the maintenance of a preaching ministry. As happens always to a brave soul, his ideals grew purer through suffering. He was nearer being a Free Churchman when calling shame to his countrymen unless they gave of their own to have salvation made known unto them, than when putting his trust in Parliament and its Queen.

When, after many wanderings and narrow escapes, he returned from Scotland to London in 1592, he joined the Southwark community led by Barrowe and Greenwood, and helped in their services, but refused office, on the ground of his loyal purpose to employ his "small talent," as he called it, "in my poor country of Wales, where I know that the poor people perish for want of knowledge." This purpose he was never permitted even to initiate: he, the "first since the last springing up of the Gospel in this latter age," as he claimed, to "*labour* to have the blessed seed thereof sown in those barren mountains," was robbed of his opportunity by his early martyrdom. The good seed was in his

1593 hand; the "barren mountains" were in sight, wintry as yet, but with faint signs of spring growing legible: he was hurried to the gallows: the mountains had to wait for other hands to sow the seed. He was hanged May 29, 1593, the warrant being signed by Archbishop Whitgift. But the glad dawning, in which his soul had stood trembling with fearful joy, did not fail; slowly it grew into open day over his dishonoured grave, and spread over the mountains which had won and grieved his heart.

The Act of 1564, already referred to, ordered a translation of the Bible to be made into Welsh, and published under the supervision of the four Welsh bishops, together with the Bishop of Hereford, whose diocese was more distinctly Welsh than it has come to be since. It was to be ready and placed in the churches by St. David's Day, 1566: or failing that, each of the five bishops would be liable to a fine of £40. The book did not appear; but in 1567 the New Testament only was published. The translation had been done by a layman—William Salesbury, assisted by Thomas Huet, Precentor, and Richard Davies, Bishop, of St. David's. The latter wrote a valuable preface, in which, among other things, he sorrowfully contrasts the secular prosperity of his country with its religious desolation: "God will not again drown the world with the water of the Deluge; but the desire of the world's good things has to-day drowned Wales, and brought decay on every particular faculty and noble virtue." He appeals to the patriotic sentiment of his countrymen, by quoting ancient proverbs and bardic complaints against Rome, to show that "the ancient faith of the Britons had its root in the Word of

God" before it was corrupted from Rome. "Fall thou on thy knees," he cries, "and give thanks to God, who hath this day in mercy visited thee, and hath begun to raise thee to thine ancient privilege and chief honour of yore, making thee now partake of His blessed Word, and sending thee the Holy Testament. . . . Go forward, therefore, and read."

The translation, in many respects, was only tentative; in orthography and diction it lacked much of the strength and charm of a home-born version. It was not before 1588 that Wales received its complete Bible, done by another and more exquisite hand. Dr. William Morgan ministered to the parish of Llanrhaidr Mochnant, Montgomeryshire; and here, in the seclusion of the hills, he gave himself to his life-work. There may be some foundation for the tradition that he had his early education from one of the scholarly fugitives of the monasteries; in any case, he had somehow inherited their patriotic regard for the language and national sentiments of his countrymen. In his dedicatory epistle to Queen Elizabeth, with some courage—bated, it is true, but still courage, in view of the Tudor infirmity of a dream of all-embracing uniformity—he answers those

who think it would be better for "our nation to learn English than translate the Scriptures into our tongue," warning them lest they should "expel religion in the very pursuit of agreement." He concedes that it might be desirable for the inhabitants of one island to have one tongue ; but are the people of God to be starved of His Word, while learning a strange tongue? "Besides, religious concord can undoubtedly do more towards peace than lingual concord. And it is no pious act to consider interest before religion and outward agreement before the peace which the Word of God establishes in the minds of men."

In this spirit Dr. Morgan pursued his task, assisted by Edmund Prys, Archdeacon of Merioneth ; Dr. David Powell ; Dr. Richard Vaughan, then of Lutterworth, later Bishop of London. He revised, for his New Testament, Salesbury's version of 1567 ; but the stamp of his own remarkable genius is on the whole work. Its strength and beauty of diction, the coining of new words and adaptation of old words, its accuracy, and, at the same time, amplitude of translation, combine to make it a remarkable achievement. It was revised by Bishop Parry, and a new edition was published in 1620 ; and

this, strictly speaking, is the Authorised Version in Wales. But the foundation, and the best part of the whole, is Dr. Morgan's.

His work was not carried on without difficulty. His parishioners made some complaints, now undecipherable, against him. This brought him to the presence of Archbishop Whitgift, who was so favourably impressed with his scholarship and his learning that he became his patron, and helped him to publish his Bible. Let it not be forgotten that the same powerful ecclesiastic had a share in giving Wales the two greatest gifts of the sixteenth century—its first Free Church martyr and its first Welsh Bible, so unconsciously avenging the death of the man by the publication of the Book. For both the gifts lie at the root of Nonconformity, and survive in all its best growth. When the first Welsh Bible of 1588 reached the Churches of Wales it had in it the seed of all future reformation and Christian liberties. Penry's prophecy was to be abundantly fulfilled that the Bible was to be the means "whereby the Lord hath decreed to make cleare unto all men, in Wales, what the fellowship is of the myserie, which from the beginning of the world hath bin hid in God."

II

INDEPENDENT AND BAPTIST

THE Anglican Church had its national opportunity in Wales when the seventeenth century dawned. It had rich patrons, it had great scholars ; it had its Welsh Bible and Common Prayer ; and in 1621 it received another valuable auxiliary, Archdeacon Prys's metrical version of the Psalms. But time after time it has been the calamity of this Church to move apart from the people's inmost life. Now and again it has been smitten with patriotic ideals—sometimes deeply, but never lastingly. Occasionally a leader tries courageously to keep step with the nation in some onward movement ; but early or late repentance overtakes him and leads him back to his own alien ranks. Had there been a succession of native bishops of the calibre and of the temper of Richard Davies and William Morgan—had the prophecy of the

latter in 1588 been fulfilled, that the new book would increase the number and efficiency of preachers—had the former's impressive picture been realised of a pure and undefiled religion flourishing through the "diligent preaching of ordained ministers, the active fidelity of spiritual watchmen and incumbents in planting and sowing the law of the Lord,"—Wales would not have been so disastrously lost to Anglicanism. But the unredeemed alienism of the Church chilled, and chills, the warmth of her patriot hours, whenever they come upon her; and she has repeatedly forfeited her choicest opportunities.

The preaching host did not arrive; the diligent watchmen were too few. Penry's "idol shepherds" were too secure in their place. "The dumb priests and swollen preachers," said Morgan Llwyd in 1653, recalling the state of the Church in his early days, "laid us waste. There was not to be found a man of God in four hundred. . . . The word through them was neither hammer to break the stone, nor fire to consume the flesh, nor wheat to feed the conscience, but as chaff and dreams—namely, light vacant sermons. Therefore art thou, O Wales, till to-day unhealed; and also because thou hast made light of the few beams which appeared

in some, and hast shut thine eyes from seeing and acknowledging the dayspring." The few exceptions, of devout churchmen and preaching priests, only made the general dearth more acute. So the Reformation still tarried. But the Book was in the land: not in the homes and hands of the people as yet, it is true, still it was growing more and more audible. Nor was the spirit of Penry dead, though his name and memory suffered long eclipse. Puritanism had arrived, and was even touching the pulpit—much to the concern of Laud, when he became Bishop of St. David's in 1621. Here he found himself free to develop his High Church ideas: he forced his clergy to restore Roman rites and ornaments, long disused: the communion-table became an altar, to which the people had to bow; candles and robes, and piety in colours became the command and the custom.

The testing time had come with some sharpness in 1616, when the *Book of Sports*

1633 was ordered to be read in all the churches by the King, who five years previously, had sanctioned the Authorised Version of the Bible for their use. In 1633, under the supervision of Laud—now Archbishop—the order for the reading of the *Book of Sports* was re-

vived and vigorously pressed. This was the beginning of the end. Consciences already ill at ease, became more restive: "inconformity" was growing to be something more than a pious opinion; we are now in sight of positive, constructive Non-conformity.

Between the death of John Penry in 1587 and the formation of the first Welsh Free

1639 Church there is a period of over fifty years. But the "inconformity" which had been marked in more than one Welsh diocese during those years was growing assertive. "My lord of St. David's" certifies Laud that he had in 1632 "suspended a lecturer for his inconformity," and promises to "take great care hereafter to whom he gives holy orders." He of Llandaff also certifies that he has visited in person William Erbery, vicar of St. Mary's, Cardiff, and has found him and his curate, Walter Cradock, guilty of "preaching very schismatically and dangerously." He, too, has risen bravely to his duty, admonishing the vicar, and suspending the "bold, ignorant, young fellow" of a curate. All this testifies to the embarrassing presence of a newer life. In 1636 Erbery and Wroth are in the High Commission Court for "schismatical proceedings." The

"slow prosecution there against them" grieves the soul of the Bishop of Llandaff.

Apparently, no distinct fellowship was formed till 1639, when the Independent Church at Llavaches, near Chepstow, was established. Among those taking part in its formation was Henry Jessey, pastor of the Independent Church at Southwark, from which Penry had gone forth to his martyrdom. So the seed, as from the dead sower's hand, is sown on his "barren mountains," to bear fruit, even to hundredfold.

The name most prominently associated with this mother of Free Churches in South Wales is that of its first pastor, William Wroth. He was a native of the county of Monmouth, and a graduate of Oxford, and had held the living, probably, from the beginning of the century. The tradition is, that at first he, too, was of the "idol shepherds," worldly and frivolous. But a friend of his, having won a lawsuit in London, sent home the news, and invited a goodly company to his house for the evening of his arrival to join in festal celebration of the victory. Wroth himself had brought a new violin to aid in the mirth. All were on the tiptoe of merry expectation, when a messenger arrived with the tragic news of his master's death

on the journey. In the consternation Wroth threw his violin aside, and fell on his knees praying for God's mercy. That day he heard the "serious call," and obeyed. How long this happened before 1639 we cannot say. "For the powerfulness and efficaciousness of his preaching," says the writer of the *Broadmead Records*, "with the exemplary holiness of his life, he was called the Apostle of Wales. . . . By his ministry it pleased the Lord to convert many, so that they left their sinful courses in the world; after which he caused them to separate from the worship of the world, and gathered them into the Gospel order of Church government." Llanvaches became a centre of missionary influence: "like Antioch," to use the words of Henry Jessey's biographer, "the mother Church in that gentile country."

Of this and other early Independent Churches Baptists were as prominent members as Pædobaptists. In the case of Llanvaches there was a Baptist co-pastor with Wroth—viz., William Thomas. Gradually, however, the section of Baptists which believed in close communion took separate form. Their first leader of note was John Myles, sent with Thomas Proud to form the Church at Ilston, near Swansea, by the

Church then meeting at the Glass House, Broad Street, London, as Henry Jessey had been sent to Llanvaches. This formative relationship of English Nonconformity to the origins of Nonconformity in Wales is pleasant and interesting to note. But it is also pleasant to add that the Anglican mistake of forcing the development of Welsh piety into English moulds was not committed. Their English brethren came to advise, to encourage, and instruct, but not to overrule. Independents and Baptists used native speech, and followed the patriotic ways of an older British faith. Down to the present day many of their methods are peculiar to themselves, and distinct from those of the same two denominations in England. The architects of a nation's faith must be her own sons, breathing of her inmost spirit; others—strangers—may lay the foundation: her own sons must build.

So far Nonconformity, as expressed in terms of a Church, seems confined to South Wales, and to a district in it, previously touched by Lollardism, and lighted by the Marian fires of martyrdom. But the messages were wingèd; for Erbery, writing in his *Apocrypha* of 1652, says: "Let all the English Counties about them testifie, and

they will tell how many saints from Somerset, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Radnor, and Glamorganshire came in multitudes with delight to Llanvaches. What light and labour in the Spirit was there!—how heavenly-minded!—what holy language among them!—what watching!—what prayers night and day in the way they went, in the work they did, at the plough; everywhere in private that Spirit of prayer and pureness of heart appeared.”

One by one Churches were formed in other districts during the next ten years, **1640-50** some on the Llanvaches foundation (*i.e.*, “Independents and Baptist mixed, yet united in communion”); and others on the Ilston foundation of close communion. In Glamorganshire there are Churches at Cardiff, Llantrisant, Merthyr, Mynydd Bach, Swansea and Neath; in Carmarthenshire, at Carmarthen, Pentre Ty Gwyn, Capel Isaac, Henllan, Llanedi, and Pencader; in Brecknockshire, at Hay, Troed Rhiw Dalar and Olchon (on the borders); in Radnorshire, at Llanigon; in Monmouthshire, at Penmain, Abergavenny and Newport. In North Wales nothing can be definitely traced further back than 1646—though a “conventicle of mean persons” is

reported in 1640 as being laid hold on somewhere in the diocese of St. Asaph. The Northern Churches of 1646 were Llan Bryn Mair and Llanvyllin, in Montgomeryshire ; and Wrexham. Pwllheli, in Carnarvonshire, also dates from 1650. It should be understood, of course, in each case, that the date of forming a Church reflects the light backwards, suggesting rather than narrating the preparatory missionary work—carried on, it may be, for years—which made such a result possible. The wide area from which the congregations of Llanvaches were gathered gives a prospect of far-spread influence and immeasurable activity. The spirit of evangelism had come not only on the ministers but on the people also. But let it be remembered that in comparison with the mass of the people Nonconformists were few and scattered ; and their state was more experimental than organic.

William Wroth died in the spring of 1642 : the same year, in the month of August, the Civil War began. It found Wales
1642 overwhelmingly Royalist — for King and Church : nobleman and peasant, scholar and poet. But before the death of Cromwell a great change had taken place ; Free Church ideals, as conceived by Inde-

pendent or Presbyterian, by Baptist or Quaker, had touched and moved large portions of the people. Walter Cradock, who took up the work left by Wroth, and who had to flee to England when the war broke out, and became "preacher at Hallows Great in London," in his sermon on *Good Newes to the Worst of Sinners* (published in 1648,) declares—

"I use not to tell stories, but let me tell you this one thing: since I have been from you of late, I have observed, and seen, in the Mountaines of Wales, the most glorious that ever I saw in England, unlesse it were in London; the Gospel is run over the Mountaines between Brecknockshire and Monmouthshire, as the fire in the thatch; and who should doe this? They have no ministers: but some of the wisest say, there are about eight hundred godly people, and they goe from one to another. They have no ministers, it is true; if they had, they would honour them and blesse God for them: and shall we raile at such, and say they are Tub-preachers, and they were never at the University? Let us fall downe, and honour God; what if God will honour Himself that way? They were filled with good newes, and they tell it to others; and therefore vex

not at them, and say, 'O, what times are these!' and, 'What will become of us?' 'Why, what is the businesse?' 'O, such a man he was never Master of Arts, he was never at the University, and he takes upon him to preach;' when it may be he hath more of God in him than I, and a hundred that have all this."

It is worthy of note that this fruitful awakening should be so intimately associated with Penry's native county—some fifty years after his martyrdom. Who can tell how much of it was the harvest of his tears, and of the prayers which he taught his wife and children to pray for his native land?

III

CROMWELL'S DAYS

JOHN MYLES remained to carry on his evangelising work till he emigrated, after the Restoration, to America. In a Welsh poem, by a violent Royalist, attacking the tenets of the Baptists, nineteen besides him are deemed worthy of insulting mention as leaders of this special class of "fanatics." These included, however, several who favoured open communion; such as Jenkin Jones, evangelist of Radnorshire, and the still more famous Vavasor Powell. The attack testifies to their growing success. Indeed, the success of the Baptists in the country generally had so alarmed the Government as early as 1642 that the King issued a special direction to "stop the overhasty growth of Anabaptism." In Monmouthshire their "present growth and increase" was such by 1653 as to cause grave concern to the "pious watchmen of the

Church," says a controversial opponent. We have already quoted Cradock's testimony in 1648 to the remarkable work done in that county and Brecknockshire through the zeal of "godly men" itinerating in the interests of the Gospel. A song by Morgan Llwyd, dated the same year, characterises the state of Wales religiously then as a "spring in spring"—

"Our head is high,
Our summer nigh."

But before we tell the story from within, it is well to estimate some contributory aids from without.

In 1630 there appeared a translation of Bishop Bayley's *Practice of Piety* and of
1630 Dent's *Easy Pathway to Heaven*,
and, in 1632, of Parsons's *Christian Resolutions*—all of them done by devout Churchmen, and in charmingly idiomatic Welsh. The character of the first may be judged from the fact that doubts have been cast on its authorship, and the name of a Puritan minister substituted for that of the bishop. The author of the second was a Presbyterian minister who suffered much for his Nonconformity. The translator, Robert Llwyd, vicar of Chirk, would have been

suspected of "inconformity" in the diocese of St. David's, judging from the tone of his preface: "Leave the playground, and the bowls, and the inns, and the foot-ball, and the tennis, and thy business: do these becomingly in thine own days, if there be cause: but serve God on His own day: or else He will be offended with thee, and whither wilt thou flee from Him? . . . Thou findest it easy to pay the musician his wages on Sundays and feast-days, to kill thy children's souls; and canst thou give nothing to save them . . . in purchasing a few small books in thine own speech and within the compass of thine understanding, which shall comfort thy soul, when the whole world can profit thee nothing?" The author of the last of the three was the well-known Jesuit, Robert Parsons; and Dr. John Davies, vicar of Mallwyd, the Welsh translator, used a strongly Protestantised edition for his purpose. Also in 1630 there appeared a popular edition of the Welsh Bible. The editions of 1588 and 1620 had been for use in churches only; but this octavo edition, published at the expense of two Welsh citizens of London, was meant more for the private reader, the price corresponding. In 1647 an edition of the New Testament was published under the

care of Vavasor Powell and Walter Cradock. All these contributed to the nature and growth of the new life; and, except the last named, they came from the Anglican Church.

But from within that Church the greatest force in aid of Nonconformity was imparted by the puritan vicar of Llandovery—Rhys Prichard, who died in 1644. If traditions are trustworthy, it was some years after his ordination at Witham, and his return to Wales in 1602, that his real conversion and consecration took place. His fervent preaching soon spread his fame far and wide; when he visited the cathedral church of St. David's as preacher, a movable pulpit had to be improvised, from which he preached in the churchyard to the vast congregations. No note is made of his view of the *Book of Sports*, in 1617 or 1633.

If he refused to read it—as his songs might lead us to expect—it is surmised that the protection of influential friends sheltered him from episcopal frowns. But possibly he considered conformity, with all its moral inconveniences, preferable to the unknown risks of "inconformity." At any rate, in the book which has made his name famous and preserved his influence to the present day, he is a whole-hearted puritan. The *Welshmen's*

Candle, as his book of moral and religious songs has been called, throws candid light on the indolent or immoral clergyman, on the gambling, drunken squire, on the ignorance and ungodliness of the common people, on all the formalism and ritualism in the Church. He is, in these folk-songs, a staunch upholder of the Sabbath and of an active evangelism, a preacher of personal repentance and clean church-life. He pleads the cause of the poor against rapacious officers of civil law, and the grabbing of the rich. His songs are written in Carmarthenshire dialect, or almost so: as poetry, they have little artistic value; but for more than two centuries their moral influence has been incalculable. They were collected after his death and published, not by a member of his own Church—significantly enough—but by a great Free Church propagandist, Stephen Hughes, “the apostle of Carmarthenshire.” Time after time the Anglican Church in Wales has left the harvest, for which her own sons had laboured, to be reaped by other, more patriotic hands. Its most famous clergyman in the first half of the seventeenth century became the unwitting ally of free religion.

In 1645 Walter Cradock, with two others, were voted £300 annually “out of the lands

of the bishops, deans, and chapters of Llandaff and St. David," to help to maintain them in preaching the Gospel "itinerantly" in South Wales. This was extended a few months later to North Wales. Among the special provisions of the latter act was one for "sending down ministers that may be able to preach in the Welsh tongue." In

1645-50 1649 an *Act for the Better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel in Wales* made still larger provisions, and on a somewhat different basis. It came into force March, 1650, and specifically lasted till 1653. It was not renewed, but its provisions for maintenance were not withdrawn. At first there seems to have been no recoil from this open form of State aid. The leaders, both Baptist and Independent, accepted livings, or "lecture" appointments, which meant an equivalent. But as the principles of Nonconformity, in the clash of controversy within and without, became clearer and more distinct, misgivings were born. Erbery, in a tract of 1652, declaring that "not a Prelate or Presbyter appears with power in all South Wales to preach or pray," and after a cryptic reference to Morgan Llwyd—"a man going into the inward world, and walking up to the Eternal Spirit, not in word and in thought,

but in deed and in truth"—goes on to say, "In South Wales also, the chiefest of the Pastors there forsakes not only his Tithes but his forms of Prayer before and after Sermon." Vavasor Powell declares that he and many of his brethren "took no salary at all, nor any other maintenance" after 1653. The Baptists—especially the Arminian section—became pioneers of a purely voluntary principle: and in 1655 their church at Llanwenarth¹ made public protest and threatened to withdraw from any of their ministers who continued to accept "maintenance from the magistrates." But it was as yet the day of lonely voices: as usual, persecution had to bring home to the many the prophetic messages of the few.

The workers who, from 1630 to 1660, laid hold of these varied auxiliary forces, and wisely and effectually diverted them to the redemption of Wales, were men of many types. When Walter Cradock, in 1633, refused to read the *Book of Sports* at St. Mary's, Cardiff, he was not only, as we have seen, excommunicated from the Church, but banished from his home as an unworthy son. He, the outcast of the Cross, became its devoted pilgrim, visiting various districts

¹ Near Abergavenny.

in Brecknock, Radnor, and Montgomery, preaching in farm-house kitchen, or grey barn, or open mountain-side, wherever an audience could be obtained. He reached Wrexham, and there made a considerable and fruitful stay; he had to leave through the hostility of a maltster, who traced the decline in the sale of his malt to Cradock's preaching. Among his disciples are reckoned the intrepid evangelist, Vavasor Powell, and the prince of Welsh mystics, Morgan Llwyd. He returned south and became Wroth's co-pastor and successor at Llanvaches, but had to flee at the outbreak of the Civil War to Bristol, which was then held for Parliament. Here he continued to preach to his own fugitive church and others till he removed to London and became preacher at Great All-hallows. He returned to Wales, by appointment of Parliament, in 1646; and next year he published his useful edition of the New Testament. He died at home at the close of 1659. The best testimony to his Nonconformist worth is derived from the accusations brought by the author of *Gangræna* against him of preaching (1) that there should be no ordinances to punish men for holding opinions; (2) that there should be no confessions of faith; and (3) that every one should have

the liberty of their consciences. He is further accused of having commented on Micah iv. 5, that "in that day"—these "Gospel times"—"neither episcopacy nor presbytery, nor any others should intermeddle or invade the rights of the saints."

Vavasor Powell presents a more dramatic character, and a much more chequered life. He was born at Knucklas, in Radnorshire, in the year 1617. He led a careless youth, fond of dance and song and sport. He was first made ashamed of Sabbath sports by a sober, mild question from a "godly, grave professor of religion (one of those then called Puritans)"; and about a year later the impression was deepened by a sermon of William Wroth showing that those who would go to heaven must do four sorts of services—namely, "hard service, costly service, decided service, and forlorn service." It was the last thought, "the forlorn service," that chiefly disquieted him. "It made me go into private," he wrote in his autobiography, "where in darkness I struggled, not knowing what to do, and was ashamed to inquire, having never yet read seriously any part of the Holy Scriptures, nor any other godly book, nor never prayed privately, except by book and forms, and that formally without under-

standing sense, faith, or the spirit of supplication." A "second wedge" clave his heart somewhat more in a sermon by Walter Cradock, whose disciple and fellow-worker he became. He began his itinerant ministry in 1640, and his unflinching courage soon brought him into trouble. Once he was seized while preaching in an open field, and committed for trial. But those charged with the execution of the warrant—to the number of 16 or 17—refused to act, except one, who took him to his house overnight to conduct him to prison the following morning. Powell asked permission to conduct family worship; his prayer changed his custodian to be his protector: the man would sooner forfeit his own life than deliver him into prison. To save the constable from harm, the conquering prisoner bound himself to appear at the next assizes. He did appear, and defended himself so ably as to clear himself of all charges. He also won the goodwill of his judges, who invited him to dine with them, and in the simple act of returning thanks so impressed one of them that he declared he had never heard such grace before. When the war broke out he fled from Royalist Wales, like Cradock, to England, where he laboured till 1646 at Dartford. With Cradock he returned

to Wales, and helped his friend to bring out the New Testament of 1647. He journeyed and preached incessantly, and the record of his visit to Anglesey is specially interesting, as that Island—"Mother of Wales"—stood outside the sphere of early Nonconformity. As late as 1647 it still held out for the Royalist cause, and Powell himself became a victim of the disturbances. He had dreamt, a night or two before, that he would be wounded and two of his fingers cut off—which actually took place. "Yet," he adds, "when I was in extream danger between several enemies who fell upon me, receiving that and some other wounds, there being no likelihood to escape, I heard a voyce as I apprehended speaking audibly to me, 'I have chosen thee to preach the Gospel,' to which I answered, 'O, Lord, then bring me off;' and immediately God guided my horse (though he was very wild and not well commanded) to go backward out of the barricado that I had entered at, and so I was indeed miraculously preserved, although a good man, a Captain, who came to relieve me, was killed close to me."

From 1648 to 1660 he lived at Goitre House, near Newtown, but his stormy days had by no means ceased. The proclamation of Cromwell as Protector, and his installation

with great pomp, December 16, 1653, greatly disturbed him, for it threatened, among other things, his interpretation of the course of events, and the monarchy of Christ, as supposed to be foretold in Daniel xi. Cromwell's acceptance of the Protectorate seemed to upset all the prophetical calculations of the Fifth Monarchy men. On the evening of that day, at Blackfriars Church, Powell in his sermon denounced the apostasy of the army, and mentioned a "common proverb" amongst them of the General "that in the field he was the graciousest and most gallant man in the world, but out of the field, and when he came home again to government, the worst." So perilous is it for any man, however great, to upset, or even appear to arrest, the fulfilment of private interpretations of prophecy! "Fuliginous-flaming in the highest degree" Carlyle calls our "Anabaptist leveller" (though he did not change his views on baptism till a year or two later); and fiery he was without a doubt, but he was brave enough to pay for his own fire. His denunciation then cost him a few days' imprisonment. For fidelity to convictions he saw, before he died, the inside of over thirteen prisons.

Morgan Llwyd (already named more than once) was a native of Maentwrog, Merionethshire—a district which provided the old Catholic faith with a martyr of considerable renown in Elizabeth's time. Like Vavasor Powell, he came of a good family; and he refers, in an autobiographical poem, to his early religious history, speaking, mystically, of his birth on Olivet, his lodging in terror on Sinai, his peaceful abode on Mount Zion, his visit to Gilboa "in arms and wars," and, last of all, his coming to Nebo, where he caught a "glimpse of fair Canaan." Tradition gives a striking impression of his evangelistic labours in a picture of his visits to Pwllheli on Fair days, when he used to go through the market, with Bible in hand, "the people retreating before him as if a chariot rushed through the streets." He himself tells us how he found Carnarvon awaking, Lleyrn full of cruel blind men, with some that sought the right way; he prays for his beloved Merioneth that no enmity to the truth should ever find a rest there! But to what exact period, between 1640 and 1650, this refers we cannot say. He was at Wrexham when Walter Cradock ministered there, and becoming his convert followed him into Monmouthshire. Erbery, also, he calls his "once dear school-

master." "Since I knew you, or tasted the wine in you," he writes, in a letter dated April 29, 1652, "I ever lodged respectful thoughts of you : I fear neither truth nor its enemies." He fled with Cradock and others at the outbreak of the Civil War, and in his songs he mentions Bristol, Portchester, London, Bath, Winchester, Guildford, and Derby, among the places where he exercised a brief ministry during those stormy years. He returned to Wrexham, and we have already heard his welcome of a spiritual spring in 1648—"some Welsh swallows chirpe and chime." He became one of the "approvers" under the Act of 1649. In 1650 he named his little daughter "Peace," because—he tells us in a couplet—"in soule, in family, and Wales and England peace shall bee." Unhappily this was not to be ; strife, among the people of his charge, falsified for him, personally, his prophecy. In 1652 he sings "A Song of my Beloved concerning His Vineyard"; in it he speaks of full fifteen years of showers and dew from heaven, and of the springing of "many flowers and saints at Jesus' feet." Then he passes to a heart-broken lament over "the bryers and thorns and thistles tall" which had wasted his vine ; immorality, pride of life, covetous oppression,

self and strife have entered into his vineyard.

“The boasting settled lofty mind
Is root of their disunions,”

he exclaims, and calls upon Wales and England to judge between him and his vineyard. In all the controversies within the Nonconforming Churches of his day Morgan Llwyd was an advanced teacher of toleration. He would have “no honest soules kept out”:

“No new engagement, no new bonds
Do wee at all require”:

he would ever “wellcome saints as saints,” making all one—“our bound our Master’s word.” Baptist, Independent, Presbyterian—

“Though sibboleth may cost us deare,
In Christ we are all one.”

He will have all unite in one—“Bitterians” alone being excluded: “woe to them!” Among his contemporaries and fellow-workers in Wales he was pre-eminently the prophet of private judgment and catholic charity. His writings are full of the teaching of the Inner Light; and although he deprecated making it a doctrine of division, his

advocacy of it, in many eloquent and memorable passages, undoubtedly helped the Friends' mission in Wales.

He was an avowed disciple of Jacob Behmen, some of whose tracts he translated into Welsh. His chief work, first published in 1653, and frequently republished up to the present day, is called the *Book of the Three Birds*: the Eagle representing Cromwell; the Raven, Church Establishment (not absolutely the Church); the Dove, Nonconformity. No book in the language so charmingly, so eloquently presents the spiritual ideals of Nonconformity as this literary classic. It is, of necessity, largely controversial; but it yields devotional fruit free of any controversial taint. More than all his fellow-workers he wrote *in Welsh*; in English he published only two short tracts. He meant therefore, and continues to mean, to the Welsh people something at once more intimate and more dominant than any leader of that age. Men of all creeds are his disciples. His death took place in 1659, at the early age of 40.

The Quaker movement of the middle of the seventeenth century in Wales is of absorbing interest, though too often ignored. It presents a story of shameful persecution and of

undaunted, if at times, half quixotic courage. The autobiography of Richard Davies, of Welshpool, explains, incidentally, the source and inner meaning of the movement, with much simple charm. He was brought up in the Church, and was twelve or thirteen years old when, about 1648—that historic year of

1648

hope—he felt deep conviction of sin. “I was inclined to leave the Church, and go to hear sermons, and follow the best sort of people, which seemed to me to fear the Lord most. These, according to my opinion at that time, were the Independents, especially one Vavasor Powell, who was very fervent in his day and time.” For a while he was happy with his new comrades and in the new way; but later they appeared to him to grow “formal, and carnal, and cold”; and he lost faith in himself and in so formal a religion. Some time after this he heard one of the most eminent of “our Independent teachers”—“a great man in the Scriptures”—possibly William Erbery, or still more probably Morgan Llwyd—declare in a sermon “that a time would come when there would be no necessity for the Scriptures, any more than for some other book.” This so arrested the young man’s attention that he stayed to question the preacher as to when that

time would come. He received as reply, Jeremiah xxxi. 33, 34—the promise of the new covenant written in the heart: “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.” He went home much exercised in mind, and when, in 1656, he heard frequent warning references by preachers to the “rise of some sort of people in the North, called Quakers,” he viewed them with fear of being deceived by them, more than with any other interest. But he did not come into actual touch with one of them till the next year, when “a poor man meanly clad”—a Morgan Evan, from South Wales—called at his master’s house. This stranger had, on his journeys, met the people called Quakers, and been converted by them. Richard Davies became his convert after much perplexity. It was the doctrine of the Inner Light that captivated him and subdued him to the Friends’ faith.

The earnestness of these new converts carried them far and wide on their evangelistic itinerancies; no opposition chilled them; no sufferings daunted them. Their worth to Welsh religion between 1650 and 1685 can

never be told. From the day when John ap John, in the parish church of Swansea, interrupted the sermon to ask the preacher if he thought he was a servant of Christ, and was forthwith led to prison,—much to the disappointment of the clergyman, who wished to have the devil flogged out of him first,—from that day a new force, irregular but productive, entered the people's life. "By the end of the year 1660 there was scarcely a locality in any Welsh county, excepting Carnarvon and Anglesey, without adherents to their sect."

We can now pass from these pioneer workers to the work achieved. We find Welsh Nonconformity, on the eve of the Restoration, in possession of rich assets of partly-tried principles. Their faith in voluntaryism had been encouraged, displacing their trust in the State as dispenser of religion; the right of private judgment had been taught and sealed with suffering and death; the doctrine of toleration was beginning to be proclaimed, though not without misgiving; the Bible was on the way to become the people's freehold; the shining of the Holy Spirit in the heart of each believer, and the believer's right, in consequence, simply as believer, to witness publicly for Christ, were

accepted by hundreds as experimental truths ; distinctive Nonconformity was speaking and writing in the people's language. True, each of these contributions was that of an individual or at most a minority ; but they were cast into the common stock, to become, by slow degrees, the common property of the many. Some of the principles were too new to be efficiently handled at first ; but suffering for the sake of them would produce better skill. The divisions, too, were sharp and often

petty. In the introduction to *The*
1658 *Testimony of William Erbery* (1658),

we find these remarks : " The whole Body of Truth seems to be rent and torn in sunder, and the several limbs of it in small iota's and diminutive parcels are scattered up and down (as it were) upon the face of the whole earth ; each party and sect of professors grasping at some small portion and seed of truth, and covering it under various mixtures of their own, which many times do steal away the heart from the contemplation of truth itself ; most people eying only the building, which doth appear, and neglecting the foundation which lyes under ground."

Erbery himself was a product of the clash of great beginnings ; hermit and reformer, eclectic and comprehensionist—" the truth of

all professions he did own, and walked up with them by the hand to their head and spring; the mixture and adherencies of flesh and blood, which carnal spirits had introduced on a fleshly design, pretendedly to beautifie the Truth, he did disclaim and condemn, in which attempt his flesh suffered, and underwent many reproaches, by the litteral Professors of the Formal Church"—we are told in the same introduction. He was enamoured of his mystic ideal of a purely spiritual Church free from all ordinances. Only, as often happens, the advocate of eclecticism and comprehension would have all choose out what he chose and comprehend only what he deemed comprehensible. But notwithstanding his idiosyncrasy, Erbery deserves a kinder word and a more just appreciation than he has hitherto received. In his own way he, too, helped Welsh Nonconformity in the making. Others would learn to handle more deftly the instrument which he and others had discovered.

IV

THROUGH PERSECUTION TO TOLERATION

IF Cromwell's favour to some extent imperilled the wholesomeness and robustness of Nonconformist conditions and progress, the Restoration made ample provision for discipline. In the ejectment of 1662 no one was found worthy of being deprived of his living in the counties of Carnarvon, Anglesey, or Merioneth. Monmouth and Glamorgan stand significantly first with 10 and 16 respectively; Pembroke has 8 to its credit; Carmarthen and Montgomery, 7; Cardigan, 6. The total for Wales has been given at 125; but, naturally, the case of several is somewhat dubious, and it includes those who had as "lecturers" received State aid under the Act of 1649.

In the persecution which soon followed, no one bore his part more bravely, and at greater

cost, than Vavasor Powell. He was placed
1660 in custody, July, 1660, as a "most
factious and dangerous minister,
countenancing unlawful assemblies and seditious persons;" and, with the exception of a few months, spent all the rest of his days in prisons, dying October, 1670, at "Karoone House, the then Fleet Prison, in Lambeth." Some three years previously he had said before his judges at Cardiff: "Gentlemen, I have been near eight years a prisoner, and in thirteen prisons." How it fared with his co-religionists in May and June is told in his own words: "Some poor and peaceable people have been drag'd out of their Beds, and without regard of Sex or Age, have been driven, some twenty miles to Prison on their feet, and forced (though in heat of Summer till their feet were much blistered, and they ready to fall with faintness) to run by the Troopers' horses receiving many blows and beatings. Others (as if they had been Bruite-beasts) driven into Pitfolds, or Pounds, where they were kept several hours, their enemies in the interim drinking in an Ale-house, and forcing the poor People to pay for it, though they tasted not of the drink. . . . Others who were quietly met together (after their usual manner for many years, to worship God, and

edifie one another), were cast into Prisons without any Examination. . . ."

A disciple and friend of Vavasor Powell—Henry Williams, of Ysgafell Farm, near Newtown, Montgomeryshire—lives in a

1625- strange but beautiful tradition.
1685

Time after time he was attacked in his own house, and carried off to prison for "unlawful assembling." On one occasion his aged father, attempting to dissuade the soldiers, was smitten dead by their halberts. On another occasion his house was burnt down, while he himself was suffering imprisonment: his wife, near her confinement, escaped for her life, "grasping one child by the hand and carrying another in her arms," and was saved from the brutality of one of the soldiers by the officer in charge. On still another occasion they assaulted him and left him as dead and then proceeded to lay waste his property. All stock and crop that could be destroyed, were done away with. They left nothing but a field of wheat, newly sown. But that field, as winter gave way to spring, became the wonder and talk of the whole district. The stalks, in many cases, produced as many as nine *heads* of wheat; and the yield of the whole field was so rich as to recoup the owner for all his previous autumn's losses. The field was called

the "Field of Blessing" (*Cae'r Fendith*), and is still so known. Ears of the wheat are still kept as heirlooms; and though, even of late years, some of the unshed grain was sown and carefully watched, it never yielded more than the customary single-eared stalk. As interpreted by the people of the district, that field's witness served to awe even the menials of the Restoration into using less violent hands.

In another sense, throughout considerable portions of the Principality, the area of suffering was becoming a "field of blessing." In Carmarthenshire, Stephen Hughes, who saved Vicar Pritchard's "Candle" from being extinguished—or even from being melted before it was lit—became the county's apostle. His "Carmarthenshire Church" was made up of Congregational
 1622 (?)—
 1688 branches in all parts of the county.

He spent his days itinerating from one to the other; and so faithfully and well did he build, that his Churches are still thriving, and have become the starting-places of many more. One Easter Monday he passed a throng of merrymakers, on his way to a service in the "cave" (so called) of Cwm-hwplin, near Pencader. He singled out the ringleader and invited him to go with him

across the hill for far better sport. The youth felt curious to see what this could be and went with him, till they passed up a little glen which suddenly turned and ended, forming a kind of roofless chapel. Here Stephen Hughes preached, and so won the young man's heart that he became a leader of religious faith and service among his quondam merry-makers. In another of these cave-churches in the same county the father of the "sweet singer of Wales"—Williams, the author of "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah"—was bearing his testimony to the victory of conscience over persecuting intolerance.

From another home in that county, and under the influence of Stephen Hughes, James Owen went forth to become one of the pioneers of Nonconformity in North Wales and the Borders. He was one of nine children who grew up to be all Dissenters, though their parents—his brother and biographer tells us—"were inviolably firm to the Established Church," as befitted near relatives of James Howel, author of the *Familiar Letters*, and of his brother, Bishop of Bristol. He was about thirteen years old when he first heard a Dissenting minister preach from Mal. iv. 1; and this sermon had an unusual effect upon

1654-
1706

his mind, producing at first "dismal commotions in his afflicted soul." He dreaded nothing more than "heart-deceit and abortive convictions." This made him "spend many days in fasting and prayer," and "exercise the greatest severities upon himself." At last a Divine calm succeeded the storm, "and a strong resolution never to make a forfeiture of so signal a blessing." He was prepared for the Christian ministry at the academy of Samuel Jones, Brynllwarch; and then spent some time with his godfather, Rev. James Howel, a minister of the Church of England, "who took a great deal of pains to reduce him to Conformity, but cou'd not satisfie his Scruples." But although "the Dissenting Protestants in that Country were but inconsiderable for Number and Power, and had no men of Figure to give 'em the least Umbrage of Protection," and that they had "no external attractives" to recommend them, he decided, after mature deliberation, to cling to them. "The only Thing," his biographer adds, "which determin'd his judgment was, their close Adherence to that Way, which upon an impartial Disquisition, he thought most agreeable to the Divine Will reveal'd in the inspired Canon." He had the honour of imprisonment at Caerwys, in Den-

highshire, and the honour of abiding service at Oswestry and Shrewsbury, both as preacher of the Gospel and as teacher of young men for the ministry. He established "lectures" at Ruthin, Denbigh, and Llanvyllin; and his Churches founded in these and other places still remain, while the story of Nonconformity in and around Oswestry is a shining monument to his worth. Among his dying expressions was one of "entire satisfaction" that "he lived and died in his Nonconformity."

His teacher, Samuel Jones, exercised his ministry in Glamorganshire, but was a native of Chirk, Denbighshire. At the
1628-1696 time of his ejection he held the living of Llangynwyd, in the county of his adoption. Here he continued to preach, and here he founded his celebrated academy, mother of the modern theological colleges of Carmarthen and Brecon. He itinerated less than most of those mentioned in this chapter, keeping himself closely to his academic labours. But that did not serve to save him from persecution, and he found himself in Cowbridge Gaol more than once for conscience' sake.

A report having become current, towards the end of his life, that he had renounced his

Nonconformity, made him declare "to all the world, as in the words of a dying man": "Though I had then [in 1662] and have still many and great sins to bewail before God, yet I had not then and have not since the least check from my own conscience for my non-compliance and submission to those impositions, that were thus made the indispensable terms of communion with the Church of England." There were "such blocks," he added, laid by the law at the Church door, that he "could not, durst not then, and dare not now leap over, though to save my credit and livelihood, though to gain a dignity or preferment, without odious hypocrisy, and the overthrowing of my inward peace, which is and ought to be dearer to me than my very life."

Pembrokeshire had its suffering, effectual witness in Peregrine Phillips, who, on his ejection, retired to a farm near
1623-1691 Haverfordwest; and here he fitted a room for preaching services and formed a Church, which cost him several imprisonments—with the added privilege of preaching in prison to those who found courage to attend. Here, in the town of Haverfordwest, a place was obtained in 1687 for his congregation, and from this Church

other Churches in the district came to be formed.

Travelling again northwards, in the footsteps of James Owen, we find in Merionethshire Hugh Owen, of Bronclydwr—
1637–1699 a nephew of Dr. John Owen. He was preparing to take holy orders, when the Act of Uniformity compelled him to reconsider, and finally to change, his plans. He returned to his native county to do the work of a faithful evangelist, and bear his cross nobly. Reminiscences of his goodness of heart and of his power in prayer still flourish in beautiful and well-founded traditions. It is related how, when the under-sheriff of his county came to apprehend him, he begged leave first to lead his family in prayer: the officer himself was so affected that he failed to carry out his commission. During his confinement later at Powis Castle, Welshpool, his prayers made Lord Powis, though a Papist, say to his priest, "Surely, this is a good Christian!" And when he was released, he had to give a promise to return every Christmas for a visit to Powis Castle, not as prisoner, but as guest.

In Flintshire the witness of Nonconformity was Philip Henry—great father of a greater son. When ejected from the living at

Worthenbury, he followed the plan of many of his fellow-sufferers, and retired to his farm at Broad Oak, and there held services ; attending Whitwell Chapel on Sunday mornings and preaching frequently at home in the evening to those who came—not, of course, without fines and distrainments in consequence. After the *Indulgence* of 1672 he was prevailed upon to “preach at publick time every Lord’s Day, which he continued to do while he lived, much to his own satisfaction and the satisfaction of his friends.” And besides, “he preached a great many lectures in the Country about, some stated, some occasional, in supplying of which he was very indefatigable. He hath sometimes preached a Lecture, ridden eight or nine miles, and preached another, and the next day two more. To quicken himself to diligence, he would often say our opportunities are passing away and we must work while it is day, for the night cometh.” His *Diaries and Letters* reveal his piety and charity, and show his character as “mild, peaceable, and hospitable”—a man “whose life was a constant sermon, setting forth Christ by word and deed, and His law as a pattern.” All his mildness and restraint—“principles of moderation,” as the biographer of James Owen calls them—did not save him

in life from loss and imprisonment ; nor after his death did it secure his grave from being twice molested. His remains had actually to be moved from their resting-place, and re-buried in a secret place.

The name of Henry Maurice, while locally and particularly associated with the neighbourhood of Pwllheli, in Carnarvonshire, belongs in a general sense to the whole of Wales. A somewhat wild youth was followed by years of earnest and far-reaching service. He did not leave the Church at Broomfield (near Ludlow) in 1662 ; he remained, and was promoted to the living of Church Stretton. But his conscience was ill at ease ; and the ravages of a malignant fever in his parish further disturbed him. When he confessed his trouble to his wife, and how he feared for her and her child, she told him to follow his conscience, assuring him that she could commit herself and her child to God's providence. After taking the final step, he ministered to the Nonconformist Churches at Abergavenny, Llanigon, and Merthyr. But he had the missionary pilgrim's heart, and so he took his country for his parish. He made his home in Brecknockshire, visiting, among many other places, his native district, where his wife had property, of which she was deprived till some

years after his death. In spite of all deprivations and sufferings, he spent his brief life in the service of the Gospel. Asked once how and on what he lived, he replied, "I am living on the sixth of Matthew." When dissuaded from his strenuous labours, his reply was that a man who had idled his morning must double his diligence in the afternoon. He died, about his forty-fifth year, in 1682. His cousin, John Williams, pioneered in Carnarvonshire also for the new faith; but he allowed the discouragements of his work to interrupt his labours and silence his preaching for years.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the sufferings of the Quakers had commenced before the Restoration; but after that they increased in area and violence. Their almost total disappearance from modern Welsh religious life has served to take out of mind the immense value of their testimony and suffering during those hostile years. The

1708 death of their great leader, Richard Davies, in 1708, practically ended their active evangelism. But their graveyards, in sequestered nooks here and there throughout the country, some of them unknown or only locally known to-day, others surviving in such a place-name as "Quakers' Yard"—

these grass-grown homes of their dead bear silent but effective record to their presence and devotion in other far-off days. They flourished at first, especially in Merionethshire; and when many of these left their native land, in the footsteps of Penn, it was to found another "Meirion" in the new land, and transfer to it the continuance of a chapter of noble witnessing.

Wales can never repay its debt to the Nonconformist sufferers and evangelists of the latter half of the seventeenth century. Both they, and the thousands of disciples they gathered around them, passed through cleansing fires to a clearer conception of their heritage and their opportunity: their worldly losses and religious endeavours made them better Nonconformists and more zealous patriots. Most of them were men of pre-eminent learning; but with it they joined unfailing enthusiasm for the preaching of the Gospel. Several of them, to add to their scanty living, were founders of academies for the training of young men, which connect the Wales of that day, educationally, with the Wales of to-day and its nascent University. Brynllwarch in Glamorganshire, Llwyn Llwyd in Brecknockshire—to name no more—were prophetic of more than their teachers or disciples knew.

V

BETWEEN TWO PERIODS

BETWEEN the great evangelistic efforts following the Restoration and flowing beyond the Declaration of Indulgence and the great Revival of the eighteenth century, there is a period of doubtful light. That it did not grow as dark as sometimes painted is now, through research and comparison, made certain ; but it is probable also that too bright a view must not be implicitly accepted.

First of all, it is to be noted that the Church itself in the later years of the seventeenth century became more awake and more provident. A study of Welsh bibliography from, say, 1670 to 1720 reveals a steady growth of interest and supply, in which Churchmen were as prominent as Nonconformists. Bibles, books of devotion (original and translated), catechisms, sermons, and other religious

1670-
1720

volumes, were appearing with greater frequency and in more numerous editions. No outsider did more for Wales at that time in this respect than Thomas Gouge, ejected from the living of St. Sepulchre's, London, in 1662, but remaining in the communion of the Church still; and although he was excommunicated for preaching in Nonconformist places, his funeral sermon was preached by the Archbishop of Canterbury. He became devotedly attached to Wales; and in 1674, with Dr. Tillotson and others, he formed a society for distributing the Scriptures and other good books, and for establishing schools in Wales. He had, before his death, started between three and four hundred schools, and distributed many thousands of Bibles and other books. That he found his noblest assistant in a Nonconformist—Stephen Hughes—is true; but it is equally true that he touched kindred spirits within the Church. In 1698 the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge" was founded; and from the very first its interest in Wales was well informed and practical. Not only did it supply large numbers of good books in the vernacular, but it encouraged among the clergy and devout laity of the Church the formation of "societies," or conferences

for the culture of the devout life, and for the deepening of evangelistic zeal—on the pattern of some of the pietistic movements in Germany. In addition to this there are individual contributions of note and worth from within the Church. Such names as Charles Edwards, Edward Samuel, Edward and Hugh Morris, Theophilus Evans, and Elis Wynne—author of the Welsh classic, *The Sleeping Bard* (Y Bardd Cwsg)—shed permanent lustre on this period, and prove that the Church was neither without native ability nor earnestness.

But a still more powerful voice from within the Church was the reforming voice of Griffith Jones, vicar of Llanddowror, Carmarthenshire. He was in the
1684– succession of Vicar Pritchard ;
1761 and his preaching, wherever he went, attracted vast crowds. He was both evangelist and educationist. With the aid of his brother-in-law, Sir John Phillips, of Picton, and other wealthy patrons, he was able to institute and carry on his circulating day-schools, so becoming the successor of Thomas Gouge. He would send a schoolmaster—Churchman by preference, but when such was not available or incompetent, a Nonconformist, these forming a large majority—to

a district to teach those who came to read ; when this was done, he would be sent on to another district. In 1746 these schools numbered 116, with 5,685 scholars. They helped to make the common people competent Bible-readers, to the number, it has been estimated, of over 150,000 in twenty-four years.

Had the Anglican Church been wise then to make use of its restored opportunity, one cannot say what might have happened. All that has been here summarised of literary, evangelistic, and educational motive from within the Church accounts for the partial and temporary check to the progress of our experimental Nonconformity ; but it also reveals the Church's disastrous inability to use its golden chances. As before—and after—it alienated itself now from what was likeliest to win the heart of Wales.

There were, besides these, arresting forces within the Nonconformist Churches themselves. These were partly born of the exaggeration of the spirit of controversy, on such questions as baptism, Church organisation, and more intricate questions of theology. Presbyterian and Independent, Baptist and Quaker, Arminian and Calvinist—all this meant keen controversy, not peculiar to Wales

by any means, but representing a general note of the age. That this spirit chilled the effort to seek and save the lost is probably too true ; but, at the worst, controversy is no sign of inactivity. Dead Churches do not quarrel so earnestly.

It is evident, also, from contemporary testimony, that questions of discipline within the Churches caused trouble. These affected doctrine as well as conduct. Mathias Maurice, born, like Griffith Jones, in 1685, and brought up like him in Henllan Independent Church, Carmarthenshire, gives, in his *Social Religion* (published in 1759, in English) reminiscent pictures of some of the difficulties and divisions of his own early Church, in the discovery of heresies and the maintenance of discipline. He comes down heavily upon Antinomianism, as on its opposite extreme—Legalism ; and to those opposite but co-operative heresies he assigns in part the cooling of love. "Though they were like Sampson's foxes, Tail to Tail, having different views, they had Firebrands fix'd to 'em." "In all our contentions about Truth," he makes one of his characters declare, "the Spirit of Truth does not appear."

In this connection it is to be remembered that Dr. Daniel Williams, the eminent anti-

Calvinistic leader, was a native of Wrexham ; and although ministering in London, he exercised considerable influence in Wales also, in Arian directions, up to his death in 1716. His generous benefactions have long since passed into Unitarian hands, though the Fund retains the old name of "Presbyterian." They were, however, used, and continue to be so, in the interests of theological and general education, and in aid of Nonconformist causes, free from denominational bias. His well-known Library was another of his gifts to Nonconformity. Whatever we may think of the direction taken by the theological movement he allied himself with, and of its disintegrating effect on Nonconformist progress, his own place in it is worthy of all honour, and his liberal kindness to Wales of lasting gratitude.

What seems a still deeper truth, here as elsewhere, is that a period of evangelistic zeal must be followed by a period of inner organisation. A revival, like a great tidal wave, covers the beach with weed and treasure ; and it takes time to divide and cast away the weed, and rescue and apportion the treasure-trove. The statistics collected by

1715

Dr. John Evans in 1715 give a glimpse of churches consolidated through

patient effort and quietly thriving. His total yields over 20,000 hearers ; but as he excludes the Friends, and has omitted several churches, the grand total, it has been calculated, would exceed 30,000. Presbyterianism and Independency had become practically one ; the Baptists, following the lead of John Myles, were forming an organic whole under the protection of their Association (*Cymanfa*), from 1700. And God sent the workers which the time needed. In Montgomeryshire, for instance, Lewis Rees was building the churches from Llan Bryn Mair as centre¹ : in Monmouthshire, Edmund Jones was working from Pontypool ; in Cardiganshire, Philip Pugh was building to the same plan. Similarly, amongst Baptists, we have such builders as Enoch Francis, on the confines of Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire ; and Miles Harry in Monmouthshire. The number of new Churches formed, and of chapels built, in this period is sufficient proof of the earnest, quiet work steadily going on. But because of its quietness, because of its being a strengthening of root rather than a bourgeoning of leaf and blossom, it is easy to underestimate its place and value in a nation's spiritual progress. For we can

¹ Later at Mynydd Bach, Swansea.

easily see how such a period can run its very virtue into a failing, and inward content may be obtained at the loss of outward progress. That in many districts of Wales evangelism was decaying, is clear ; that there were other districts in a more vigilant mood is also clear : let one illustration suffice.

Perhaps the most interesting forward movement of this period connects itself with Anglesey—hitherto conspicuously absent, except for the Vavasor Powell incident, from our story. William Pritchard, a native of Lleyn, Carnarvonshire, was converted by the help of a lighted window one Sunday evening. He had spent the day in sport and carousing, and was returning home late at night when he missed his way. Seeing a distant light, he led himself to it, and recognised it as the home of a humble and devout member of the Independent Church at Pwllheli. He knew his way now, and started home, only to lose himself again. Once more spying a light, he drew near, to find himself at the same house. The third time he started for home, and for the third time lost himself. Looking again for some guiding light, he made his way to it, and found himself for the third time at the house of Francis Evans—to his increasing surprise

and terror even. He drew near to the window, and saw the little household gathered for family prayer; he heard a portion of Matthew xxv. read, and the prayer. He started again, and had no difficulty in finding his way: but the chapter and prayer followed him and afflicted him till he joined the Church at Pwllheli himself. His house soon became the home of pilgrim-evangelists, and with the help of Francis Evans he obtained a school-master for the district. He asked the incumbent for the loan of the church, but was refused. "Well," he remarked, "if you have power over the church, I have power over my own kitchen; he shall keep school there." And school was held there, and many a preaching service besides. They were suspected of teaching heresy and treason, and much annoyed. And when William Pritchard remarked on a sermon of Chancellor John Owen, of Bangor, that it was contrary to Scripture, the suspicions seemed amply verified. He was summoned to the ecclesiastical court at Bangor for contempt, but after being harassed for two or three years won his case. The Chancellor, however, found a way of punishing him by inducing his landlord to turn him out of his farm—a custom much honoured in Wales for political and eccle-

siastical proselytism for two hundred years, and still insidiously revived at need. He was obliged to find a new home in Anglesey, near Llangvni. And with him

1742

Nonconformity entered that island home of the Druids, never again to retire or grow slack till, with the approaching Revival, it would be a stronghold of the new faith. The coming of Pritchard was by no means hailed with delight. His new neighbours avoided him as though he were plague-stricken; they wasted his property, and devised all manner of schemes for molesting him. When he brought in his preaching schoolmaster, and Lewis Rees, of Llan Bryn Mair, they were still more enraged. The persecution became more systematic; and one Sunday morning a mob of about 250 attacked his house, breaking windows, and damaging the outhouses, and threatening to kill every one that hindered them. For this they suffered justice; and the terrors of the law limited their churchly rage. But one method was still available—to have him driven out of his farm. This was done in 1745, and was again repeated some five years later. He found refuge at last in a leased farm on the Bulkeley estate, called Clwch-dyrnog. Here he welcomed preachers of all

denominations and of all degrees; among them being John Wesley. He himself remained faithful to his Church at Pwllheli, eighty miles away, attending its monthly communion up to the time of his death in 1773. He lived to see Anglesey lit with the dawning of a new and great day.

Any one who is acquainted to-day with the state of each Welsh county, denominationally, can perceive where the older Dissenters were doing their work faithfully, and were able to hold their own possessions, when the Great Revival came. He can also perceive where they had partly or wholly failed, by the hold which Methodism gained in these districts. Broadly speaking, they retained South Wales, whereas North Wales was possessed by the fresh workers. To-day, we can all of us thank God for both, and give to each his due without grudging, belittling neither old nor new.

VI

THE GREAT REVIVAL

WHILE Welsh and English Methodism had each its origin in the same great eighteenth century movement, their development, after the first years, became quite separate. The one became Arminian and Wesleyan, the other Calvinistic and Presbyterian.

Howell Harris was born at Trevecca, Brecknockshire, in 1714, and was destined from his early years for the Church. When he was eighteen years old his father died ; and his plans had to be rearranged. He opened a school in the neighbourhood, while still hoping to prepare himself for ordination. The year 1735 became to him a great year—his spiritual birth-year. “Labouring and heavy-laden, under the guilt and power of his sins,” he felt at the Whitsun sacrament

the power of a new hope. Thoughts of human applause and preferment vanished from his mind: "I felt some insatiable desire after the salvation of poor, lost sinners." He felt so happy that he could not help telling people, in going home from church, that he *knew* his sins were forgiven him. Soon after, he set up family worship in his mother's house on Sunday mornings—a custom "laid aside," he tells us, "except among some of the Dissenters"—and on Sunday evenings "exhorted the poor people," who, more and more, flocked to hear him. A brief stay at Oxford intervened, and then he returned home, more fervent than ever in his reforming zeal, but with no intention of doing his work except within and under the authority of the Church—as Whitfield and Wesley also intended. His tremendous preaching soon spread his fame and stirred the opposition of the ungodly outside and the negligent within the Church. He became the trumpet of God's judgment on sin; for at first his preaching was almost entirely a blast from Sinai—"in the thunder was his dwelling-place." He travelled from county to county, invited or uninvited. Invitations mostly came from Nonconformists already in possession, Independent and Baptist; they

stood by him and supported his work. But he also took unbeaten paths, north and south ; and frequently suffered violence from unclean hands. At Newport—he tells us—in 1740, the mob attacked him and his companion, William Seward, with great fury, tearing his clothes, taking away his peruke, and leaving him in the rain unsheltered : “ But, oh ! it was sweet to stand bareheaded under the reproach of Christ.” Two years later, at Hay, his companion was killed, having been struck with a stone while preaching. Harris himself, in 1741, had scarcely escaped a violent death at Bala—later to become the centre of Methodism. “ I thought,” he tells us, “ it would be my lot to die like Stephen in the midst of them. While speaking to and praying for my persecutors, one of the people told me that I was tempting the Lord by staying there. But no sooner had I turned myself around to go away, than I was somehow left to myself and sunk under the waves. I was not afraid of death, knowing it to be the entrance to eternal rest ; I had no doubt of the favour of God through the blood of Christ my Saviour ; yet I felt unwilling to die by the hands of these men. They ceased not inhumanly to beat me with sticks, and to pelt me with stones, until I fell

under their merciless feet, where they continued to beat me, until the Lord touched the heart of one of them with pity, or fear of being prosecuted for killing me."

In 1739, within a few months of each other, Whitfield and Wesley paid their first evangelistic visit to Wales, to be followed by many apostolic journeys. Wesley's visits averaged nearly once a year for the next fifty years. Naturally, the barrier of language limited the extent of their influence, except in the more English parts. But in Pembrokeshire and Glamorganshire, and along the Marches northwards, from Chepstow, past Hay and Welshpool, to Wrexham, and again in Anglesey, their footprints are still traceable. Harris was intimately associated with both in these tours. The theological controversy which divided them from each other affected him too; and for the time taking Whitfield's side, he was estranged from the Wesleys; later, however, they drew nearer again and worked together.

Among the earliest converts of Howell Harris was William Williams of Pantycelyn.

1717-
1791 His father was faithfully and honourably connected with an

Independent Church near Llandovery, which had found refuge during days

of persecution in a cave at Castell Craig y Wyddon. He was sent to a school at Llwynllwyd, near Hay, kept by Vavasor Griffiths, a Nonconformist minister. And it was when returning home from school that he heard

1738 Harris preach in Talgarth churchyard, and found in him his spiritual father, though but three years his senior. His home and school associations would naturally turn his mind towards Nonconformity ; but the influence of Harris prevailed ; and he took orders, being appointed curate of Llanwrtyd and Abergwesyn. However, his Puritan strain and his evangelistic zeal made his stay in the Church intolerable. He too became a pilgrim-herald of the new day, in all parts of Wales. But more than all his gifts of preaching was his incomparable gift of sacred song. Known to English readers mainly through his two hymns—

“Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,”

and—

“O'er the gloomy hills of darkness,”

his contributions to Welsh hymnody number several hundreds ; and of these a large per-

centage have won national appreciation. His dramatic poem *Theomemphus*, and his epic on *The Kingdom of Christ*, translated into permanent verse the trials, the hopes, the sorrows, the joys of the spiritual renaissance in which he took so noble a part.

At Llangeitho, in Cardiganshire, the fire was kindled by another clergyman—Daniel Rowlands. When appointed to the living he was, as he came afterwards to view his state, an unconverted man. A sermon of Griffith Jones, about 1735, deeply affected him; the impression was deepened by conversation with his Independent neighbour, Philip Pugh, a man of marked piety: scholarly, earnest, quietly effective in evangelising Cardiganshire. At first, like Harris, his reformed zeal flamed as from the tempestuous fire of Sinai; but, by advice of his neighbour, he became more evangelical. His hour came more fully as he was one Sunday reading the liturgy; and power, unfelt before, came upon him and the congregation from the Passion phrase, "By Thine agony and bloody sweat." He travelled less than Harris and Williams; but as his fame spread, the crowds flocked to hear him from all parts of Wales. The Communion Sundays of

1713-
1790

Llangeitho have become one of the great historic traditions of Welsh religion.

His heart's wish, as in the case of Williams and Harris, was to continue his work from within the Church of his fathers. These pioneers of an immense movement took a path whose end was hidden from them when they adopted the Pietistic plan—already not unfamiliar to Wales—of establishing “societies” to promote and concentrate their evangelistic labours. These were meant to be indirect if not direct adjuncts to the Anglican Church; and the first trouble between Harris and his Dissenting supporters came from his wish and effort to keep them in the shelter of the Church's porch, at least. We may add here that the “society” or “experience meeting” is characteristic of *every* denomination in Wales to-day; but they continue unknown to the Church.

It is not quite certain whether the fire burst into flame first at Llangeitho or at Talgarth; nor does it matter.

1742

From 1735 it spread and gathered force month after month. By the year 1742 the work had so grown that the first association was held at Watford.¹ Four of those present were in episcopal orders, including

¹ Near Caerphilly.

Williams and Rowlands. A number of lay "exhorters" was set apart, with Harris as their superintendent. Among other things it was decided "that the brethren who scruple to receive the sacrament in the Church because of the impiety of the administrators and the usual communicants there, and among the Dissenters because of their lukewarmness, should continue to receive it in the Church, until the Lord open a clear way to separate from her Communion"—which shows how the presentiment of the seer disturbed the Churchman's loyalty. These "Associations" have been held regularly ever since that year.

This new movement estranged the older Dissenters still more; they felt aggrieved because of the help they had at first given and of the losses which they now suffered. We can to-day, in a serener air, see how both sides were partly to blame, and much more to be sympathised with; for they were paying the cost of a reformation and a progress far vaster than they could foresee or comprehend. But a still more grievous variance happened

1751 in 1751, when, at the annual meeting of the Association, Harris was attacked for his supposed Sabellianism in speaking of God's humiliation and death in the

person of Christ. In consequence of this, and of ill-health, he withdrew, and spent the rest of his life in clouded retirement—not without a bright light in the clouds. At Trevecca he formed a sort of religious colony, on a communistic foundation. His “family” was gathered from all parts of Wales, and numbered at one time over a hundred. It was a kind of Franciscan monastery, piously and honourably conducted—but, alas, so ineffective, when we think of what might have been! “Howell Harris’s house,” wrote John Wesley in 1763, “is one of the most elegant places which I have seen in Wales. . . . About six score are now in the family, all diligent, all constantly employed, all fearing God and working righteousness.” Three years later Henry Venn bears his testimony: “Of all the people I have ever seen, this society seems to be most advanced in grace.”

In 1759 he joined the county militia, on condition of being permitted to preach. He remained during the French War with his troop, returning in 1763. In 1768 he rented

1768 a part of Trevecca to Lady Huntingdon to found her college—since removed to Cheshunt. It is evident that the course and discipline of time had alleviated old grievances: for Daniel Rowlands and

Williams joined with Harris and Fletcher, of Madeley, in the preaching and communion services at the opening of its college. And Harris also joined with his old friends occasionally in evangelistic labour. "Why may not such concessions be made," he wrote to Charles Wesley in 1761—"and such toleration of spirit be showed, that all the evangelical friends of the church may be invited to some union or nearness together?" Had he not learnt by suffering—even through mistakes?

It was not given to Harris to build abiding causes. His "family" broke up soon after his death in 1773; most of the societies he instituted fell through. Rather was it given to him to stir profoundly an entire nation, and make it possible for others to construct and consolidate. His fiery eloquence loosened the stones in the quarry: other hands trimmed them and took them for their own more effectual building.

Whatever differences arose at first between the older Nonconformists and these newer Nonconformists—as yet afraid of the name, though partaking of its spirit—the reflex influences of the revival upon the former was wholesome and lasting. All the existing Churches were refreshed and strengthened;

nor has there been since that day, any serious evidence of retrogression.

More than that, the revival directly or indirectly affected the whole course of national life, and exalted the national ideals. In those years of genial fervency Wales found its hymnody. Hitherto the metrical Psalter of Edmund Prys had supplied its wants. But now a new life demanded a fresh phrase. Dr. Watts's psalms and hymns were charmingly translated by David Jones, of Cayo, who from unregenerate cattle-driver became a saint and a singer. Morgan Rhys, his neighbour, one of the itinerant schoolmasters, breathed the air of "Nebo's height"; David Williams re-echoed "the joyful sound" of Zion's tabernacles. And, chief of them all, a farmstead in the outgoings of the same Vale of Towy, named Pantycelyn, has blended itself with the history of Welsh piety for all time. For the man who dwelt in Pantycelyn is more frequently and more affectionately mentioned by the name of his farm than by his proper name of William Williams.

VII

WELSH CALVINISTIC METHODISM

IN the story of the Great Revival we have given only the names of the first leaders. Howell Harris never left the communion of the Church of England ; Daniel Rowlands was banished from it in 1763. Williams had left earlier : the first, not an ordained clergyman, set apart to administer the sacraments was Morgan John Lewis—in 1756. Who, then, were the other workers worthy to be ranked among the founders of Calvinistic Methodism ? Humble names, in very truth, but for God's direct gift of grace and power. Many of the schoolmasters became evangelists ; those set apart as lay " exhorters " won their right by their service. In 1783 Thomas Charles speaks of between sixty and eighty lay preachers being present at the Llangeitho Association, and of that number as not all that were in the connection ; several of them

endowed with excellent gifts. Few of these were men of scholarship ; but they were deeply schooled in suffering contempt, and in retiring from man's mockery to God's healing presence. They penetrated into dark corners of the land ; they prepared the way often in the desert. And God sent, in due time, the men who were to finish what they had begun.

Among the leaders of the Revival was one man, less prominent for widespread evangelism, but otherwise an unwearied worker—Peter Williams. He was born at Laugharne, 1722, and as a child used to go with his mother to hear Griffith Jones. She intended him for the Church ; and although she died when he was only twelve, her purpose continued to rule him. While at school at Carmarthen he heard Whitfield preach one morning in Lammas Street ; and this though the pupils were warned by the master from hearing him, “lest they should be affected with Methodism,” “‘for,’ said he, ‘I am told he preaches original sin, that man must be born again, and that we must be justified before God, by faith, without works.’” However he and three others ventured among the numerous crowd to hear the eloquent heretic “and judge for themselves.” He was “wounded, but not overturned” with the

sermon, till the preacher exclaimed vehemently, "My dear friends, I had been for some years as diligent as any of you; I prayed seven times a day, I fasted twice a week, went to church every day, received the sacrament every Sabbath, and all this while I was no Christian." The effect of this sentence on the young man was overpowering; and before the sermon concluded "the new creature," he writes, "was formed within me, and that in the space of that important hour." His former companions forsook him, his intimate friends did not know him: "they were sorry to hear, they said, that I was turned a fool; that is, I had espoused the cause of Methodism." After a year as schoolmaster at Conwil Elvet, with "the honour of being a minister of Christ," he presented himself for orders, and he was admitted, "though suspected of being a Methodist." His zeal for reverent behaviour in church led him on Sunday to rebuke a young couple for their open misconduct. "When I came out," he says, "I heard a whispering or murmur, and the vicar's lady in the midst. 'I suspected he was a Methodist before,' said she, 'and to-day he has thrown off the mask.'" She wrote to her absent husband, and soon "Peter Williams, curate of Eglwys Gymmun, stood

charged with preaching original sin, justification by faith, and the absolute necessity of regeneration." "Sir," he naïvely replied to his patron, "I am young; perhaps I may mistake; I declare I always thought these articles of faith were the fundamental doctrines of the Church of England." He was dismissed. Two or three similar experiences sufficed to make him resolve "to follow the leading of Providence, and preach the Gospel anywhere, whether in or out, in a field or on a dunghill, if I could by any means win souls to Christ." Soon afterwards he went to hear an "eminent exhorter" in Pembrokeshire—Howell Davies, probably; and by him he was taken to an "association of the Methodist preachers." "I obtained a name amongst them, and with them continued to associate from the twenty-fourth of my age until I was seventy and upwards." Unhappily, as in the case of Howell Harris, and on the same theological question, his association with them was marred by his brethren excommunicating him in 1792. To-day neither he nor Harris would be deemed guilty of anything worse than mysticism, in company with Erbery and Morgan Llwyd. But, as suggested, his evangelistic work was eclipsed by his literary labours. His "Annotated Bible,"

published in 1770—an heroic risk—is still pre-eminently the Welsh family Bible. In his lifetime, even, it passed through several editions. As if one risk were not enough, he published in the year of his Bible the first Welsh periodical, which reached fifteen fortnightly numbers, and then perished for want of support. In 1790 he published an edition of four thousand copies of “John Canne’s Bible,” which led directly to his excommunication—both Rowlands and his great friend Williams having died before 1792. His trials and sorrows, we can perceive to-day, were part of the price of the new life; they were the growing-pains of Nonconformity.

The man who, more than any other, reduced these glowing, clashing forces of revival into order was Thomas Charles, of Bala. He was born in 1755 at Pant-dwfn, a farmhouse near St. Clears, and as a child breathed, like Peter Williams, the air of Llanddowror. He acknowledges specially his indebtedness to an old disciple of Griffith Jones—“an aged, holy, and pious man, by name Rees Pugh.” When about fourteen he entered the “Presbyterian” academy at Carmarthen, where he soon joined a “society” of Methodists, where he “met several very pious persons”; but “all had been well-nigh ruined by a set of care-

less, high-spirited professors," with whom he contracted too much intimacy. "But the Lord graciously opened my eyes, and delivered me out of their snare." On January 30, 1773, he heard a sermon by Daniel Rowlands at New Chapel on Heb. iv. 15, and that day he ever kept afterwards as the anniversary of his soul's birth. "Ever since that happy day I have lived in a new heaven and a new earth." Unexpectedly, and very wonderfully, two years later Providence opened his way to Oxford; and Providence again came as wonderfully to his rescue some two years later still, when his supplies from Wales were suddenly stopped. This same year of 1777, he spent the summer vacation with John Newton at Olney; "the visit," he writes in his diary, "proved very comfortable and very profitable indeed." During that visit, too, he had no small pleasure in listening to Mr. Romaine preach "two very excellent sermons on Christ's glory in His person and offices, and on His preciousness to a ruined sinner." After hearing him he felt that were he "master of all the branches of human literature, yes, of all learning, both sacred and profane," it would have been much too little to make him a Gospel-preacher.

The following year he was ordained deacon at Oxford, and during the summer visited Bala and Llangeitho and home, and had his last interview on earth with his "old and very dear Christian friend, Rees Hugh." He settled as curate first at Queen Camel, and later at Milborne Port. But his engagement to a daughter and an only child of pious parents living at Bala made him anxious to settle near. He applied in 1781 for a curacy at Oswestry, "but the moment the vicar heard that I was tinctured with what they call Methodistical principles he would have nothing more to say to me." Lady Huntingdon invited him to take the care of her chapel at Bath, but Providence, and his heart, kept him for North Wales. He was married in 1783, and settled at Bala, but his hope of a living became fainter week by week. He speaks of serving a church for two Sundays, and then of a long letter "genteely excusing" his attendance for the future. He obtained temporary charge at Shawbury, Salop; and later of Llanymawddwy—fourteen miles still from Bala, a rough, bleak mountain road. It was while here he started the custom of catechising the young people on Sunday afternoon, which has remained a feature of Welsh Sunday Schools,

in rural parts at least, to the present day. The common people rejoiced in his ministry, but what he calls "the great folks about Dinas" moved against him, and had him once more dismissed. He was offered a living in England, but his heart held him fast. "I feel myself much inclined to take Wales, as I did my wife, 'for better, for worse, till death do us part.'" To save himself from sloth he began teaching and catechising the young people at Bala on Sunday evenings, and as his school grew he was offered the use of the Calvinistic Methodist chapel. And so, by many "windings of the road," he was led, about the dawn of 1785, to his great life-work. In him the centre of Methodism was moved from south to north, from Llangeitho to Bala. When **1785** he attended the Association at Llangeitho that summer, and preached there, Rowlands remarked, "Charles is the Lord's gift to North Wales." He was the only ordained minister at that time among the North Wales Methodists; and he and his brethren at the time, like the early Puritans wished to be reckoned as simply still somehow a branch of the Established Church. They had not as yet risen to the honour of Nonconformity.

He became a devoted educationist, and decided to revive the circulating school system of Thomas Gouge and Griffith Jones. Some of the first teachers he taught himself; the sacrament money collected at Bala chapel was added to the gifts he obtained from friends far and near. "In many parts," he relates, "not one person in twenty was capable of reading the Scriptures;" so his circulating schools became mothers of Sunday Schools. By the year 1808 they had sufficiently grown to have associations of the different schools, meeting in central places to be publicly catechised; three meetings of the kind were held in North, and three in South, Wales. The system spread itself on every hand, and still effectively prevails. "Feed My lambs" was the call which helped Charles to take his decisive step in 1785, and well did he obey the call.

When the London Missionary Society was formed in 1795 he cordially supported it, and the Methodists generally gave joint support to it and the Church Missionary Society till John Elias, calling in question the consistency of such dualism, induced them to devote themselves to the one. Here we may add that in 1840 the denomination formed a society of their own, which has had the

Khassian hills for its field of effort, and has added a fruitful chapter to the story of modern missions.

The effect of his schools was to produce Bible-hunger, and it soon became his chief difficulty to provide the poor with Bibles. As early as 1787 he was in correspondence with Thomas Scott on the subject. The religious revivals of 1791-3 added to the need. In 1792 the Rev. Thomas Jones, of Creaton, aided his fellow-countryman in asking the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge to print an edition of 10,000 Bibles. A delay of years occurred, however. When the edition came out in 1799 it was sold as soon as published. "The 10,000 copies were not sufficient to supply one-fourth part of the country." Mr. Charles, as a member of the Religious Tract Society, visited London in 1802, and "the idea of having a Bible Society established in London, on a similar basis to the Tract Society, occurred to his mind," says his biographer in 1828. He mentioned his plan at the Society's committee, with results well known, when Joseph Hughes took the provincial germ and gave it worldwide atmosphere. The New Testament came out in 1806. "When the arrival of the cart was announced

which carried the first load," writes an eyewitness, "the Welsh peasants went out to meet it, welcomed it as the Israelites did the ark of old, drew it into the town, and eagerly bore off every copy as rapidly as they could be disposed. The young people were to be seen consuming the whole night in reading it. Labourers carried it with them to the fields that they might enjoy it during the intervals of their labour and lose no opportunity of becoming acquainted with its sacred truths."

There had been among the Methodists a growing feeling of impatience under the rule of episcopal sentiments. None but those who had been episcopally ordained were allowed to administer the sacraments; and this, as the movement spread, constituted not only a grievance, but a serious hindrance. Charles was at first naturally under the sway of early sentiments and convictions, but at an

1810 Association in Bala in 1810 he gave way to his brethren's wish and formulated the connexional rules, which had been practically in use since 1790. The next year, in North and South Wales, the first group of ministers was ordained; with the result that a few of the clergy, which had hitherto associated themselves with the move-

ment, left. In 1823 their confession of faith and connexional rules were finally revised, and legalised in 1826.

Hitherto there was no preparation for the training of their ministers. It was in 1837 that Dr. Lewis Edwards, with the help of David Charles, B.A., established the College at Bala; and in 1842 Howell Harris' house at Trevecca was fitted for a college to meet the wants of South Wales, the latter becoming its first principal, and his place at Bala taken by Dr. John Parry.

We have now reached the period when the older ecclesiastical sentiment was passing away and a Nonconformist sentiment was coming in. The efforts and writings of Dr. Lewis Edwards and his compeers—from the founding of the great Welsh review, the *Traethodydd* (Essayist), in 1845—
1845 have helped to bring the denomination into line with the older Dissenters. Common foes and common causes have consolidated the alliance, and to-day the only rivalry is for the “primacy of honour” in advancing Nonconformist ideals.

Dr. Edwards had a great part also in modifying the inner organisation of the denomination. At first the evangelistic sentiment completely overruled the pastoral.

An ordained minister belonged to the entire denomination; he had no particular church under his charge. The pastoral office was a growth, and is growing still. It was in many cases strongly opposed. Writing in 1858, Dr. Edwards pleaded that the work of the pastoral office had been partly recognised by Rowlands and Harris, Charles, and Ebenezer Morris. "Where," he asked, "is there any basis in Scripture or reason for deacons without a minister, or a minister without deacons?" There being no pastoral charge, the ministers preached at a fresh place almost every Sunday in the year. The opponents urged that the general introduction of the pastoral office would injure the older itinerant system. "But," he replied, "that system has done its work: what is good in it can be still maintained." And his ideas have very generally prevailed: the number of Churches without pastors grows steadily fewer; but these pastors preach to the Churches of their charge only once a month, more or less according to local requirements.

A little more than a hundred years ago Thomas Charles found a company of sincere but scantily educated preachers to serve the cause of Calvinistic Methodism: to-day no Welsh denomination has taken

ministerial education so seriously. When Dr. Thomas Charles Edwards returned in 1891 from being the Principal of Aberstwyth University College to his father's home and chair at Bala, it was not so much an initiation, as the public adoption by the son of his father's conception. But to the younger leader it had become a larger and more national enterprise. Some day Wales may rise to it, and have its one Nonconformist Theological College.

VIII

WESLEYAN METHODISM

WE have, in the last chapter, referred to the regular visits of John Wesley to Wales, almost yearly for fifty years, and to his intimate but interrupted association with Howell Harris and the other revivalists; but as his preaching was in English only it is not surprising perhaps that his "societies" should have been founded in the English districts only. Welsh Wesleyanism dates its formal history from 1800.

Its actual founder was Edward Jones, who was born in 1777 at Bathafarn, near Ruthin, and went as a youth to Manchester, where one Sunday evening, about the close of 1795, he was converted in Oldham Street Chapel. That same service marked the conversion of Jabez Bunting and others, who became his first companions in the new life. He had to return home to Ruthin at the end of 1799;

much to his grief, because of his being deprived thereby of sympathetic Christian fellowship. But while staying on the journey at Chester he heard of a fellow-countryman named John Bryan who was a Wesleyan local preacher. As soon as he reached home he made arrangements to have a service in the town, January 3, 1800, in the large room of a carrier's house. One of the Chester ministers came to preach, but as the sermon was in English only a slight impression was made. However, the young pioneer was not daunted, but went on holding the services, sometimes reading one of Wesley's sermons, sometimes venturing to give his own message. One Sunday morning, in the following month of February, he and as many young men as he had already gathered to him climbed to the top of Moel Fama to meet John Bryan; and there in the keen air of winter,—within sight of several Welsh counties, the Vale of Clwyd beneath them scarcely touched with the promise of spring,—there they sang a Welsh hymn of the "good news which had come to their land" (*Newyddion braf a ddaeth i'n bro*). As they re-entered the town they sang in English—

"Let heaven and earth agree," &c.

The town was moved, the carrier's large room was crowded, and the ministry was with power. By the time Bryan visited them, in June, not only was there a promising cause at Ruthin, but other towns had also been touched. The work was there, ready to hand ; but where could workers be found ? He was greatly discouraged with the thought ; and one day in August of that year he thought of ascending the Voel where the hymn had rung in February's air, and "after a regretful gaze in the direction of Manchester, he fully intended to ask the Lord to take him from the earth to Himself as He had taken Moses His servant from the mountain's summit." He was, however, hindered from making the ascent by a servant's message that a letter waited for him at home—and letters were no trifles at that time and in that district. He returned to find that the Conference, newly met at City Road, London, had just added a new circuit to its list—that of Ruthin. The matter had been practically dropped for that year, when Dr. Coke arrived—after much delay in crossing from Ireland—and so eloquently pleaded the cause of his native land that Wesleyanism that year began its native mission in Wales. So the letter gave

to the discouraged young leader the gladder keynote of the *Moel Fama* hymn. On August 27th of that year Owen Davies and John Hughes began circuit-work at Ruthin.

There can be no doubt that there was preparation of mind in Welsh religious life—as elsewhere—for the advent of Wesley's messengers. The theology of Wales was predominantly and strictly Calvinistic; and although the Arianism of the eighteenth century had deeply affected small areas, and had been effectively taught by a few able leaders, Wales as a whole remained faithful to Geneva. A rigid doctrine of election, and of an atonement for the elect only, was generally held by Independent and Methodist; so that the freer, more missionary note of Wesley's theology came as a relief to many.

Owen Davies could not preach in Welsh, though he made himself acquainted with it colloquially. John Hughes was a native of Brecon—Dr. Coke's native town. He was ordained in 1796, and at first laboured in English circuits in Wales. Probably he was the only one available for Welsh work in 1800; at any rate he served his country well both in preaching and in literary productions. John Bryan was set apart to the ministry in 1801, at Leeds. His translations of Wesley's

hymns to Welsh were a great aid in those early years, and are still much in use. The first Welsh Wesleyan chapel was opened at Denbigh in 1802. In 1803 a new circuit was formed, that of Carnarvon; and Edward Jones, with his cousin, John Maurice, were the appointed preachers. In 1816, consequent upon Dr. Coke's death, the grant hitherto made by Conference was withdrawn; and nearly all the Welsh ministers that could preach in English were transferred to English circuits, greatly to the arrest of the work in Wales. The circuits were reduced from twenty-one to twelve, and the number of ministers from forty-eight to thirty-five; these were still further reduced from different causes. But from about 1820 onward the work revived, and the lesson of helping themselves had not been unprofitable. In 1828 Wales was divided into two districts—North and South. At the reunion of the two Mr. Hugh Price Hughes took part at Machynlleth, six years ago. The movement owed much to his patriotic zeal; and as it involves some elements of denominational "home rule"—such as the right of ordination, apart from Conference—it may have far-reaching effects on the future of Wesleyanism in Wales.

Wesleyan Methodism from the first gained more ground in North than South Wales. Perhaps something in the character of the people accounts for this, the South being more impatient of too formal an organisation. Or it may be that previous evangelisation had anticipated their efforts more thoroughly in South Wales. The whole religious history of Wales proves that, while good work may be initiated from without, its development, to attain success, must come largely under the formative genius of the nation itself. Romanism suffered through ignoring this, and so has Anglicanism. But if Wesleyanism has suffered from that or some other cause, and has not taken its place with "the first three," its contributions to Welsh religion have been, and are, of living value.

Other sections of English Methodism are represented in Wales. But as their work is almost exclusively English, and has followed mostly in the wake of English settlers in populous centres, we have not referred to it in a work dealing with Nonconformity from a native and national standpoint.

CHAPTER IX

FUSION OF FORCES

THE older Dissenters, Independent and Baptist, at first hailing the Methodist fathers, then in some cases partly estranged from them, received from the spirit of the movement a great blessing. They regained their missionary zeal. Churches, which had been wasted by Arian influences, came under the sway of evangelistic ideals, and learnt again to believe. That the reaction from Arianism tended to narrow their theological views, is true. Indeed, it is possible that something of Daniel Rowlands' over-anxious zeal for orthodoxy arose from the sight of the damage done to his neighbour, Philip Pugh's churches in Cardiganshire, by Arian controversies. This came to mean that in the first decades of the nineteenth century the battle for a more liberal interpretation of Christian truth had to be fought from within. The Wesleyan teachers had to suffer opposition, and great preachers among the Inde-

pendents — like Williams o'r Wern — had pulpit doors closed against them because of their advocacy of the "new system," which was simply a milder Calvinism than had for some fifty years prevailed.

A colonising movement, initiated during the early years of the nineteenth century among the older Dissenters, proved of abiding value to their increase. Previously they had clung too affectionately to central churches ; but now, moved by a more practical sentiment, they added, one after another, a number of "little Bethels," associated with their historic "Jerusalems." What kind of men took part in this work, and how a touch of heroism redeemed many of these humble beginnings, will best be seen from a concrete instance, as told in a manuscript autobiography of the late Rev. Samuel Bowen, of Macclesfield. When his parents, in Carmarthenshire, removed in 1800 from the neighbourhood of Capel Evan to the parish of Conwil Elvet, there was "hardly one Independent professor of religion in the whole neighbourhood for miles round." They greatly missed their church associations, and the constant ministrations of their pastor—the Rev. Morgan Jones, of Trelech. Mr. Bowen proceeds :—

“ In course of that winter my father hired an old barn at Blaenycloed (being a little more than a mile from his house) for 20s. per annum, for holding public meetings for religious worship—‘prayer meetings,’ for the most part, with an occasional sermon, Mr. M. Jones, his minister, having engaged to visit the place and preach on Sabbath afternoons once in every two months, which in a year or two was changed into monthly visits, and which so continued to the day of his death (I think in 1830). My father was an excellent singer . . . and was remarkable, almost extraordinary, for his gift in prayer. Of these gifts he had at that time, for a season, abundant occasion ; for at many a ‘social’ prayer-meeting he was the only one to sing and pray, there being present to unite and assist only some six or seven old women. On those occasions he often read *twice*, and sang and prayed *thrice*, more or less assisted by the venerable matrons around him. They had never had more than one candle, which candle, rolled up in a piece of paper, he invariably took with him from his own house. I well remember the old barn. In its latter and better days it had been fitted up with several forms *with backs*, a table, a pulpit, and two or three large windows ! In the

following year a church was formed of some twelve or fifteen members.

"One Sunday afternoon, in 1803 or 1804, as Mr. Jones was preaching, great interest was excited, and one young man cried out, 'What must I do to be saved?' It proved the commencement of a revival, and several were added to the church.

"Shortly after this my father, being now full forty years of age, began to preach, and continued to do so at Blaenycloed and other places around, to the day of his death. The church members at my father's death could not be much, if any, under 200; and hardly a house in the district round where there was not family worship, morning and evening, regularly conducted, and a Sunday School of some 200 scholars."

This is a fair sample of how Baptists and Independents immensely strengthened their position some hundred years ago. God gave for that age a remarkable number of gifted ministers who permanently sowed national religion by faithfully and carefully serving a district. Among the Baptists—to mention two characteristic instances only—the influence of Dr. Jenkins, of Hengoed, still prevails in parts of Monmouthshire, and that of J. R. Jones, of Ramoth, in the border district of

Carnarvon and Merioneth. Similarly, among Independents, the influence of Azariah Shadrach, in North Cardiganshire, and that of Dr. Phillips, of Neuaddlwyd, in Mid-Cardigan, are felt to this day. There are other names as great, or even greater, associated with district after district in North and South Wales, whose most lasting monument is the churches they helped to build.

Apart from this district work, the past century had a succession of great preachers of national fame among the four denominations. Three of these are united in indissoluble tradition: Christmas Evans, John Elias, and Williams o'r Wern—Baptist, Calvinistic, Methodist, and Independent respectively. Twice have two brothers, equally famous, been given to two different denominations: Henry Rees and Dr. Owen Thomas to the Calvinistic Methodists, and Dr. William Rees and Dr. John Thomas to the Independents. There are thousands of hearts that still beat warmly to the name of John Jones, Tal y Sarn, and Dr. Thomas Rees, of Swansea; and the voices of John Evans (Eglwysbach), Roberts of Llwynhendy, and Dr. Herber Evans linger like loved melodies in the ears of multitudes; while Dr. Thomas

Charles Edwards holds a place of honour in and outside Wales. And around these stand a great host, "honourable among the thirty," though they may not have "attained to the first three."

The literature of Wales, from the dawn of the last century, has become overwhelmingly Nonconformist. The first Welsh weekly newspaper was started by Dr. William Rees, in 1843, after some brave attempts at fortnightly or monthly newspapers, prominent among which were the efforts of the Rev. Roger Edwards, of Mold: and a succession of ministers has largely sustained the vernacular press till to-day, with constant anxiety and little or no payment. The bulk of the published theology of Wales, in sermons, commentaries, and essays, has been and is Nonconformist. With one or, perhaps, two exceptions, the greatest poetry of the past century has been by Nonconformists. Church music even has passed into the hands of Nonconformist composers; names like Ieuan Gwyllt, Stephens of Tanymarian, J. D. Jones of Ruthin, J. Ambrose Lloyd, and Dr. Joseph Parry are the national names in church-song. It can be safely said that, of the product of the last fifty years, the book that is read in the ingle-nook on a winter's evening, the

melody singing in the heart among springing daisies, the verse that haunts the shepherd's mountain-ways, the passage of eloquence that returns with healing benediction to the sick-room, will be, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the gift of Nonconformity. The only name that really counts in Welsh fiction is that of Daniel Owen; and the Methodist chapel is the centre of his books, as it was of his heart.

The battle of Dissent had to be fought, as we have seen, for a considerable period by Independents and Baptists. Indeed, the colloquial name for Independents—not yet obsolete—was “Dissenters,” and by way of ornament the epithet “dry” was added. When a Baptist minister—Joseph Harris, of Swansea—published the first number of his famous periodical, *Seren Gomer*, in 1814. Dissent found in literature a fervent and eloquent voice. In 1821 the Independents found their instrument in a monthly—still published—called the *Dysgedydd* (Instructor), and from the first its position also was valiantly Nonconformist. The leaders of both denominations, including such names as Dr. Arthur Jones, Christmas Evans, Dr. John Pritchard, the Roberts family of Llan Bryn Mair, Titus Lewis, Jones of Velinvoel,

and David Rees of Llanelly, were foremost in the struggle of early Victorian years either by speech or pen, or both. Then as Methodism became more pronouncedly Nonconformist, powerful allies were found in such leaders as Ebenezer Richard (father of Henry Richard, M.P.), Dr. Lewis Edwards, Roger Edwards, and Thomas Gee.

The stupid attack made on Nonconformist Wales through the Education Commission of 1846 helped to make Methodist and Dissenter one in repelling it. Henceforth the difference wore away until it has all but totally disappeared. We are "all Nonconformists now." The election of 1868 gave Welsh Nonconformity its first sense of political power. Henry Richard became its prophet; ejected farmers, its martyrs. To-day, for the first time, an absolutely united Wales, through its newly-elected county councils, challenges the assault of grabbing bishops unmoved. How many voices have borne witness in lonely valleys, how many appeals have been penned in forgotten pages, how many hearts have secretly bled, how many graves prematurely opened, to secure this assured triumph, none can ever tell.

Dr. Thomas Rees gave the statistics which he had personally collected, or obtained from

denominational publications, in 1861 as follows :—

	Communicants.
Independent	97,647
Calvinistic Methodist	90,560
Baptist	50,903
Wesleyan Methodist	24,395

Mr. Howard Evans has kindly supplied me with the following from the latest sources :—

WELSH NONCONFORMIST STATISTICS.

	Communi- cants.	S. S. Teachers.	S. Scholars.
Congregational... ..	146,225	15,152	149,572
Calvinistic Methodist	144,523	25,684	171,254
Baptist	113,597	11,925	126,154
Wesleyan	47,515	7,589	62,590
Other Methodist bodies	10,157	2,349	20,341
Total... ..	<u>462,017</u>	<u>62,699</u>	<u>529,911</u>

NOTES.

1. The Welsh congregations in England have been deducted.

2. Junior members of Methodist classes are counted where the figures are given—(a) because they are entitled to receive the communion ; (b) because the Church of England counts every boy and girl that has been confirmed.

3. There are thirty-three Unitarian congregations in Wales, but they publish no statistics.

We have seen how this position has been slowly but effectively gained. We have watched the small beginnings; we have caught glimpses of heroic faces in dark hours and lonely places; we have marked the approach of the Puritan, the Independent, and the Methodist, each giving of what God gave him. We have seen something of the interchange of thought and power between older and newer, and the gradual fusion which has made Wales what it is to-day—a land of Nonconformists. Not that the last battle is yet fought. There are local rivalries that should be discouraged, and power of majorities that should be subject to the law of charity. Nor is Wales without its evangelistic question. In many districts the problem of two languages is growing more and more difficult. The elders love their native Welsh; but the younger generation is more familiar with English. Which shall be the language of the chapel? The question is full of difficulties; and each case has its local complications. But this at least should be understood, that no patriotic sentiment, however admirable, should overrule the higher interests of religion. Apart from this difficulty, a kindred problem is that of the increasing flow of English settlers into the

mining valleys. The Methodist "Forward Movement" is an attempt to supply the growing need ; but the extent of the need is serious enough to call for still larger effort.

Nonconformity in Wales has won many a notable victory. At the present moment it stands foremost in the struggle against ecclesiastical reaction. The words of Philip Henry in 1666 are as true in reference to the struggles of to-day against an unjust Act as then : " I know what is said for it, that it is the command of my Superiors, to which I oppose the command of my Supream, saying, Bee not yee y^e Servants of men and call no man Master ; which I then doe when I give a blind Obedience to their Injunctions for the Authority sake of the injoyndrs, rendring mee no reason why or wherefore, but only *sic volo, sic jubeo* ; and to do this in the things of God's worship I conceive to bee sinful."

Let the courage which has helped Nonconformist Wales to take this position carry it still further in providing wisely for its own children, and bringing the stranger within its gates to partake of its own Christian freedom, and to-morrow will affirm the patience of yesterday and the hope of to-day.

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