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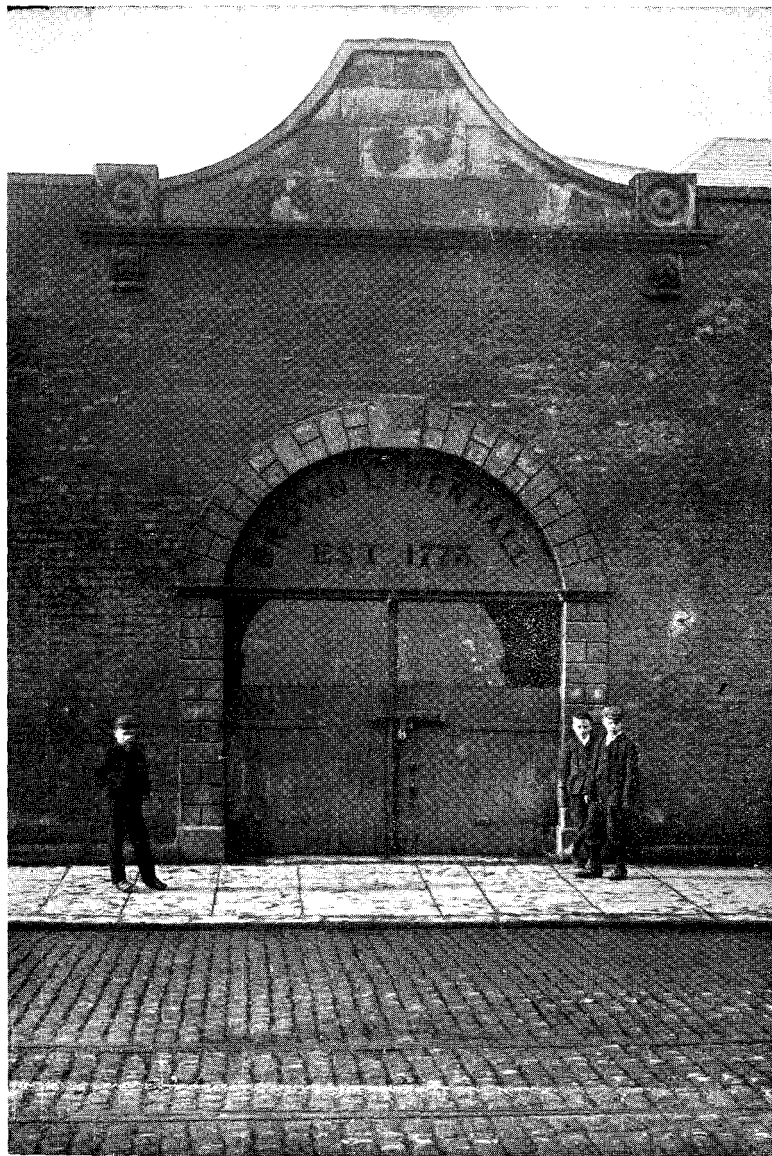
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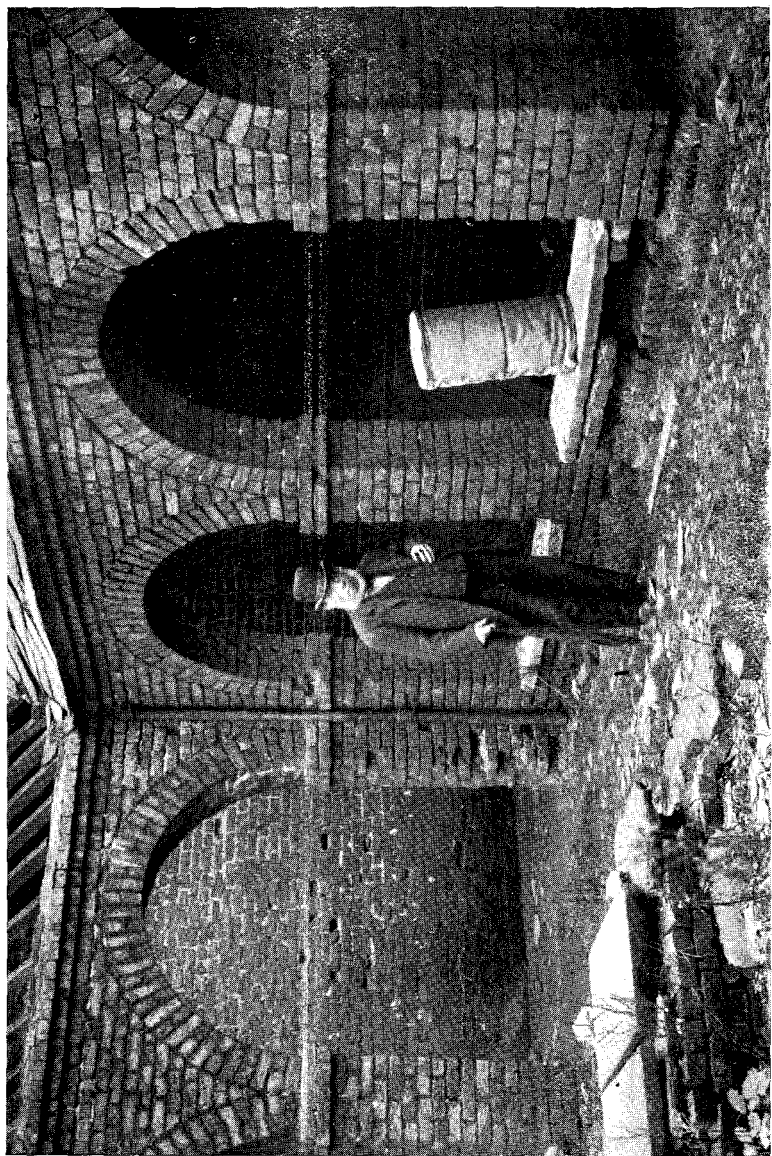
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Photo

OLD BROWN LINEN HALL, BELFAST.

A. R. Hogg



Photo

OLD BROWN LINEN HALL, BELFAST.

A. R. Hogg

JOHN WESLEY IN BELFAST.

With reference to the article on "John Wesley's Belfast," which appeared in the *Proceedings*, vol. xvii, pp. 57-63, I have received, through the courtesy of Mr. Francis J. Cole and Mr. A. H. McKisack, both of Belfast, copy of a letter headed "John Wesley in Belfast," which appeared in the *Northern Whig* of that city, under date of December 3, 1873. The writer of the letter was the Rev. John Scott Porter, M.A. (1801-1880), the distinguished minister of the First Presbyterian (Unitarian) Congregation, Belfast, and an authority in his day on Biblical history and criticism. Particulars of his career are recorded in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Mr. Porter begins his letter by quoting in full the two relative passages in Wesley's *Journal*, June 9, 1787, and June 8, 1789. The first is reproduced here for convenience of reference.

Saturday, June 9, 1787. We went through a lovely country to Antrim. Here, likewise, the Presbyterian Minister offered me the use of a large and commodious house. The Bible in the pulpit lying open, I chose for the subject of my discourse the words which first met my eye, namely, 'When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.' The greatest part of the country from hence to Belfast is likewise exceeding pleasant. At six I preached in the Linen Hall to a numerous and seriously attentive congregation. A gentleman invited me to lodge at his house, and showed me the new Presbyterian meeting house. It is nearly seventy-two feet by fifty, and is far the most beautiful of any I have seen in Ireland; but I doubt whether it equals Dr. Taylor's in Norwich: that is the most elegant I ever saw.

The second extract (June 8, 1789) refers to his preaching in the Rosemary Street Meeting House, which he considered "beautiful in the highest degree." He made another estimate of its dimensions: "It is of an oval form; as I judge by my eye, a hundred feet long, and seventy or eighty broad." As will be seen, however, the previous estimate was more nearly correct. He also mentions that intimation was sent him by the sexton that he could not preach there a second time, "for the crowds had damaged the house and some of them had broke off and carried away the silver which was on the Bible in the pulpit."

Mr. Scott Porter's letter then proceeds:—

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The Presbyterian minister at Antrim who offered Mr. Wesley the use of his "large and commodious house" was probably the Rev. William Brison, who was then pastor of the old congregation in that town, and whose large and comprehensive liberality would induce him to welcome to his pulpit the eminent servant of God who had been so successful a labourer in the great vineyard. I may add from my traditional knowledge of Mr. Brison's character and principles, as well as from the perusal of several of his carefully composed manuscripts, that there are few texts in the Bible on which he would have more loved to dilate, or which he would have more gladly heard discussed by Mr. Wesley than that on which the latter preached—"When they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both."

The Linen Hall in which Mr. Wesley preached in Belfast to a "numerous and seriously attentive congregation" was, beyond a doubt, "the Brown Linen Hall" in Donegall Street, which is capable of containing a very large assemblage of people. The "new Presbyterian Meetinghouse" in Belfast, which Mr. Wesley saw in 1787, and in which he preached in 1789, was unquestionably the Church of the First Presbyterian Congregation in Rosemary Street, of which the Rev. James Crombie, D.D., was at that time minister. It was erected on the site of a former unseemly structure, and was opened for public worship in the year 1783; so that at the time of Mr. Wesley's first visit it was only four years old. The architect was Mr. Roger Mulholland, and his design was so much admired by the Right Rev. Dr. Hervey, Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry, who was a consummate judge of architecture, that, on passing through Belfast, he sent a note to the treasurer of the congregation with a donation of £50 towards the expense of the building. Mr. Wesley has, in another part of his *Journal*, spoken in terms of high admiration of the Octagon Chapel in Norwich, in which the celebrated Dr. John Taylor, author of the *Key to the Apostolic Writings*, and *Concordance to the Hebrew Bible*, then officiated. In the same entry, he regrets Dr. Taylor's deviation from the orthodox theology; but his illustrious follower, and the biographer of his family, the late Dr. Adam Clarke, deemed the *Key to the Apostolic Writings* so valuable that he has incorporated it with his own commentary on the sacred Scriptures. The meetinghouse which Mr. Wesley considered worthy of being compared with Dr. Taylor's must have stood very high in his estimation. In external appearance and in point of commodious arrangement, it has lost nothing since the date of Mr. Wesley's visit: but the attendance is seldom so numerous as it was on that occasion; I can affirm, with perfect sincerity, that I never experienced any difficulty in making my way to the pulpit.

I think Mr. Wesley was misinformed as to the injury done to the pulpit Bible on the occasion of his preaching. So far as I can learn, there never was in that pulpit a Bible bound, clasped, or ornamented with silver: but there is still existing a copy of the Scottish version of the Psalms, printed at Belfast by Patrick Neill, bound in tortoise-shell, with silver back, clasps, and other decorations, which was presented to the congregation in the year 1705 by David Smith, Esq., whose posterity are still among the members of the Church. It may have disappeared for a time, and its loss may have been ascribed to the promiscuous assemblage attracted by Mr. Wesley's fame; but, if so, it was afterwards recovered. I cannot but regret that the use of the

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meeting-house for a second discourse was, for any cause, refused to Mr. Wesley. I am unwilling to believe that the damage done to the building was a mere pretext, and that the real reason was displeasure with some of the sentiments advanced by the preacher in the morning, or dissatisfaction with his conduct in announcing his intention to preach there next day without having obtained the previous permission of the committee. In the last entry, Mr. Wesley over-estimates the dimensions of the church. Internally it measures 72 feet in length by 49 feet 6 inches in breadth.

Yours, &c.,

J. SCOTT PORTER.

Belfast, Dec. 1, 1873.

Mr. Scott Porter was installed as Minister of the First Presbyterian Congregation in Rosemary Street in 1832, and as only 43 years elapsed between this date and that of Wesley's last visit, his views are worth placing on permanent record.

Some further light on the question of the pulpit Bible is available in a letter, dated November 9, 1929, which I had from the late Rev. Alexander Gordon, a former minister of the Church and an eminent authority on Wesley (see *Proceedings* xvii, 60, and xviii, 53-54). Mr. Gordon writes:—

The tortoise-shell Psalm Book was never in use. My impression, derived from G. K. Smith, a descendant of David Smith's family, is that, the edition being practically exhausted, said David had a clean copy gorgeously bound, to be preserved as a rarity.

The historic Bible is a small 4to, leather bound. Mr. Wesley speaks of it as 'the Bible in the pulpit.' This he would only know by hearsay. I suspect it was in the preacher's desk. We still have the folio pulpit Bible then in use.

From this it would appear that it was really the Bible used by the precentor that was damaged.

John Wesley's association with Rosemary Street is not forgotten, for on the 140th anniversary of his visit, on June 9, 1929, Rev. R. Nicol Cross, M.A., who was minister of the Church at that time, preached a sermon in very appreciative terms on the subject: "John Wesley, the Founder of Methodism."

The *Journal* records that Wesley preached in the "Linen Hall" on June 9, 1785, and the *Belfast News Letter* of June 7 to 10, 1785, confirms that this was the Brown Linen Hall, which stood in Donegall Street, where he also preached a second time exactly two years later.

The photos illustrating the old Brown Linen Hall, the site of which is now occupied in part by the warehouse of Messrs. Douglas & Green, were taken by Mr. A. R. Hogg nearly forty years ago, and it is fortunate that these mementoes of Wesley's

visits have been preserved. In regard to the solitary figure standing within the ruined building, it may be explained that this was old John McNicholl of Maghera, who for 40 forty years came regularly from there to establish his claim to the Brown Linen Market. His bale of linen beside him was exposed for sale every Friday. With this old character (known to the youth of the vicinity as "Kruger") the history of the Brown Linen Hall comes to an end.

D. B. BRADSHAW.

WESTLEY HALL AND THE WESLEY FAMILY.

All students of the eighteenth century know that mine of information, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, but not so many are acquainted with *The Westminster Magazine*, *The Monthly and Critical Review*." The number for October, 1774, contains many "Curiosa," as the book catalogue calls them:—an anecdote of Marvell; "Thoughts and Reflections on Various Subjects" (e.g. "Virtue, like the loadstone, can only communicate its properties to susceptible natures," or "*Personne*, in the feminine gender, signifies *somebody*, but in the masculine, *nobody*. So that in France, Women, it seems, are considered as *everything*, and Men as *nothing*." There is an Essay on Infidelity, a Dialogue on Unequal Marriages, Observations on the Oran-Outang as "the Lag of Human-Kind," and exciting news from Boston. But the issue is notable for the publication of a poem by Charles Wesley, 1735.

[The correspondent who sent it also sent a letter which he printed on p. 22 of the current volume of *Proceedings*. The poem is reproduced in Adam Clarke's *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (pp. 518-9). He says the verses were "certainly never designed to be made public."]

It was certainly a remarkably indignant effort on the part of Charles, in the best early eighteenth century manner, and a cross between Dryden and Pope:—

"How fierce thy conflict! How severe thy fight,
When Hell assails the foremost Sons of Light!
When he who long in Virtue's paths hath trod,
Deaf to the voice of Conscience and of God,
Drops the fair masque, proves traitor to his vow—
And thou the temptress, and the tempted thou! . . .

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“ I see the *Saint* in all his charms appear.
By nature, by religion, taught to please,
With conquest flushed, and obstinate to press,
He lifts his virtues in the cause of Hell ;
Heav'n with celestial arms presumes t' assail ;
To veil with semblance fair the fiend within,
And makes his God subservient to his sin.”

Miss Keziah Wesley, “ the other sister whom he first addressed,” is Delia in the poem.

“ Poor injur'd Delia ! All her groans are vain,
Or he denies, or, list'ning, mocks her pain.
What tho' her eyes with ceaseless tears o'erflow,
Her bosom heave with agonizing woe.”

H—ll made “ his crimes and Delia's wrongs complet.”
Could the injured maid

“ Behold him in a Sister's arm—and live ? ”

Charles carries a fine invective to a grand climax :—

“ Sooner shall light in league with darkness join,
Virtue and Vice, and Heav'n and Hell combine,
Than her* pure soul consent to mix with thine ;
To share thy sin, adopt thy *perjury*,
And damn herself to be reveng'd on thee ;
To load her conscience with a Sister's blood ;
The guilt of incest, and the curse of God.”

Perhaps the greatest interest is the correspondent's own comment at the asterisk, which is worth quoting, not merely for its additions to the history of the Wesley family, but for the conclusion of the story about the Rev. Westley Hall, and the writer's estimate of Methodism and Methodists about 1774 :—

“ *The poet was mistaken. The gentle whispers of Love prevailed over the thunder of Verse. The Lady to whom this Epistle was addressed was actually married very shortly after to Mr. H—ll ; and, what is more extraordinary, the other Sister, whom he first vowed and swore eternal love to, was fool enough to accompany the perfidious wretch and his wife to his Curacy, somewhere (if I mistake not) in Wales, with whom she lived for a considerable time. Samuel Wesley, of Tiverton, was highly disgusted at this. He always bore an invincible aversion to H—ll. He was not to be cajoled by specious shows of saintship. In proportion to his pretensions on that score, so proportionately did that astute Student in men and manners abstract from his real merit. In a letter to his brother John, he says, ‘ I am sure, I may well say of *that* marriage, it will not—cannot come to good. I never liked the man from the first time I saw him. His smoothness never suited my roughness. He appeared always to dread me as a wit and a jester, like Rivington. This, with me, is a sure sign of guilt and hypocrisy. He never could meet my eye in full light. Conscious that there was something foul at bottom, he was afraid I should see it, if I looked keenly into his eye.—Charles sends me a bad account, indeed ! If you will allow *Kezzy* what was proposed,

I will take her with me. Thus she will be delivered from discontent perhaps, or a worse passion.'

This H—ll, if my intelligence be right, was afterwards settled in a small parish near Salisbury. There, indeed, *he put the angel off, and stood confest*,—the most artful of villains, to betray the innocent, and the most infamous, to defend his guilt. He adopted a system of Fatalism suited rather to inclination than reason; and consoling himself with the fond ideas of an *universal Restitution*, as the consequence of an universal Preordination, which, depriving man of the freedom of his will, at once destroys his accountableness for any of his actions; he boldly struck at the very root of the most sacred and moral obligations, turned a second time traitor to woman, abandon'd his wife and family to want and shame, and went off with his servant-girl.

Some years afterwards he returned under a new character. His red cloak, sword, and cane, were the badges of it; and *opijer per orbem* was a title that apologized for his importance. In what capacity he shone most, or whether souls or bodies owe most to his skill, I shall not pretend to determine. All I know is, that he had taken up a very wrong trade, and found it necessary to try the old one again. He had some hopes that his bankruptcy had been forgotten; or else, that he could coax the people into an opinion of his having a fresh flock to begin upon. His scheme answered in one respect, but not in another. He found his name in the *black list* of the Church, and he could get no Bishop to erase it out.

But he was not long at a loss what to do. He knew Methodism to be a sink which swallows up the dregs of Divinity. Thither he tended by a strong sympathetic impulse; and having flounder'd in that muddy fount some time, to gather a sufficient quantity of its filthy and black materials to qualify him for his office, he staggered forth a Preacher to debauch and intoxicate souls, being now too old and feeble to do anything else. Thus, as a Poet turn'd sour for want of praise, frequently becomes an ill-natured Critic, so a Rake turned an enthusiast for want of sense, frequently becomes a Methodist Preacher; and as in one character, so in the other, fitly verifies the remark of Horace, that

Stulti in contraria currunt."

John Wesley answered an angry letter from Westley Hall in 1743.—"Alas, my brother! Who will tell you the plain truth? You are a weak, injudicious, fickle, irresolute man, deeply enthusiastic and highly opiniated of yourself, and therefore a fit tool for those who apply to your weak side, vanity. . . . For you may remember you fathered all upon God! You then jilted one of my sisters and married the other; and all was by inspiration still. Your life has been one blunder ever since. I pray God give you a sound mind." In 1761 he wrote to Charles: "Is it right that my sister Patty should suffer Mr. Hall to live with her? I almost scruple giving her the sacrament, seeing he does not even pretend to denounce Betty Rogers." . . .

What a meeting place of doomed ideas and the new-born is this Magazine! There is a list of Old Bailey death sentences, beginning with "John Coleby and Charles Jones for breaking

and entering the dwelling house of Lancelot Keatt and stealing some goods," down to "William Lane and Samuel Trotman for assaulting William Floyd on the highway in the Knightsbridge Coach and robbing him of 2s. and upwards in silver." Close by are the caustic book notices, where Arthur Young's *Political Arithmetic* is "Curious, sensible and judicious," Dr. Johnson's *The Patriot*, where "manly, philosophical reflections are conspicuous in every line of this temporary trifle," and *A Paraphrase on the General Epistle of St. James*, by Cornelius Murdin, *is.*, is dismissed as "Methodistical," and *Thoughts upon Slavery*, by John Wesley (8vo. 1s. Hawes), is "A severe and spirited attack upon the Slave Trade, which reflects equal honour upon Mr. Wesley's humanity and ability." But *A Supplement to Mr. Wesley's Pamphlet on Slavery* is "Silly—Nihil ad Dionysium."

STAMP.

VICTORY PURDY.

A HERO OF THE 18TH CENTURY RELIGIOUS
REVIVAL.

By F. A. WILSHIRE (RECORDER OF BRIDGWATER).

In the early part of the eighteenth century England stood first in the world in Arms, Science, and Literature. This proud position was achieved by the victories of the Duke of Marlborough which destroyed for ever the ambition of Louis XIV to be Dictator of Europe; by the scientific speculations of Sir Isaac Newton, whose *Principia* and John Locke's famous *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* were discussed by the Universities and educated people; and the writings of Pope, Swift, Addison and Steele. Yet England was irreligious and depraved. Eminent statesmen of the time scoffed at Christianity. Generally, the educated classes were unbelievers. The masses of the people were ignorant and brutal in their habits. Montesquieu on his return to France from a stay in England, said:

"In England if one talks of Religion everyone laughs."

Green in his *History of the English People* says:

"England remained at heart religious. In the middle class the old Puritan spirit lived on unchanged, and it was from this class that a religious revival burst forth which changed after a time the whole tone of English society."

The 18th century opened in moral darkness ; but, thanks to the religious Revival, it closed in a blaze of evangelical light. The two major events in Europe in the 18th century were that Revival and the French Revolution. There can be no reasonable doubt that had it not been for that Revival, England would have had a Revolution.

It is not within the scope of this article to discuss the cause of the religious indifference of this period. This subject is dealt with in an exhaustive and brilliant way by Elie Halévy in his *A History of the English People in 1815*, published in the Pelican books, volume three.

This was the England which impelled John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield to begin the Revival. Under God's blessing they did wonders. But they could not have accomplished their work unless they had been supported and helped by noble men and women whose names are forgotten.

Charles Reade begins *The Cloister and the Hearth* with these words :—

“ Not a day passes over the earth but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words, and suffer noble sorrows. Of these obscure heroes, philosophers and martyrs, the greater part will never be known till that hour, when many that are great shall be small, and the small great.”

It is about one of those “ obscure heroes ” this article is written, one Victory Purdy.

The writer is indebted for his information to the anonymous author of a short book, published in 1825, entitled, *Poetical Miscellanies by the late Victory Purdy with A Life of the Untutored Author*;¹ also to a manuscript book, in the writing of Victory Purdy in the possession of Harold Purdy, a descendant ; and to the writer's great-grandfather, John Shallard, who knew Victory Purdy.

At the pressing invitation of George Whitefield, John Wesley in March, 1739, decided to visit Bristol. The man who accompanied him on that historic ride, surely one of the greatest rides in all history, was John Purdy, a native of Durham. John Purdy remained in Bristol, and was one of Wesley's earliest preachers.

1. Mr. Telford refers to *Some Account of the Life, Ministry and Writings of Victory Purdy, the Kingswood Collier, who for upwards of half a century gratuitously, and with unremitting zeal, preached the Gospel to the Poor*. Mr. Wilshire has not seen this book, and would be grateful to any one who could enable him to do so. F.F.B.

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In a letter written by John Wesley in London on February 1, 1784,² to Victory Purdy he said :—

My Dear Brother,

Your father was one of our first Society, which met at Fetter Lane, and one of the first that found peace with God. When it was thought best that I should go to Bristol, we spent a considerable time in prayer, and then cast lots who should accompany me thither. The lot fell upon him; and he was with me day and night, till he judged it proper to marry. But I had no curiosity; so that I scarce ever asked him a question concerning his parents, birth, or former way of life. I first saw him when he came to Fetter Lane and desired to be admitted into the Society. He was a man of eminent integrity and simplicity, "fervent in zeal and warm in charity"; both in his spirit and behaviour greatly resembling Joseph Bradford. Be you a follower of him, as he was of Christ.

I am,

Your affectionate Brother,
JOHN WESLEY.

To

Mr. Victory Purdy,
At the New Room
in Bristol.

This letter was in reply to an enquiry by Victory Purdy about the history of his father.

One day in the year 1747, John Purdy went to the small village of Rangeworthy in Gloucestershire, about 12 miles from Bristol, to hold an open-air service. A mob collected, plentifully supplied with rotten eggs, stones and other missiles with which they threatened the preacher if he held the meeting. But John Purdy was not daunted. He engaged in prayer, and read and explained a chapter from the Bible. The people were impressed by his courage and his persuasive manner, and instead of using violence the crowd listened in silence, and John Purdy had the satisfaction of seeing many converted.

When he reached his home in the parish of St. Philip, in Bristol, to his joy he found that his wife had given birth during his absence to a boy. With his recent experience at Rangeworthy in his mind Purdy said :—

"Then his name shall be called Victory: for this day the Lord hath given me the victory."

And that is how our hero was named Victory. No more suitable name could have been chosen, and no man ever deserved the name of Victory better than Victory Purdy.

2. See *Standard Letters*, vii, 208. Mr. Telford's note states that John Purdy's birthplace was Bladon, four miles from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This is undoubtedly Blaydon in the County of Durham, on the south side of the river. Bladon is the spelling used by Victory Purdy, depending very likely upon oral tradition. F.F.B.

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He was brought up in a religious home, and in the atmosphere of the Bible and family prayer. It is no wonder, therefore, that at the tender age of five years he showed great interest in religion. He would frequently ask his father a variety of questions about the Bible stories he heard his parents read, and they noticed with great joy that the child often engaged in prayer.

In 1759 his father died, and shortly after he lost his mother. So, when he was twelve years of age, Victory Purdy became an orphan. At this time it was his practice to attend religious meetings, and pray for blessings for others and himself.

He was self-educated. A contemporary wrote of him :

"In the course of a long life, he had diligently read and studied some of the best writers upon ancient and modern history, upon geography, astronomy and various branches of philosophy ; and what by the most patient industry he had learned from these, he brought to bear in such a happy manner upon his illustrations of the sacred volume, that he frequently not only delighted, but astonished his audience."

He wrote a neat hand, and acquired skill in figures. During this time he was working in a Kingswood colliery. He also worked for a period as a cooper, and a labourer in a stone quarry.

Victory Purdy preached his first sermon in the year 1771, at the village of Kendleshire³ about six miles from Brisol. Thus he began a preaching crusade which lasted fifty-one years. In a short time he came under the notice of John Wesley, who placed his name on trial in the *Minutes* of the Methodist Conference, 1773. He was sent to the North Wiltshire Circuit as an itinerant preacher. Here he met with many discouragements, and, being very nervous about his suitability for the work, he returned home, and engaged in his old employment. He resolved to devote his spare time to preaching the Gospel. This he did to the end of his life.

After working hard all day he walked frequently many miles to preach in out-of-the-way places where the Gospel was never heard. On Sundays it was his pleasure to walk on this errand ten, fifteen, twenty, and even thirty miles.

"No inclemency of weather prevented him from pursuing his labours : and for the last twenty years (until his health was impaired) he preached once, twice or thrice every Lord's day."

3. In *Proceedings* v, 126, the Rev. H. J. Foster contributed a topographical note on Kendalshire near Bristol. This is the spelling in the *Journal*, but Mr. Wilshire states that Kendleshire is the correct spelling.

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He kept a diary from the year 1781 down to June 9, 1822, in which he recorded every place where he preached and every text. He was a very reliable man, and careful in all he said and wrote. This record shows that during that period of forty-one years he preached 2,882 sermons, travelled about 22,896 miles, chiefly on foot, and, by way of recreation, wrote 1,853 hymns, and a great variety of miscellaneous pieces in prose and verse. Before he began this diary he had been preaching ten years. If these ten years are averaged with the forty-one years, it will be found that as a minister of the Gospel he preached 3,350 sermons, and, to do this travelled some 27,639 miles,—nearly 3000 miles more than the circumference of the Earth. In 1802 he wrote 104 hymns on the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Notwithstanding this physical and mental exertion for a period of twenty years he was not prevented by sickness or any other cause from preaching every Sunday.

His greatest year was 1803, when he preached 128 times, and travelled 900 miles. He carried the Gospel into hamlets where there was no place of worship, and to people who were ignorant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By his zeal he induced many young men to become preachers.

The natural gifts of Victory Purdy as a preacher of the Gospel were extraordinary. He had a strong understanding, and a good memory which he took pains to store with a fund of useful information from various sources, especially from the scriptures. The Bible was his delight, his comfort, and his inseparable companion. It may aptly be said of him: "In the law of the Lord did he meditate both day and night."

According to his diary he had read the Old and New Testaments regularly and carefully through no less than forty times, and had got as far as Isaiah on the forty-first when death put an end to his reading. In the year 1821, when he was 74 years of age, he read the Bible from cover to cover four times. In 1822 his diary stated:

January 27th. Finished the Bible the 39th time.

„ 28th. Began the Bible the 40th time.

March 31st. Ended the Bible the 40th time.

This wonderful record shows that Purdy read the whole of the Bible in nine weeks.

Purdy was very thorough in everything he undertook. He did not read the Bible in a perfunctory manner. He knew it thoroughly. Sometimes he quoted from one hundred to two hundred passages of scripture in the course of a sermon from

memory, giving the exact chapter and verse where each might be found. He was called "The walking Bible." As with the Puritans,

"It was his book of reference upon every occasion; with him it decided every controversy, removed every doubt, established every principle, purified every motive, regulated every temper, guided every step."

On one occasion he submitted to a friend a paper he had written for the Press. His friend pointed out what he thought was an ungrammatical expression. Immediately, Purdy quoted a passage of scripture in which the same expression occurred.

A relative asked him by what means he had become so well acquainted with the Bible. Purdy replied: "Samuel, go and read the Bible through twelve times on your knees as I have done, and then you may know something about it."

He did not confine his reading to the Bible; he also read history and philosophy. After his death his friends were surprised to find he had so few books. The explanation was that he was poor and could not afford to buy and keep them. With the spare money he had he bought books, and, having read them, sold them and bought others.

This wonderful man worked long hours daily, and, as has been noted, was incessant and tireless in his religious duties, yet found time, in his 37th year, to study Greek to enable him to read the New Testament in that language.

He had little money to spend on clothes. His diary dated December 28, 1783, is instructive on this. It states: "This year the Rev. John Wesley gave a me suit of clothes."

One day a lady and gentleman chanced to be present at a place where Purdy was preaching. They formed a poor opinion of him because of his clothes. But they remained, and were astonished at his memory, precision, elocution, spirituality, fervour and devotion. They thought that he was some famous man in disguise. When the service was over they enquired who the extraordinary man was, and were informed that it was "Victory Purdy, the Kingswood Collier." "A collier!" exclaimed the gentleman, "A collier! Why he ought to be a bishop."

As a man he was admired and loved by all who knew him. One who was well acquainted with him said:

"I never saw him out of temper for thirty years. I lived under the same roof with him. I never knew him upon returning home from labour, or from religious duties, to sit down in his house without first retiring to his closet to thank the Lord for His protection and blessing going out and coming in."

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“He always closed his worldly affairs on the Saturday night, and began the Sabbath very early with the Lord.”

A favourite quotation of his was : “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day ; the night cometh, when no man can work.”

The following extract from Purdy's diary, dated December 30, 1781, gives a good idea of what the itinerant preachers had to endure :

“Preached at Hanham. I had a very uncomfortable journey. It rained almost all the way from my house, which is, I suppose near four miles. The rain drove directly in my face and wetted me to the skin. My feet and legs were particularly wet, yet I went to the meeting, and found a degree of liberty in preaching, and returned home before I pulled off my wet clothes. Through the Divine protection I caught no cold nor harm of any kind that I know of.”

Early in 1822 Victory Purdy formed his preaching plans for April, May and June. Up to June 16 he carried out his engagements with his accustomed punctuality and regularity. On that day he preached his last sermon at Rose Green, St. George, Bristol, where John Wesley began his field preaching on April 2, 1739.

The following Sunday, June 23, he set out for the “Colliers' Temple,” Kingswood, Bristol, with the intention of preaching at 10.30. He had nearly reached the place when he was taken seriously ill, and had to return home. He became gradually worse. He knew his end was near, but he was in no way depressed. Looking upon his surrounding family, he said to them :

“I have nothing to boast of. I am a sinner saved by Grace. If you would all meet me in heaven get into Christ, and abide in Him.”

A relation who was with him to the end said :

“While he uttered these and similar expressions of strong and unshaken confidence, his soul was truly calm and composed, the utmost sincerity not only appeared to pervade his mind, but also to sit upon his countenance. In this peaceful and happy state he continued, rejoicing in God, and occasionally exhorting his family till a little before 6.00 on Friday morning, June 28, 1822, he passed away.”

On July 2, 1822, he was buried in Stapleton churchyard, Bristol ; but there is no stone or memorial of any sort to show where he lies.

“And some there be, which have no memorial ; who are perished as though they had never been.”

It is hoped to place a tablet in the Parish Church of Stapleton. The Rector, the Rev. J. E. Staley, is keenly interested, and he has suggested the following inscription :



TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN MEMORY OF
VICTORY PURDY.

Born at St. Philips, Bristol, in 1747.
Died June 28th, 1822, at Stapleton.
His remains lie in the adjoining churchyard.
For over 50 years he laboured in Bristol and
District as one of John Wesley's lay preachers.

This tablet was set up in the year
1939, the bi-centenary of the
beginning of the Field Preaching of
George Whitefield and John Wesley.

As a member of the English Bar, and one of His Majesty's
Recorders, the writer deems it an honour and privilege to write
and speak of the "obscure hero," Victory Purdy.

The words spoken by Mark Antony of Brutus in *Julius*
Cæsar, may be aptly applied to Victory Purdy :

"His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world 'This was a man'!"

F. A. WILSHIRE.

EARLY METHODISM IN NORTHWICH.

It has been my privilege to write for the *Proceedings* at various
times a number of articles on the early history of Methodism in
various places in which I have been interested, and I have been
able to incorporate information which has resulted from research
on the spot. The ancient salt town of Northwich, in Cheshire,
appears to me to be a suitable subject for another such study.
The historian has a clear field, for I can only trace a somewhat
inadequate article written in a popular style which appeared in the

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Methodist Recorder over thirty years ago.¹

The story of Methodism in Northwich begins at Booth Bank, a little hamlet just off the main Altrincham to Northwich road, not far from Rostherne Mere. Here there lived a worthy couple named John and Alice Cross. They entered upon the tenancy of a cottage at Booth Bank on the estate of Sir John Chetwode in 1744. Alice Cross had already joined the Methodists, and she soon devoted her energies towards the conversion of her husband. "John Cross," said she, "wilt thou go to heaven with me? If not, I am determined not to go to hell with thee." Her decision was final, and as a result her husband soon became converted. The Methodist preachers were gladly received into their humble home, a pulpit was fixed in their largest room, a Methodist Society was formed and Alice became the leader.

One is tempted to relate some of the delightful stories which are told of this worthy couple. They are, however, to be found elsewhere, and the references are given below.² John Wesley first visited John and Alice Cross at Booth Bank in 1747, and speaks of the little Society which met in their house as "a quiet and loving people." He visited them again on several occasions; indeed, their house was for generations the happy home of Methodist preachers. It may be added that their son Thomas followed in their footsteps, and their grandson John. In fact, for many years the home of the Crosses at Booth Bank became the centre of Methodist activity in these parts. A little chapel was later built in the village, and when it celebrated its centenary a few years ago, a tablet was placed on the outside wall, stating in outline the history of this remarkable place.³

In 1752, the first Methodist Quarterly Meeting to be held in Cheshire was held at the home of John and Alice Cross at Booth Bank.⁴ There is preserved in the strong room at the offices of the Chapel Committee in Manchester a very old account book of the transactions of those early days. I have had the privilege of inspecting this old volume. It has frequently been quoted (e.g.,

1. It may be mentioned that complete files of the *Watchman* and the *Methodist Recorder* are preserved in the library at Didsbury College. I am indebted to the Rev. C. J. Wright, Ph. D., for introducing me to them.

2. See *Methodist Magazine*, 1843, p. 26; Tyerman's *Life and Times of John Wesley*, i. 546.

3. A photograph of the home of the Crosses appears in the Standard Edition of the *Journal*, iii. 297.

4. For a discussion as to whether this was the first Quarterly Meeting ever to be held in Methodism, see *Methodist Magazine*, 1843, p. 376, and *Proceedings*, vii. 78.

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in Bretherton's *Early Methodism in and around Chester*, p. 35, and in *Methodist Magazine*, 1843, p. 380), but never in the pages of our *Proceedings*. The first page is headed:

A True Account of the Money Bro^d in by the Stewards from Each Society in the Manchester Round: for the use of the Preachers, and for y^e discharging of Necessary Expence.
 April y^e 20, 1752.

The items on the income side for that first Quarterly Meeting are as follows:

Chester	Jon ^h . Pritchard	12/-
Alraham	Ric ^d . Cawley	12/-
Acton	W ^m . Davison	7/-
Boothbank	Jo ⁿ . Cross	10/11
Oldfield Brow	William Johnson	8/-
Davyhulme	Robert Haywood	15/-
Shackerley	Jo ⁿ . Hampson	4/-
Bolton	George Eskrick	8/2
Bank House	James Schofield	8/-
Asbury	Jo ^b . Booth	5/6
Manchester	Ric ^d . Barlow	£2/3/5
Gadbrook	Mary Webster	6/-

For us, there is one name in that list of Societies that stands out more prominently than the rest. It is the name of Gadbrook.* And here our story comes a little nearer home,

Gadbrook Farm, three miles from Northwich (on the Roman Road, known as "King Street," leading out to Middlewich), was at that time occupied by the family of Kinsey, who had removed there from Ollerton, near Knutsford, in 1737. They had two sons, George, born in 1731, and Ralph, born in 1733. As we have already seen, the Methodist preachers first visited Booth Bank about 1747. Ralph Kinsey went to hear them, as a lad of about fourteen years of age. Frequently he would walk to Booth Bank (a distance of ten miles), at the end of a hard day's work, in order to listen to the Methodist preachers. His brother George began to attend also. Both of them were soundly converted and joined the Methodist Society. About the year 1750, they invited the Methodist preachers to visit Gadbrook, and thus began the Society which was destined later to move to Northwich. The whole

5. It has hitherto been quoted as "Kadbrook." A close examination of the book leaves no doubt in my mind that "Gadbrook" was actually written. In the Standard Edition of the *Journal* the name is given as "Gadsbrook;" this again needs to be corrected.

Kinsey family was converted, as well as many of the neighbours. There is a tradition that John Wesley preached at Gadbrook, but like so many other similar traditions, it cannot be verified from his *Journal*.

About 1755, Ralph Kinsey removed to Little Leigh (about five miles on the other side of Northwich) to become the bailiff for a Mr. Daniel Barker, of whom we shall hear more presently. His brother George remained at Gadbrook, and his home became the centre of Methodist activity in this locality.⁶

In the account book preserved at Manchester, to which reference has already been made, Gadbrook appears regularly as sending contributions to the Quarterly Meeting until December, 1760, when it becomes "Northwich and Gadbrook," sending 17/3 by the hands of a James Beamen. It was in this year, 1760, that the Methodist preaching was removed to Northwich. Such removal came about on this wise. Since the beginning of the 18th century there had been a number of Congregationalists worshipping in Northwich, and in 1720 they had built a chapel in Crown Street. About 1760 their numbers had declined to such an extent that they had to discontinue their services, and they let their chapel to the Methodists for the sum of £6 per annum. Wesley refers to this little chapel in his *Journal*, under date August 3, 1762. He writes, "I was desired to preach at Northwich, and one had stuck up notices in all parts of the town. But what place had they for me to preach in? Only a little room which would hold about fifty people."

The arrangement between the Congregationalists and the Methodists only persisted for six years, however, and in 1766 the Congregationalists resumed possession of their chapel, leaving the Methodists homeless once again. The services had therefore to be held in private houses, and anywhere else where accommodation could be found.

At this time Northwich was included in what was called the Lancashire Circuit, which was a much smaller edition of the former Cheshire Round. Even so, it included the whole of Lancashire and a considerable part of Cheshire. This huge Circuit had at this time 1742 members, and the four preachers appointed to it would only occasionally be seen in Northwich. We cannot tell now to what extent Methodism had spread to this locality by the year we have now reached in our story. In the

6. A memoir of Ralph Kinsey appears in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1817, p. 929; and of George Kinsey in 1830, p. 857.

account book to which reference has already been twice made, Little Leigh appears as first sending contributions in 1761, Whitley in 1762, and Great Budworth in May, 1763. Probably these were the only places in the locality, in addition to Northwich, at which Methodist Societies had been established at this time.⁷

The persecut¹on which the Northwich Methodists endured was considerable. But, as ever, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church, and the Society prospered to such an extent that by 1770 there was already talk of building a Methodist chapel in Northwich. A site was given by Mr. Daniel Barker, of Little Leigh, who also gave a subscription of £300. Mr. Joseph Janion, of Park Side Farm, Aston,⁸ also gave generous support, and in 1774 the foundation stones of the first Methodist chapel in Northwich were laid. It may be added that Mr. Daniel Barker was for many years the mainstay of the little Society at Little Leigh. John Wesley visited him there once or twice, and in April, 1777, found him "just tottering over the great gulf." Mr. Barker died two days before Christmas, 1777, and his grave-stone, presumably removed from the place where his remains rest, has been placed in the garden at the front of our London Road Chapel, where it is to be seen to this day.

To return to the building of the Northwich Chapel. At the Conference of 1774, one of the three preachers appointed to the Liverpool Circuit (which then included Northwich) was Samuel Bradburn. This was his first year as a travelling preacher, but some months previous, armed with a letter of recommendation from John Wesley, he had gone to London to beg money for a new Chapel at Wigan. He was so successful that early in 1775 he was instructed to go to London again, this time to beg money for the new chapel at Northwich. In company with Mr. Hampson (an old preacher who was also a class leader at Little Leigh), Bradburn left for London on January 9, 1775. They met with a friendly reception in the metropolis, but this second visit does not seem to have been as successful as the former one. On his return home at the end of the month, Bradburn writes: "Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, that I am safe in my Circuit again. Collecting money for preaching houses is not my business."⁹

7. An interesting account of Methodist work in Great Budworth in later years is given in *Methodist Magazine*, 1844, p. 891.

8. A memoir of Joseph Janion will be found in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1840, p. 810.

9. Blanshard's *Life of Samuel Bradburn*, p. 46.

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At length the new chapel was completed and ready for opening. On Tuesday, March 21, 1775, John Wesley rode over from Macclesfield to Northwich, and in the evening he opened the new chapel in Leftwich. He writes in his *Journal*: "In the evening I opened the new house at Northwich, which was sufficiently crowded both this night and the next."¹⁰

The next twenty years of Northwich Methodism are wrapped in obscurity. No documents relating to that period can be traced. There is still preserved in the Circuit safe, however, the earliest existing account book for the Northwich Society and Circuit. It begins in 1793 for the Society and in 1798 for the Circuit. We find that in the first quarter of 1793 there were six Society classes meeting, the leaders being:

John Hewitt	William Humphreys
William James	Thomas Shuttleworth
Christopher Holford	James Holford

with a total class and ticket money for the quarter of £4 16s. 8d. There were at this time 475 members in the Northwich Circuit, as it was now called. In 1797 there were ten classes, in the charge of the following leaders:

James Holford	Christopher Holford
John Harrison	Thomas Millington ¹¹
Daniel Ball	Robert Johnson
William Wells	Ralph Garner
James Bradshaw (who later built a house for the senior preacher in Witton Street).	

John Perryn (who later became the chapel keeper).

The class moneys had increased to £5 11s. 2d. At this time the preacher was receiving £3 13s. 6d. per quarter as 'quarterage,' and 9/- per week for 'preacher's board,' in addition to coals and candles. The board had recently been raised from 7/6 per week to 9/-. The total cash allowance to the preacher was therefore £34 4s. per annum. There were at this time two preachers in the Northwich Circuit. One of them, I think, lived at Warrington.

The Northwich preacher lived in a rented house,—situation unknown,—the rental of which was £7 per year. The chapel keeper was one Alice Rogerson, who received remuneration at the rate of 5/- per quarter. At the end of 1797, Alice Rogerson

10. This Chapel continued to be used until 1889. The present Chapel, in London Road, celebrates its Jubilee this year.

11. A brief appreciation of Thomas Millington will be found in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1838, p. 958. He succeeded George Kinsey as the tenant of Gadbrook Farm.

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was succeeded as chapel keeper by John Perryn, and, as so often happens when a new chapel keeper is appointed, the quarterly salary was raised to 6/6. Occasionally other help had to be secured, as in 1795, when John Hazelhurst was paid 2/- for "cleaning the chapel after the flood."

By a happy chance, from one page of this old book we are able to discover the extent of the Northwich Circuit in the year 1798. In that year there is detailed the amounts sent to the Quarter Board from each place in the Circuit, and the statement reads as follows :

Northwich	£3 15s. 6d.	Middlewich	£1 2s. 6d.
Woodhouses	7/-	Nook	16/6
Booth Bank	11/6	Acton Bridge	7/6
Warrington	£2	Lymm Ticket	
Mouldsworth		Money	1/-
Ticket Money	2/-	Knutsford	£1 15s. od.
Whitley	15/-	Runcorn	£1 1s. od.
Northwood	5/6	Kingsley	10/-
Comberbach	5/-	Frodsham	£1 1s. od.
Preston Brook	£1 1. od.	Budworth	3/-
Barnton	5/5	Witton Brow	2/-
Lostock	4/2	Wincham	10/-

It must be remembered that in most of these places the Societies were meeting in private houses or similar places. At this time the only chapels which had been erected were at Northwich, Warrington, Kingsley, Knutsford and Norley. It must also be remembered that in all probability the above list of Societies is far from complete. We know, for example, that a Society had been formed at Norley about 1777, and a chapel built there two years later. There is also no mention in the list of Little Leigh, where, as we have seen, there was a Society. It will be realised that the story of these early days is very fragmentary.¹²

The next list of Societies does not appear until eight years later, in 1806. All the places already mentioned we find still in existence at this later period, together with the addition of Forest, and Rowstern and Merestown, as it is described in the account book. This represents a Society at Rostherne. And so, with very little variation, the Circuit continued until 1812, when Warrington was constituted a separate Circuit, taking with it the

12. I have identified all these places except Nook. All my efforts to trace this Society have failed.

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Societies at Runcorn, Lymm, Northwood, Whitley, Preston Brook, Booth Bank and Nook.¹³

The perusal of these old books is of infinite interest. We learn, for example, that candles were 9d. per pound, that coal could be bought at just under 10/- per ton, but the carting of it cost 2/7, and "getting in" 6d. Beef and mutton cost 6d. per pound, and four pairs of snuffers for the candles involved the stewards in an expenditure of 1/6. "Bad silver" is a frequent entry. The stewards had to pay 3/- window tax, though whether on the chapel or the preacher's house it is impossible to say. It also cost 8/6 to clean the chapel windows.

In 1798 the stewards bought a clock for the preacher's house. It cost them £2 3s. 6d. It seems to have been dear at the price, for there are half-a-dozen entries within as many years, "To repairing the clock 1/-"; "to a hand and repairing the clock, 2/-." We gather that the local clock repairer was one John Heywood, for in 1803 there is a receipt signed by him (and pinned into the account book) for a new key which he had fitted to this self-same clock.

And so we must regretfully leave these early Northwich Methodists. Our problems are different from theirs, as are the times in which we live. Whether times have changed for better or worse, the reader will perhaps be able to judge if we close by quoting the very first entry in the steward's account book:

March 26, 1798.

To Beer for the Quarter Day. 4/9.

WESLEY F. SWIFT.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

789. WESLEY'S TURNPIKES.—In a famous passage Mr. Augustine Birrell says of Wesley, "He paid more turnpikes than any man who ever bestrode a beast." I wonder is Mr. Birrell correct in this statement, and would be glad to have any corroboration or contradiction of it. A correspondent in a recent number of *Notes & Queries* (p. 121, August, 13, 1938) says that ministers of religion proceeding to or from their duties enjoyed legal exemption from the tolls, at least in Staffordshire.

13. The area represented by the list of Societies above is now covered by seven Circuits, viz., Northwich, Warrington, Altrincham, Tarporley, Alderley Edge, Runcorn and Frodsham.

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A report from an old copy of the *Leek Times* tells how in the year 1835 the toll-gate keeper at Leek Edge was summoned for charging the Rev. J. E. Moulton of Leek, father of the Rev. Dr. Moulton, President of the Wesleyan Conference, the sum of three pence, as double toll, when he was proceeding to discharge his ministerial duties of the Sabbath Day, and had claimed exemption on that ground. After hearing both sides, the magistrates decided that the claim to exemption was fully established, and decided accordingly, ordering the collector to pay costs. Ten years later a similar case arose in the same neighbourhood, and the claim to exemption was upheld. The magistrates could not very well have done anything else in view of the section of the Turnpikes Road Act of 1822; section 32 of this voluminous Act exempted from Tolls horses and carriages going to or returning from Church or attending funerals. It also exempted from all tolls ministers attending to their duties. At first sight it seems, therefore, as if this right of exemption dated only from 1822 in the reign of George IV, and so could not possibly have applied to Wesley. But the 1822 Act is a unifying and cumulative Act. It gathers up, for example, in its preamble, sixteen Acts of the previous reign and repeals them. Most of these were local Acts for the purpose of particular localities and thoroughfares, but the matter is left at least in some doubt whether it was not the custom on all or many Turnpike Roads to allow ministers of religion a free passage. Is there any evidence on this score.—*Rev. R. Lee Cole.*

[Pending an answer from some legal expert, may I state a personal recollection? About fifty years ago I walked once or twice from Colwyn Bay to preach at Conway. My recollection is that I enjoyed the privilege of crossing the bridge without payment because of the purpose of my journey. I do not know the present position.—*F.F.B.*]

790. THE REV. RICHARD GREEN'S COLLECTION.—Our older members will remember with what skill and enthusiasm Mr. Green devoted himself to acquiring first editions of the publications of John and Charles Wesley. I remember their serried ranks in a special bookcase. Mr. Green succeeded so well in his enterprise, that in the preface to his invaluable bibliography he was able to speak of the collection as almost complete.

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Mr. Green, who was the founder of the W.H.S., died in 1907. His collection was given in 1921 to Victoria University Library, Toronto, by Sir John Eaton. There it is one of the Library's most valued possessions.

The Victoria Library has recently begun to publish a Bulletin. The four-page leaflet forming part 3 of volume I has been sent to us. It was issued in May, 1938, and contains an account of Mr. Green's collection and other treasures of the Library, by the librarian, Rev. Dr. F. Louis Barber. He tells us that Mr. Green arranged his collection with great care, and in Victoria Library it is in the condition in which he left it. The 417 items are, as far as possible, placed in the precise order in which they were published. The poetical works, however, issued in any year are placed at the end of the list for the year. It is interesting to note that there are other collections of first and early editions of Wesleyana in the U.S.A. According to this Bulletin there are 82 first editions in Drew Theological Seminary Library; 123 in Garrett Biblical Institute Library; and 43 in the Library of Wesleyan University.

Victoria Library also possesses three original letters of Wesley, one of which is in a volume of portraits and letters of the Presidents of the Wesleyan Conference from and including John Wesley to 1900. The Wesley letters are in the *Standard Letters*.

The following items are missing from the Green collection, numbered as follows in the Bibliography: 7, 99, 109, 180, 205, 272, 273, 322, 325 note, 342. The Librarian would be glad to fill any of these gaps.

The Victoria Library has copies of the first, third and fifth editions of Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament*. The copy of the third edition has an inscription in Wesley's handwriting: *Auctoris donum Joanni Doty, Feb. 1771, Londini*. A covering letter, dated 1842, states that John Wesley personally gave the volume to John Doty, the husband of the writer of this letter. We should like to know more about this. The name Doty does not appear in the *Journal* or *Letters* of Wesley. The dates do not present an insuperable difficulty; Mr. Doty, who is not stated to be still living in 1842, may have been old enough in 1771 to have been regarded by Wesley as a suitable recipient of the *Notes*.—*F.F.B.*

LIVERPOOL CONFERENCE
JULY — 1939.

A PUBLIC LECTURE

(Under the auspices of the Wesley Historical Society)

WILL BE DELIVERED IN THE

Trinity Methodist Church

DUKE STREET, SOUTHPORT

On Friday, July 21st at 7-30 p.m.

— BY —

DR. J. H. WHITELEY

(AUTHOR OF "WESLEY'S ENGLAND.")

**Subject: "Wesley's Anglican Contemporaries:
their Trials and Triumphs."**

Chairman: Rev. Canon J. S. CRISALL M.A.

COLLECTION

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE W.H.S.

The Annual Meeting will be held at the above Church on the same day at 6-0 p.m. Tea will be kindly provided for the members at 5-30 p.m. by Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Coomer. It will be greatly appreciated if members who are able to accept the invitation will fill in the enclosed card and post it by July 18th at latest.

Trinity Church is in Duke Street,—two minutes from the south end of Lord Street, and ten minutes walk from the station.

Trains leave Liverpool (Exchange) for Southport very frequently,—the journey takes about 40 minutes.