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A WESLEY LETTER

On board the *Simmonds* off the Island of Tibeys in Georgia  
Feb. 5th. 1736.

God has brought an unhappy unthankful wretch hither through a thousand dangers to renew his complaints and loath the Life which has been preserved by a series of Miracles. I take the moment of my arrival to inform you of it because I know you will thank Him, tho' I cannot. I cannot—For I yet feel myself. In vain have I fled from Myself to America: I still groan under the intolerable Weight of Inherent Misery!—If I have never yet repented of my undertaking it is because I hope for nothing better in England—or Paradise. Go where I will, I carry my Hell about me; nor have I ye least Ease in anything, unless in thinking of J and You! This very night conversing with you, though but in a Dream; I quite forgot that I was miserable, but alas

“I wake to all the woes I left behind”

and am now fled from the Reproaches of my Friends for my Irresignation to you for Refuge. To you only I can complain, though I have wearied out all my Friends besides. And tis well for ym yt a few Hours or Days will place ym out of hearing. It gives me no Concern that I must so soon be separated from ye few yt are still dear to me. Their Example is a Reproach, but not Encouragement; their advice a Pain, but not any Help to me. It appears to me yours and ye Thoughts and Words of J. (could you but prevail upon him to send ym) and those only, would surely alleviate if not remove my Trouble. For h[im] this is intended equally with you; for I know h[is] Heart is as your heart; all Gentleness and Pity. —O that you both might profit by my Loss and Never know the Misery of Divided Affections. [Sentence erased.]

Besides you Two I have no Relations, no Friends in England, who, I either write to, or find any ease in thinking of. And for you I do pray continually, with an earnestness like that of Dives yt ye may never come into this Hell of torment.—I cannot follow my own Advice, but yet I advise you —Give GOD your Hearts; Love Him with all yr Souls; Serve Him with all yr Strength. Forget ye things that are behind; Riches, Pleasure, Honour—in a Word, whatever does not lead to GOD. From this hour let yr Eye be single.

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Whatsoever ye speak, or think, or do, let GOD be yr Aim, and God only! Let your One End be to please and love GOD! In all your Business, all yr Refreshments, all yr Diversions, all yr Conversations as well as in All those which are commonly called Religious Duties let yr Eye look straight forward to GOD. Have One Design, One Desire, One Hope! Even yt the GOD whom ye serve may be your GOD and your All in Time and in Eternity! O be not of a Double Heart! Think of Nothing else—Seek nothing else—To love GOD and to be beloved of Him is enough. Be your Eye fixt on this One Point, and yr whole Bodies shall be full of Light. GOD shall continually lift up, and yt more and more the Light of His Countenance upon you. His H. Spirit shall dwell in you and shine more and more upon yr Souls unto ye Perfect Day. He shall purify yr Hearts by Faith from every Earthly Thought, every Unholy Affection. He shall stablish yr Souls with so lively a Hope as already lays hold on ye Prize of your High Calling. He shall fill you with Peace and Joy and Love. Love, the Brightness of His Glory, ye Express Image of His Person! Love which never rests never faileth, but shall spread its Flame, still goeth on conquering and to conquer, till what was but now a Weak Foolish, Wavering Creature, be filled with all ye Fullness of GOD!

I cannot myself account for ye Strange Expansion of heart wch I feel in ye midst of my Wishes for yr Welfare. It is not Charity, for that arises from ye Love of GOD, a Principle I am utterly ignorant of. If it springs from ought else it is of no worth: and yet tis . . . I have to rest my Soul upon, I know no Pleasure but in . . . Consciousness that I love YOU, or rather in contemplating . . . Lovely in You.

“and shall I doat on your scattered Pieces of . . . and imperfect Picture, and never be . . . with . . . ginal Beauty? Ought I not to conclude yt if there be so much Sweetness in a Drop there must be infinitely more in ye Fountain; if there be so much Splendour in a Ray what must ye Sun be in its Glory?”

I herewith send you C's Journal, which may possibly make you some Amends for ye Pain I put you to in reading this. He is indeed Devoted—but I cannot bear to think of His Happiness! and find a preposterous sort of Joy yt I am going to be removed from the Sight of it. Could I hide me from Myself too in these vast impervious Forests how gladly wd I fly to . . . as my last Asylum, and lose myself forever in a Blessed Insensibility and Forgetfulness! But it is a Fruitless Wish & yt salutation of Satan better becomes me—

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Hail Horrors hail, and thou profoundest Gloom  
Receive thy New Possessor! One who brings  
A mind not to be changed by Place or Time! \*

*Feb. 14 off Peeper's Island.*

My friends will rejoice with me in the interval of Ease I at present enjoy. I look with Horror back on ye Desperate Spirit yt dictated ye words above, but shall let ym stand, as ye naked picture of a soul, wch can never know reserve towards You. I will still call myself a *Prisoner of Hope*. GOD is able to save to the uttermost, to break my Bonds in sunder and bring Deliverance to the Captive!—"To what am I reserved?" is a Question I am continually asking myself, though GOD alone can answer it. This I am persuaded will now be soon determined; for I am come to a Crisis.—The Work I see immediately before me, is ye care of 50 poor Families; (alas for them yt they shd be so Cared for!) Some Few of whom are not far from ye Kingdom of GOD. Among these I shall either be Converted or LOST. I need not ask yr Prayers; You both make mention of me in ym continually. Obstinate Pride, Invincible Sensuality stand between GOD and Me. The whole Bent of my Soul is to be altered. My Office calls for an Ardent Love of Souls, a Desire to spend to be spent for ym, an eagerness to lay down my Life for ye Brethren. May the Spirit yt maketh intercession for us, direct you how to intercede for me!

¶ I have a thousand things to say. Many, many dear home Friends wd be remembered. Particularly ye Best of Men whose Parting Tears I can never forget. Has GOD, in pity to you, withheld him longer from his Reward? Or do you find by his increasing Desire to be Dissolved yt he is just going to be taken from yr Head? Let me die the Death of ye Righteous and let my last end be like His. You are cut off from wishing my Regard to some whom I . . . shortly challenge for my Friends in ye Presence of GOD and His Angels.

Be pleased to let no One see ye *Journal* except whom you yourself cd trust with everything. It is not impossible but I may one day tell you the Reason of my Request. But this I submit . . . you I surely shall when . . . part no more!

If there be time for transcribing ym I will . . . my Brother's Reasons (O yt I cd say they were mine too) for coming hither. I long to hear from you—Both; (take Notice J!) And yt for this very plain Reason yt I may love you

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\* From *Paradise Lost*, Book I, line 248, with some variation.

## WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

better. Nothing encourages our Love like Prayer for each other. And I am never so near the Spirit of Intercession as when I am reading the Letter of my Friend. Therefore; J . . write. It is my greatest Happiness on Earth to love you both for GOD'S sake and will be Part of my Happiness in Heaven. Methinks I anticipate ye Freedom of yt Blessed Place where they neither Marry nor are given in Marriage.—My Heart is now Full of You—O yt I were such as that my Prayer might avail much for You! I earnestly recommend you Both to GOD, & trust He will conduct us All to rejoice together, in HIM!

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The letter has been folded and bears the mark of a seal.  
It has as its address only—To V.

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Copy made from the original by Miss M. B. Webster and A. S. Beaty at Leamington on August 31st, and Sept. 1st, 1944.

M. B. WEBSTER  
A. STANLEY BEATY.

This letter was discovered a few months ago by Miss Hake the daughter of the late Rev. Henry Hake who was Vicar of Chilvers Coton for about nineteen years. He retired about 1865 and came to live in Leamington. Sometime in 1941 another Wesley letter was discovered by this lady and is now in possession of the Museum at Wesley's House, City Road. That letter was written from Savannah on September 7th, 1736, but the address portion has been cut away, and beyond the opening "Madam" there is no indication to whom it was sent. It was published in *Wesley's Chapel Magazine*, July 1941.

When Miss Hake discovered the letter addressed "To V." she shewed it to Miss M. B. Webster, a member of our Church, who realised that it was of unusual interest as being intended for Varanese and brought it to me. We were able to purchase it so that it might be preserved for the Methodist Church. A.S.B

To ensure this preservation Mr. Beaty has kindly presented the letter to the Methodist Missionary Society. We thank him very much for sending this. transcription for publication. F.F.B.

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### A NOTE ON THE FOREGOING

The discovery of this letter of John Wesley is of first-rate importance as it is the only one in existence of that long series which he wrote to his friend Varanese of Stanton in the Cotswold Hills. But it carries further significance in its revelation of the state of mind of the writer, as his boat draws in to the shores of America. It shows us another Wesley

altogether from the one whom we know from his *Journal* of that period, in the ardour of his Holy Club enthusiasms. It is a Wesley which the careful student of his *Diary* and of the Wesley family letters will not be surprised to find.

It is a real discovery to have found out what John Wesley was dreaming of on the night of February 4th, 1736 when he had just sighted the trees of Georgia from the main deck, on the afternoon of that day. It was not of God, or his mother or of the Red Indians that he dreamed, but this letter confesses that it was of Varanese. And it was of her that he was thinking next day when the good ship *Simmonds* anchored just off Tybee Island and his heart was caught away to other spring-times when he saw, unexpectedly, here in Georgia, "The bloom of spring in the depths of winter." He writes this letter, then, in his little cabin and it is a veritable cry from the heart to one, so far off in England, with whom he has never known reserve.

It was in the spring of 1725 that Wesley rode down from Oxford to Stanton and had that momentous interview with Sally Kirkham which he marks in his diary with his own secret sign of deep distress and the laconic "saw Varanese." He must then have discovered that he had come too late and that his friend was promised to another, for, before the year was out, the vital Sally, (the V. of this letter), would have married Jack Chapon (the J.) It was fully eleven years since John Wesley had taken Holy Orders and Jack Chapon had taken Sally Kirkham, but they all seem to have remained fast friends and this letter vouches for "The gentleness and pity" with which the rejected lover had been treated.

It is interesting to compare this letter with the one which Wesley wrote to his mother to say all the right things about landing in America. In that letter he writes: "I doubt not but you are already informed of the many blessings which God gave us in our passage," but he says nothing of himself as of that "unhappy, unthankful wretch" of this lately discovered letter. That would have made his mother open her eyes, but would not have surprised his sister Emily at all. It was she who knew all about Varanese and had estimated the significance of her loss as the starting point of her brother's Holy Club ardour. She says bluntly: "Had you not lost your dear Mrs. C—n, where had your love been fixed? On heaven I hope principally, but a large share too had been hers—but being deprived of her there went all hope of worldly happiness, and

now the mind which is an active principle, losing its aim here has fixed on its Maker for happiness." Emily Wesley had also said "If ever you come to suffer the torment of a hopeless love all other afflictions will seem small in comparison to it." So that it looks as though this new letter of John Wesley's supports his sister's prophecy and bears witness to the fact that the loss of Varanese had cut him to the quick.

It must be remembered that Wesley was not quite like other men in the sorrows of a broken heart, for the fact that added still more poignancy to his sorrow was the difficulty it caused him afterwards of seeking heaven whole-heartedly. In this letter it is the "divided heart" which he laments and that is the point about his reference due to his relief in parting from Charles Wesley and Benjamin Ingham on arrival in America. Wesley says they are "devoted", seeking their salvation with all their energies, whilst he feels weighted down to earth, having left at least half his heart in England. His friendship with Varanese had always been religious. This letter slips into preaching quite naturally, for Wesley is speaking to his own soul when he exhorts his friends to have only God in their view. It is a real consolation to the man to take the liberty of talking to them there, if only on paper, and so anticipate, in his lonely heart, the hope of heaven where they neither marry nor are given in marriage. Love is the thing. That is the fact John Wesley holds by falteringly now, as too obsessed with the creature, yet seeing in Varanese a hint of the sum of the love of God, and, in her loveliness, a suggestion of the Primæval Beauty. So that it is but fitting that when Wesley comes to Aldersgate Street and discovers the love of God, without a veil between, he should write down, in his *Journal*, the fact of that first "religious friend" in explanation of May 24th, 1738. That friend was undoubtedly the Varanese of our letter who introduced him to Thomas à Kempis and the idea of perfection in an imperfect world, and at the same time won his heart and then broke it.

Wesley's conversion did more than deliver him from the vagaries of divided allegiance, for it also lifted him above moods. In this important letter we see him experiencing a swift change from despair to a certain ease of mind and hope, all in the passage of nine days. The John Wesley we know is as steady as a rock and takes an even pace with God for more than fifty years of life. The nervous turmoil and introspection of this letter seem to belong to a different man

altogether from the Wesley of Aldersgate Street. In whatever way we read the riddle of May 24th, 1738, it is absolutely certain that something happened then to change the writer of this letter into the instrument of God's salvation.

G. ELSIE HARRISON.

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## WESLEY AND ANGLESEY METHODISM

### PART 3

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We have already seen that Wesley's friends in Anglesey were the non-conformist leaders, who had been deeply influenced by the Methodist Movement led by Howell Harris, and also the early Calvinistic Methodists, who had been converted through the ministry of Harris and his fellow-exhorters. The houses and villages visited by Wesley were places where non-conformity and early Calvinistic Methodism had already secured a foothold in the island, and at all these places he found a warm welcome and eager congregations. Hitherto we have not dealt at all fully with his visits to two towns in Anglesey, Holyhead and Llannerch-y-medd, and these now demand our attention.<sup>5</sup> The latter is described as "a very ancient market town, near the centre of the island," where several large fairs were also held. *The Gwyneddion for 1832*, (London, 1839), p. 44. It appears to have been particularly hostile to the early Methodists: both Howell Harris and Peter Williams are said to have been persecuted here, and there are numerous unfavourable references to it in Methodist correspondence of this period. William Richard, the exhorter, preached there on a Sunday morning, "but they were very rude and abuseful there, though they hurted nobody." In January 1749 William Jones hoped that it would be obliged to surrender "when two or three more warm attacks have been made upon her; and may the Lord send us skilful and bold soldiers." It was in April 1750 that Wesley

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5. There is no record of his having preached at the town of Llangejni, although he did on one occasion attend Divine Service at the parish church there. Howell Harris once had a conversation with the rector and curate of Llangejni, explaining to them his attitude to the Church of England, (*C.M.H.J.*, xxvi, Trev. MSS. Suppl., 12, p. 455).



went there, being assured by many who had come from the town to hear him at Clwchdernog that "it was the general desire of the inhabitants" that he should preach there. So he went. "But," he adds, "we were scarce set down when the 'sons of Belial', from all parts, gathered together and compassed the house. I could just understand their oaths and curses, which were broad English, and sounded on every side. The rest of their language was lost upon me, as mine was upon them." Despite the advice of the people in the house, Wesley decided to "look them in the face while it was open day", and, accompanied by Christopher Hopper, he walked unscathed through their midst, and retired to Holloway's house near Llangefni.

A few days later Wesley preached again within a short distance of the town, and wrote thus in his *Journal*: "Not one scoffer is found in these congregations; but whoever hears, hears for his life." It appears, therefore, that the hostility to Methodism was confined for the most part to the town itself, whilst some, at least, of the neighbouring villages were friendly and hospitable. Neither must we lose sight of the fact that, even within the town itself, the early Methodists had some friends, who were eager to hear their message.

Naturally, it was at the town of Holyhead that the Wesleys had the most frequent opportunities to preach, and there is no indication that Charles preached anywhere else in the island. It was Charles Wesley, as we have already seen, who was the first to preach there, on September 6th, 1747, at the request of some of the gentry, "who behaved as such, though the vulgar were rude enough." We are fortunate in having William Morris's account of the same service, which gives us some idea of what the more intelligent critics of the Methodists thought of them: "And John Wesley is a saint, is he? I heard his brother preach here the other day at the door of an inn. Either he had gone mad or else he thought that other people had,—like one preaching the Gospel to a crowd of unbelieving, ignorant pagans." *The Morris Letters*, i. 121. (Translated). Morris was a faithful church-goer, and devout enough in his way perhaps, but he, like many of his contemporaries, stumbled at the 'foolishness of the Cross,' and we are not surprised to find that there is no reference to his having gone any more to a Methodist service. John Wesley usually had a large and attentive congregation in the town, and it was only on two occasions that he experienced some opposition

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there. (*Journal*, iii. 335, 337, 395, 460.) His first opponent was the Rev. Thomas Ellis, the incumbent of the parish. One could write a long article on him, based on the copious material in the *Morris Letters* and elsewhere, but we must summarize. Ellis, who was a native of Flintshire, a graduate and Senior Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, had been nominated curate of Holyhead by the Principal and Fellows of his College, to whom belonged the great tithes of the benefice. There can be little doubt that he was one of the ablest and best clergymen Anglesey had in those days,—a strict Sabbatarian, a reformer of the people's moral and religious customs, an enthusiastic supporter of Griffith Jones' circulating schools and a keen advocate of the publication of religious books and pamphlets for the benefit of the common people. One criticism his friend William Morris had to offer of him was that he tended to be too opinionated and was easily angered: "he condemns a thing violently one day and is sorry for't the next."<sup>6</sup>

We have already seen that he had been in controversy concerning the Methodists early in 1747, when William Bulkeley of Brynddu, whom William Jones once described as being "friendly and serviceable to us", defended them against his attacks. When Charles Wesley sent a messenger to him to offer him his services on Sunday, September 6th, 1747, "Ellis was ready to beat my messenger." The curate was obviously in one of his moods! Nevertheless Charles attended Divine Service at his Church on that Sunday and received the Sacrament there, but it is not likely that Ellis went to hear him preach that evening. In the following February, however, he went to hear Wesley preach at an inn in the town, but with no kind intentions. He was speaking warmly to the landlord, when Swindells, Wesley's companion on that journey, went up to him "and spoke a few mild words." The two went together to the curate's lodgings, where they had "a long and friendly conversation", the result of which was a request from Ellis that Wesley would write a pamphlet "to advise the Methodists not to leave the Church, and not to rail at their ministers,"—an advice that was probably particularly necessary, from his point of view, in Anglesey, where Dissenters formed such a strong element in the early

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6. *The Morris Letters*, i. 155; cf. p. 115f. Cf. also the opinion of Goronwy Owen, the Welsh poet, in *Letters of Goronwy Owen*, (ed. J. H. Davies. Cardiff, 1924), p. 21.

Methodist movement. Wesley readily agreed, and wrote *A Word to a Methodist*, which, together with a Welsh translation by Ellis himself, under the title *Gair i'r Methodist*, was published in Dublin. William Morris says that Wesley wrote the pamphlet "after Mr. Ellis had rebuked him for turning Church-people into Presbyterians, etc.", (*The Morris Letters*, i. 147.) but one would think that Wesley regretted as much as Ellis the necessity for such a pamphlet. In a letter to Harris Wesley says of Ellis: "I believe his views of things are greatly changed. He commends you much for bringing the Methodists back to the Church . . . I believe God has detained us here for the sake both of the minister and the people." *Letters*, ii. 129. So changed were the views of Ellis that Charles Wesley was able, in the following August, to spend half an hour with him, not in bitter controversy, but in "provoking each other to love and good works."

William Morris, however, was rather sceptical of the change in his minister's attitude, and offers another explanation of it: "Mr. Ellis is tired of battling the Methodists, he now takes 'em by fair means, that is the best way to deal with fools that observe no rules." (*The Morris Letters*, i. 150.) (Last clause translated). But in spite of Morris's intimate acquaintance with his minister, we gather that his views on this matter were coloured by his anti-Methodist prejudices. It is significant that Ellis's report to the Bishop in 1749 was on the whole favourable to the Methodists in his parish, saying that they all attended Church services regularly, with the single exception of Owen David, their teacher, who was frequently away from home, and had often broken his undertakings to him, presumably to be more regular in his attendance at church.<sup>7</sup> It appears that Ellis no longer objected to the Methodists, provided they adhered to the Church of England, and refrained from openly criticising their ministers.

His attitude in later years, however, remains somewhat mysterious. John Wesley was at Holyhead again in 1756,

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7. Owen David was an ex-dissenter, who had joined the Methodists after Harris's visit to Anglesey in 1748, and who had become an exhorter amongst them, (*C.M.H.J.*, xi 84). After the Rowland-Harris disruption in 1750, he adhered to Harris, but in March, 1751, Thomas William was of the opinion that he was wholly carnal (*ibid.*, vi. 16), although he admitted in the following August that he was more 'broken' and that there were signs that his egotism was weakening, (*ibid.*, iv. 43).

and had given notice that he would preach at the end of the Sunday Afternoon service. The service began soon after three; "ten minutes before four, Mr. E. began catechising the children in Welsh. I stayed till after five. As there was no sign of his concluding, I then went home, and found the people waiting."<sup>8</sup> Did the curate intentionally prolong the service, and if so, why? At the moment we can only ask the question, but further research into the history of his attitude towards Calvinistic Methodism during this period may enable us to solve our problem.

Wesley's other opponent at Holyhead was a very different sort of person, a certain Mr. Griffith, a noted persecutor from Caernarvonshire, described by Wesley as a "clumsy, overgrown, hardfaced man." The late Richard Bennett thought he might have been William Griffith of Cefnamwlch in South Caernarvonshire. His wife had been converted to Methodism, probably during Peter Williams's preaching tour in North Wales in 1747, and Howell Harris met her probably for the first time, in October, 1748. Her husband had previously been an opponent of Methodism, if we interpret aright a suggestion in Harris's Diary (*C.M.H.J.*, xxv, Trev. MSS. Suppl., No. 11, p. 440) but the conversion of his wife probably moderated his views for a time. In November 1748, he visited Garth in Brecknockshire, and in telling the story of that visit William Jones of Trefollwyn wrote: "All the Exhorters are welcomed to come to Cefnamwlch; may the Lord continue it." None the less, William Griffith was not yet a saint by a long way: "he has not got the better of much sin yet, he pleads hard for his Diversions and will not admit them to be sinful." His wife, however, soon became very prominent amongst the Methodists, and her influence over Howell Harris, who thought she possessed prophetic gifts, was as strong as it was unfortunate in its results. Before long she quarrelled violently with her husband over some financial matters, and she was cast out of his house, whereupon she sought refuge with Harris at Trevecka. We need not trace the sordid history of the next few years—how her influence over Harris brought discord to his domestic life, gave rise to widespread scandal and helped to bring about the

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8. *Journal*, iv. 154. The name is given in the Standard Edition as "Mr. D.", but as Mr. E—" in Everyman's edition. Since Ellis retained the living until 1759, it appears that the latter reading is more likely to be correct.

rupture between Harris and his old fellow-labourers in 1750.<sup>9</sup> From henceforth William Griffith was undoubtedly an implacable foe of the Methodist movement, and remained so until his death (four months before his wife's) in February 1752. It is quite possible, as Mr. Bennett suggested, that the Mr. Griffith mentioned in Wesley's *Journal* was none other than William Griffith of Cefnamwlch.

Wesley first came across him on board an Irish-bound vessel during the night of March 28th, 1750. He was very violent and his language more vile than that heard at Billingsgate, and Wesley retired to his cabin leaving him to his companion, Christopher Hopper. During the following afternoon the unfavourable weather forced the ship to return to Holyhead, and in the evening Wesley preached to a roomful of rich and wicked men who could not bear his words. Two nights later, these men, under the leadership of Mr. Griffith, broke into Robert Griffith's house, where Wesley was staying, struck the householder several times, kicked his wife, and demanded to have Wesley, who had been safely locked in another room. At last, after their leader had fallen off a chair, "as he was not a man made for climbing", they retired from the house, but only to return later in the evening. The second time they were quickly dealt with: the daughter of the house threw a pail of water over Mr. Griffith, and Wesley's host managed to lock the door before the others could come in. Finding himself alone, the leader's courage failed him, and on his promising to take the others away he was let out, and no more is heard of him or his followers. If Mr. Griffith's identity could be established beyond all reasonable doubt, Wesley's account of his encounter with him would be all the more valuable, as it could then be regarded as an interesting description of the husband of a lady who played such a decisive and unfortunate part in the history of Howell Harris during those years.

We have perhaps devoted a disproportionate amount of space to the opposition with which Wesley met in Anglesey,—at the hands of the rabble in Llannerch-y-medd, at the hands of the curate of Holyhead, (who later modified his views in the light of further knowledge of Wesley's aims), and at the hands of rich and drunken ruffians under the leadership of "Mr. Griffith" at Holyhead. We must not forget the other,

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9. Probably the best account of these years is that in Richard Bennett: *Methodistiaeth Trefaldwyn Uchaf*, *passim*.

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and brighter, side of the picture—the warmth with which he was welcomed by the Methodists and Dissenters of Anglesey. Maybe it was only fair that he should experience also some of their difficulties and partake of their burdens.

It may also be significant that Wesley preached in Anglesey only once after the year 1750, although the full significance of this can be fully understood only after a detailed study of his visits to other parts of Wales. Between 1739 and 1750, John and Charles Wesley between them visited the Principality 33 times, but between 1751 and 1762 they came here only eight times, including three very short visits to the town of Mold. This drastic curtailment of their work in Wales occurred after the year 1750, the very year in which Howell Harris to all intents and purposes, ceased to be a leader of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, his position being filled by people with whom Wesley was not nearly so intimately acquainted as he had been with Harris. During those earlier years Wesley's Methodism had been co-operating with Welsh Calvinistic Methodism to a far greater degree than we sometimes realise, and this paper on Wesley's visits to Anglesey may serve to illustrate that point. After Harris's retreat into Trevecka in the early fifties of the eighteenth century, however, Wesley's interest in Wales seems to have lagged, and it was not successfully revived for more than ten years. But the history of Wesleyan Methodism in Wales from about 1762 onwards is another and a different chapter, into which the island of Anglesey does not enter. Wesley's labour in the island was practically confined to those early years, when men largely succeeded in laying the emphasis, not on doctrinal differences nor on questions of ecclesiastical practices, but on the 'enthusiasm' (as their enemies called it), on the passion for souls, that they all shared in common. By the time Wesleyan Methodism, by then Welsh-speaking too, re-entered Anglesey at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new and more dismal day had dawned, when Methodists tended to lay more stress on their Arminianism or their Calvinism than on their common Methodism, on the doctrines that separated them rather than on the rich experience that united them in the bond of fellowship of the redeemed. As we remember that there had been better days, we are also inspired to hope that the day will come again when the separated flocks of Christ will be reunited in penitence and in love.

G. T. ROBERTS.

## WESLEY AT NEWTOWNARDS

A feature of Wesley's last two visits to Northern Ireland was the number of occasions on which he occupied Presbyterian pulpits; six such incidents occurred in 1787 and five in 1789. From 1726 there had been Divisions and Secessions in Irish Presbyterianism, one of the most important being due to the refusal of several influential ministers, supported by their congregations, to continue to subscribe to the Westminster Confession, and this resulted in the formation of the Non-Subscribers of the Presbytery of Antrim, while the older and orthodox Presbyterians adhered to the Synod of Ulster. Many of the Non-Subscribers were Arian, a fact which became more apparent as the nineteenth century developed, when they were described as Unitarian. In spite of doctrinal differences Methodism has reason to be grateful to Irish Non-Subscribing Ministers and Elders because of the cordial reception they gave to the founder of Methodism. On 9th June 1787 and 6th June 1789 Wesley preached in the Non-Subscribing, subsequently Unitarian, Meeting House at Antrim, which was not surprising as the congregational records show that at that period Methodist preachers occasionally held services there. The present Minister of this Church is Rev. George V. Crook, son of Rev. William Crook, D.D., one of the historians of Irish Methodism. On 8th June, 1789, Wesley preached in the Non-Subscribing Meeting House, subsequently Unitarian, Rosemary Street, Belfast, a church for which he expressed admiration and which in spite of the damage done to surrounding buildings by the German Air Force, still exists. In modern times this church is no longer strictly Unitarian and amongst its members are avowed Trinitarians.\* In the eighteenth century it belonged to a wealthy congregation and it was unfortunate that some of its property was injured by the crowds which gathered to hear Wesley. In spite of that incident, the Non-Subscribing Meeting House, known as "the First Presbyterian Meeting House" at Newtownards was opened to him the following morning, 9th June. This congregation later became Unitarian and now meets in another part of the town, while the building in which Wesley preached has been converted into a cinema. Under the above date the *Journal* records:—"About eight I

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\* See the history of Rosemary Street Church by the Rev. G. R. Wilde, M.A., B.D., Ph.D.

came once more to Newtownards where I had not been for eleven years, and preached at nine to a multitude of people in the Presbyterian Meeting House. All of them seemed to be not a little affected". Learning recently from Rev. B. S. Lyons, our minister at Newtownards, that Rev. Thomas McIlwrath, B.A., minister of one of the local Presbyterian congregations had a manuscript historical sketch of this Church with references to Wesley's last visit to the town I wrote Mr. McIlwrath, who at once replied telling me that the manuscript, which was the work of the Rev. Hugh Moore, M.A., was now the property of Mr. Moore's grandson, Dr. David Jamison of Newtownards, and that Dr. Jamison had asked Mr. McIlwrath to send me a copy of the extract regarding Wesley. I therefore very gladly acknowledge the kindness of both Mr. McIlwrath and Dr. Jamison in furnishing the quotation given below. Rev. Hugh Moore, who graduated M.A., at Glasgow in 1823 was ordained to the first Presbyterian Congregation at Newtownards in 1827, and his knowledge of Wesley's visit must therefore have been secured from some of the older people who were living in 1789. The manuscript is entitled: *An Historical Sketch of the Old or First Presbyterian Congregation of Newtownards . . . . .*

It was during the ministry of Mr. Sinclair in 1789 that the celebrated evangelist John Wesley, in the 86th year of his age, visited the North of Ireland. His views of Christian doctrine, as was well known, were most distinctly and decidedly what was called by name Arminian, and the consequence was, as these views were very much opposed to the Calvinism of the High Church Party on the one hand, and the Presbyterians of the Synod of Ulster, on the other, that when he came to Belfast and sought an opportunity of addressing the masses, every place of worship in the town was closed against him, with the exception of the Meeting House of the 1st Congregation, Rosemary Street, Belfast, then under the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Cromie, where he addressed a large and appreciative audience.

The same thing occurred when he came to Newtownards. The Arch-heretic, as he was called, must not ventilate his unsavory doctrine there. He was refused admission to every pulpit in the town except that which was occupied by the Rev. William Sinclair, where he met with a most cordial reception. The Meeting House was full to overflowing, and the audience was wrapped in admiration at the saving truths he enunciated, so much in accordance with their own cherished opinions, some of the most enthusiastic of the audience accompanied the carriage in which he travelled to the house of Mr. Davison, in Greenwell Street, whose guest he was while he remained in town. It is said that he caused the carriage to move slowly down High Street lest any of the crowd should sustain injury and that they cheered him as they went along most



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lustily, a circumstance which . . . (Unfortunately the next leaf is missing.)

It only remains to add that Mr. Sinclair, like many of his Presbyterian contemporaries, became involved in the Irish Insurrection of 1798 and was banished to the United States of America.

F. J. COLE.

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## NOTES AND QUERIES.

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842. **METHODISM IN DIPTON.** Mr. J. W. Lawson, Librarian of the Annfield Plain Public Library, has kindly sent us a copy of *A History of the Parish of Dipton (the Township of Collierley) in the County and Diocese of Durham.* By J. W. Fawcett, 1911. This book, which has many merits from the historical and antiquarian point of view, includes much information about the various branches of Methodism in the region, thus linking up with Mr. Wray's article, *Proceedings* xxiv 8. F.F.B.

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### OBITUARY.

The death of the Rev. R. H. Wray, which occurred at Reeth, on April, 17th, robs the W.H.S. of a member who had long been deeply interested in its work. Mr. Wray had a considerable knowledge of the history and biography of Methodism in its early period, accompanied by an aptitude for presenting clear and impressive pictures of the grand old saints of other days to readers of modern Methodist periodicals. He was beloved by a wide circle of friends.

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The **Annual Lecture** under the auspices of the W.H.S. will be delivered at the Bridgeway Hall, Nottingham, on Saturday, July 21st, at 7-0 p.m. by the Rev. Dr. A. W. Harrison, (President of the Conference). The chair will be taken by Mr. A. M. Poxon. The subject will be "The Separation of Methodism from the Church of England at the end of the Eighteenth Century."

The **Annual Meeting** will be held on the same premises at 6 p.m.

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Mr. Herbert Ibberson kindly invites any officers and members of the W.H.S. who may be able to attend, to **Tea**, at the Bridgeway Hall at 5 p.m. It is essential that any who desire to accept this invitation should send in their names to Rev. F. Baker, 40 Appleton Street, Warsop, Mansfield, Notts. not later than Thursday, July 19th.