

In Methodist Byways

WESLEY ACROSTICS

By the Rev. FRANK BAKER, B.A., B.D.

THE pages of John Wesley's *Arminian Magazine* contain many curious things, including various doggerel epitaphs which had caught his eye as he travelled up and down the country. He even set his readers literary puzzles, asking them to translate Latin epigrams into English verse. Many years were to pass, however, before acrostics were to be seen in its pages, though it is not unlikely that he had himself tried his hand at this form of literary recreation.

The founder of Methodism certainly provided the subject-matter for several such efforts, some of which he must have seen. The genuine reverence in which he was held during his later years moved many untutored poets to enshrine their admiration in tributes stumbling, yet sincere.

Perhaps the most well-known of these Wesley Acrostics was inscribed on a silver tea-pot which he himself was supposed to have used:

An Acrostic

Humbly Inscribed to the Rev. Mr.

Jehovah reigns. Let saints—let men adore.
O bey, ye sinners, and proclaim His power!
H e, each desponding, thirsty soul, draw
near,
N or money bring, nor price, nor doubt, nor
fear.

W ide as Creation, deep as Sin's recess,
E xtend the merits of redeeming grace!
S o Wesley speaks—so wond'ring angels
taught—
L ove, peace, goodwill to all in Christ are
brought.
E namour'd thousands hear the joyful Word,
Y ield to conviction, and confess their Lord.

Cornelius Cayley, a rather eccentric Methodist who has secured for himself a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, published in 1781 a

tiny *Meditation on the Motto of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Seal, Believe!—Love!—Obey!* At the end of this pamphlet, now very rare, is the following:

A

PRAYER

For the Rev. Mr.

I n years now far advanc'd, O may he prove
 O 'er flowing incomes of Celestial Love!
 H ear for thy Servant, Lord, my heart-felt
 prayer,
 N ew blessings give, to smooth his age's care.

W hilst here on earth, O may his latter days,
 E ffulgent shine with Truth's meridian blaze.
 S erene and cloudless make his setting sun;
 L et him then shout, Christ's precious Blood
 hath won.
 E ach host angelic then, O may he see,
 Y ield him their convoy sweet, O Lord, to
 Thee.

We wonder if Wesley ever *seeing a Picture of the Rev. Mr.*
 came across another very rare *J. Wesley.* The anonymous lady
 publication, a broadsheet headed writes, with something like
Lines written by a Lady on adoration:

Hail brightest Orator our Nation boasts!
 Hail Veteran Soldier of the Lord of Hosts!
 Hail bright resemblance, in whose nervous
 Lines,
 The Saint sublime, the finish'd Christian
 shines:
 Thro' whom appears to each discerning Eye,
 The depths of Learning, Wisdom, Piety:
 All Graces human and divine are there,
 Soft temper'd with the pensive mourner's Air,
 Mild, heavenly meekness to the World
 unknown,
 Unto the lov'd Disciple given alone,
 A worth so singular since time began,
 But one surpass'd, and he was more than Man.

This is not an acrostic, of course, though it is a very moving tribute. It did provide the excuse for two acrostics, however, one of them standing poor John Wesley on his head. for beneath the lady's poem appears the following:

A GENTLEMAN on Reading the above Lines,
 wrote the two following ACROSTICS.

J ust and true description this,
 O f that hail Man of God,
 H oly, happy, full of peace,
 N ever weary of his rod.

Wisdom in his Writings shines,
Excellent in depth of thought,
Solidness in all his Lines,
Love and clearness, full and short,
Ever giving God his time,
Youth, old Age, and all his Prime.

Younder see him in the North.
Ever spreading good around,
Loves to set his Saviour forth,
Suggish he is never found;
East and West, and South shall see,
Wesley's Love and Labours free.

Noted Labour'r like St. Paul,
Humble, loving unto all;
Only to the end endure,
Jesus's great reward is sure.

There must be many more written somewhat obscurely, by such Wesley Acrostics hidden 'W.L.S.', to commemorate the away in scrapbooks and obscure laying of the corner stone of the pamphlets. We close with one Burg Street Wesleyan Chapel, from the last century, and from Cape Town, on 6th May 1875: overseas. It was written, and

Just on the day when Royalty arose
On British throne, to bring a sweet repose
Here, at the Cape, some corner stones were
laid
Not both, by skill, or worldly schemes
displayed.

Where churches rise—if they be old or new—
Envy or bigotry pronounce them 'true'.
Some good in all, but not perfection found:
Look we for 'The Church', on much *higher*
ground;
Enlistment now is made from earthly ranks,
You'll find *one chorus* in supernal thanks.

Guard Your Thoughts !

By HAROLD TWEEDIE

THERE is a famous little story of a small boy who decided to make a charge for all the errands and all the odd jobs he did in the house.

The account went like this:
Helping in the house ... 4d.
Three errands ... 3d.
Total ... 7d.

(Signed) Johnny.