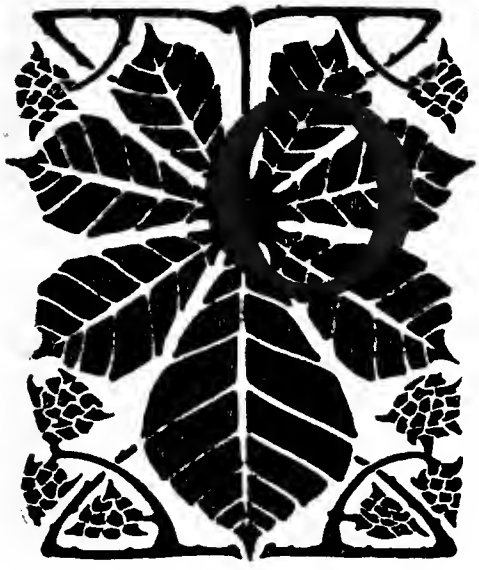
JOHN WESLEY

MY horse was very lame, and my head did ache exceedingly. Now what occurred I here avow is truth—let each man account for it as he will. Suddenly I thought, "Cannot God heal man or beast as He will?" Immediately my weariness and headache ceased; and my horse was no longer lame. —WESLEY'S JOURNAL

John Wesley

GREAT REFORMERS



NCE in a speech on "The Increase of Population," Edmund Burke intimated his sympathy with Malthus, and among other interesting data made note that Susanna Wesley was the twenty-fourth child of her parents. Burke, however, neglected to state how many sisters and brothers Susanna had who were younger than herself, and also what would have been the result on church history had the parents of Susanna named their twenty-third child Omega.

John Wesley was the fifteenth child in a family of nineteen. And yet the mother did her own work, thus eliminating the servant girl problem, and found time to preach better sermons to larger congregations than did her husband. Four of Susanna's children became famous—John, Charles, Samuel and Martha.

John rebuked and challenged the smug, self-satisfied and formal religion of the time; had every church door locked against him; sympathized with the American Colonies in their struggle for freedom; and founded a denomination, which to-day is second only in wealth and numbers to one alone.

John Wesley left no children after the flesh, but his

influence has colored the entire fabric of Christianity. There is no denomination but that has been benefited and bettered by his beautiful spirit.

Charles Wesley was the greatest producer of hymns the world has ever seen, having written over six thousand songs, and re-written most of the Bible in lyric form. He was "the brother of John Wesley," and delighted all his life in being so called. No one ever called John Wesley the brother of Charles. John had a will like a rope of silk—it slackened but never broke. He was resourceful, purposeful, courageous, direct, healthy, handsome, wise, witty, happy; and he rode on horseback, blazing the way for many from darkness into light. Charles followed.

Three of the children of Charles Wesley became great musicians, and one of them was the best organist of his time in England.

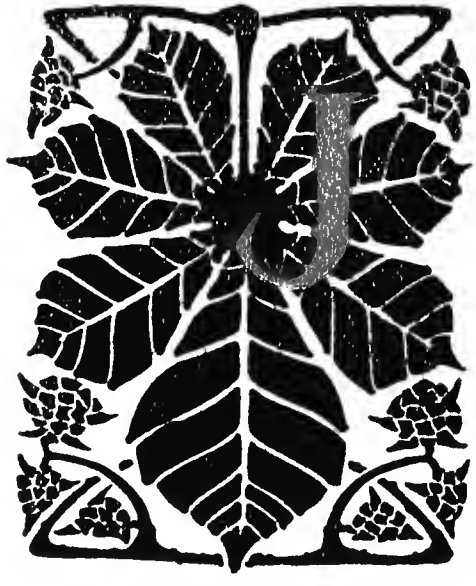
The third noted brother in this remarkable family was Samuel, who was thirteen years older than John and exercised his prerogative to pooh-pooh him all his life. Samuel was an educated high churchman, a Latin scholar, and a poet of quality. Samuel always had his dignity with him. He wrote and published essays, epics, and histories of nobodies; but of all his writings, the only thing from his pen that is now read and enjoyed is a letter of remonstrance to his mother because he hears that she has joined "Jack's congregation of Methodists and is a renegade from the true

religion." Needless to say the "true religion" to Samuel was the religion in which he believed—all others were false. Samuel being an educated churchman did not know that all religions are true to the people who believe in them.

The fourth Wesley of note was Martha, who looked so much like her brother John, that occasionally, in merry mood, she dressed herself in his cassock and surplice, and suddenly appearing before the family deceived them all until she spoke. Martha was the only girl in the brood who was heir to her mother's mind. Had she lived in this age she would have made for herself a career. A contemporary says, "She could preach like a man," a remark, I suppose, meant to be complimentary. In one respect she excelled any of the Wesleys—she had a sense of humor that never forsook her. John usually was able to laugh; Charles smiled at rare intervals; and Samuel never. As it was, Martha married and was swallowed by the conventions, for the times subdue us, and society takes individuality captive and binds it hand and foot with green withes.

But the times did not subdue John Wesley—he was the original circuit-rider, and his steed was a Pegasus that took the fences of orthodoxy at a bound, often to the great consternation and grief of theological squatters. He was regarded as peculiar, eccentric, strange, extravagant, just as any man ever has been and would

be to-day who attempted to pattern his life after that of the Christ. Perhaps it is needless to say that the followers of John Wesley do not much resemble him, indeed not more so than they resemble Jesus of Nazareth. John Wesley and Jesus had very much in common. But should a man of the John Wesley pattern appear, say in one of the fashionable Methodist churches of Chicago, the organist would drown him out on request of the pastor; and the janitor with three fingers under his elbow, would lead him to the door while the congregation sang "Pull for the Shore."

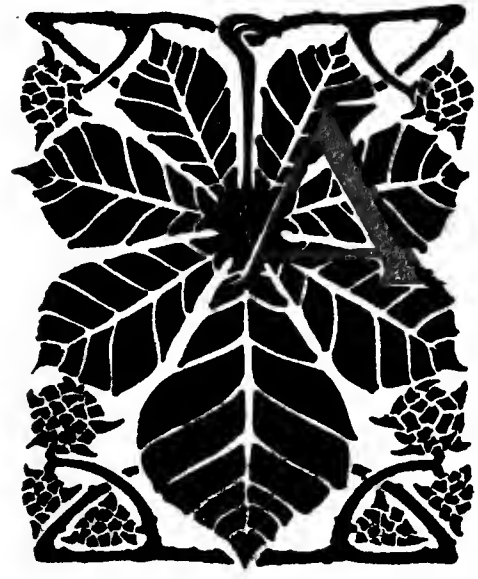


ULIA WEDGWOOD, daughter of Josiah and Sarah Wedgwood, and sister to the mother of Darwin, wrote a life of John Wesley. In this book Miss Wedgwood says, "The followers of a leader are always totally different from the leader." The difference between a leader and a follower is this: a leader leads and a follower follows.

The shepherd is a man, but sheep are sheep.

As a rule followers follow as far as the path is good, but at the first bog they balk. Betrayers, doubters and

those who deny with an oath, are always recruited from the ranks of the followers. In a sermon John Wesley once said, "To adopt and live a life of simplicity and service for mankind is difficult; but to follow the love of luxury, making a clutch for place, pelf and power, labeling Paganism Christianity, and imagining you are a follower of Christ, this is easy. Yet all through life we see that the reward is paid for the difficult task. And now I summon you to a life of difficulty, not merely for the sake of the reward, but because the life of service is the righteous life—the right life—the life that leads to increased life and increased light."



MOST remarkable woman was Susanna Wesley. The way she wound her mind into the minds of her sons, John and Charles, was as beautiful as it was extraordinary. Very few parents ever really get acquainted with their offspring. Parents who fail to keep their promises with their children and who prevaricate to them, have children that are secretive and sly. But often no one person is to

blame, for children do not necessarily have any spiritual or mental relationship to their parents—their minds are not attuned to the same key—they are not on the same wire.

Indeed, even with the great Susanna Wesley, there was a close and confiding intimacy only with two of her brood. John Wesley has written, "I cannot remember ever having kept back a doubt from my mother—she was the one heart to whom I went in absolute confidence, from my babyhood until the day of her death."

The Epworth Parsonage where John Wesley was born was both a house and a school ☙ Probably the mother centered her life on John and Charles because they responded to her love in a way the others did not. In the year 1709, the parsonage burned, with a very close call for little John who was asleep in one of the upper chambers. The home being destroyed the family was farmed out among the neighbors until the house could be rebuilt. John was sent to the home of a neighboring clergyman, ten miles away. After a week we find him writing to his mother asking her if she has lost a little boy, because if so he is the boy—a most gentle way of reminding her that she had not written to him. At this time he was but six years old, yet we see his ability to write a letter. This peculiar letter is the earliest in a long correspondence between mother and son. Mrs. Wesley preserved these letters,

just as the mother of Whitman treasured the letters of Walt with a solicitude that seems tinged with the romantic. Much of the correspondence between John Wesley and his mother has been published, and in it we see the intimate touch of absolute mental undress where heart speaks to heart in abandon and self-forgetfulness ☙ The person who reaches this stage in correspondence has passed beyond the commonplace. This formulation of thought for another is the one exercise that gives mental evolution or education.

John Wesley was sent to Charterhouse School when he was eleven years old, and he remained there for six years, when he went to Oxford ☙ So after his twelfth year he was denied the personal companionship of his mother, but every day he wrote to her—sometimes just a line or two, and then at the end of the week the letter was forwarded.

In his later years Wesley did not think that either the "Charity School" or Oxford where he went on a scholarship, had benefited him excepting by way of antithesis; but the correspondence with his mother was the one sweet influence of his life that could not be omitted. Their separation only increased the bond. We grow by giving; we make things our own by reciting them; thought comes thru action and reaction; and happy is the man who has a sympathetic soul to whom he can outpour his own. When Charles Kingsley was asked to name the secret of his insight and

power, he paused, and then answered, "I had a friend!"

John Wesley had a friend; incidentally that friend was his mother. She died when he was thirty-nine years of age; after he had learned to wing his way on steady pinions. And in the flight she was not left behind.

We are familiar with the lives of many great men, but where among them all can you name a genius whose mother's mind matched his, even in his maturity?

THE primitive Christian is a reactionary product of his time. Humanity continuing in one direction acquires success, and finally thru an overweening pride in its own powers, relaxation enters, and self-indulgence takes the place of effort. No religion is pure except in its inception and in its state of persecution. ¶ A religion grown great and rich and powerful becomes sloth and swag, its piety being performed perfunk; and then ceases to be a religion at all. It is merely an institution.

Religions multiply by the budding process. Every new

denomination is an off-shoot from a parent stem. "A new religion" is a contradiction in terms—there is only one religion in the world. A brand new religion would wither and die as soon as the sun came out. ¶ New denominations begin with a protest against the lapses and grossness of the established one, and the baby religion feeds and lives on the other until it has grown strong enough to break off and live a life of its own. Buds are being broken off all the time, but only a few live; the rest die because they lack vitality. That is why all things die—I trust no one will dispute the fact. ¶ Christian Science, for instance, appropriated two great things from the parent stock—the word "Christian," and the Oxford binding, which made "Science and Health" look just like the Bible. One could carry it on the street as he went to church without fear of accusation that he was on the way to the circulating library. It fulfilled the psychological requirments. ¶ John Wesley retained the word "Episcopal" for the new denomination, and he also retained the gown and tippet. And it was near a hundred years before the denomination had grown to a point where it could afford to omit the gown—and possibly its omission was an error then.

OF UNIVERSITY education at this time let Miss Wedgwood speak:

We can hardly wonder that the time spent at Oxford was to a man like Gibbon, "the most idle and unprofitable period of his life," to use his own words. Even under the very different system which prevailed in the early portion of the present century, one of the most fertile thinkers of our day has been heard to speak of his university career as the only completely idle interval of his life. How often it may have proved not a mere episode, but the foundation of a life of idleness, no human being can tell. Nor was the evil merely negative. While the student lounged away his time in the coffee-house and the tavern, whilst the dice-box supplied him with a serious pursuit, and the bottle a relaxation, he was called upon at every successive step to his degree to take a solemn oath of observance to the academical statutes which his behavior infringed in every particular. While the public professors received a thousand pounds a year for giving no lectures, the candidates for degrees were obliged to ask and pay for a dispensation for not having attended the lectures that never were given. The system in every public declaration solemnly recognized and accepted was in every private action utterly defied. Whatever the Oxford graduate omitted to learn, he would not fail to acquire a ready facility in subscribing, with solemn attestations, pro-

fessions which he violated without hesitation or regret. The Thirty-nine Articles were signed on matriculation, without any attempt to understand them. "Our venerable mother," says the great historian from whom we have already quoted, "had contrived to unite the opposite extremes of bigotry and indifference;" and these blended influences, which led Gibbon first to Rome, and then to scepticism, proved no doubt to the average mind a mere narcotic to all spiritual life. Gibbon is not the only great writer who has recorded his testimony against Hanoverian Oxford. Adam Smith in that work which has been called, with pardonable exaggeration, "the most important book that ever was written," the "Wealth of Nations," has, in the following remarks on universities, evidently incorporated his anything but loving recollections of the seven years which he spent at Balliol College. "In the University of Oxford the greater part of the professors have for these many years given up even the pretence of teaching. The discipline is in general contrived not for the benefit of students, but for the interest, or, more properly speaking, for the ease of the masters. In England the public schools are less corrupted than the universities; the youth there are, or at least may be taught Greek and Latin, which is everything the masters pretend to teach. In the university the youth neither are, nor can be taught the sciences which it is the business of those incorporated bodies to teach." It is the last statement to which attention is here directed. It is not that the university drew up a bad program, not even that this scheme was badly carried out. That might be the case also; but the radical vice of the system was not that it was essentially incomplete in theory or faulty in

practice, but that it was false. Its worst result was not poor scholars, but insincere and venal men.

I believe Europe cannot produce parallels to Oxford and Cambridge in opulence, buildings, libraries, professorships, scholarships, and all the external dignity and mechanical apparatus of learning. If there is an inferiority, it is in the persons, not in the places or their constitution. And here I cannot help confessing that a desire to please the great, and bring them to the universities, causes a compliance with fashionable manners, a relaxation of discipline, and a connivance at ignorance and folly, which errors he confesses occasioned the English universities to be in less repute than they were formerly ❧ The fashion of sending young men thither was even in some degree abated among that class who at the present day would be the most reluctant to omit it—the nobility. The useless and frivolous exercises required for the attainment of academic honors, and the relaxation of discipline, had by this time created a wide-spread and deeply-felt contempt for the whole system of which they formed a part; and the indulgent but candid observer, who tries to dilute his censure with the truism that he could not have been placed anywhere in this sublunary world without discovering many evils, informs us that in his seven years' residence at the university he saw immorality, habitual drunkenness, idleness, ignorance and vanity openly and boastfully obtruding themselves on public view, and triumphing without control over the timidity of modest merit.

It is under such conditions that the strong man of right intent rebukes the sloth and hypocrisy of his time. Very seldom, if ever, does he faintly guess the

result of his protest. Jesus rebuked the iniquities and follies of Jerusalem, pleading for simple honesty, directness of speech and love of neighbor. In wrath the Pharisees made the usual double charge against Him —heresy and treason—and He was crucified.

Heresy and treason are invoked together; one is an offense against the Church, the other against the State. "The man is a traitor to God and a traitor to his country," that settles it—off with his head! The offenses of Socrates, Jesus, Savonarola, Huss, Wyclif, Tyndale, Luther and John Wesley were all identical. Reformers are always guilty—guilty of telling unpleasant truths. The difference in treatment of the man is merely the result of a difference in time and local environment.

Oxford was professedly a religious institution; it was a part of the State. John Wesley, the undergraduate, perceived it was in great degree a place of idleness and dissipation. John wrote to his mother describing the conditions. She wrote back, pleading that he keep his life free from the follies that surrounded him, and band those who felt as he did into a company and meet together for prayer and meditation in order that they might mutually sustain each other.

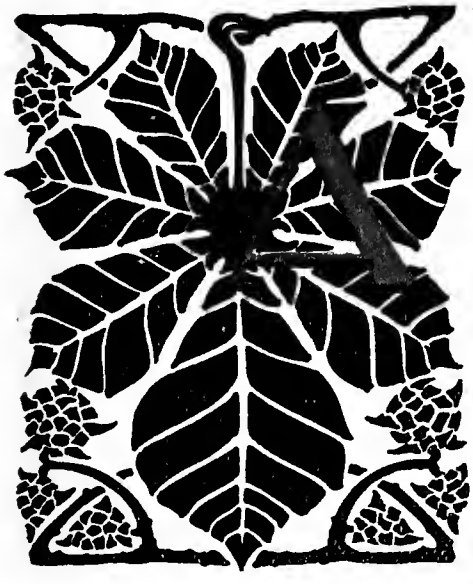
Susanna Wesley was the true founder of Methodism, a fact stated by John Wesley many a time.

As early as 1709, she wrote to her son, Samuel, who was then at Oxford, and who was never converted from

Oxford influences, "My son, you must remember that life is our divine gift—it is the talent given us by Our Father in Heaven. I request that you throw the business of your life into a certain method, and thus save the friction of making each day anew. Arise early, go to bed at a certain hour, eat at stated times, pray, read and study by a method, and so get the most out of the moments as they swiftly pass, never to return. Allow yourself so much time for sleep, so much for private devotion, so much for recreation. Above all my son, act on principle, and do not live like the rest of mankind, who float thru the world like straws upon a river." ¶ In hundreds of her letters to John and Charles at Oxford their mother repeats this advice in varying phrase: "We are creatures of habit; we must cultivate good habits, for they soon master us, and we must be controlled by that which is good. Life is very precious—we must give it back to God some day, so let us get the most from it. Let us methodize the hours, so we may best improve them."

John Wesley was a leader by nature, and before he was twenty he had gathered about him at Oxford a little group of young men, poor in purse, but intent in purpose, who held themselves aloof from the foibles and follies of the place, and planned their lives after that of the Christ. In ridicule they were called Methodists. The name stuck. ¶ In this year of grace, 1907, there are over thirty million Methodists, and about

seven million in America. The denomination owns property to the value of over three hundred million dollars in the United States; and has over one hundred thousand paid preachers.



AFTER Wesley's graduation he was importuned by the authorities to remain and act as tutor and teacher at Christchurch College ☙ He was a diligent student and his example was needed to hold in check the hilarious propensities of the sons of nobility.

In due time John was ordained to preach, and often he would read prayers at neighboring chapels. His brother Charles was his devoted echo and shadow. Then there was an enthusiastic youth by the name of George Whitefield, and a sober, serious young man, James Hervy, who stood by the Oxford Methodists and endured without resentment the sarcastic smiles of the many.

These young men organized committees to visit the sick; to search out poor and despondent students and give them aid and encouragement; to visit the jails and workhouses. The intent was to pattern their lives

after that of the apostles. They were all very poor, but their wants were few, and when John Wesley's income was thirty pounds a year he gave two pounds for charity. When it was sixty pounds a year he gave away thirty pounds; and here seems a good place to say that although he made over a hundred thousand pounds during his life from his books, he died penniless, just as he had wished and intended.

Thus matters stood in the year 1735, when James Oglethorpe was attracted to that Oxford group of ascetic enthusiasts.

The life of Oglethorpe reads like a novel by James Fenimore Cooper. He was of aristocratic birth, born of an Irish mother, with a small bar sinister on his 'scutcheon that pushed him out and set him apart. He was a graduate of Oxford and it was on a visit to his Alma Mater that he heard some sarcastic remarks flung off about the Wesleys that seemed to commend them. People hotly denounced usually have a deal of good in them. Oglethorpe was an officer in the army, a philanthropist, a patron of art, and a soldier of fortune. He had been a member of Parliament, and at this particular time was Colonial Governor of Georgia, home on a visit.

He had investigated Newgate and other prisons and had brought charges against the keepers and succeeded in bringing their inhumanities before the public. Hogarth has a picture of Oglethorpe visiting a prison,

with the poor wretches flocking around him telling their woes. In a good many instances prisoners were given their liberty on the promise of Oglethorpe that he would take them to his colony. The heart of Oglethorpe was with the troubled and distressed; and while his philanthropy was more on the order of that of Jack Cade than it was Christian, yet he at once saw the excellence in the Wesleys, and strong man that he was, wished to make their virtue his own. He proposed that the Wesleys should go back with him to America and evolve an ideal commonwealth.

Oglethorpe had with him several Indians that he had brought over from America. They were proud, silent and had the reserve of their kind. Moreover they were six feet high and when presented at court wore no clothes to speak of.

King George II. when presented to these sons of the forest appeared like a pigmy. Oglethorpe knew how to march his forces on an angle. London society went mad trying to get a glimpse of his savages. He declared that the North American Indians were the finest specimens, intellectually, physically and morally of any people the world had ever seen. They needed only one thing to make them perfect—Christianity.

¶ The Wesleys, discouraged by the small impress they had made on Oxford, listened to Oglethorpe's arguments and accepted his terms. Charles was engaged as secretary to the governor and John Wesley was to

go as a missionary. ¶ And so they sailed away to America. On board ship they methodized the day—had prayers, sang hymns and studied, read, exhorted and wrote as if it were their last day on earth. This method excited the mirth of several scions of nobility who were on board and Oglethorpe opened out on the scoffers thus, "Here, you damned pirates, you do not know these people. They forget more in an hour than you ever knew. You take them for tithe-pig parsons, when they are gentlemen of learning and like myself, graduates of Oxford. I am one of them, I would have you know. I am a religious man and a Methodist, too, and I'll knock hell out of anybody who, after this, smiles at either my friends or my religion!"

Long years after Wesley told this story to illustrate the fact that a man might give an intellectual assent to a religion and yet not have much of it in his heart. ¶ Oglethorpe looked upon Methodism as a good thing —cheaper than a police system—and sure to bring good results. If John Wesley and George Whitefield could convert his colony and all of the Indians round about, his work of governing would be much reduced. ¶ Oglethorpe was a very practical man.

JOHN WESLEY did not convert the Indians, because he could not find them, they being away on wars with the other tribes. Besides that he could not speak their language and was wholly unused to their ways. The Indian does not unbosom himself to those who do not know him, and the few Indians Wesley saw were stubbornly set in the idea that they had quite as good a religion as his. And Wesley was persuaded that probably they had.

In the city of Savannah there were just five hundred and eighteen people when John Wesley was there. About half of these were degenerate sons of aristocrats, ex-convicts, soldiers of fortune and religious enthusiasts—the rest were plain, every-day folk ❧ Pioneer people are too intent on maintaining life to go into the abstrusities of either ethics or theology. Wesley soon saw that his powers demanded a wider field ❧ ❧

The experience, tho, had done him much good, especially in two ways. He had gotten a glimpse of chattel slavery and made a remark about it that is forever fixed in literature, "Human slavery is the sum of all villainies." Then he had met on shipboard a party of

Moravians, and was so impressed by them that he straightway began to study German. In six weeks' time he could carry on an acceptable conversation in that language. At the end of the two years which he spent in Georgia, through attending the services of the Moravians, he could read, write and preach in the German language.

The Moravians seemed to him the only genuine Christians he had ever seen, and their example of simple faith, industry, directness of speech and purity of life made such an impress upon him that thereafter Methodism and Moravianism were closely akin.

At Savannah there were some people too poor to afford shoes and when these people appeared at church in bare feet they were smiled at by the alleged nobility. Seeing this, on the following Sunday, John Wesley appeared barefoot in the pulpit, and this was his habit as long as he was in Georgia. This gave much offence to the aristocrats; and Wesley also made himself obnoxious by preaching salvation to the slaves. Indeed this was the main cause of his misunderstanding with the governor. Oglethorpe considered any discussion or criticism of slavery "an interference with property rights."

And so Wesley sailed back to England, sobered by a sense of failure, but encouraged by the example of the Moravians, who accepted whatever Providence sent, and counted it gain.

The overseers of Oxford, like Oglethorpe, had no special personal sympathy with the peculiar ideas of Wesley, but as a matter of policy they recognized that his influence in the great educational center was needed for moral ballast. And so his services were secured as Greek Professor and occasional preacher.

Concerning the moral status of Oxford at this time Miss Wedgwood further says:

The condition of Oxford at the time of the rise of Methodism has been too little noted among those who have studied the great Evangelical Revival. Contemplating this important movement in its latter stage, they have forgotten that it took its rise in the attempt made by an Oxford tutor to bring back to the national institution for education something of that method which was at this time so disgracefully neglected. To surround a young man with illustrations of one kind of error is the inevitable preparation for making him a vehement partisan of its opposite, and in education the influence on which we can reckon most certainly is that of reaction. The hard external code and needless restrictions of Methodism should be regarded with reference to what Wesley saw in the years he spent in that abode of talent undirected and folly unrestrained.

It was to the Oxford here described—the Oxford where Gibbon and Adam Smith wasted the best years of their lives, and many of their unremembered contemporaries following in their steps with issues not less disastrous to themselves, however unimportant to others,—to the Oxford where young men swore to observe laws they never read, and renewed a solemn promise when

they had discovered the impossibility of keeping it,—that Wesley, about a score of years after his entrance to the University, poured forth from the pulpit of St. Mary's such burning words as must have reached many a conscience in the congregation.

"Let me ask you," he said in his university sermon for 1744, "in tender love and in the spirit of meekness, is this a Christian city? Are we, considered as a community of men, so filled with the Holy Ghost as to enjoy in our hearts, and show forth in our lives, the genuine fruits of that Spirit? I entreat you to observe that here are no peculiar notions now under consideration: that the question is not concerning doubtful opinions, but concerning the undoubted fundamental branches (if there be any such) of our common Christianity. And for the decision thereof I appeal unto your own consciences. In the presence of the great God, before whom both you and I shall shortly appear, I pray you that are in authority over us, whom I reverence for the sake of your office, to consider (and that not after the manner of dissemblers with God), are you living portraitures of Him whom ye are appointed to represent among men? Do you put forth all your strength in the vast work you have undertaken? Let it not be said that I speak here as if all under your care were intended to be clergymen. Not so: I speak only as if they were intended to be Christians. But what example is set us by those who enjoy the beneficence of our forefathers, by Fellows, Students, Scholars, and more especially those who are of some rank and eminence? Do ye, who are of some rank and eminence—do ye, brethren, abound in the fruits of the Spirit, in holiness of mind, in self-denial and mortification, in seriousness and composure of spirit,

in patience, meekness, sobriety, temperance; and in unwearied, restless endeavors to do good to all men? Is this the general character of Fellows of Colleges? I fear it is not. Rather have not pride and haughtiness, impatience and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies, nor wholly without ground? Many of us are more immediately consecrated to God, called to minister in holy things. Are we then patterns to the rest in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity? Did we indeed enter on this office with a single eye to serve God, trusting that we were inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon us this ministration, for the promoting of His glory, and the edifiying of His people? Where are the seals of our apostleship? Who that were dead in trespasses and sins have been quickened by our word? Have we a burning zeal to save souls from death? Are we dead to the world and the things of the world? When we are smitten on one cheek, do we not resent it, or do we turn the other also, not resisting evil, but overcoming evil with good? Have we a bitter zeal, inciting us to strive sharply and passionately with those that are out of the way? Or is our zeal the flame of love, so as to direct all our words with sweetness, lowliness and meekness of wisdom? ¶ Once more: what shall we say of the youth of this place? Have you either the form or the power of Christian godliness? Are you diligent in your business, pursuing your studies with all your strength? Do you redeem the time, crowding as much work into every day as it can contain? Rather, are ye not conscious that you waste day after day either in reading that which has no tendency to Christianity, or in gaming, or in —you know not what? Are you better managers of

your fortune than of your time? Do you take care to owe no man anything? Do you know how to possess your bodies in sanctification and honour? Are no drunkenness and uncleanness found among you? Yea, are there not many of you who glory in your shame? Are there not a multitude of you that are foresworn? I fear, a swiftly increasing multitude. Be not surprised, brethren—before God and this congregation I own myself to have been of the number solemnly swearing to observe all those customs which I then knew nothing of, and all those statutes which I did not so much as read over, either then, or for a long time afterwards. What is perjury, if this is not? But if it be, oh what a weight of sin, yea, sin of no common dye lieth upon us! And doth not the Most High regard it?

May it not be a consequence of this that so many of you are a generation of triflers with God, with one another, and your own souls? Who of you is, in any degree, acquainted with the work of the Spirit, His supernatural work in the souls of men? Can you bear, unless now and then in a church, any talk of the Holy Ghost? Would you not take it for granted if any one began such a conversation, that it was hypocrisy or enthusiasm? In the name of the Lord God Almighty I ask, What religion are ye of?"

We may hope that, even in that cold and worldly age, there was more than one in St. Mary's church whose conscience was awakened so to re-echo that question that he joined with his whole soul in the prayer with which the sermon concluded: "Lord, save or we perish! Take us out of the mire that we sink not. Unto Thee all things are possible. According to the greatness of Thy power, preserve Thou them that are appointed to die!"

THE fervor of Wesley's zeal gave offense to the prim and precise parsons who recited their prayers by aid of a T-square ☙ ☙

To them religion was a matter of form, but to Wesley it was an experience of the heart. From the Moravians he had acquired the habit of interjecting prayers into his sermons—from speaking to the people, he would suddenly change, raise his eyes aloft and speak directly to Deity. This to many devout Churchmen was blasphemous. Of course the trouble was that it was simply new—we always resent an innovation. "Did you ever see anything like that?" And the fact that we have not is proof that it is absurd, preposterous, bad.

Wesley went one day to hold evening prayers at a village church near Oxford. His fame had preceded him: the worthy warden securely locked the doors and deposited the key in the capacious depths of his breeches pocket and went a-fishing. Several old women were waiting to attend the service, and rather than send them away, Wesley, standing on the church steps, read prayers and spoke. It was rather an unusual scene, and the unusual attracts. Loafers from

the tavern across the way came over, children gathered in little groups, people who never entered a place of worship stopped and listened. Some laughed, others looked serious, and most of them remained to the close of the meeting.

Thus does everything work together for good for everybody. The warden and his astute vestrymen thought to block the work of Wesley, and Wesley did the only thing he could—spoke outside of the church, and thus did he speak to the hearts of people who had never been inside the church and who would not go inside the building. Street preaching was not the invention of John Wesley, but up to his time no clergyman in the Church of England had attempted so undignified a thing.

Wesley was doing what his mother had done the very year he was born. She had preached to the people ot the village of Epworth in the churchyard, because forsooth, the chancel was a sacred place and would suffer if any one but a man, duly anointed, spoke there. The woman had a message and did the only thing she could—spoke outside, and spoke to two hundred and fifty people while the regular attendance to hear her husband was twenty-five.

And so John Wesley had made a discovery, and that was that to reach the submerged three-quarters, you must make your appeal to them on the street, in the market places—from church steps. His experience on

shipboard and in America had done him good. They had taught him that form and ritual, set time and place, were things not necessary—that whenever two or three were gathered together in His name, He was in their midst.

And it was in preaching to the outcasts that Wesley found himself, and was "converted." He says, "My work in America failed because I had not then given my heart to my Savior."

Now he got the "power," and whether this word means to his followers what it meant to him is a question we need not analyze. Power comes by abandonment—the orator who flings convention to the winds and gives himself to the theme finds power.

The opposition and the ridicule were all very necessary factors in allowing Wesley to find his true self.

He wrote to his mother telling what he was doing and she wrote back giving him her blessing, writing words of encouragement. "Son John must speak the words of love on any and every occasion when the spirit moves," she said.

John Wesley was attracting too much attention to himself at Oxford: there came words of warning from those in authority. To these admonitions he replied that he was a duly ordained clergyman of the Church of England and there was nothing in the canons that forbade his holding services when and where he desired. And then he adds, "To show simple men and

women the way of life and tell them of Him who died that we might live, surely cannot be regarded as an offense. I must continue in my course."

That settled it—Oxford the cultured was not for him. He was a preacher without a pulpit—a teacher without a school.

He saddled his horse and with all his earthly possessions in his saddle-bags, traveled toward London—following that storied road over which almost every great and powerful man of England had traversed.

He was penniless but he owned his horse. He was a horse lover—he delighted in the companionship of a horse, and where the way was rough he would walk and lead the patient animal. It comes to us with a slight shock that the Rev. John Wesley anticipated Col. Budd Doble by saying, "God's best gift to man—a horse!"

So John Wesley rode not knowing where he was going or why, only that Oxford no longer needed him. When he started he was depressed, but after passing the confines of the town, and once out upon the highway with the green fields on either side he lifted up his voice and sang one of his brother's hymns. Exile from Oxford meant liberty.

Arriving at a village he would stand on the church steps, on the street corner, often from a tavern veranda and speak. In his saddle-bags he carried his black robe and white tippet. He could put these on over his

traveled-stained clothes and look presentable. His hair was worn long and parted in the middle; his face was cleanly shaved and revealed comely features of remarkable strength.

The man was a commanding figure. People felt the honesty of his presence. The crowd might jeer and catcall, but those who stood near offered no violence. Indeed, more than once the roughs protected him.

He preached of righteousness and judgment to come. He plead for a better life—here and now. And so he traveled, preaching three or four times a day, and riding from twenty to fifty miles ❧ At London he preached on the "heaths" and thousands upon thousands who never entered a church heard him. That phrase, "they came to scoff and remained to pray," is his ❧ ❧

Wesley's oratory was not what is known to us as "the Methodist style." He was quiet, moderate, conversational, but so earnest that his words carried conviction. The man was honest—he wanted nothing —he gave himself.

Such a man today, preaching in the same way, would command marked attention and achieve success.

The impassioned preaching of Whitefield was what gave the "Methodist color." Charles Wesley was much like Whitefield, and was regarded as a greater preacher than his brother because he indulged in more gymnastics, but John was far the greater man.

And so the Great Awakening began; other preachers followed the example of the Wesleys and were preaching in the fields and by the roadside and were organizing "Methodist Societies." But John Wesley was their leader and exemplar.

Neither of the Wesleys nor did Whitefield have any idea at this time of organizing a separate denomination or of running opposition to the Established Church. They belonged to the Church and these "societies" were merely for keeping alive the spiritual flame which had been kindled.

The distinguishing feature of John Wesley's work seemed to be the "class" which he organized wherever possible. This was a school-teacher's idea. There was a leader appointed, and this class of not over ten persons was to meet at least once a week for prayer and praise and to study the Scriptures. Each person present was to take part—to stand on his feet and say something.

In this Wesley was certainly practical—"All must take part, for by so doing the individual grows to feel he is a necessary part of the whole. Even the humblest must read, or pray, or sing, or give testimony to the goodness of God."

And so we get the circuit-rider and see the evolution of the itineracy. And then comes the "local preacher" who was simply a "class leader," "who had gotten the power."

Wesley saw with a clear and steady vision that the paid preacher, the priest with the "living" was an anomaly. To make a business of religion was to miss its essence; just as to make a business of love evolves a degenerate. Our religion should be a part of our daily lives. The circuit-rider was an apostle—he had no home; drew no salary; owned no property; but gave his life without stint to the cause of humanity. It was Wesley's habit to enter a house—any house—and say, "Peace be unto this house." He would hold then and there a short religious service. People were always honored by his presence—even the great and purse-proud, as well as the lowly welcomed him. All he wanted was accommodations for himself and his horse, and these were freely given. He looked after the care of his horse himself, and always the last thing at night he would see that his horse was properly fed and bedded.

One horse he rode for ten years, and when it grew old and lame his grief at having to leave it behind found vent in a flood of tears as he stood with his arms about its neck. Was ever mortal horse so honored? To have carried an honest man a hundred thousand miles, and been an important factor in the Great Awakening. Is there a Horse Heaven? In the state of Washington they say "yes." Perhaps they are right. Often before break of day, before the family was astir, Wesley would be on his way.

AS an argument against absolute innocency in matters of love, the unfortunate marriage of Wesley, at the discreet age of forty-eight has been expressed at length by Bernard Shaw. If Wesley had roamed the world seeking for a vixen for a wife, he could not have chosen better. Mrs. Vazeille was a widow of about Wesley's age—rich, comely, well upholstered. In London he had accepted her offers of hospitality and for ten years had occasionally stopped at her house, so haste cannot be offered as an excuse. The fatal rock was propinquity, and this was evidently not on the good man's chart; neither did he realize the ease and joy with which certain bereaved ladies can operate their lachrymal glands.

On the way down The Foundry steps at night, Wesley slipped and sprained his ankle. He hobbled to the near-by residence of Mrs. Vazeille. On sight of him, the lady burst into tears, and then for the next week proceeded to nurse him.

He was due on the circuit and anxious to get away; he could not ride on horseback, and therefore if he went at all, he must go in a carriage. Mrs. Vazeille had a carriage, but she could not go with him, of

course, unless they were married. ¶ So they were married, and were miserable ever afterward.

Mrs. Wesley was glib, shallow, fussy, and never knew that her husband belonged to the world, and to her only incidentally. She took sole charge of him and his affairs; ordered people away who wanted to see him if she did not like their looks; opened his mail; rifled his pockets; insisted that he should not go to the homes of poor people; timed his hours of work, and religiously read his private journal and demanded that it should be explained. This woman should have married a man who kept no journal, and one for whom no one cared. As it was, no doubt she suffered up to her capacity, which perhaps was not great, for God puts a quick limit on the sensibilities of the stupid.

She even pulled him about by the hair before they had been married a year; and made faces at him as he preached, saying sotto voce, "I've heard that so often that I'm sick of it." In company, she would sometimes explain to the assembled guests what a great and splendid man her first husband was.

But worst of all, she took Wesley's faithful saddle horse "Timothy," and hitched him alongside of a horse of her own to a chaise, with a postboy in a red suit on his back, tooting a horn.

Poor Wesley groaned, and inwardly said, "It is a trial sent by God—I must bear it all."

Finally the woman renounced him and left for Scotland. He then stole his own horse from her stable, and rode away as in the good old days. But alas! in a month she was on his trail. She caught up with him at Birmingham and fell on his neck, after the service, explaining that she was Mrs. John Wesley. The poor man could neither deny it nor run away, without making a scene, and so she accompanied him to his lodgings. ¶ Her protests of reformation vanished in a week and the marks of her nails were again on his fine face.

This program was kept up for thirty-one years with all the variations possible to a jealous woman, who had an income sufficient to allow her to indulge her vagaries and move in good society. On October 14, 1781, Wesley wrote in his journal, "I am told my wife died Monday and was buried on this evening."

Wesley once wrote to Asbury, "She has cut short my life full twenty years." If this were true, one can see how Wesley would otherwise have made the century run. However, Wesley was right—it was not all bad; the law of compensation never sleeps, and as a result of his unfortunate marriage, Wesley knew things which men happily married never know.

John Wesley did not blame anybody for anything. Once when he saw a drunken man reeling through the street, he turned to a friend and said, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Wesley!" All his bio-

graphies agree that after his fiftieth year his power as a preacher increased constantly until he was seventy-five. He grew more gentle, more tender and there was about him an aura of love and veneration, so that even his enemies removed their hats and stood silent in his presence. And we might here paraphrase his own words and truly say of him, as he said of Josiah Wedgwood, "He loved flowers and horses and children—and his soul was near to God!"

The actual reason for breaking away or "coming out" is a personal antipathy for the leader. Like children playing a game, theologians reach a point where they say, "I'll not play in your back yard." And not liking a man, we dislike his music, his art, his creed ❧ So they divide on free grace, foreordination, baptism, regeneration, freedom of the will, endless punishment, endless consequences, conversion, transubstantiation, sanctification, infant baptism, or any one of a dozen reasons which do not represent truth, but are all merely a point of view and can honestly be believed before breakfast and rejected afterward. ¶ However, the protest of Wesley had a basic reason, for at his time the State Religion was a galvanized and gilded thing, possessing everything but the breath of life.

AND so John Wesley went riding the circuit from Land's End to John O'Groat's, from Cork to Londonderry, eight thousand miles, and eight hundred sermons every year. In London he spoke to the limit of his voice—ten thousand people. Yet when chance sent him but fifty auditors he spoke with just as much feeling. His sermons were full of wit, often homely but never coarse. He knew how to interest tired men; how to keep the children awake. He interspersed anecdote with injunction and precept with homely happenings. He yearned to better this life, and to evolve souls that were worth saving.

Wesley grew with the years, and fully realized that preaching is for the preacher. "Always in my saddle-bags beside my Bible and hymnal I carried one good book." He knew history, science as far as it had been carried, and all philosophy was to him familiar. The itineracy he believed was a necessity for the preacher as well as the people. A preacher should not remain so long in a place as to become cheap or commonplace. New faces keep one alive and alert. And the circuit-rider can give the same address over and over and perfect it by repetition until it is most effective.

¶ The circuit-rider, the local preacher or class-leader, the classes, the "love-feast" or a general meeting—these were quite enough in way of religious machinery.
¶ Finally, however, Wesley became convinced that in large cities an indoor meeting place was necessary in order to keep the people banded together. Often the weather was bad and then it was too much to expect women and children to stand in the rain and cold to hear the circuit-rider.

So London supplied an abandoned warehouse called "The Foundry," and here the Wesleyans met in a vast body for a service of song and praise. Methodism is largely a matter of temperament—it fits the needs of a certain type. The growing mind is not content to have everything done for it. The Catholics and Episcopalians were doing too much for their people, and not letting the people do enough for themselves. The Methodist class-meeting allowed the lowliest member to lift up his voice and make his own appeal to the throne of grace. Prayer is for the person who prays, and only very dull people doubt its efficacy. The God in your own heart always hearkens to your prayer and if it is reasonable and right always answers it.

"Methodism raised the standard of intellect in England to a degree no man can compute," says Lecky the free-thinking historian. Drunkenness, gambling, dog-fighting, bear-baiting in whole communities was replaced by the singing of hymns, prayers and "testi-

monies," in which every one had a part. Wesley loved flowers and often carried garden seeds to give away, and then on his next trip would remember to ask about results. He encouraged his people to be tidy in their dress and housekeeping, and gentle in their manners. Thousands learned to read that they might read the Bible; thousands sang who had never tried to sing before, and although the singing may have been of a very crude quality and the public speaking below par, yet it was human expression and therefore education, evolution, growth. That Wesley thought Methodism a finality need not be allowed to score against him. His faith and zeal had to be more or less blind, otherwise he would not have been John Wesley; philosophers with the brain of Newton, Spencer, Hegel, Schopenhauer could never have done the work of Wesley. Had Wesley known more, he would have done less. He was a God-intoxicated man—his heart was aflame with divine love.

He carried the standard far to the front, and planted the flowing pennant on rocky ramparts where all the world could see. To carry the flag further was the work of others yet to come.

It was only in the year 1784, when Wesley was eighty-one years old, that he formally broke loose from the mother-church and Methodism was given a charter from the State. At this time John Wesley announced himself as a "Scriptural Episcopus," or a bishop by

divine right, greatly to the consternation of his brother Charles. But the morning stars still sang together, even after he had ordained his comrade, Asbury, "Bishop of America," and conferred the title of bishop on a dozen others. It was always, however, carefully explained that they were merely Methodist Episcopal bishops and not Episcopal bishops. A year before his death Wesley issued an order that no Methodist services should be held at the hours of the regular church service, and that no Methodist bishop should wear a peculiar robe, have either a fixed salary, residence or estate, nor should he on any account allow any one to address him as "My Lord."

It was a very happy life he led—so full of work that there was no time for complaint. The constant horseback riding kept his system in perfect health. At eighty-five he said, "I never have had more than a half-hour's depression in my life. My controlling mood has been one of happiness, thankfulness and joy."

Wesley endeavored not to make direct war upon the Established Church—he hoped it would reform itself. He did not know that men with fixed and fat incomes seldom die and never resign, and his innocence in thinking he could continue on his course of organizing "Methodist Societies," and still keep his place within the Church reveals his lack of logic. Moreover, he never had enough imagination to see that the Methodist Church would itself become great and strong and

powerful and rich, and be an institution very much like the one from which in his eighty-fourth year he at last broke away. Charles Wesley and Whitefield died members of the Church of England, and were buried in consecrated ground, but John Wesley passed peacefully out in his eighty-eighth year, requesting that his body be buried in City Road Chapel, in the plot of ground that he by his life, love and work had consecrated. And it was so done.