

EVANS CHRISTMAS

SERMONS OF
CHRISTMAS
EVANS

Christmas Evans

Sermons of Christmas Evans

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Содержание

ADVERTISEMENT	5
INTRODUCTION	6
MEMOIR	11
EARLY YEARS	11
PROFESSION OF RELIGION	12
COMMENCEMENT OF PREACHING	13
BACKSLIDING AND RECOVERY	14
CHANGE OF VIEWS	15
DEPRESSING VIEWS OF HIMSELF	16
LABORS IN LĚYN	17
VISIT TO SOUTH WALES	18
SETTLEMENT IN ANGLESEA	19
POWERFUL SERMONS	20
SANDEMANIANISM AND SABELLIANISM	22
TIME OF REFRESHING	23
COVENANT WITH GOD	24
STUDYING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE	26
NEW TROUBLES AND SORROWS	27
LEGAL PROSECUTION	28
CAERPHILLY	29
ANOTHER COVENANT	30
CARDIFF	32
SERMONS FOR THE PRESS	33
WELSH JUMPING	34
CAERNARVON	38
PULPIT POPULARITY	39
INTERESTING LETTER	40
TOUR THROUGH THE PRINCIPALITY	43
MONMOUTHSHIRE ASSOCIATION	44
LAST SERMON, SICKNESS, AND DEATH	45
FUNEREAL SORROW	46
PORTRAITURE	47
PERSONAL APPEARANCE	47
MORAL AND CHRISTIAN CHARACTER	48
SOCIAL DISPOSITION	49
READING AND STUDY	50
DEVOTIONAL HABITS	51
CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE	52
SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS	53
CATHOLIC GENEROSITY	54
INGENUOUSNESS AND HONESTY	55
SARCASTIC REBUKES	56
PULPIT TALENTS AND LABORS	57
SERMONS OF CHRISTMAS EVANS.	62
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	63

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Sermons of Christmas Evans

ADVERTISEMENT

The Sermons of Christmas Evans contained in this volume, and the extracts from his journal and other writings given in the following Memoir and Portraiture, are translated by two different hands, and in very different styles. The former are clothed in very good English, but the diction of the latter requires an apology. Unable to procure a better version, we have furnished such as we found; and it is hoped that even this, with all its imperfections, will not be wholly unprofitable to the reader.

The writer does not wish to be held responsible for the Theological Views put forth, either in the extracts alluded to, or in the sermons. Christmas Evans was a Calvinistic Baptist, and several of his sermons inculcate, to some extent, the peculiar doctrines of that denomination; though they are generally free from sectarian bias, and may be read with advantage by spiritual Christians of all evangelical creeds.

Joseph Cross.

Philadelphia, May 10, 1846.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of Christianity into Britain is said to have taken place about sixty-three years after the crucifixion. By whose agency it was effected, cannot now be satisfactorily determined. Tradition has ascribed it to Joseph of Arimathea. This, however, is exceedingly doubtful. It has also been attributed to the apostle Paul. That the apostle Paul visited Britain, is quite probable, from the testimony of Theodoret and Jerome. That he was the first preacher of the gospel in Britain, is certainly a mistake. The weight of evidence seems to be in favour of Claudia, a Welsh lady, belonging to Cæsar's household. The circumstances were these: —

The Romans invaded Britain about fifty years before the incarnation. Failing to conquer the Welsh, they made peace with them, and dwelt among them in amity. Many Welsh soldiers joined the Roman army, and several Welsh families went and resided at Rome. Among the latter were Claudia and her husband. Saint Paul was then a prisoner under Nero; dwelling, however, “in his own hired house,” and receiving all who came to hear the word of God. Under his ministry, Claudia was converted to Christianity. She soon returned to her native country, and scattered “the Seed of the Kingdom” among her own people. This was in the year of our Lord sixty-three.

About a century after this, Faganus and Daminicanus went to Rome, were converted there, and became “able ministers of the New Testament.” In the year of our Lord 180, they were sent back to Wales, to preach to their own countrymen. They were zealous and successful laborers. They opposed the pagan superstitions of the Welsh with wonderful energy. They pursued Druidism to its dark retirements, and poured upon it the withering blaze of the gospel. Through their preaching, Lucius, king of Wales, was brought to embrace Christianity. He was the first king that ever bowed to the Prince of Peace. The royal convert was exceedingly zealous in the propagation of the truth. The Macedonian cry issued from the throne of Wales, an earnest appeal to Eleutherius for help. Then “the word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified.”

Under the reign of Dioclesian, about the year 300, the Welsh Christians suffered a dreadful persecution. Their books were burned, their houses of worship were destroyed, and multitudes obtained the crown of martyrdom. The first three were Alban, Aaron, and Julius. They were all excellent men, and greatly beloved by their brethren. They died in triumph, and their blood became the seed of the church. Many others soon followed them in the same path. Dioclesian gave strict orders for their destruction. Not a Christian was to be spared, not a Christian church, not a book or a scrap of writing that could transmit their faith and history to future generations. This was the tenth persecution. The great dragon had sent forth his flood to destroy the church. But “mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.” The bush still lived,

“And flourished unconsumed in fire.”

The first Christian king, we have said, was a Welshman. So, in part, was the first Christian emperor. Constantine the Great was born in Britain. His father was Roman; his mother Welsh. Having resided some time in Britain, they removed to Rome. Constantine ascended the Imperial throne. Converted, he made Christianity the religion of the empire. The intolerant edicts of his predecessors were abolished; and the absurd rites of paganism, as far as possible, suppressed. The emperor employed all his energies and resources in spreading the gospel. But his course, if honest, was injudicious. In the end, he dishonoured Christianity more by his imprudence, than he glorified her at first by his zeal. He opened the door of the church so wide as to admit Antichrist himself. The “man of sin” came and seated himself in the temple of God.

Intoxicated with her prosperity, the church throughout the empire gradually embraced the grossest superstitions. But the Welsh Christians strenuously resisted all innovations. They adhered firmly to the primitive simplicity of Christian faith and worship. Yet they lost a portion of their

spirituality. The storms of tribulation are often more favourable to the growth of vital religion, than the sunshine of prosperity. The church becomes dizzy when placed upon the pinnacle of worldly praise. The boatmen wax careless when their craft glides gently along on a smooth sea, before a pleasant gale. This is the natural tendency of the human mind, in circumstances of prosperity. It was thus with the Christians of Wales.

Other things operated unfavourably. The Pelagian controversy divided and distracted the churches, and destroyed the spirit of Christian meekness and love. The Welsh were soon involved in a civil war with the Picts and Scots. In their distress, they solicited the aid of the Saxons. The Saxons promptly responded to the call. But the ally soon became an enemy. They fell upon the Welsh, drove them to the mountains of Cumry, and took possession of their land.¹ These disasters threatened the extermination of Christianity in Wales. But there were a few faithful ones, whose ark outrode the deluge. Gildas, Dyfrig, Dynawt, Teil, Padarn, Pawlin, Daniel, Codag, Dewi, and several others, stood firmly against the degeneracy of the times, and were “valiant for the truth upon the earth.” Through their labors, the religion of Jesus survived among the hills of Cumry.

In the beginning of the seventh century, Austin came to Britain, under a commission from Gregory the Great, to make proselytes to popery. He succeeded well with the Saxons, but not at all with the Welsh. This is not strange. The Saxons were ignorant idolaters, and the transition was easy from Paganism to popery. The Welsh were enlightened Christians, and it was difficult to seduce them from their allegiance to Christ. They consented, however, to hold a large meeting on the borders of Herefordshire, and hear what Austin had to offer. His doctrine did not suit them. They rejected alike the proposals of the monk and the commands of his master. This awoke the fiend within him. He instigated the Saxons to murder them. Twelve hundred ministers and delegates were slaughtered, and afterward many of their brethren. Their leaders being slain, the majority of the survivors reluctantly purchased peace at the sacrifice of conscience, submitting to the creed and the usages of Rome. Yet there were some who repudiated the doctrine of the pope’s supremacy, and maintained for a season the simplicity of the gospel. But they lived among the mountains, in seclusion from the world, like the inhabitants of the vale of Piedmont. We hear little or nothing of them again till the time of the Reformation.

While the Lord, through the labors of his servant Wickliffe, was preparing his way in England, Wales also was remembered in mercy, and visited with “the day-spring from on high.” Walter Brute was a native of the principality. He had been at Oxford, where he had formed an intimate acquaintance with Wickliffe. He entered fully into Wickliffe’s views concerning the reformation of the church. His heart was moved with compassion for his countrymen. Inspired with apostolic faith and zeal, he left the university, and returned to his native land. He determined to resist, even “unto blood,” the delusions and abominations of the papacy. He soon distinguished himself as a courageous reformer. He preached in the streets, in the markets, and from house to house. He blew the trump of God throughout the principality. The temple of Antichrist began to tremble, and its gilded and pampered occupants manifested considerable uneasiness and alarm.

Everybody saw that Brute was generous and disinterested. Friends flocked around him, for the people had long since become disgusted with the corruptions of the church, and heartily sick of ecclesiastical despotism. Men of all classes gathered to his standard. His labors of love soon elicited, of course, the hostility of the clergy. But so numerous and respectable were his friends, that all the attempts of ecclesiastical judicatures, and officers of the civil law, were ineffectual. A petition was at length sent to Richard II., King of England, entreating his interference. The king issued an order to the nobility of Wales, requiring them to assist the Bishop of Hereford in apprehending and punishing the heretic and his adherents. This was in the year 1391. Still Walter Brute went on, preaching the gospel,

¹ Down to this time, the Welsh inhabited all of what is now denominated England. But henceforth they are confined to the western part of the island, called Cumry, or Wales.

denouncing the papacy, and exposing the corruptions of the church, without material molestation, till 1393. He was then cited to appear before the Bishop of Hereford, to answer to a charge of heresy. He appeared, defended himself against the allegation, and contended boldly that the pope was Antichrist, and the papal church Babylon.

In this argument, Brute triumphed over his accusers, and made many converts to his cause. Several of the clergy now embraced his views, and became zealous defenders of the faith. One of these, Davydd Ddu of Hiraddug, on the border of Cardiganshire, undertook a translation of the Scriptures into Welsh. Portions of this translation were extensively circulated. Another, John Kent, D.D., of Grismond, in Monmouthshire, was a learned man and a fine poet. He labored incessantly with his pen, to expose the vices of the clergy, and promote a more spiritual religion. These divines were variously opposed and persecuted by ecclesiastical power. They were stigmatized as magicians, and accused of intercourse with evil spirits. But all was unavailing. The zeal of Ddu and Kent was unabated, and the progress of truth was unretarded. The hand of God was with them wherever they went. Revivals occurred in the cloisters, and monks came forth from their seclusion to reinforce the reformers. In the monastery of Margam, Glamorganshire, a large number of the monks were converted. One of them, Thomas Evan ab Rhys, travelled the mountains of the principality, at the constant peril of his life, to remonstrate against popery, and recommend a purer form of Christianity.

In 1580, John Penry, an Episcopal minister, dissented from the established church, and became a Baptist. He was a man of liberal education and fine pulpit talents. After having prosecuted his ministry more than seven years, with remarkable zeal and success, he died a martyr. Penry was the first Baptist preacher in Wales after the Reformation.

In 1620, Erbury and Wroth followed his example. The conversion of the latter was very singular. A nobleman belonging to his parish went to London to attend a law-suit. Hearing that he was successful, Mr. Wroth bought a new violin, and prepared to welcome his return with music and dancing. While these preparations were going on, news came that the nobleman was dead. The joy of the party was suddenly turned into mourning. The vicar fell upon his knees, and poured out his heart in fervent prayer to God. This event occasioned his conversion. Erbury, his friend, was converted about the same time. Both began to preach with wonderful unction. "Jesus Christ and him crucified" was their constant theme. Their zeal drew down upon them a violent storm of persecution. But they were not discouraged. God owned their labors, and many were the seals of their ministry. In 1635 they were ejected from their parishes. But they "cared for none of these things." They went from valley to valley, from mountain to mountain, preaching the word. The recent Welsh translation of the Scriptures proved a powerful auxiliary to their work. People read and investigated for themselves, and found that these were men of God, speaking "the words of truth and soberness."

Erbury and Wroth both organized Baptist churches; the former, on the plan of "strict communion;" the latter, on more liberal principles. These were the first Baptist churches instituted in Wales, after the Reformation from popery. It is said, however, that there existed, even centuries before, many Baptists in the valley of Carleon, the Piedmont of Wales, and among the neighboring mountains. Their origin is, very unfortunately, involved in obscurity. Some pretend to trace them back to the year 63, the time of the introduction of Christianity into Britain. This is a very convenient theory for those who wish to show that the first Christians were exclusive immersionists; and who deem it of primary importance to establish a regular succession of such Christians, from the apostles of our Lord, down to the present day. But it is unsustained by a single shadow of evidence, beyond the bare assertion of interested witnesses.

During the ministry of Erbury and Wroth, arose that morning-star of the Baptist church in Wales, Vavasor Powell. He was born in Radnorshire, South Wales. He was educated for the ministry of the established church. For some time he officiated at Clun, on the borders of Shropshire. While there, his conscience was awakened by a reproof from a Puritan for violating the Sabbath. He was soon afterwards converted, under the preaching of Walter Caradock, a noted preacher among the

Independents. In 1636, he joined the Baptists, and shortly became a very popular preacher among them. He was a man of great eloquence and power. Many were converted under his ministry. But the red dragon was roused to pursue him. In 1642, he fled his native land for the safety of his life. In four years, however, he returned, and preached boldly throughout the country. The people flocked to hear him, by thousands, to the market-houses, to the fields, the woods, and the tops of the mountains. His ministry was wonderfully blessed to the salvation of souls.

After the death of Cromwell, in 1658, Charles II. returned to England. Now commenced a dreadful persecution of the Baptists in Wales. "Hundreds of them were taken from their beds at night, without any regard to age, sex, or the inclemency of the weather; and were driven to prison, on foot, fifteen or twenty miles; and if they did not keep up with their drivers on horseback, they were most cruelly and unmercifully whipped; and while their drivers stopped to drink at the taverns, they were beaten like cattle, during the pleasure of the king's friends; and all their property was forfeited to the king, except what was deemed necessary to defray the expenses of their drivers. But all this was only the beginning of sorrows, and nothing to what they suffered for the space of six-and-twenty years afterward."

In these persecutions, Vavasor Powell bore his part. He was immured, at different times, in thirteen prisons. Indeed, he was a prisoner most of the time till his death, which happened in 1670. On his tomb is this inscription: – "He was, to the last generation, a successful preacher; to the present generation, a faithful witness; to the next generation, an excellent example."

Contemporary with Vavasor Powell, and immediately succeeding him, were many faithful laborers in the cause of Christ in Wales. One of them was the noted Roger Williams, who subsequently removed to New England, and founded the Baptist sect in America. But after the death of Powell and his coadjutors, the revival in Wales declined, and the churches gradually settled into a spiritual sleep, in which they remained a century, when they were roused by the trumpet-tongued eloquence of Harris and Rowlands.

Harris and Rowlands were Methodists. While Whitefield and Wesley were rekindling the fires of the Reformation on the altars of England, these men of God were scattering some sparks of it among the mountains of Wales. Under their labors commenced such a revival as was never known in that country before. They adhered to the established church; and, on that account, were, for a season, but little opposed. But when the blessed fruits of their ministry began to be developed in the conversion of thousands of souls, the wrath of Satan and his emissaries arose against them. But, as Christmas Evans remarks, it was now too late. The sword of the Spirit was drawn; the gates of the city were opened; the fire was kindled in the stubble, and not all the floods of persecution could stay the progress of the flame. Harris and Rowlands went forward in their work of love, clothed with power from on high. A great and effectual door was opened to their ministry, and the leaven spread rapidly through the lump.

The Baptists shared largely in this work of grace. It was the rising of a new sun upon them, which had been heralded a hundred years before in the powerful ministry of Vavasor Powell. The revival developed whatever of talent and energy lay dormant in the denomination. Many a David went forth to meet the Philistine, and returned in triumph. One of these, and the most successful of them all, was Christmas Evans. "He was a man of God," says Dr. Cone, "and eminently useful in his generation." His natural talents were of the highest order, and his Christian graces have not been surpassed in a century. The celebrated Robert Hall regarded him as the first pulpit genius of the age. "Had he enjoyed the advantages of education," writes one who knew him well, and often sat under his ministry, "he might have blended the impassioned declamation of Whitefield with something of the imperial opulence and pomp of fancy that distinguished Jeremy Taylor." His two celebrated "Specimens of Welsh Preaching" have been read throughout Protestant Christendom; and ranked, by universal suffrage, among the most splendid productions of sanctified genius. Who that has seen them does not wish to know more of so remarkable a man? To gratify this desire is a secondary object of

the present publication; the primary, is the religious benefit of mankind. The matter of the following memoir and portraiture is compiled from several authentic sources of information. May their perusal afford the reader as rich a harvest of profit and delight as their preparation has afforded the writer!

MEMOIR

EARLY YEARS

Christmas Evans, second son of Samuel and Joanna Evans, was born at Ysgarwen, Cardiganshire, South Wales, on the 25th of December, 1776. His birth happening on Christmas day suggested his Christian name.

Samuel and Joanna Evans were poor, and unable to educate their children; and at the age of seventeen, Christmas could not read a word. When he was only nine years old, he lost his father and went to live with his uncle, who was a farmer, and a very wicked man. Here he spent several years of his youthful life, daily witnessing the worst of examples, and experiencing the unkindest of treatment. He subsequently engaged as a servant to several farmers successively in his native parish.

During these years he met with a number of serious accidents, in some of which he narrowly escaped with his life. Once he was stabbed in a quarrel. Once he was so nearly drowned as to be with difficulty resuscitated. Once he fell from a very high tree, with an open knife in his hand. Once a horse ran away with him, passing at full speed through a low and narrow passage.

PROFESSION OF RELIGION

His first religious impressions he dates from his father's funeral. But they were fitful and evanescent. To use his own language, "They vanished and recurred once and again." When he was eighteen years of age, an awakening occurred among the young people of his neighborhood. Christmas himself was "much terrified with the fear of death and judgment," became very serious in his deportment, and joined the Arminian Presbyterians at Llwynrhydowen.

His Christian experience was evidently very imperfect. He had a conviction of the evil of sin, and a desire to flee from the wrath to come; but no evidence of acceptance with God, and a very limited knowledge of the plan of salvation. Yet his religious impressions were not entirely fruitless. They produced, at least, a partial reformation of life, and led to many penitential resolutions. He thought much of eternity, and was frequent in secret prayer. He soon felt a strong desire to understand the Scriptures, and with this view began to learn to read. According to his own account, "There was not one in seven in those parts at that time that knew a letter." Almost entirely unaided, he prosecuted his purpose; and in an incredibly short time was able to read his Bible.

COMMENCEMENT OF PREACHING

He was now called upon to exercise his gifts in public prayer and exhortation. “To this,” he says, “I felt a strong inclination, though I knew myself a mass of spiritual ignorance.” His first performance was so generally approved, that he felt greatly encouraged to proceed. Shortly afterward, he preached a sermon at a prayer-meeting, in the parish of Llangeler, county of Caermarthen. The discourse, however, was not original, but a translation from Bishop Beveridge. He also committed one of the Rev. Mr. Rowlands’ sermons, and preached it in the neighborhood of the church to which he belonged. A gentleman who heard him expressed great astonishment at such a sermon from an unlettered boy. The mystery was solved the next day; he found the sermon in a book. “But I have not done thinking,” said he, “that there is something great in the son of Samuel the shoemaker, for his prayer was as good as the sermon.” His opinion of the young preacher would probably have suffered some farther abatement, if he had known, what was the fact, that the prayer itself was memorized!

Young Evans now received frequent invitations to preach, in sundry places, for different denominations; especially in the Baptist church, at Penybont, Llandysil. He spoke occasionally in the pulpits of several eminent ministers. All who heard him were delighted with his discourses, and gave him much encouragement. These labors drew him into the society of many excellent Christians. He seems to have profited by their godly conversation, and soon acquired an experimental knowledge of justification by faith, though the witness of the Spirit was not so clear as in many cases, and he could never fix upon any particular time when he obtained the blessing.

BACKSLIDING AND RECOVERY

The young preacher shortly felt the need of a little more learning, to qualify him for his calling. He commenced going to school to the Rev. Mr. Davis, his pastor, and devoted himself for about six months to the study of Latin. This involved him in pecuniary distress. He took a journey into England, to labour during the harvest season, for the purpose of replenishing his purse, and enabling him to continue his studies. While thus engaged, he fell into temptation, and his religious feelings suffered a sad declension. He thought of relinquishing the school and the ministry, and devoting his life to secular pursuits. While revolving this matter in his mind, the children of the wicked one came upon him, and buffeted him back to his duty. He was waylaid by a mob, who had determined to kill him. They beat him so severely, that he lay for a long time insensible; and one of them gave him a blow upon his left eye, which occasioned its total blindness through the rest of his life.

“That night,” says he, “I dreamed that the day of judgment was come. I saw Jesus on the clouds, and all the world on fire. I was in great fear, yet crying earnestly, and with some confidence, for his peace. He answered and said: ‘Thou thoughtest to be a preacher; but what wilt thou do now? The world is on fire, and it is too late!’ On this I awoke, and felt heartily thankful that I was in bed.”

This dream produced a deep impression upon his mind, and recovered him from his spiritual declension. He began to preach with renewed energy and success, and all his friends predicted that he would “yet become a great man, and a celebrated preacher.”

CHANGE OF VIEWS

There was living, about this time, at Aberduar, a Mr. Amos, who had left the Arminian Presbyterians, and joined the Calvinistic Baptists. He came to visit young Evans, and converse with him on the subject of baptism. The latter was unpractised in argument, and little acquainted with the Scriptures. He strove strenuously for a while, but was at length silenced by the superior skill of his antagonist. Encouraged by his success, Mr. Amos made him another visit, during which he shook his faith in the validity of infant baptism. After this he came again and again. Mr. Evans was at length brought to believe there was no true baptism but immersion by a Baptist minister. Now it was suggested that he ought to be immersed. Other Baptist friends interested themselves in his case, and put into his hands such books as were best adapted to their purpose. He was shortly satisfied what was his duty. "After much struggling," says he, "between the flesh and the spirit, between obedience and disobedience, I went to the Baptist church at Aberduar, in the parish of Llanybyther, in the county of Caermarthen. I was cordially received there, but not without a degree of dread, on the part of some, that I was still a stout-hearted Arminian." He was baptized with several others, by the pastor, Rev. Timothy Thomas, in the river Duar, and admitted to the communion of the church. This was in 1788, when Mr. Evans was about the age of 22.

It is not strange, that, after such a change, he should gradually imbibe the doctrine of election, and its concomitants, as held by the Calvinistic Baptists; but it is quite evident, not only by inference from his own account, but by information from other sources, that he had not yet relinquished his Arminian theology. Whether he would have been more pious and useful, by adhering to his Arminian views, and remaining among his Arminian friends, is a question not for us to answer, and perhaps of little practical importance. It is certain that he became a Calvinist of the highest school, and "a burning and shining light" among his Baptist brethren. That the Calvinistic faith is not incompatible with eminent holiness of life, we have other evidence than that afforded by the history of Christmas Evans. The seraphic piety of a Bunyan, a Baxter, a Whitefield, and a Payson, should silence for ever the clamors of Arminian bigotry!

DEPRESSING VIEWS OF HIMSELF

For several years after this, Mr. Evans entertained painfully depressing views of his Christian character and ministerial talents. He thought every other believer had more light than himself, and every other preacher greater gifts. He called himself “a mass of ignorance and sin.” He imagined his discourses entirely useless to his hearers. This he attributed partly to his habit of repeating them *memoriter*. Others appeared to him to speak extemporaneously, and he “thought they received their sermons directly from heaven,” while he, by memorizing his, forfeited the aid of the Holy Spirit. “I therefore changed my method,” says he, “and took a text without any premeditation, and endeavored to speak what occurred to me at the time. If bad before, it was worse now. I had neither sense nor life, nothing but a poor miserable tone, which produced no effect upon the hearers, and made me really sick of myself. I thought God had nothing to do with me as a preacher. I had no confidence in my own talents and virtues, and the very sound of my voice discouraged me. I have since perceived the great goodness of God herein, preserving me from being puffed up by too good an opinion of my own gifts and graces, which both before and since has proved fatal to many young preachers.”

These views of himself often occasioned him deep distress of mind. He entered the pulpit with dread. He conceived that the mere sight of him there was sufficient to becloud the hearts of his hearers, and intercept every ray of light from heaven. He could not ascertain that he had been the means of the salvation of a single soul during the five years of his preaching. It might have been some relief to him, could he have ventured to develope to some judicious Christian friend the disquietude of his soul. But this he dared not do, lest he should be deemed an unconverted man in the ministry, and exposed as a hypocrite to the world. So he wrapped up the painful secret in his heart, and drank his wormwood alone.

From all this, what are we to infer? That Mr. Evans had never been converted, or was not now in favour with God? We think not. All who knew him had full confidence in his piety, and thought him an excellent Christian. Whether his attention to the subject of baptism, or the Calvinistic views he had recently imbibed, had acted injuriously upon his religious enjoyment, would be an unprofitable speculation, if not otherwise improper. Perhaps these distressing doubts were but the permitted buffetings of Satan, to preserve him from spiritual pride; the preparatory darkness, which enabled him more highly to appreciate, and more earnestly to recommend to others, “the Bright and Morning Star.” Many of God’s chosen servants have been disciplined for their work in darkness. Dr. Payson, during all the earlier part of his eminently useful ministry, and John Summerfield, when his sweet persuasive tongue was leading multitudes to the Cross, were constantly distressed with doubts of their own spiritual condition. Though it is certainly the privilege of every believer to know that he is “a new creature in Christ Jesus,” we cannot thence infer that all such as have not constantly the direct witness of the Spirit are in an unregenerate state.

LABORS IN LËYN

In 1790, Mr. Evans attended the Baptist association at Maesyberllan, in Brecknockshire. Some ministers from North Wales persuaded him to accompany them on their return. He found the Baptist people at Lëyn, in Caernarvonshire, few and feeble. They earnestly besought him to remain with them, to which he at length consented. He was immediately ordained a missionary, to itinerate among several small churches in that vicinity.

Now he began emphatically to “live by faith on the Son of God.” The burden which he had borne so long, rolled away like that of Bunyan’s Pilgrim. He received “the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” From this time, a wonderous power attended his preaching. Many were gathered into the church, as the fruit of his labor. “I could scarcely believe,” says he, “the testimony of the people, who came before the church as candidates for membership, that they had been converted through my ministry. Yet I was obliged to believe, though it was marvellous in my eyes. This made me thankful to God, and increased my confidence in prayer. A delightful gale descended upon me, as from the hill of the New Jerusalem, and I felt the three great things of the kingdom of heaven, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

During the first year of his labors in Lëyn, he was united in marriage to Miss Catherine Jones, a pious young lady of his own church, and a very suitable companion. After this event, his duties were increasingly arduous. He frequently preached five times during the Sabbath, and walked twenty miles. His heart was full of love, and he spoke with the ardor of a seraph. Constant labor and intense excitement soon wore upon his health. He became feeble, and his friends were apprehensive of consumption. Through the mercy of God, however, he was spared; gradually recovered his strength; and performed, through the remainder of a long life, an incredible amount of ministerial labor.

VISIT TO SOUTH WALES

Mr. Evans naturally felt a strong desire to see his friends in South Wales. During his second year at Lëyn, thinking it might benefit his enfeebled health, as well as refresh his spirit, he determined to make them a visit. He was unable to procure a horse for the journey, and the small societies to which he preached were too poor to provide him one. So he set forth on foot, preaching in every town and village through which he passed. His talents were now developed, and he had received “an unction from the Holy One.” All who heard him were astonished at his power. His old acquaintances regarded him as a new man. A great awakening followed him wherever he went. Hear his own language: —

“I now felt a power in the word, like a hammer breaking the rock, and not like a rush. I had a very powerful time at Kilvowyr, and also pleasant meetings in the neighborhood of Cardigan. The work of conversion was progressing so rapidly and with so much energy in those parts, that the ordinance of baptism was administered every month for a year or more, at Kilvowyr, Cardigan, Blaenywaun, Blaenffôs, and Ebenezer, to from ten to twenty persons each month. The chapels and adjoining burying-grounds were crowded with hearers of a week-day, even in the middle of harvest. I frequently preached in the open air in the evenings, and the rejoicing, singing, and praising would continue until broad light the next morning. The hearers appeared melted down in tenderness at the different meetings, so that they wept streams of tears, and cried out, in such a manner that one might suppose the whole congregation, male and female, was thoroughly dissolved by the gospel. ‘The word of God’ was now become as ‘a sharp two-edged sword, dividing asunder the joints and marrow,’ and revealing unto the people the secret corruptions of their hearts. Preaching was now unto me a pleasure, and the success of the ministry in all places was very great. The same people attended fifteen or twenty different meetings, many miles apart, in the counties of Cardigan, Pembroke, Caermarthen, Glamorgan, Monmouth, and Brecknock. This revival, especially in the vicinity of Cardigan, and in Pembrokeshire, subdued the whole country, and induced people everywhere to think well of religion. The same heavenly gale followed down to Fishguard, Llangloffan, Little New-Castle, and Rhydwylin, where Mr. Gabriel Rees was then a zealous and a powerful preacher. There was such a tender spirit resting on the hearers at this season, from Tabor to Middlemill, that one would imagine, by their weeping and trembling in their places of worship, and all this mingled with so much heavenly cheerfulness, that they would wish to abide for ever in this state of mind.”

The fame of this “wonderful work of God” spread through South Wales on the wings of the wind. An appointment for Christmas Evans to preach was sufficient to attract thousands to the place. In a very short time he had acquired greater popularity in Wales than any other minister of his day.

SETTLEMENT IN ANGLESEA

On Christmas day, when Mr. Evans was forty-six years of age, he removed from Lëyn to the isle of Anglesea. According to his own account, “it was a very rough day of frost and snow.” Unencumbered with this world’s goods, and possessing the true apostolic spirit, he “commenced the journey on horseback, with his wife behind him,” and arrived on the evening of the same day at Llangewin.

Whatever the motive of this removal, it was certainly not the love of money. His salary in Anglesea was only £17 per annum, and for twenty years he never asked for more. He had learned, with the apostle, “having food and raiment, therewith to be content.” He found his reward in his work. The privilege of preaching Christ and saving souls, with him, was preferable to mountains of gold and silver.

On his arrival in Anglesea, he found ten small Baptist societies, in a lukewarm and distracted condition; himself the only minister, and no brother to aid him within a hundred and fifty miles. He commenced his labors in earnest. One of his first movements was the appointment of a day of fasting and prayer in all the preaching places. He soon had the satisfaction to realize an extensive revival, which continued under his faithful ministry for many years.

POWERFUL SERMONS

In 1794, the South West Baptist Association was held at Velin Voel, in Caermarthenshire. Mr. Evans was invited, as one of the preachers on the occasion. It was a journey of about two hundred miles. He undertook it on foot, with his usual fortitude, preaching at different places as he went along. The meeting was to commence with three consecutive sermons, the last of which was to be preached by Mr. Evans. The service was out of doors, and the heat was very oppressive. The first and second sermons were rather tedious, and the hearers seemed almost stupefied. Mr. Evans arose and began his sermon. Before he had spoken fifteen minutes, scores of people were on their feet, some weeping, some praising, some leaping and clapping their hands for joy. Nor did the effect end with the discourse. Throughout the evening, and during the whole night, the voice of rejoicing and prayer was heard in every direction; and the dawning of the next day, awaking the few that had fallen asleep through fatigue, only renewed the heavenly rapture. “Job David, the Socinian,” said the preacher afterwards to a friend, “was highly displeased with this American gale.” But all the Socinians in Wales could not counteract its influence, or frustrate its happy effects.

Mr. Evans continued to visit the associations in South Wales for many years: and whenever he came, the people flocked by thousands to hear “the one-eyed man of Anglesea.” It was on one of those occasions, and under circumstances somewhat similar to the above, that he preached that singularly effective sermon on the demoniac of Gadara. The meeting had been in progress three days. Several discourses had been delivered with little or no effect. Christmas Evans took the stand, and announced as his text the evangelical account of the demoniac of Gadara. He described him as a naked man, with flaming eyes, and wild and fierce gesticulation; full of relentless anger, and subject to strange paroxysms of rage; the terror and pity of all the townsfolk. They had bound him with great chains, but he would break them as Samson broke the withes. They had tried to soothe him by kindness, but he would leap upon them like a furious wild beast, or burst away with the speed of a stag, his long hair streaming on the wind behind him. He inhabited the rocks of a Jewish cemetery; and when he slept, he laid down in a tomb. The place was a little out of town, and not far from the great turnpike road, so that people passing often saw him, and heard his dreadful lamentations and blasphemies. Nobody dared to cross his path unarmed, and all the women and children ran away as soon as they saw him coming. Sometimes he sallied forth from his dismal abode at midnight, like one risen from the dead, howling and cursing like a fiend, breaking into houses, frightening the inhabitants from their beds, and driving them to seek shelter in the streets and the fields. He had a broken-hearted wife, and five little children, living about a mile and a half distant. In his intervals of comparative calmness, he would set out to visit them. On his way, the evil spirit would come upon him, and transform the husband and father instantly into a fury. Then he would run toward the house, raving like a wounded tiger, and roaring like a lion upon his prey. He would spring against the door, and shatter it into fragments; while the poor wife and children fled through the back door to the neighbors, or concealed themselves in the cellar. Then he would spoil the furniture, and break all the dishes, and bound away howling again to his home in the cemetery. The report of this mysterious and terrible being had spread through all the surrounding region, and everybody dreaded and pitied the man among the tombs. Jesus came that way. The preacher described the interview, the miracle, the happy change in the sufferer, the transporting surprise of his long afflicted family. Then, shifting the scene, he showed his hearers the catastrophe of the swine, the flight of the affrighted herdsman, his amusing report to his master, and the effect of the whole upon the populace. All this was done with such dramatic effect, as to convulse his numerous hearers with alternate laughter and weeping for more than half an hour. Having thus elicited an intense interest in the subject, he proceeded to educe from the narrative several important doctrines, which he illustrated so forcibly, and urged so powerfully, that the people first became profoundly serious, then wept like mourners at a funeral, and finally threw themselves on the ground,

and broke forth in loud prayers for mercy; and the preacher continued nearly three hours, the effect increasing till he closed. One who heard that wonderful sermon says, that, during the first half hour, the people seemed like an assembly in a theatre, delighted with an amusing play; after that, like a community in mourning, over some great and good man, cut off by a sudden calamity; and at last, like the inhabitants of a city shaken by an earthquake, rushing into the streets, falling upon the earth, and screaming and calling upon God!²

² A part of this sermon, as delivered on another occasion, is given in the latter part of this volume.

SANDEMANIANISM AND SABELLIANISM

About this time arose among the Baptists of North Wales a bitter and distracting controversy, concerning Sandemanianism and Sabellianism, which had been introduced by the Rev. Mr. Jones, a man of considerable learning and influence in the denomination. Mr. Evans was at first inclined to fall in with these doctrines, and participated largely in the strife of tongues. He says: —

“The Sandemanian system affected me so far as to quench the spirit of prayer for the conversion of sinners, and it induced in my mind a greater regard for the smaller things of the kingdom of heaven than for the greater. I lost the strength which clothed my mind with zeal, confidence, and earnestness in the pulpit for the conversion of souls to Christ. My heart retrograded, in a manner, and I could not realize the testimony of a good conscience. Sabbath nights, after having been in the day exposing and vilifying with all bitterness the errors that prevailed, my conscience felt as if displeased, and reproached me that I had lost nearness to, and walking with God. It would intimate that something exceedingly precious was now wanting in me; I would reply, that I was acting in obedience to the word; but it continued to accuse me of the want of some precious article. I had been robbed, to a great degree, of the spirit of prayer and of the spirit of preaching.”

Mr. Evans thus describes the effect of this controversy upon his people: —

“The Sandemanian spirit began to manifest itself in the counties of Merioneth, Caernarvon, Anglesea, and Denbigh, and the first visible effect was the subversion of the hearers, for which the system was peculiarly adapted; intimating, as it did, that to Babylon the crowd of hearers always belonged. We lost, in Anglesea, nearly all those who were accustomed to attend with us; some of them joined other congregations; and, in this way, it pulled down nearly all that had been built up in twelve or fifteen years, and made us appear once again a mean and despicable party in the view of the country. The same effects followed it in a greater or lesser degree in the other counties noticed; but its principal station appears to have been in Merionethshire; this county seems to have been particularly prepared for its reception, and here it achieved by some means a sort of supremacy.”

TIME OF REFRESHING

Mr. Evans had been a long time in this controversy, destitute of all religious enjoyment, or, to use his own expressive phrase, “as dry as Gilboa,” when he experienced a remarkable refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The following account is extracted from his journal: —

“I was weary of a cold heart towards Christ, and his sacrifice, and the work of his Spirit – of a cold heart in the pulpit, in secret prayer, and in the study. For fifteen years previously, I had felt my heart burning within, as if going to Emmaus with Jesus. On a day ever to be remembered by me, as I was going from Dolgelley to Machynlleth, and climbing up towards Cadair Idris, I considered it to be incumbent upon me to pray, however hard I felt my heart, and however worldly the frame of my spirit was. Having begun in the name of Jesus, I soon felt as it were the fetters loosening, and the old hardness of heart softening, and, as I thought, mountains of frost and snow dissolving and melting within me. This engendered confidence in my soul in the promise of the Holy Ghost. I felt my whole mind relieved from some great bondage: tears flowed copiously, and I was constrained to cry out for the gracious visits of God, by restoring to my soul the joy of his salvation; – and that he would visit the churches in Anglesea, that were under my care. I embraced in my supplications all the churches of the saints, and nearly all the ministers in the principality by their names. This struggle lasted for three hours: it rose again and again, like one wave after another, or a high flowing tide, driven by a strong wind, until my nature became faint by weeping and crying. Thus I resigned myself to Christ, body and soul, gifts and labors – all my life – every day and every hour that remained for me; – and all my cares I committed to Christ. – The road was mountainous and lonely, and I was wholly alone, and suffered no interruption in my wrestlings with God.

“From this time, I was made to expect the goodness of God to churches and to myself. Thus the Lord delivered me and the people of Anglesea from being carried away by the flood of Sandemanianism. In the first religious meetings after this, I felt as if I had been removed from the cold and sterile regions of spiritual frost, into the verdant fields of the divine promises. The former striving with God in prayer, and the longing anxiety for the conversion of sinners, which I had experienced at Lëyn, was now restored. I had a hold of the promises of God. The result was, when I returned home, the first thing that arrested my attention was, that the Spirit was working also in the brethren in Anglesea, inducing in them a spirit of prayer, especially in two of the deacons, who were particularly importunate that God would visit us in mercy, and render the word of his grace effectual amongst us for the conversion of sinners.”

COVENANT WITH GOD

Mr. Evans now entered into a solemn covenant with God, made, as he says, “under a deep sense of the evil of his heart, and in dependence upon the infinite grace and merit of the Redeemer.” This interesting article is preserved among his papers. We give it entire, as a specimen of his spirit and his faith: —

I. “I give my soul and body unto thee, Jesus, the true God, and everlasting life – deliver me from sin, and from eternal death, and bring me into life everlasting. Amen. – C. E.

II. “I call the day, the sun, the earth, the trees, the stones, the bed, the table, and the books, to witness that I come unto thee. Redeemer of sinners, that I may obtain rest for my soul from the thunders of guilt and the dread of eternity. Amen. – C. E.

III. “I do, through confidence in thy power, earnestly entreat thee to take the work into thine own hand, and give me a circumcised heart, that I may love thee, and create in me a right spirit, that I may seek thy glory. Grant me that principle which thou wilt own in the day of judgment, that I may not then assume palefacedness, and find myself a hypocrite. Grant me this, for the sake of thy most precious blood. Amen. – C. E.

IV. “I entreat thee, Jesus, the Son of God, in power, grant me, for the sake of thy agonizing death, a covenant-interest in thy blood, which cleanseth; in thy righteousness, which justifieth; and in thy redemption, which delivereth. I entreat an interest in thy blood, for thy *blood’s* sake, and a part in thee, for thy name’s sake, which thou hast given among men. Amen. – C. E.

V. “O Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, take, for the sake of thy cruel death, my time, and strength, and the gifts and talents I possess; which, with a full purpose of heart, I consecrate to thy glory in the building up of thy church in the world, for thou art worthy of the hearts and talents of all men. Amen. – C. E.

VI. “I desire thee, my great High Priest, to confirm, by thy power, from thy High Court, my usefulness as a preacher, and my piety as a Christian, as two gardens nigh to each other; that sin may not have place in my heart, to becloud my confidence in thy righteousness, and that I may not be left to any foolish act that may occasion my gifts to wither, and rendered useless before my life ends. Keep thy gracious eye upon me, and watch over me, O my Lord, and my God for ever! Amen. – C. E.

VII. “I give myself in a particular manner to thee, O Jesus Christ, the Saviour, to be preserved from the falls into which many stumble, that thy name (in thy cause) may not be blasphemed or wounded, that my peace may not be injured, that thy people may not be grieved, and that thine enemies may not be hardened. Amen. – C. E.

VIII. “I come unto thee, beseeching thee to be in covenant with me in my ministry. As thou didst prosper Bunyan, Vavasor Powell, Howell Harris, Rowlands, and Whitefield, O do thou prosper me. Whatsoever things are opposed to my prosperity, remove them out of the way. Work in me every thing approved of God, for the attainment of this. Give me a heart ‘sick of love’ to thyself, and to the souls of men. Grant that I may experience the power of thy word before I deliver it, as Moses felt the power of his own rod, before he saw it on the land and waters of Egypt. Grant this, for the sake of thine infinitely precious blood, O Jesus, my hope, and my all in all! Amen. – C. E.

IX. “Search me now, and lead me in plain paths of judgment. Let me discover in this life what I am before thee, that I may not find myself of another character, when I am shown in the light of the immortal world, and open my eyes in all the brightness of eternity. Wash me in thy redeeming blood. Amen. – C. E.

X. “Grant me strength to depend upon thee for food and raiment, and to make known my requests. O let thy care be over me as a covenant-privilege betwixt thee and myself, and not like a general care to feed the ravens that perish, and clothe the lily that is cast into the oven; but let thy care be over me as one of thy family, as one of thine unworthy brethren. Amen. – C. E.

XI. “Grant, O Jesus! and take upon thyself the preparing of me for death, for thou art God; there is no need, but for thee to speak the word. If possible, thy will be done; leave me not long in affliction, nor to die suddenly, without bidding adieu to my brethren, and let me die in their sight, after a short illness. Let all things be ordered against the day of removing from one world to another, that there be no confusion nor disorder, but a quiet discharge in peace. O grant me this, for the sake of thine agony in the garden! Amen. – C. E.

XII. “Grant, O blessed Lord! that nothing may grow and be matured in me, to occasion thee to cast me off from the service of the sanctuary, like the sons of Eli; and for the sake of thine unbounded merit, let not my days be longer than my usefulness. O let me not be like lumber in a house in the end of my days, – in the way of others to work. Amen. – C. E.

XIII. “I beseech thee, O Redeemer! to present these my supplications before the Father: and O! inscribe them in thy book with thine own immortal pen, while I am writing them with my mortal hand, in my book on earth. According to the depths of thy merit, thine undiminished grace, and thy compassion, and thy manner unto thy people, O! attach thy name, in thine upper court, to these unworthy petitions; and set thine amen to them, as I do on my part of the covenant. Amen. – Christmas Evans, Llangevni, Anglesea, April 10, 18 – .”

Mr. Evans, in speaking of this solemn transaction and its influence upon his spirit, subsequently observes: “I felt a sweet peace and tranquility of soul, like unto a poor man that had been brought under the protection of the royal family, and had an annual settlement for life made upon him; from whose dwelling the painful dread of poverty and want had been for ever banished away.”

Thus “strengthened with might in the inner man,” he labored with renewed energy and zeal, and showers of blessings descended upon his labors. In two years, his ten preaching places in Anglesea were increased to twenty, and six hundred converts were added to the church under his care. “The wilderness and solitary place were glad for them, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose.”

STUDYING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Mr. Evans made several visits to Liverpool, Bristol, and other parts of England. On these occasions he was frequently solicited to preach in English, to which he several times consented, to the great gratification of his English friends. These sermons evinced the same energy of thought, and the same boldness of imagery, as those which he preached in Welsh; but in the power of his peculiar delivery, they were inevitably far inferior. His brethren in England were much delighted with his performances, and said it was “no wonder the Welsh were warm under such preaching;” but his language was broken and hesitating, and they could scarcely have any conception of his animation and energy when he spoke in his vernacular tongue.

His success induced him to commence a systematic study of the English language, that he might be able to preach in it with greater freedom and effect. He could read English before, and was somewhat familiar with the best English authors of his day; but never acquainted himself with the grammar of the language till he was thirty-three years of age. But read his own account of the matter: —

“The English brethren had prevailed upon me to preach to them in broken English, as it was; this induced me to set about the matter in earnest, making it a subject of prayer, for the aid of the Spirit, that I might be in some measure a blessing to the English friends, for there appeared some sign that God now called me to this department of labor in his service. I never succeeded in any thing for the good of others, without making it a matter of prayer. My English preaching was very broken and imperfect in point of language; yet, through the grace of Jesus Christ, it was made in some degree useful at Liverpool, Bristol, and some other places. I was about forty years old when I learned to read the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Testament, and use Parkhurst’s Lexicons in both languages. I found that, had I studied the English language attentively and perseveringly, I should be able to overcome great difficulties; and also, that I could without much labor in the course of few years, even in my idle hours, as it were, understand all the Hebrew words corresponding with every Welsh word in the Bible; and so also the Greek. I had always before thought that it was impossible to accomplish this, for I had no one to encourage me in the undertaking; but I found it was practicable, and proved it in some measure, yet relinquished the pursuit on account of my advanced age.”

NEW TROUBLES AND SORROWS

Here we pass over several years of Mr. Evans' history, during which nothing of very special interest occurred, except the agitation of the Fullerian controversy. This is a matter which requires only a passing notice in this brief memoir. We let it sleep in silence.

Mr. Evans was now nearly sixty years of age. Infirmary, the result of his arduous labors and numerous afflictions, began to prey upon his system. The several congregations under his care had hitherto constituted but one church. But the number of preaching places had now become too great for him, in his enfeebled state, to continue his pastoral visits and labors among them as he had done. He therefore advised them to form themselves into separate churches, two or three stations uniting in one. This was the occasion of a dark and dreadful storm upon the apostle of Anglesea. Some of the churches refused the ministers he recommended, and called others whom he disapproved. Then arose a bitter party spirit, and a general contention, among the congregations. Mr. Evans was severely censured, and even assailed with the shafts of slander. Many of his former friends forsook him, and some of those who professed to feel for him in his troubles did nothing for his vindication. The severity of these public calamities was increased by private afflictions. His beloved wife had gone "the way of all the earth." He was himself brought very low by sickness, in which he nearly lost his only remaining eye, and seemed fast tending to his final home.

But though cast down, he was not destroyed. "I wonder greatly," says he, "that I did not sink into the grave under the weight of sorrows that came upon me in my old age, together with an accumulation of trials of all kinds; but the Lord sustained me. There was, in the midst of all, a strong persuasion in my mind, that there was yet much work for me to do for God in the world, as well as much to suffer, ere I died. If I only entered the pulpit, I felt raised as it were to Paradise – above my afflictions – until I forgot my adversity; yea, I felt my mountain strong, my mind was in such a heavenly frame, and as anxious as ever for the conversion of sinners. The truth appeared to me in its power like a hammer in its strength. The doctrine dropped as sweet as the honey, yea, sweeter than the honeycomb, and as comfortable as the best wine. I was now particularly wishful that all the ministers in Anglesea should join with me, according to the promise, 'If two of you agree to ask the *same thing*, it shall be given unto you of my Father which is in heaven;' for I had such confidence that then I should see prosperity attending the ministry, and that I should not die until I had finished my work. I said to a brother: – 'Brother, the doctrine, the confidence, and strength which I feel, will make some persons dance with joy yet in some parts of Wales.' 'Yea, brother,' said he, with tears flowing in streams from his eyes.

"Every thing now contributed to remove me from Anglesea. The unbending disposition of those who were offended at me, and the ardor of my own spirit, believing that there was work for me to do in some other field of the harvest of the Son of man, and my having prayed earnestly for twelve months for the direction of Divine Providence, together with the visions of my head in the night seasons, appeared to unite together to lead in one direction. At length, the determination to leave Anglesea, afflicted as I was, preponderated. I was much like Jacob, leaving his father and his mother, going with his staff only over Jordan: so was I, leaving the church: I had prayed, yea, I had striven with God for its prosperity, and had labored nearly forty years with it – now leaving it – possessing nothing of this world's goods, save the horse upon which I rode, and a small amount of silver in my pocket; and scarcely could I say that these were mine."

LEGAL PROSECUTION

During the above-mentioned tribulations he received an insulting letter, threatening him with a civil prosecution. “They talk,” said he, “of casting me into a court of law, where I have never been, and hope I shall never go; but I will cast them first into the court of Jesus Christ, the source of law and authority.” So saying, he retired to his chamber, and falling upon his knees, he wept and made supplication in the following pathetic strain: —

“O blessed Lord! in thy merit I confide, and trust to be heard. Lord, some of my brethren have run wild; and forgetting their duty and obligations to their father in the gospel, they threaten me with the law of the land. Weaken, I beseech thee, their designs in this, as thou didst wither the arm of Jeroboam; and soften them, as thou didst soften the mind of Esau, and disarmed him of his warlike temper against thy servant Jacob, after the wrestling at Penueel. So disarm them, for I do not know the length of Satan’s chain in this case, and in this unbrotherly attack. But thou canst shorten the chain as short as it may please thee. Lord, I anticipate them in point of law. They think of casting thine unworthy servant into the little courts here below; but I cast my cause into the High Court, in which thou, gracious Jesus, art the High Chancellor. Receive thou the cause of thine unworthy servant, and send them a writ or a notice immediately – sending into their conscience, and summoning them to consider what they are doing. O, frighten them with a summons from thy court, until they come and bow in contrition at thy feet; and take from their hands every revengeful weapon, and make them deliver up every gun of scandal, and every sword of bitter words, and every spear of slanderous expressions, and surrender them all at thy cross. Forgive them all their faults, and clothe them with white robes, and give them oil for their heads, and the organ, and the harp of ten strings, to sing, for the trampling of Satan under our feet by the God of peace.”

Having thus poured out his heart to God, he felt some confidence of security. But he was never satisfied in such cases without an inward assurance of acceptance and success. So he went again and again; and when, like Jesus, he had “offered up many prayers, with strong crying and tears,” like Jacob “he had power with God, and prevailed.” “At the seventh time,” says he, “I came down in full confidence that Christ had taken my cause into his own hand, and would be my Savior. I felt as cheerful and happy as Bunyan’s Pilgrim, when his load fell off and rolled into the grave of Christ; or as Naaman, when he came up from the waters of Jordan, cured of his leprosy.”

It is scarcely necessary to add, the threat was never executed. The Throne of Grace is the good man’s sure resort in every emergency. Jehovah “hides him in his pavilion from the strife of tongues.”

CAERPHILLY

An invitation, which he received about this time, to take charge of the Baptist church in Caerphilly, Glamorganshire, South Wales, confirmed Mr. Evans in his determination to leave the scene of his recent trials. He set out alone, in his sixtieth year. The distance he had to travel was about two hundred miles. On the way, while dwelling on his past misfortunes, he found his heart melted within him, and drawn out in fervent prayer. His faith soon triumphed over his afflictions and his fears. He renewed his covenant with God, and went on his way rejoicing. This revival of his religious feelings had a powerful effect upon his ministry. He had not been long in Caerphilly, before the Spirit of God was poured copiously upon the people.

Previous to this time of refreshing, he had a remarkable dream, which he noted in his diary. He thought he was in the church at Caerphilly, and found many harps hanging about the pulpit, wrapped in coverings of green. Then, said he, "I will take down the harps of heaven in this place." In removing the covering, he found the ark of the covenant, inscribed with the name of Jehovah. Then he cried, "Brethren, the Lord has come to us, according to his promise, and in answer to our prayers." In that very place, he shortly afterward had the satisfaction of receiving one hundred and forty converts into the church, as the fruit of his ministry.

While at Caerphilly, he entered into a second marriage. He remained there only two years. He says: "I never spent a short time in greater comfort, for the ark of God had appeared there, and the harps of one hundred and forty souls had been tuned to the song of redemption." Happy years no doubt they were, and gladly would Mr. Evans have ended his life in Caerphilly; but troubles arose between him and some of his parishioners, and, receiving a call from Cardiff, a neighboring town, he went to take charge of a church in that place.

ANOTHER COVENANT

Previous to his removal, and while he was meditating the matter, he made a new covenant with God. We extract again from his journal: —

“While returning from a place called Tongwynlâs over Caerphilly mountain, the spirit of prayer descended very copiously upon me. I wept for some hours, and heartily supplicated Jesus Christ, for the blessings here following. I found at this time a particular nearness to Christ, as if he were close by me, and my mind was filled with strong confidence that he attended to my requests, for the sake of the merits of his own name. This decided in favor of Cardiff.”

I. “Grant me the great favor of being led by thee, according to thy will – by the directions of thy providence and word, and the disposing of my own mind by thy Spirit, for the sake of thine infinitely precious blood. Amen. – C. E.

II. “Grant, if I am to leave Caerphilly, that the gale (of the Spirit’s influence) and religious revival I had there may follow me to Cardiff, for the sake of thy great name. Amen. – C. E.

III. “Grant thy blessing upon bitter things, to brighten, and quicken me more and more, and not to depress and render me more lifeless. Amen. – C. E.

IV. “Suffer me not to be trodden under the proud feet of members, or deacons, for the sake of thy goodness. Amen. – C. E.

V. “Grant me the invaluable favor of being, in thine hand, the means of calling sinners unto thyself, and of edifying thy saints, wherever thou wilt send me, for the sake of thy name. Amen. – C. E.

VI. “If I am to stay at Caerphilly, give me some tokens, as to Gideon of old, by removing the things that discourage me, and are in the way of the prosperity of religion in that church. Amen. – C. E.

VII. “Grant, Lord of glory, and Head of thy church, that the Ark of the cause which is thine, in Anglesea and Caerphilly, may be sustained from falling into the hands of the Philistines. Do not reject it. Aid it speedily, and lift up the light of thy countenance upon it; and by thy Spirit, word, and providence, so operate as to carry things forward in the churches, and neighborhoods, in such a manner as will produce changes in officers, and measures that will accomplish a thorough improvement in the great cause, for the establishment of which in the world thou hast died; – and by scattering those that delight in war, and closing the mouths of those that occasion confusion. Amen. – C. E.

VIII. “Grant me way-tokens by the time I begin my journey to Liverpool, and from thence to Anglesea, if it is thy will that I should go thither this year. Amen. – C. E.

IX. “O grant me succor beneath the shadow of the sympathy that is in thee towards them who are tempted, and the unbounded power there is in thee to be the relief of such. Amen. – C. E.

X. “Accept of my thanksgiving a hundred millions of times, that thou hast not hitherto cast me from thine hand, as a darkened star, or a vessel in which there is no pleasure; and suffer not my life to be extended beyond my usefulness. Thanks, that thou hast not given me a prey to the teeth of any. Blessed be thy name. Amen. – C. E.

XI. “For the sake of thine infinite merit, do not cast me, thy servant, under the feet of pride and injustice, of *worldly* greatness, riches, and selfish oppression of any men, but hide me in the secret of thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues. Amen. – C. E.

XII. “Help me to wait silently and patiently upon thee, for the fulfilment of these things, and not become enraged, angry, and speak unadvisedly with my lips, like Moses, the servant of the Lord. Sustain my heart from sinking, to wait for fresh strength from Zion. Amen. – C. E.

XIII. “Help me to wait upon thee for the necessities of life; let thy mercy and goodness follow me while I live; and, as it hath pleased thee to honor me greatly, by the blessing thou hast vouchsafed

upon the ministry through me, as an humble instrument, at Caerphilly, after the great storm had beaten upon me in Anglesea, like Job, grant that this honor may continue to follow me the remainder of my days, as thou didst unto thy servant Job. Amen. – C. E.

XIV. “Let this covenant abide like the covenant of salt, until I come to thee in the world of eternal light. I entreat aid to resign myself to thee, and to thy will. I beseech thee take my heart, and inscribe upon it a deep reverence of thyself, with an inscription that time and eternity cannot efface. O let the remainder of my sermons be taken by thee from my lips; and those which I write, let them be unto thee for a praise. Unto thee I dedicate them. If there should be any thing in them conducive to thy glory, and to the service of thy kingdom, do thou preserve it, and reveal it unto men; else, let it die like the drop of a bucket in the midst of the scorching heat of Africa. O grant, that there may be a drop of that water which thou alone canst impart, and which springs up to eternal life, running through all my sermons. In this covenant, which probably is the last that will be written between me and thee on the earth, I commit myself, my wife, and the churches amongst whom I have preached, to the protection of thy grace, and the care of thy covenant. Amen. – C. E.

XV. “Let this covenant continue when I am in sickness or in health, or in any other circumstance; for thou hast overcome the world, fulfilled the law, finished justifying righteousness, and hast swallowed up death in victory, and all power in heaven and earth is in thine hand. For the sake of thy most precious blood and perfect righteousness, note this covenant with thine own blood in the court of the memorials of forgiving mercy: attach unto it thy name in which I believe; and here I, this day, set my unworthy name unto it, with my mortal hand. Amen. – Christmas Evans. Dated, Cardiff, April 24, 1829.”

CARDIFF

“After having entered into this covenant,” says Mr. Evans in his diary, “I came to Cardiff, heartily and unhesitatingly, like a merchant that should send his vessel to sea after it had been registered in the insurance office. I had nothing now to lose, for I had given myself up to the possession of Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament, for time and for eternity; and so I have had to abide here in the secret of his tabernacle for these nine months.”

He removed to Cardiff in the autumn of 1828, and remained there two years and a half. During this time, he received into the church about eighty converts. He was much in secret prayer, and enjoyed intimate communion with his God. He not only retired for devotion several times every day, but ordinarily rose at midnight to call upon the Lord. But the whole period of his residence was not a cloudless day. Some unpleasant matters arose in the church, which caused him much sorrow, as is evident from the following entry in his diary: —

“April 27, 1829. I earnestly entreat thee, blessed Jesus, for the sake of thine own name, to regard me in this request. * * * * Let things be ordered, O Lord, that they may not be impediments and discouragements unto me, and a hinderance to the progress of religion. O, interpose between me and these obstacles, O Lord, that I may have no occasion to dispute with any, and so embitter my spirit! Thy power is infinite, and thy wisdom is infallible. Stand thou between me and all contention, that no ill effect come upon me. I flee to hide myself under the shadow of thy wings. Permit nothing to blunt the edge of my talents, my zeal, or my success, — nor corrupt the church. Grant me this for the sake of thine infinitely precious blood. Set thy name to this request in the court of heaven, and let Satan’s party grow weaker and weaker, and the cause of truth and righteousness become like the house of David, and the house of David like the angel of the Lord. Deliver me, that my spirit be not irritated, and I speak unadvisedly with my lips, as Moses did. Hide me in thy pavilion from the strife of tongues * * * *. I am as it were on the verge of eternity; O save and preserve me by thy boundless power. Amen, Amen, Amen. Lord, regard, behold, hear, and spare. — Christmas Evans. Write this in thy book, O my Lord, and my God. Let none be disappointed that wait upon thee, gracious Lord. — Remember me.”

He adds in another passage: —

“I have given my soul anew to Christ; my body; my talents; my influence in preaching; my name; my character as a man, as a Christian, and as a preacher of the gospel; my time, and the remnant of my opportunities; my success; my peace and comfort as a Christian and a minister. I have resigned all afresh into the hands of Christ. I have commended to his care, also, my wife, and all the circumstances of my family, and my friends and assistants in the work of the Lord, for whom I pray earnestly that they may be blessed, throughout Anglesea, Caernarvon, Caerphilly, Cardiff, and indeed in all the counties of Wales. There are many of them who were helpers to me in my day. I will say, in the language of Paul, and I hope with affectionate emotions of love to Jesus Christ, ‘The Lord grant unto them that they may find mercy of the Lord in that day.’ It is a great privilege to a minister to retain beloved friends, who have helped him with their prayers and sympathy. O bless those whom I have, and preserve the new race, the new generation of them that I have found in these parts. I committed to God, also, those who obstruct the progress of the cause here, and disturb the unity and brotherly love of the church. Let Christ, whose the church is, and let not me, remove every obstacle, either by changing and melting in the love of the gospel, or taking them somewhere else, where they shall not be a curse and an impediment to the cause — and by the means that shall seem fit in his sight. A word or a nod of thine shuts and opens heaven and earth, and all the locks of the land of *Hades*, or the invisible state. For the sake of the blood of thy covenant, grant the above things unto me, thine unworthy servant.”

SERMONS FOR THE PRESS

During his sojourn at Cardiff, though now sixty-five years old, much debilitated, and almost blind, he wrote about two hundred sermons for the press, many of which have since been published. It is certainly very remarkable, that he should write, at his advanced age, with all the vigor and vivacity of his earlier years. Perhaps, of all the sermons he ever made, those composed at Cardiff are the best. Most of them were preached on the Sabbath, and written out during the following week. This circumstance, with their author's peculiar nearness to God, may account for their freshness and power.

Mr. Evans was in the habit of referring every important matter to God. We find in his diary the following paragraph: —

“Cardiff, February 2, 1829. Lord, I have been importuned by many of my brethren in the ministry, to prepare a number of my sermons, that have been in the course of my ministry the most useful in thine hand for the conversion of sinners, with a view to publication. I had no time when in Anglesea to engage in the work, because my circumstances required so much travelling every week. I left the work to lie by, the two years I was at Caerphilly; but here, at Cardiff, I have had a new impulse in my thoughts to enter upon it; and I come unto thee, my great Lord, to consult thee, who art the Head of the church, and the Head-Prophet and Teacher of thy people. Shall I proceed with the work or not? Is it a part of my duty, or is it a useless, foolish notion of my own? I entreat thy gracious direction in this matter, for the sake of thy great name. Suffer me not to afflict myself, when my eyesight is so weak, with a work that thou wilt not bless, but which shall be buried in the land of forgetfulness. If thou wilt not open a door – with thee are the keys of the house of David – in thy providence, that I may obtain subscribers, and bring the work through the press, without hazarding myself in such a way as will involve me in debt and disgrace: and also if thou, the great feeder of the flock, wilt not direct me to give the true gospel, not only without error, but with the savor and unction which accompanies the works of Bunyan and others, which thy Spirit is likely to make use of whilst thou hast churches in Wales: if they should not be for thy glory in the building up of thy church, and the calling of sinners, – if these objects should not be accomplished by the publication of the sermons, dispose my mind to relinquish the undertaking. But if thou wilt patronise the work, strengthen me to accomplish the design. Lord, thou knowest I feel my own insufficiency for such an important enterprise, and my unworthiness to solicit of thee such a favor: but I cannot refrain from making these requests: therefore, for the sake of thine infinite merits, according to thy manner unto thy people, grant unto me my request. Amen.”

WELSH JUMPING

In the autumn of 1829, Mr. Evans wrote in his diary extensive notes of a conversation which he had with several ministers in Bristol, on “the manner of religious rejoicing so remarkable among the Welsh.” His friends condemned it in a sweeping sentence, under the name of “Welsh jumping.” Mr. Evans attempted its vindication. We insert his own account:

“I observed that I could find no account of it among the Welsh until the time of Harris and Rowlands, Calvinistic Methodists, who flourished in Wales about the same time as Whitefield and Wesley in England. The preaching of these men was the means of producing a religious revival throughout all the principality, which had sunk into a state of deep lethargy, since the time of the great awakening under Vavasor Powell, about one hundred years before. At this period nothing was to be seen in almost every parish but young men and young women flocking together into the churches and church-yards, and engaging in different gambols and pastimes, such as ball-playing, foot-ball, leaping, fighting, and such like frolics, as if Wales had been changed into an Olympic mountain, and old paganism restored again. It is true, there were some preachers and churches, both Congregationalists and Baptists, then existing in the principality; but their talents, their spirits, or their magnanimity could not storm such a fortress of impiety. And, besides, there was a dreadful prejudice still remaining in the country against all sects, since the days of Charles II.; and they suffered persecution even unto blood, for about one hundred years previous to the appearing of these men. But from the ashes of those sufferers the revival by Harris and Rowlands sprung up, as did Luther from the ashes of Huss and Jerome of Prague.

“Mr. Rowlands and Mr. Harris were both of the communion of the Episcopal church, and, as such, there was not so much enmity against them at first; but after they had come out, and when the people understood that they were preachers of the cross of Christ, considerable persecution arose against them from the multitude; but it was now too late – for the gates of the city were opened – the leaven was put in the meal – the fire had been kindled – the sword was drawn from the scabbard, and many had been wounded, (spiritually,) and were ready to open the door for the gospel in spite of every danger. Harris, Rowlands, and the two Williams’s, had been clothed with power from on high, and the hammer of their ministry was sufficiently heavy to break in pieces the northern iron.³ Several laymen of powerful minds were also raised up about this time; such as Mr. David Morris, and others, who were valuable auxiliaries to carry on the work. By their ministry, this praising and jumping in religious enjoyment began in Wales, which has not wholly left it on certain occasions until this day.

“As an apology for them, granting at the same time the possibility of extremes even in a good cause in the present state; and that graceless persons may feel something from these excitements as of the powers of the world to come, in the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost in the apostolic age; observe,

“1. That it appears to me like the residue of the Spirit, and the powers of the world to come; which were necessary to open a way for the gospel through the darkness and obduracy of paganism in the days of the apostles.

“2. It is no argument of importance against it, that many graceless persons felt a considerable degree of influence at the time, as well as others; for so it was in the case of Saul, king of Israel, and some besides named in Scripture.

“3. There is no essential difference between religious enjoyment in Wales and that which is now experienced in America; and that which accompanied the preaching of Whitefield in England, and even in Scotland: and that which also followed the ministry of President Edwards, in America, when whole towns and neighborhoods echoed with the sound of persons praying and praising God, as if a

³ Jer. xv. 12.

bursting cloud-shower of the Spirit of grace and prayer had descended upon them. Persons under the ministry of Whitefield wept, cried for mercy, and even fainted by the power of this influence.

“4. And such gracious influences are necessary for the spread of the gospel in every country, and in every land: and therefore the Millennium is described in the Bible as a period remarkable for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost – ‘that a nation shall be born at once,’⁴ – and ‘the flowing of the nations shall be to the mountain of the Lord’s house.’⁵ It is this influence that has driven, as it were, the gospel into every nook of the mountains of Wales, as well as into its cities, towns, and villages; while in England, with all the advantages of education, the gospel, in a manner, is hid in a corner; and it has not run through the country, and searched out, and taken possession of all the inland parts of that spiritual Africa, and that for the want of these gales of divine influence, and powers peculiar to the gospel: and it can never be spread through every part of England as it is in Wales without these gifts. Common preaching will not do to rouse sluggish districts from the heavy slumbers into which they are sunk. Indeed, formal prayers and lifeless sermons are like bulwarks raised against these things in England; and this evil genius has also entered the principality under the pretence of order. Five or six stanzas will be sung as dry as Gilboa, instead of one or two verses, like a new song, full of God, of Christ, and the Spirit of grace, until the heart is attuned for worship. The burying-grounds are kept in fine order in Glamorganshire, and green shrubs and herbs grow on the graves, but all this is of little value, for the inhabitants of them are all dead – so is every form of godliness where its power is not felt. Order without life is exceedingly worthless. You exhibit all the character of human nature, leaving every bud of the flower to open in the beams of the sun, except in divine worship. On other occasions you appear to have as much fire in your affections as the Welsh have. If you are noticed in a court of law, the most efficient advocate, such as Erskine, will give you the greatest satisfaction; but you are contented with a preacher, speaking so lifelessly and so low that you can hardly understand the third part of what he says; and you will call this decency in the sanctuary. To-morrow, I shall see you answering fully to the human character, in your own actions. When the speakers on the platform will be urging the claims of missions, you will then beat the boards, and manifest so much life and cheerfulness, that not one of you will be seen to take up a note-book, nor any other book, while the speaker shall be addressing you. A Welshman might suppose, by hearing your noise, that he had been silently conveyed to the midst of one of the meetings of the ‘Welsh jumpers,’ with this difference, that you would perceive many more tears shed, and hear more ‘calves of the lips’⁶ offered up, in the rejoicing meetings of Wales. But you will use your heels well on such occasions, and a little of your tongues. But even in Wales, in certain places – that is, places where the fervent gales are not enjoyed which fill persons with fear and terror and joy in approaching the altar of God – you may see, while hearing a sermon, one looking into his hymn-book, another into his note-book, and a third turning over the leaves of his Bible, as if he were going to study a sermon in the sanctuary, instead of attending to what is spoken by the preacher as the mouth of God. If there is joy and gladness pertaining to many, the light of God’s countenance in the sanctuary should develope it; until a fire is kindled, and he speak with his tongue, making melody unto the Lord in his heart, and praising Him with his lips.

“5. It is in vain to urge objections against these powerful gales of divine influence, and allege that it is under the ministry of the illiterate preachers of Wales only they are experienced. Harris, Rowlands, and the two Williamses were not so, for they had been brought up for the established church. Whitefield and Edwards were men of education, and they preached the doctrine which in England is considered evangelical.

⁴ Isaiah lxvi. 8.

⁵ Isaiah ii. 3.

⁶ Hos. xiv. 2.

“6. It is also beside the point to affirm that only persons of no weight, that is, ignorant boys and girls, are in the habit of thus rejoicing and praising God in His temple; for it is certain, that those who express their joy in this manner possess so much sound experimental knowledge, as to make them eminent in that respect. I have listened to many of them in the midst of their enjoyment, and have often been delighted while they repeated true, evangelical, and substantial stanzas, replete with profound sentiment: for in such seasons, they could find out the very best, which made impressions on their memories; and these rapturous feelings developed them, as if the tongue were moved by the heat and force of the fire within. And many other things of an evangelical and gracious character they will utter on these joyful occasions, with such heavenly eloquence as would be inimitable, and impracticable even for themselves to utter with the same effect, without enjoying these meltings of spirit. This enjoyment is accompanied by many tears and much tenderness of heart: nor are persons of a dry spirit and hard heart ever regarded as fit subjects for this work of praise, in these blessed seasons of Christian enjoyment. It does not accord with any, but with him whose heart melts like wax, and runs in the form and mould of the gospel.

“7. There is no way in which churches or particular persons may enjoy this heavenly ecstasy, but by walking with God, and by cultivating a spirit of watchfulness and prayer, which shows its pure and holy character. It awakens watchfulness against all evil tempers, improper expressions, and wicked actions, lest the sense of it should be lost. Such a frame of mind cannot be expected by living in sin. These individuals come to the house of God with an earnest desire for this enjoyment, and dreading lest there should be a something in them which would cause God to deny them this unspeakable privilege. It is an exceedingly easy matter for a minister to manage a congregation while Christian enjoyment keeps them near to God. They are diligent and zealous, and ready for every good work. But it is very easy to offend this joyous spirit – or give it what name you please, enthusiasm, religious madness, or Welsh jumping, (its English name,) – and make it hide itself. A quarrel and disagreement in the church will occasion it to withdraw immediately. Indulging in sin, in word or deed, will soon put it to flight. It is like unto the angel formerly, who could not behold the sin of Israel without hiding himself; so is the angel of the *religious* life of Wales, which proves him to be a holy angel, though he has the name of a ‘Welsh jumper.’ My prayer is, that this angel be a guard upon every congregation, and that none should do any thing to offend him. It is an exceedingly powerful assistant to accompany us through the wilderness. But the individual that has not felt its happy influences, has nothing to lose; hence he does not dread a dry meeting and a hard prayer, for they are all the same to him; but the people of this enjoyment pray before prayer, and before hearing, that they may meet with God in them.

“8. The seasons when these blessings are vouchsafed to the churches of Wales, are to be noticed. It is generally at a time when the cause of religion is at a low ebb – all gone to slumber. This happy spirit of enjoyment, like the angel of the pillar of fire, appears when there is distress, and every thing at the worst. Its approach to the congregation is like the glory of God returning to the temple of old; it creates a stir among the brethren, – they have a new prayer, and a new spirit given them to worship God. This will lay hold of another, – some new strength and light will appear in the pulpit, until it will be imagined that the preacher’s voice is altered, and that his spirit is become more evangelical, and that he preaches with a more excellent savor than usual. Tenderness will descend upon the members, and it will be seen that Mr. Wet-eyes and Mr. Amen have taken their place among them. The heavenly gale will reach some of the old backsliders, and they are brought with weeping to seek their forfeited privilege. By this time the sound of Almighty God will be heard in the outer court, beginning to move the hearers like a mighty wind shaking the forest. In these seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord some churches will receive, in the course of a year, additions of one hundred, others a hundred and fifty, and some others upwards of two hundred new members. Sometimes, the gale seems as if it blew upon the outer court – upon the hearers, and the young people from ten to fifteen years of age – when nothing extraordinary appears in the light and effect of the ministry, nor in the

church; but afterwards making its way through the outer court to rouse the inner court, until a great concern is awakened for the state of the soul. But observe: The revival that begins in the church, and proceeds from thence to the world, and not that which commences outside of the church, is more frequent, and more efficient in its converts, for the pangs of labor are to begin in Zion.

“9. Again, it may be remarked that the happy effects which follow these powerful revivals, evince their nature. They are certain, where they are strong, to bend the oaks of Bashan – men of strong and sturdy minds, and haughty hearts – to attend the ministry of the word. They will bring all the ships of Tarshish, the merchants of this world, into the harbor of hearing. The power of the day of the Lord will raze all the walls of bigotry to the foundations. The thoughts of eternal realities, and the spirit of worship, are by these blessings diffused abroad, and family worship is established in scores of families, where a few months before no regard was had unto it. The door of such a district, thus opened by the powers of the world to come, shall not be closed against the hearers of the gospel, until a goodly number of souls are there converted unto God. Where the living waters flow, dead fish are made alive by its virtues.

“10. Since the first appearing of these gracious gifts at Llangeitho, under the ministry of Mr. Rowlands, they have been showers of blessings, which are poured down on the congregations of the Baptists and Congregationalists as well as the Calvinistic Methodists; and sometimes one of these denominations is favored with them, whilst the others are destitute. These refreshing seasons were, at times, experienced in a very powerful manner at Llangeitho, for about fifty years; that is, all the period of Mr. Rowlands’ ministrations in that church. About two thousand persons assembled there for communion once a month, from the several counties of Wales, even in winter, and about three thousand in the summer season; which rendered it the most extraordinary place in Europe, and beyond a doubt, hundreds of those who assembled there, on such occasions, are now in heaven singing the new song. If to live on the merits of Christ, to fear God, and praise him, and lead a sober and righteous life, is an evidence of a godly state, then this was visible *at that time* at Llangeitho.”

CAERNARVON

Mr. Evans' next settlement was in Caernarvon. The Baptist interest in that town was in a feeble and languishing condition. The church numbered about thirty members, but they were chiefly of the lowest class, and sadly disunited. They had a decent house of worship, but it was involved in a debt of £800. "All things," said Mr. Evans, "seemed like a waste howling wilderness; yea, a habitation of dragons, where they made their rest night and day." Some advised the dissolution of the church, but he thought better to attempt its reformation. His coming produced quite a sensation through the town. His first congregation was very large, and for some time multitudes flocked to his ministry, but they were only accidental hearers, generally members of other churches, who, when they had satisfied their curiosity, returned to their own places of worship. His Welsh biographer mentions with commendation the sympathy and help which he received from the Wesleyan and the Calvinistic Methodists, and Mr. Evans himself calls them the Aarons and the Hurs that sustained his hands in Caernarvon.

His labors and zeal in this place were not less than in Caerphilly and Cardiff; but owing to many unfavorable circumstances, his success was far inferior. During the first year, however, he reduced the chaos around him to some incipient order; and was enabled, by the payment of a mortgage upon the church, to save it from sheriff's sale. He employed a Mr. Edwards to travel into England, Ireland, and Scotland, and make collections for this purpose. Mr. Evans was already known extensively, as the author of the celebrated *Specimen of Welsh Preaching*, which had been translated into English, and published in many of the periodicals, eliciting universal admiration. Mr. Edwards had this piece reprinted, and distributed the copies wherever he went, thus making known the pastor of the church for which he solicited pecuniary aid.

Though the aged servant of God saw few conversions from his labors in Caernarvon, the seed which he sowed in tears upon that sterile soil has sprung up since his decease, and others have gathered the harvest. The Baptist church there has experienced a gracious revival, and many of the new converts attribute their salvation, under God, to Christmas Evans.

While in Caernarvon he penned in his journal the following pious reflections: "I have been thinking of the great goodness of the Lord unto me throughout my unworthy ministry, and now, in my old age, I see the work prospering wonderfully in my hand, so that there is reason to think that I am in some degree a blessing to the church, when I might have been a burden to it, or rather a curse, by which she might have been induced to wish me laid in the earth, that I might no longer prevent the progress of the work. Thanks be to God, that it is not so! though I deserve no better; yet I am in the land of mercy. This is unto me according to the manner of God unto his people. My path in the valley, the dangers, and the precipices of destruction upon which I have stood, rushes into my thoughts, and also the sinking of many in death, and the downfall of others by immorality, and their burial in Kibroth-Hattaavah, the graves of inordinate desire; together with the withering, the feebleness, and the unfruitfulness of some through the influence of a secret departure from God, and of walking in the hidden paths that lead to apostasy."

PULPIT POPULARITY

Mr. Evans' popularity in the pulpit was never greater than during the last few years of his life. His descriptive powers, which were transcendent from the first, improved to the day of his death. His services were always solicited at the anniversaries of the Missionary and Bible societies in Caernarvon, and the mayor of that town once made him a handsome present for a temperance speech which he delivered there.

In 1834, he preached at the Holyhead association. His text was Heb. vi. 18. There were many seamen present; and beautifully did the preacher describe the believer's hope, "the anchor of the soul;" and eloquently did he set forth the necessity of its having, not a bare rock, but a rock covered with clay – not abstract divinity, but "God manifest in the flesh," – in order that its hold may be "sure and steadfast," securing the Christian against spiritual shipwreck amid the many storms of the World!

The last association he ever attended in Anglesea was held in the same place, in 1837. On that occasion he preached from Col. ii. 14, 15. This sermon was one of the most effective he ever delivered. "The powerful manner," says one of his friends "in which he described the enemies, who were like unicorns and strong bulls of Bashan, and all the little elves – the great roaring lion, together with all the hosts and principalities and powers of hell, death, and the grave, giving way when Christ cried, 'It is finished,' was indescribably grand and majestic: one might have thought that the scene was actually before the eye, and that Jesus could be then seen laying hold of the powers of darkness, casting them forth, and making a show of them openly."

INTERESTING LETTER

We insert in this place an interesting letter written during Mr. Evans' residence at Caernarvon.

“Beloved Brother: * * * I write to you, August 5, 1836, in the seventieth year of my age, and in the fiftieth of my ministry, after conversing much with ministerial brethren, earnestly desiring to see our associational union brought into action by representatives of the churches, with a view to promote a determination, – 1. To bear each other's burden more efficiently in the denomination to which we belong. I lament the deficiency in this point, and ardently wish to see it effectually remedied. 2. To watch over and promote a holy conversation among all the members and all the preachers in a more efficient manner, to prevent persons of unbecoming conversation from obtaining privileges in any church, when they have been excluded in another, for that would occasion spots and blemishes to appear on the bright countenance of the ministry. The associational union, in which all the churches of the same faith and order join, should be a defence of the independence of the churches through their representatives: it should also operate as a sort of check upon independency, lest it should become opposed to the general good, and frustrate the co-operation of the whole body. *That they may all be one*, is the motto.

“Respecting church discipline. We cannot be certain that we are doing right by administering the same punishment to all offenders, even for the same offence; for the general character weighs heavily in the balance of discipline. Also a distinction should be made between the seducer and the seduced; and between being overcome, or falling into sin, and living habitually in sin, and following it as a slave following his master. The denial of Peter, from weakness, and without previous deliberation, was very different from the betrayal of Judas, and his intentional selling of Christ. The different characters of Saul, king of Israel, and that of David, required different treatment in discipline on account of their offences. The Lord's discipline upon Saul was that of a rod of iron, but upon David the correcting rod of a father, for his good, that he might be a partaker of his holiness.

“There are two things, brother, which we ought to avoid in the exercise of discipline. 1. We should avoid too great severity on the one part, and 2, too much leniency on the other part. Wisdom is necessary here to distinguish the different characters, those who require severity, and those who claim tenderness: the two are to be found blended in the principle of evangelical discipline. A difference is to be made betwixt some who may have been companions in the same crime; snatching some of them as brands from the burning. The ground of the distinction lies in the different amount of guilt which subsists between the seducer and the seduced.

“I have witnessed danger, and have sustained some harm myself, and seen harm done in churches, by exercising tenderness towards some persons, in the vain hope of their reformation. Receiving verbal testimony or mere fluent acknowledgments from their lips, without waiting for fruit in action also: some having been often accused, and as often turning to the refuges frequented by them. I never exercised tenderness towards such as these, without being repaid by them afterwards, if they had opportunity. Shimei-like, they would curse me after having shed the best oil of tenderness on their heads. There are some in the Christian church like Jezebel; and there are some in our congregations like Joab, the son of Zeruiah, that you can scarce discipline them without rending the kingdom, until they become

ripe for judgment; for they hardly ever repent, more than did Joab and Shimei; they are ultimately suddenly broken, without any danger to the church from their fall.

“I perceive that the Scriptures make a difference between one that falls into sin, and one wallowing in it; between one overtaken by a party of marauders, and dragged into the camp, and made drunk at supper, and one like Judas, going to the party, and being secretly one of them, having pistols as they had: such are hypocrites. I have many times been the advocate of the fallen, and in a variety of instances have observed this operating beneficially for the church. Sometimes I have found those who had been spared upon their own verbal contrition, blessing God for his long forbearance of them, and also their spiritual brethren, who had in a manner set their bones; as the Scripture hath it, ‘Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.’

“We should be careful that discretion and love be in exercise, though in strife and contention it be not always an easy matter to do this. When the beasts of dissension get loose from the caravan, Satan sometimes drives them through the streets of Zion, that they may enter the houses of the inhabitants; and like the lioness that escaped from the keepers at Shrewsbury, and attacked the foremost horse in the carriage;⁷ so contentions frequently attack the leaders, in order to stop the carriage of the ministry as it travels on in the labors of the pulpit. In the midst of the noise of strife, the man of God must raise his voice to heaven for courage and tenderness, so that the oil of Christ’s love to the souls of men may be found in the oil-flagon of reproof, which is poured on the head; for if anger and revenge enter in, they will drop, like the spider in Germany, into the pot, and that will prevent the salutary effect of the oil, because the poison of wrath is mixed with it. The righteousness of God cannot be fulfilled in this manner in the discipline. O! brother, who is sufficient for these things, without constant help from heaven? How awful is this place! This is the house of God and the gate of heaven – and here is a ladder by which we may climb up for help; and a school in which we may learn how to conduct ourselves in the house of God.

“You cannot but be conscious, brother, of the great difficulty there is not to speak unadvisedly with our lips, as did Moses whilst drawing water for the rebellious Israelites. The rebellion of the people had embittered his spirit, so that his obduracy stood like a cloud between the people and the tenderness of the Lord, when he was showing mercy upon them by giving them water. Moses upbraided their rebellion instead of showing mercy, as the dispensation of God now required; a dispensation which contained in it a secret intimation of the great mercy to be shown by the death of Christ on the cross. Their strife was the cause of imbittering the spirit of Moses, yet he should have possessed his soul in patience.

“There are two things, brother, which you should observe: First, you will be called upon to attend to causes of contention; and you will find persons so hardened, that you will not be able to obtain weapons in all the armory of God’s word that will terrify them and make them afraid of entering their old haunts. Such are persons without faith, and without the fear of God and the love of Christ influencing their minds; and though you warn them of the consequences of their contentions, that they are likely to deprive them of the privileges of the house of God, and thus forfeit the promised land, yet they stand unmoved, nothing terrified, for they value the flesh-pots of Egypt and their livelihood there, more than the manna and the land of promise. You cannot frighten them by speaking of the danger and loss of

⁷ Such an accident is said to have occurred at Shrewsbury, in England, a few years ago.

the immunities of the church below, or that above; Esau-like, they will sell their birthright as Christian professors for a mess of pottage. A man who has no money is not afraid to meet with robbers in the wood; but the individual that has gold to lose will be cautious and watchful, lest he should be robbed of his property. On a night of great storm, when ships are broken to pieces and sinking, a person who has no share in any of them will not tremble or feel any concern on their account. Thus there are some men concerning whom it is impossible to make them dread going out among the rapacious beasts of backslidings, and no storms can keep them in fear. Their spirit is one with the marauders, and they have no care, for they have nothing to lose in the tempests that blow upon the cause of the religion of Christ. These are the tares, or the children of the wicked one, in the church.

“Secondly, for your own encouragement, brother, I remark that you will have to attend to the exercise of discipline, and to treat with persons that may be alarmed, and made to tremble at the word of God, and not rush on presumptuously in their evil course. These are professors who possess white garments, and the gold of faith, and eye-salve from the unction of the Holy One. These individuals are rich in faith. They are afraid of revolutions and upsettings of the constitutional order of the new covenant, for they have funds invested in the stocks of God’s kingdom. They are afraid that any storm or rock of offence should come in the way of the gospel ship, for their treasure is on board of it, and they have an interest in it. They dread the thought of walking unwatchfully and licentiously, lest they should be robbed of their riches, and forfeit the fellowship of God in prayer, lose the light of his countenance, and his peace in the means of grace, and lest they should be deprived of their confidence in the merits of Christ and a good conscience. They have denied themselves, and have pulled out the right eye, lest they should not be acceptable before God. They dread harboring in their bosoms the old guilt and former doubts. They are cautious not to give a night’s lodging to such miscreants as anger, revenge, lust, and things which are of the earth; for they know that these are robbers, and if they have any indulgence they will steal away the *title-deeds* of assurance to the inheritance. They are well aware, also, that they will sustain the loss of a pure conscience, which has been purged by the blood of Christ, and which, as a golden chest, is a preserver of our confidence immovable unto the end. It is possible, brother, to manage and discipline such professors. They have something to lose, consequently they will not flee from their refuge, lest they should be destroyed. *Keep that which thou hast.* David lost for a season the enjoyment of the above blessings; but he was cleansed with hyssop, had his spirit renewed, and his riches were restored to him by faith’s view of the Messiah, for which he vowed to sing aloud for ever and ever. He prayed, after this, to be delivered from presumptuous sins, lest he should be imprisoned a second time by a party so wicked and detestable. May the spiritual gift be kindled in you, brother. Grace be with you for ever and ever.

“*Affectionately,*

“*Christmas Evans.*

“*Caernarvon, August 5, 1836.*”

TOUR THROUGH THE PRINCIPALITY

In April, 1838, when Mr. Evans had been about four years in Caernarvon, the church under his charge received notice to pay up the £300 yet due on their house of worship. He took a tour through the principality, to collect money for this purpose. Before he set out, he wrote a circular to his brethren, which was published in the Welsh Magazine. We make the following extract: —

“The term of the lease of life has expired in my case, even three score and ten years, and I am very much afflicted. I have purposed to sacrifice myself to this object, though I am afraid I shall die in the journey, and fear I shall not succeed in my errand for Christ. We have no source to which we can now repair, but our own denomination in Wales, and brethren and friends of other communities that may sympathize with us. O brethren, pray with me for protection on the journey – for strength and health this *once*, on occasion of my bidding farewell to you all – pray for the light of the Lord’s countenance upon me in preaching, pray for his own glory, and that his key may open the hearts of the people to contribute towards his cause in its present exigency. O help us, brethren, – when you see the old brother, after having been fifty-three years in the ministry, now, instead of being in the grave with his colleagues, or resting at home with three of them who are yet alive – brethren Lewis of Llanwenarth, Davies of Velin Voel, and Thomas of Aberduar ⁸– when you see him coming, with the furrows of death in his countenance, the flowers of the grave on his head, and his whole constitution gradually dissolving; having labored fifty years in the ministry in the Baptist denomination. He comes to you with hundreds of prayers bubbling as it were from the fountain of his heart, and with a mixture of fear and confidence. O do not frown upon him! – he is afraid of your frowns. Smile upon him by contributing cheerfully to his cause this once for all. If you frown upon me, ministers and deacons, by intimating an *irregular case*, I am afraid I shall sink into the grave before returning home. This is my last sacrifice for the Redeemer’s cause.”

In this journey, he was cordially received everywhere by the churches, and very successful in raising money. At no former period of his life was his popularity so great as now. Wherever he preached, the place was thronged at an early hour; and frequently multitudes remained without, unable to obtain admittance.

⁸ The three are since dead; the first two named died before Mr. Evans, and Mr. Thomas since.

MONMOUTHSHIRE ASSOCIATION

During this tour, he attended the Monmouthshire Association, and preached his last associational sermon. In his introduction, he described a man whom he had seen in Caernarvon, throwing a few beans to a herd of swine that followed him, and thus enticing them to the door of the slaughter-house, where they were to be slain; and said that, in a similar manner, with one temptation after another, Satan allures deluded sinners to the very gates of hell, where they are to be tormented for ever and ever. He spoke of the gospel on the day of Pentecost, as a great electrical machine; Christ turning the handle; Peter placing the chain in contact with the people: and the Holy Ghost descending like a stream of ethereal fire, and melting the hearts of three thousand at once!

Perhaps no sermon that Mr. Evans ever preached evinced more vigor of intellect, more power and splendor of genius, than this; and seldom, if ever, had he a more perfect command over the feelings of an audience. But the effort was too much for him, and he was afterward confined to his room by illness for a week.

LAST SERMON, SICKNESS, AND DEATH

Following this indefatigable man of God, we find him, on Sunday, the fifteenth of July, notwithstanding his late illness, at Swansea, preaching like a seraph, on the Prodigal Son in the morning, and in the evening on the words of St. Paul – “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,” &c.

The next evening he preached in the church at Mount Pleasant. He said he had taken his pulpit model from the day of Pentecost. He described the event of that memorable day, as a great naval battle between Emanuel and the Prince of Darkness. “The captain of our salvation” sent out twelve little boats to engage the whole fleet of hell. For a time all was enveloped in fire and smoke, and the issue of the day seemed doubtful; but when the conflict ceased, and the cloud cleared away, it was ascertained that the twelve little boats had captured three thousand of Satan’s ships of war.

When the preacher sat down, he said, “*This is my last sermon.*” And so it was. That night he was taken violently ill. The next day he lay in a partial stupor, taking but little notice of his friends. The third day he seemed somewhat better. On the morning of the fourth day, Thursday, he arose and walked in the garden. Toward evening he sunk again, and grew worse during the night. At two of the clock on Friday morning, he said to his friends: – “I am about to leave you. I have labored in the sanctuary fifty-three years; and this is my comfort and confidence, that I have never labored without blood in the basin” – meaning, evidently, that he had not failed to preach “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” After a few more remarks of a similar character, he repeated a Welsh stanza, expressive of his firm trust in the Redeemer; and then, as if he had done with earth, and desired to depart, exclaimed in English – “Good-bye! drive on!” He now turned over, and seemed to sleep. His friends tried to rouse him. It was too late. The angelic postillion had obeyed the order. The chariot had passed over the everlasting hills.

Thus died Christmas Evans, at the house of his friend, Rev. Daniel Davies, in Swansea, July 19th, 1838, in the 73d year of his age, and the 54th of his ministry. His life was blameless, and his end was peace. “This honor have all his saints!”

FUNEREAL SORROW

His funeral took place four days after his death. Never before was there such a funeral in Swansea, never such a concourse of mourners. The people came in crowds, and wept their way to the grave as if they had been following the bier of their father. The melancholy tidings of his departure spread through the principality, and the fountains of sorrow were everywhere unsealed. In Anglesea, especially, the grief was deep and universal. There he had spent more than half of his ministerial life, and hundreds owned him as their father in Christ. The Baptist pulpits were all clothed in mourning, and funeral sermons were preached throughout the principality.

PORTRAITURE

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Mr. Evans was a good-looking man, nearly six feet high, and well proportioned. His intellectual faculties, phrenologically speaking, were amply developed. He had lost one of his eyes in his youth, but the other was large and bright enough for two. It had a peculiarly penetrating glance; and when kindling under the inspiration of the pulpit, added wonderfully to the effect of his eloquence. All his features were expressive of intelligence and love; his whole bearing, dignified and majestic; and the blending of great and amiable qualities in his character commanded at once the reverence and the confidence of all who knew him.

MORAL AND CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

From the time of his conversion to the day of his death, Mr. Evans exhibited a consistent and exemplary piety. Though he several times fell into darkness and doubt, and lost a portion of his burning zeal, he never forfeited his place in the church, or tarnished his Christian name. The uprightness of his deportment was acknowledged by all his neighbors; and those of other denominations, differing widely from him in creed and custom, always accorded to him the reputation of “a holy man of God.” But his piety was never ostentatious or austere. Modesty and humility were among his most prominent qualities, and a high degree of Christian cheerfulness characterized his conversation. However low, at times, his religious enjoyment, he was always careful to walk with becoming circumspection before the world, that the cause of Christ might suffer no reproach through his imprudence.

SOCIAL DISPOSITION

Mr. Evans was naturally of a quick and irritable temper; but Divine Grace subdued his constitutional impetuosity, made him “gentle toward all men,” and clothed him with “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” He was eminently social in his feelings, and took great delight in the company of his friends. It cost him no effort to render himself agreeable in any society. In the cottage and the mansion he was equally at home, and the unlettered peasant and the erudite philosopher were equally interested by his conversation. He never had any children of his own, but was always remarkably fond of the children of others. After discoursing for an hour on the sublimest topics of the Christian faith, in a style befitting their importance, to the great delight, and often to the amazement of all who heard him, he would descend to the relation of some pretty story, in a manner so affectionate and familiar as at once to win the hearts and enlighten the minds of half a dozen bright-eyed little creatures, grouped around him like Peter Parley’s scholars in the picture.

READING AND STUDY

Mr. Evans was a great lover of books. He seized and devoured with avidity every interesting volume that fell in his way. He never resorted to reading, however, as a mere pastime. He sought for mental and spiritual treasures to enrich his sermons. For this he beat the fields and dug the wells of knowledge. Every thing was made subservient to his holy calling. Every thing was pressed into his preparations for the pulpit. His authors were selected with prudent discrimination, and perused with earnest attention, indicating an intense desire to be thoroughly furnished for his work. He studied what he read. He was extensively acquainted with the best theological writers of the age, and quoted them frequently in his discourses. But there is one volume to which he referred more frequently than to all the rest, “the book of books divine.” He was emphatically “a man mighty in the Scriptures.” From the word of God he derived the principal matter of his preaching. Even that lofty imagery which constituted the peculiar charm of his ministry, was ordinarily but an amplification of scriptural tropes and descriptions. In theology, next to the Bible, Dr. Owen was his favorite author. He paid considerable attention to Oriental manners and customs; was well read in history, ancient and modern; and particularly fond of tracing the rise and fall of empires.

DEVOTIONAL HABITS

Mr. Evans was eminently a man of prayer. Prayer was his daily bread, the very breath of his spirit. He considered himself entitled, through Christ, to all the blessings of the gospel, and came boldly to the throne of grace in every time of need. During his whole ministerial life, much of his time was spent in the closet. It was his custom for many years, to retire for devotion three times during the day, and rise regularly for the same purpose at midnight. The disorders of the church, the slanders of his enemies, and the various afflictions of life, all drove him to the mercy-seat, and made him peculiarly earnest and importunate in supplication. After these seasons of agony, he came into the church, or the social circle, as an angel from the presence of God, and “all his garments smelt of myrrh and aloes and cassia from the ivory palaces.”

He never undertook a new enterprise, without first asking counsel of the Lord. When he had a call to another field of labor, he could not decide upon the matter till he had spread it repeatedly before the throne. When he was about to preach at an association, or on any important occasion, he wrestled for hours with the angel of the covenant, nor relinquished his hold till he felt himself “endued with power from on high.” Then he came forth to the congregation, as Moses from the Tabernacle, when he had communed with God. Just before leaving home on his tour of collection for the Caernarvon church, the last labor of his life, he penned in his book of appointments the following paragraph: —

“O Lord, grant me my desire on this journey, for thy name’s sake. My first petition; – Comfort in Christ – the comfort of love – the bowels of love and mercy in the denomination – the fellowship of the Spirit. – Amen. My second petition; – That the sermons I have prepared for this journey may increase in their ministration, like the five loaves and two fishes. – Amen. C. E.”

CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE

Mr. Evans was a poor man, but “rich in good works.” Suffering poverty always excited his pity, and opened his purse. Wherever he beheld distress, he was “ready to distribute, willing to communicate,” according to the ability which God had given him. His salary in Anglesea, for twenty years, was only seventeen pounds per annum; and afterward, only thirty. With so small an income, he could not be expected to bestow much upon the various objects of charity. But he gave annually one pound to the Bible Society, one pound to the Missionary Society, and ten shillings to the Baptist Education Society, besides contributing liberally to the relief of the poor and the sick in his neighborhood.

Sometimes his liberality was larger than his purse. Once, when a Protestant Irishman, poorly clad, told him that he spent much time in reading the Scriptures to his illiterate countrymen, he pulled off his own coat, and gave it to him. At another time, he presented a poor Jew, who had recently been converted to Christianity, a new suit of clothes, the best he had in his wardrobe. While in Anglesea, he visited a brother in the church, who had been reduced by protracted illness to a condition of great distress; and finding the family almost in a state of starvation, emptied his pocket of the only pound he had. His wife remonstrated with him, told him she had not bread enough in the house to last twenty-four hours, and demanded what he would do now he had given away all his money. His only answer was: “Jehovah-jireh; the Lord will provide!” The next day he received a letter from England, enclosing two pounds as a present. As soon as he had read it, he called out to his wife; – “Catherine! I told thee that Providence would return the alms-pound, for it was a loan to the Lord; and see, here it is, doubled in one day!” It is evident from this incident, that Mr. Evans’ liberality was the fruit of his faith in God; and the good man’s confidence is never put to shame. “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.”

SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS

“Be ye merciful, even as your Father who is in heaven is merciful.” There is no virtue more beautiful in its character, or more important to the Christian, than that thus enjoined by the Son of God. The spirit of forgiveness infinitely transcends all the effects of mere human philosophy, and allies man to his Maker. In this amiable quality, Christmas Evans was never wanting. He took a thousand times more pleasure in pardoning the offender, than the offender in asking his pardon. “It was only,” says his Welsh biographer, “for the person who had given offence to make some sort of acknowledgment, to say there had been a misunderstanding. Mr. Evans would anticipate him with: – ‘O, say nothing about it! let it be buried! very likely I have been in fault myself!’” The spirit of Mr. Evans’ diary everywhere corroborates this description of his character. We extract a single paragraph:

“I trust that by the grace of God, I have overcome my natural disposition to anger and revenge. I have been enabled to forgive my greatest enemies, and pray that they may be forgiven of God. I can say from my heart, with Stephen; ‘Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!’ I have no wish that any of them should suffer for their attempts to injure me, but that they may all be led to repentance, and settle their matters at the mercy-seat, where I hope also that the multitude of my own trespasses will be covered and forgotten.”

His mercy was as impartial as it was cordial. He had held a controversy with a minister of another sect, who, forgetting the rules of Christian courtesy, treated him very unkindly before the public. This minister was afterward arraigned and imprisoned on a very serious allegation. If he had been convicted, degradation from the ministry would have been the smallest part of his punishment. Mr. Evans, learning the fact, and believing the prosecution unjust and malicious, felt greatly distressed for his polemical opponent. On the day of trial, he retired to his room, and poured out his heart to God on his behalf, for a long time, and with peculiar fervor. Then he waited with great anxiety for the issue. As he sat at the table, with several friends and brethren, a minister, who had been at court, entered the room, and said; “Mr. – is acquitted!” Mr. Evans instantly fell upon his knees, with tears streaming down his face, and exclaimed: – “Thanks be unto thee, O Lord Jesus! for delivering one of thy servants from the mouth of the lions!” He then arose, saluted his friend, and joined in the mutual congratulations of the company.

CATHOLIC GENEROSITY

That Christmas Evans was no bigot, might be inferred from the above anecdote. But we have other and ampler evidence of his Christian catholicity. He was a Baptist; and, with the rest of his brethren, a strenuous advocate for exclusive immersion. He was a Calvinist, and thought it very important to vindicate against Arminian views what are sometimes called “the doctrines of grace.” But he was also a Christian, and held all other Christians as brethren. He did not repudiate the sincerely pious, because they could not say his “Shibboleth.” Kind, candid, and ingenuous, he judged of things according to their real value and importance, and appreciated true talent and virtue wherever he found them. His creed was not; “I am of Paul;” nor, “I am of Apollos;” nor, “I am of John the Baptist;” but, “We are all of Christ!” He was not blinded by the senseless prejudice of sect. He was influenced less by the peculiarities of his denomination than by the love of Christ. Many of his warmest friends were ministers of other orders; and of the Methodists and Congregationalists at Caernarvon, he made honorable mention in his diary.

The most despicable reptile of the moral world is envy, the spirit that prompted revolt in heaven, and hurled archangels down to hell. Yet it is often found among Christians; among the ministers of a religion whose very principle is charity. Some men, like king Saul, can never bear a rival. If the thousands of Israel raise the voice and tune the lyre in honor of some victorious David, the evil spirit comes upon them, and they launch their javelins at the young anointed, and seek “to smite him even to the wall.” From such feelings Mr. Evans was always free. His large heart was utterly incapable of anything of the kind. He esteemed others better than himself, and in honor preferred his brethren. Wherever he discovered talent and sanctified ambition in a young preacher, he never exerted an influence to hinder him, but heartily bade him God speed. He did not deem it necessary to smite him on the head with a cudgel to keep him in his place. He was not afraid that others would outshine him in the pulpit. He would gladly have taken his place at the feet of any of Christ’s ambassadors. He was willing to accord due praise to merit, not only in the dead, but also in the living; not only in those of other countries and other denominations, but also in those of his native principality and the Baptist church. His immediate contemporaries and neighbors were often the subjects of his highest encomiums. His heart was as large as the world!

INGENUOUSNESS AND HONESTY

A late American writer has said of insincerity, that it is the most detestable of all vices for which men go unhung. Yet it must be admitted, there is no vice more prevalent, even among the professed followers of Him, “who knew no iniquity, neither was guile found in his lips.” The sentiment, that it is right to deceive for the good of the church, is not peculiar to the Papists. Perhaps the enlightened Protestant can scarcely be found, who would verbally avow such a doctrine; but it is often practically avowed, even by the messenger of truth; and ecclesiastical elevation is sometimes attributable more to dishonesty than to real virtue or talent.

Christmas Evans’ popularity, however, could boast a better origin. It was the spontaneous fruit of his graces and his gifts. He was never indebted to unfair and underhanded measures for his success. His conduct was always open and ingenuous. Of deceit and secret design he was incapable. He never attempted to build up his own church by proselyting the converts of other churches. In one instance, when a young man, who had been educated for the ministry in the established church of England, came to him, desiring baptism by immersion, instead of eagerly seizing upon so valuable an acquisition to the Baptists, as some doubtless would have done, he endeavored to dissuade him from his purpose, and yielded at length only to his fervent importunity.

He deemed the slightest departure from truth, in any instance, a crime, and a deep disgrace to the Christian character. He was innocent and unsuspecting as a child. His frank and confiding disposition was unquestionably the occasion of most of his heavy trials. Jealous and malicious men took advantage of his Christian simplicity, and made one of his sweetest virtues a poison to his peace.

He once employed a person to sell a horse for him at a fair. After some time, he went out to see if he was likely to succeed. There was a man bargaining for the animal, and the contract was nearly completed.

“Is this your horse, Mr. Evans?” said the purchaser.

“Certainly it is,” he replied.

“What is his age, sir?”

“Twenty-three years.”

“But this man tells me he is only fifteen.”

“He is certainly twenty-three, for he has been with me these twenty years, and he was three years old when I bought him.”

“Is he safe-footed?”

“Very far from that, I assure you, or I would not part with him, and he has never been put in harness since I have had him either.”

“Please to go into the house, Mr. Evans,” whispered the man whom he had employed to make the sale, “for I shall never dispose of the horse while you are present.”

The frank manner, however, in which Mr. Evans told him all the truth, induced the dealer to make the purchase at a very handsome price; while it procured for Mr. Evans a good name, which is better than gold.

SARCASTIC REBUKES

In conversation he was always careful of the feelings of others. He would never employ a sarcastic remark, but for the purpose of merited rebuke. “It is better,” said he, “to keep sarcasms pocketed, if we cannot use them without wounding the feelings of a friend.” But he was capable, when occasion required, of wielding this weapon with terrible effect. Take the following instances: —

Just before his removal from Cardiff to Caernarvon, he was conversing on the contemplated change in a circle of several ministers. His labors had been solicited in two or three other places, and the company were canvassing the comparative claims of the different churches. A feeble-minded young man present, who “thought more highly of himself than he ought to think,” said: — “It is my opinion, Father Evans, that you had better go to Caernarvon. It is not likely your talents would suit either of the other places, but I think you might do very well at Caernarvon.” Mr. Evans opened his large eye upon the speaker, and replied; — “And hast *thou* peeped? When didst thou creep from the shell?”

Once, two ministers, of different sects, were disputing in his presence on what he deemed an unimportant matter of ecclesiastical discipline. One of them asked: — “What say you, Mr. Evans?” Mr. Evans replied: — “I saw two boys quarrelling over two snails. One of them insisted that his snail was the better, because it had horns; while the other as strenuously argued for the superiority of his, because it had none. The boys were very angry and vociferous, but the two snails were friends.” The disputants burst into a hearty laugh, and the debate ended.

A shallow atheist was ridiculing the idea of a God, because, as he alleged, he had no sensible evidence of his being. Mr. Evans answered: — “My friend, the mole in the meadow has never seen a king; shall he therefore say there is no king? O thou atheistic mole! thou hast never travelled out of thy own narrow field; and if thou hadst, thou hast no eyes to see with; and wilt thou dare to say there is no God? Dost thou think all others as blind as thyself? All that thou canst say is, that thou dost not see God, and dost not wish to see him. How dost thou know that the being of a God is not so manifest on the other side of the river of death, that no doubt is entertained concerning it throughout all the expanse of eternity? Can the earth-mole say there is no grand Lama in Thibet? Poor worm! thou must travel through the gates of death, and fathom the bottomless pit, and measure the land of destruction, and scale the very heaven of heavens, and surround all the borders of time and eternity, before thou canst assure thyself there is no God!”

PULPIT TALENTS AND LABORS

As a preacher, Mr. Evans was very peculiar. No translation of his sermons can give the English reader an adequate idea of their force and beauty in the original.

He was exceedingly methodical and perspicuous. His arrangement was never loose and vague; his thoughts never confused and mingled together. He was a “wise master-builder,” who took care to lay a broad and firm foundation, and then “built thereon gold, silver, and precious stones.” The several parts of his discourse bore a mutual relation of dependence, and each would have been incomplete without the others. His order was so natural, that it was very easy to follow him; and his manner so impressive, that it was nearly impossible to forget him.

He never spoke on a subject that he did not understand. Before entering the pulpit, he invariably measured his text in all its extent, and considered it in every possible aspect. “He had a wonderful method,” says one, “of making the most abstruse passages appear easy and plain. He interpreted scripture by scripture, and exhibited the component parts of his subject in a clear and beautiful manner, and illustrated them by the most appropriate and striking metaphors; and forging link by link, united them together, and bound the whole up in one glorious chain. His talents were such as to enable him to cast a ray of light upon the darkest points of the Christian system.”

Mr. Evans’ descriptive powers were altogether unique. He abounded in allegories of the most forcible character. In this respect, he was equaled by none of his contemporaries; transcended by none of his predecessors. Passages of this kind will be so frequently met with in the following selection from his sermons, that it is not necessary to point them out to the reader.

His happy art of description is attributable chiefly to a very remarkable imagination. This is one of the primary qualities of an orator. When it is lacking, no depth of learning, no graces of delivery, can compensate for its lack. True, argument is important. There is no eloquence without argument. Argument must constitute the bone and the sinew of every good discourse. But the bone and the sinew constitute only the skeleton. Imagination must supply the muscle and the nerve. Imagination must clothe it with beauty, and inspire it with life; give expression to the features, animation to the eye, and to the tongue motion and melody articulate. Argument is the John Baptist of eloquence, after whom there cometh a mightier, baptizing with fire!

“Logic,” says Carlyle, “is good, but not the best. The irrefragable doctor, with his chain of inductions, his corollaries, dilemmas, and other cunning logical diagrams and apparatus, will cast you a beautiful horoscope, and speak you reasonable things; nevertheless, the stolen jewel which you wanted him to find you is not forthcoming. Often, by some winged word, winged as the thunderbolt is, of a Luther, Napoleon, Goethe, shall we see the difficulty split asunder, and its secret laid bare; while the irrefragable, with all his logical roots, hews at it, and hovers round it, and finds it on all sides too hard for him.”

Mr. Evans had feeling as well as fancy. This in a preacher is even more important than the other. Here, we conceive, lies the principal distinction between the orator and the poet. Poetry is the language of fancy; eloquence, the language of feeling. The preacher who operates only on the judgment and the fancy may instruct and please, and thus prepare the way for persuasion. Persuasion itself requires a warm and glowing heart. Eloquence has been defined, “the power of imparting one’s feelings to others.” “If you want me to weep,” said Horace, “you must weep yourself.” The preacher who is himself unmoved, will toil in vain to move his hearers. His sermon may be as beautiful as the moon-beams on the snow; but it will be as powerless and as cold. As saith Longinus: – “The orator must have a vehement and enthusiastic passion, a certain madness, or divine phrensy, breathing into his thoughts, and inspiring his speech.” To use the language of another: – “Truth must be planted in the hot-bed of feeling, if we would witness its flowery development, and enjoy its fruit. The orator must be roused and inflamed by the majesty of his theme; not wrought up into an unmeaning fury, like

a tempest in a tea-pot; but influenced and agitated by solemn considerations of truth, duty, interest, and moral grandeur.”

If this description of eloquence was ever realized in the pulpit, it was in the preaching of Christmas Evans. He spoke what he felt, and because he felt. The fountain was in his own soul, and it flowed out upon his audience in streams of living water. He was always full of his subject, and his ordinary manner was exceedingly ardent and pathetic. Sometimes he seemed quite overwhelmed with the magnitude and grandeur of his theme, and then he spoke with such impassioned earnestness as to storm the hearts of his hearers. Thus inspired, it was scarcely possible that any man of ordinary sensibilities should be otherwise than eloquent. But Mr. Evans’ talents were of a superior order; and when kindling with the enthusiasm of his message, he became peculiarly energetic and impressive. “His words came out,” as Longinus says, “as if discharged from an engine,” and their influence rested like a spell upon the ear and the heart. He transported his hearers beyond the region of argument, and leaving all their cavils and prejudices immeasurably behind, rapt them away to the third heaven of ecstasy!

The secret of all this power is found in the preacher’s piety. He was a man of eminent faith and holiness. The “things new and old” for the edification of his hearers, he “brought forth out of the treasure of his own heart.” The love of God within him imparted to his preaching a wonderful unction. His splendid mental creations were instinct with the inspiration of sanctified feeling. This divine anointing often rendered him superior to himself, clothed him with a superhuman energy, till he seemed a messenger from the other world. The man was lost in his theme. Art was swallowed up in the whirlpool of excited feeling. The audience were swept irresistibly along by the current of the discourse; acknowledging, by tears and groans, the preacher’s hold upon their hearts; and sometimes losing all self-control, and bursting into the most extravagant expressions of wonder and delight. On this subject take the language of one, who, from personal acquaintance with Mr. Evans, was qualified to form a correct estimate of his character as a Christian minister: —

“He was also an experimental preacher. That a preacher feel his subject, constitutes one of his excellencies; but that his sermon be deeply imbued with the spiritual experience of the preacher, is the Crowning point of his excellency. It is true, a person may speak well of the distress of other people, but he will speak more powerfully of his own distress. Persons may expatiate very eloquently on the pleasant fragrance of the herbs and flowers of foreign lands, but those who have themselves participated in the fragrant odors, in the soft breezes of those countries, can describe them in an infinitely superior manner, and to much greater advantage. Many may speak fluently of the mercies of God, in providence and grace – protecting, preserving, pardoning sinners, &c., but those who have experienced a sense of the divine mercy in their own souls can speak much better of it. Mr. Evans had an experience of the things of God. Not only had he heard of Calvary, but in Calvary he lived; not only had he heard of the bread of angels and of the corn of heaven, but this bread and this corn were his daily food; not only had he heard of the river of life, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God, but the crystal waters of this river were his constant drink; not only had he heard of the renewing influences of the grace of God, but he himself had been made the subject of these influences. He had experienced the operations of the Spirit renovating his own heart, and therefore he could speak of them, not as a matter of hearsay, but with the apostle – ‘And what our hands have handled of the Word of life, declare we unto you.’”⁹

⁹ 1 John i. 1–3.

Mr. Evans' preaching was highly evangelical. "Jesus Christ and him crucified," was the alpha and omega of his ministry. The character of the following sermons fully justifies that remarkable saying upon his death-bed: "I have never labored without blood in the basin." Every one of them is illustrative of some important point in the economy of salvation. Every one of them tends to humble the sinner, and exalt the grace of God. Every one of them abounds with lofty views of the Divine Justice and Mercy.

"It is generally allowed," observes his friend, "that the people who are trained by a minister, and moulded by his instructions, are a good evidence of the tendency of his doctrine and ministry. In this view then, it is observed, the church where he more stately labored in Anglesea, and where the most of his care and efforts were bestowed, were a people mighty in the Scriptures; that they would converse well and readily on most of the doctrines of the Christian faith; that they labored much to improve in knowledge, and were active in the cause of religion. These nearly all were Mr. Evans' own people; they were nurtured by him, and upon his ministerial food they grew to be men, and were wholly according to the mold of his doctrine. It has been remarked, 'that if volumes upon volumes were written upon the subject of the tendency of his ministry, it could never be exhibited to greater advantage than has been done by himself, in those bright, clear, and golden letters, which he has inscribed upon the people of his charge at Llangenvni.'"

The following extracts from Mr. Evans contain his views of the evangelical over the legal style of preaching: —

"While a preacher inculcates duties in any way but with a view to the promises of mercy, and of undeserved strength, he is more like to a moral philosopher, than to the apostles and preachers that have been a blessing unto men, such as Whitefield, and hundreds who have been in a degree blessed in the same doctrine, and by the same Spirit. It is not in the duties we are to rest, but in Christ. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord – that they may rest from their labors, *and their works follow them.*' It was not in reliance upon their works they passed through the river of death, as if presumptuously on a bundle of rushes, but their works will meet them in the judgment day; to be weighed there in the balance of the faith and love of Christ; and they will be there as witnesses on the part of the saints, bearing testimony that the love of Christ constrained them to live to him that died for them and was raised again."

Again: —

"By endeavoring to avoid the bog, you sink in the quicksands – while you are hiding the system of grace, and casting it, as it were, into the shade – duties without faith are not acceptable, for 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' I compare you to a dry-goods merchant, who should hang up a piece of white cloth over the shelves of his store, where the cloths, fine linen, silks, &c., are kept, and thus hiding every article in his store, without exposing any thing to the view of his customers, yet he would stand at the counter, and address them in the language of surprise, Why do you not buy here, for I know you have wherewith? So some preach, standing like the store-keeper at the counter, saying, while the doctrine of grace is kept put of sight, Why do you not buy here? for we know that you have the money of ability; but you spend your money in the shops of the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. But they reply, What shall we buy, sir? you tell us that there is salvation in your store – and fine linen wrought out from Bethlehem to Calvary, and white raiment; gold and pearls, and food and drink indeed; but you hide them under the vail: bring them to the counter, and open them before us; show us, carefully and

plainly, whence this salvation proceeds, and by what means it has been procured; – has it been expensive to some one, seeing it is free for us?”

Once more: —

“I compare such preachers to a miner, who should go to the quarry where he raised the ore, and taking his sledge in his hand, should endeavor to form bars of iron of the ore in its rough state, without a furnace to melt it, or a rolling-mill to roll it out, or molds to cast the metal, and conform the casts to their patterns. The gospel is like a form or mold, and sinners are to be melted, as it were, and cast into it. ‘But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you,’¹⁰ or into which you were delivered, as is the marginal reading, so that your hearts ran into the mold. Evangelical preachers have, in the name of Christ, a mold or form to cast the minds of men into; as Solomon, the vessels of the temple. The Sadducees and Pharisees had their forms, and legal preachers have their forms; but evangelical preachers should bring with them the ‘form of sound words,’ so that, if the hearers believe, or are melted into it, Christ may be formed in their hearts – then they will be as born of the truth, and the image of the truth will appear in their sentiments and experience, and in their conduct in the church, in the family, and in the neighborhood. Preachers without the mold, are all those who do not preach all the points of the gospel of the grace of God.”

Christmas Evans was in labors more abundant than any of his Welsh contemporaries. We have stated in the memoir, that while in Anglesea, he frequently preached five times a day, and walked twenty miles. During his ministry, he made forty journeys from North to South Wales, and preached one hundred and sixty-three associational sermons. It is wonderful that his extensive travels and arduous labors did not hurry him to the grave before he had lived out half his days. But he had a firm and vigorous constitution; and having borne the burden and the heat of the day, the Master sustained him in the vineyard till the setting of the sun.

And his labors were as successful as they were extensive. “The sound of heaven,” remarks his friend “was to be heard in his sermons. He studied his discourses well; he ‘sought to find out acceptable words, even words of truth;’ and the Holy Ghost attended his ministry in an extraordinary manner.”

Few men of modern times have had a more numerous spiritual family than he. Wherever he went, throughout all Wales, multitudes claimed him as their father in Christ. “In his day the Baptist associations acquired their great popularity, and in his day arose a number of the most respectable ministers ever known in the principality.” Some of them were his own converts, and many of them had their talents inspired and their zeal inflamed under his powerful ministry. “Life and evangelical savor,” said one of them, “attend Christmas Evans, wherever he is.” “None of us,” said another, “understand and comprehend the full extent of his usefulness.” The celebrated Robert Hall mentioned his talents in terms of high commendation, and ranked him among the first men of his age. A Congregational clergyman, who was well acquainted with him, speaks of him as follows: —

“He is a connecting link between the beginning and the ending of this century.

¹¹ He has the light, the talent, and the taste of the beginning, and has received every new light that has appeared since. He was enabled to accompany the career of religious knowledge in the morning, and also to follow its rapid strides in the evening. In this he is unlike every other preacher of the day: the morning and evening light of this wonderful century meet in him. He had strength to climb up to the top of Carmel in the morning, and remain there during the heat of the day, and see the

¹⁰ Rom. vi. 17.

¹¹ The eighteenth.

fire consuming the sacrifice and licking up the water; his strength continued, by the hand of the Lord, so that he could descend from the mount in the evening, and run without fainting before the king's chariot to Jezreel."

We conclude this brief and somewhat imperfect portraiture with the following characteristic paragraph from the pen of Mr. Evans, illustrative of his views, not only of the right kind of pulpit ministration, but also of the injurious influence and tendency of the principal theological controversies which during his day agitated the Baptist churches in the principality of Wales: —

"I consider that a remarkable day has begun upon Wales. The dawn of this day was with Vavasor Powell and Walter Caradock; the former amongst the Baptists and the latter amongst the Independents (Congregationalists). Several churches were gathered in both denominations in the twilight of morning. But when Rowlands and Harris rose – it was the sunrising of this revival day. Mr. Jones, of Pontypool, was one of the sons of the sunrising. About ten or eleven o'clock, a host of Baptists, Calvinistic Methodists, and Congregationalists, arose; and among this class I had the honor of entering the field. The day was warm – the sermons and prayers were short, and the doctrine was evangelical. But I have reached the evening, and the day is greatly cooled. Power, tenderness, and the cross of Christ, marked the sermons in the morning; but length and tediousness are the distinguishing features of the prayers and sermons in the evening. It was too warm to preach two hours in the heat of the day. It appears, also, that talents are become much weaker and more effeminate as the evening spreads its shades. Beyond a doubt, the preaching of intricate points – something like questions concerning the law, and endless genealogies, have been the means of cooling the work and the workmen in the evening of the day. They will now lift up their heads and talk to every traveller that passes the field; and towards Merionethshire, they will inquire, 'Dost thou know any thing about Sandemanianism?' and in other districts they will ask, 'Dost thou know something about Williamsism¹² and Fullerism?' and in consequence you may see young doctors many, springing up, talking like learned Lilliputians. 'Some say that Christ died for all, and others that it was for his church he died; but the truth is this,' said the Lilliputians: 'he did not die for any man, *but for the sin of all men.*' I was there also on the great platform of this period, but I dared not condemn all systems by a sweeping sentence of infallibility, and take the bagpipe under my arm, as some were disposed to do, and cry down every new voice without proving it. 'Prove all things.'"

¹² Dr. Edward Williams, of Rotherham, author of some abstruse inquiries on the Divine Sovereignty.

SERMONS OF CHRISTMAS EVANS.

A New translation from the Welsh. INTRODUCTION

In presenting to the public a selection from the sermons of Christmas Evans, we find ourselves embarrassed by two circumstances:

First. – It is impossible to exhibit on paper the peculiarly forcible elocution of the author. Some of the most effective discourses ever delivered seem comparatively powerless when perused afterward in private. This observation is verified in the case of the two most remarkable pulpit orators of modern times, George Whitefield and John Summerfield. Their spoken eloquence was like the breathings of the seraphim, but their printed sermons are of no very extraordinary character. Like them, Mr. Evans was much indebted, for his success, to a very popular and powerful delivery. His appearance in the pulpit was fine and commanding; his voice, one of unrivalled compass and melody; his gesticulation, always easy, appropriate, and forcible; and when he warmed under the inspiration of his theme, his large bright eye shot fire through the assembly. But the sermons are now divested of all these auxiliary accompaniments; and without the prophet before us, we may wonder at the effects attributed to his message. The following selections will give the reader at least a tolerable idea of Mr. Evans' modes of thought and illustration; but if he would have any adequate conception of the splendid phantasmagora in process of exhibition, he must imagine the burning lamp within the scenes.

But the greater difficulty is the impossibility of a perfect translation. Genius is proverbially eccentric. Mr. Evans' style is altogether unique. The structure of his sentences is very original. None of his countrymen approximated his peculiar mode of expression. It would be exceedingly difficult for any man, however well qualified to translate other Welsh authors, to render him into English, with the preservation, everywhere, of his spirit. The writer at first thought of publishing a selection from his sermons as translated by J. Davis; but upon examination, that translation was found so faulty, that it was deemed expedient, if possible, to produce a new. In pursuance of this purpose he obtained the aid of a friend, whose excellent literary taste, and accurate acquaintance with both languages, constitute a sufficient guarantee for the general correctness of the following translation. It lays no claim to perfection, though it is at least free from the most obvious and glaring faults of Mr. Davis' version. Some of the nicest shades of thought are inevitably lost, and many of the startling metaphors and splendid allegories have doubtless suffered some diminution of their original force and beauty; but the writer trusts that enough of the author's spirit is retained to furnish a pretty correct idea of his talents, and render the book acceptable to the reader.

With these apologetic remarks, we commit the sermons of Christmas Evans to the press; praying that they may be accompanied with something of the same Divine unction, as when, in their original delivery by the author, they "set the land of Cambria on fire."

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