

WELSH  
CALVINISTIC METHODISM

A Historical Sketch.

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LONDON:  
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.  
1872.

## CHAPTER VII.

Checks to persecution—Miracles or what?—End of some of Howell Harris's persecutors—  
The unfulfilled vow—Chancellor Owen and his clerk—Sir W. W. Wynn—The great  
prayer-meeting —Deliverance—Penryn—A plot to pull down the chapel— How it  
failed—A feast, and how it finished.

THE more favourable light in which the Methodists gradually came to be regarded by some of the leading gentry of the Principality checked, as we have seen, in a great measure, the persecutions to which they had been exposed. But there were other causes which mightily contributed to the same effect. Certain occurrences took place from time to time, and in various localities, which are so strange that many will refuse to credit them, while they will be regarded by some of those who believe that they came to pass as the interventions of Divine Providence in behalf of persecuted Christians, and by others as nothing more than strange coincidences. We have not the least objection in the world to being numbered among "those who have unlimited faith in the miraculous," if by that phrase is meant a firm belief in the power of God to perform a miracle when that is necessary, in the present day as well as in the ages that are long past. But our present duty is not to discuss the subject of miracles, nor to defend our own particular views on that important subject, but to relate facts, leaving it to our readers to draw their own conclusions, only premising that those which we lay before them are vouched for by people whose evidence upon any other subject no one would have hesitated to receive.

The man who threw the first stone into the house in which Howell Harris preached at Bala, when he suffered that brutal treatment which we have already described, fell off his horse as he was returning from a fair a short time afterwards, injured his spine, and soon died. There was one who made a desperate effort to push the preacher over a rock into a pool six yards deep, and not long after he fell over that very rock himself, and was killed on the spot. Another, who was most active among the mob, fell off his horse, fractured his skull, and instantly died. Thus three of the most violent persecutors on that memorable occasion had, before many days had elapsed, died violent deaths.

There was a tenant of a Mrs. Lloyd of Gesail, near Penmorfa, Carnarvonshire, who opened his house for religious services, and had been allowed to do so unmolested for some time. At length there came a clergyman, who had already distinguished himself for his anti-Methodist zeal, with his wife, to pay a visit to Mrs. Lloyd. One morning while he was staying at Gesail, he went out to call on a brother clergyman who resided in the neighbourhood. In the course of their conversation the local clergyman remarked to

his visitor that there was a tenant of Mrs. Lloyd's who had Methodist services held in his house although he lived very near the mansion, and that he was afraid that no one had been kind enough to inform the lady of the man's misconduct. "Then," said his visitor, "I shall not eat my dinner today before I have informed her." But he was never permitted to do so. When he reached the house he was found unable to speak. He never uttered a word again, and died in a few days. We have spoken of Chancellor Owen of Llanor as a fierce and merciless persecutor. He had a clerk who was likewise a rhymist, and this worthy was employed by him to compose a satirical poem against the Methodists, which was printed and industriously circulated about the country. At a festive gathering which occurred soon afterwards, the Chancellor introduced his clerk to the company as the author of the song which they all so greatly admired, and a collection was made on the spot for the gifted rhymist, which amounted to fifty guineas. Soon afterwards the master conceived a most bitter and unaccountable enmity against the servant, and one Sunday as they were leaving the service he rushed upon him in the churchyard and commenced beating him with all his might, charging him with having made an attempt to murder him, *throwing the church bell on his back*. The astonished clerk turned upon his master, and there was a furious fight. The former was of course dismissed from his office, soon managed to get through his fifty guineas, and spent the remainder of his days in poverty and wretchedness.

Sir W. W. Wynn was the owner of an estate at Llanuwchllyn, near Bala, and Methodism had made considerable progress among his tenantry at that place. We have already mentioned his having been obliged to return some fines which he had illegally imposed on some of the Methodists in the neighbourhood of Wrexham, and it appears that this had roused his ire to such an extent that he expressed the resolve that not a single member of the "sect" should be allowed to reside anywhere on his estates. Tidings of this reached the ears of the little flock at Llanuwchllyn, and great was their distress at the prospect which it held before them. They knew their master too well to entertain the least hope that any man would be able to shake the resolution which was to them so fraught with disaster, and in their trouble they resolved to lay their sad case together before their heavenly Father. A special prayer-meeting was held to ask Almighty God to open for them a way of deliverance, and especially to entreat Him for strength to be faithful to His truth whatever might happen to themselves; and they had not to separate without evidences which satisfied them that He was willing that they should thus approach Him, and that He would with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they might be able to bear it. In a few days the news reached them that the great object of their dread had fallen from his horse on the hunting-field and had been killed on the spot.

Some years after the event which we have just related, an effort was made by a little band which had been gathered together at Penryn, in the same county, to build a place for worship. When they had finished it up to the roof, they found the greatest difficulty in procuring slates to cover it in, for all the proprietors in the neighbourhood had agreed not to let them have any on their property. The Ffestiniog quarries were within a few miles, but were closed to them, and not a slate could they have on any terms, and the building, therefore, remained for some time unroofed. At length they were enabled to get over their difficulty by the kindness of another Sir Watkin, who was a man of a very different spirit from his persecuting sire. He gave them permission to search for slates on his property, which was lying at some miles' distance. It was very rough and uncouth material that they succeeded in finding, and so rugged and mountainous was the spot where it was found, that the chapel people had to convey it to its destination on the backs of horses; but they pushed on through all their difficulties, and the little chapel was completed. The persecutors were annoyed, but not disconcerted. If the Methodists had succeeded in completing their chapel, it would not cost much labour to pull it down, and this they resolved to do. A day was fixed for this act of Vandalism, but, on the evening of the preceding day, the man who was to take the lead in the bad business suddenly died, and the rest, having lost their leader, had not strength of heart enough to proceed, and the chapel was left in peace. But there was a wealthy woman in the place, a relative of the deceased man, who was by no means willing to let the Methodists have their way. Little would they be the better of their chapel unless they could hold services in it. It had been built for preaching, and she would take care that no one should preach in it in peace *as long as she lived*. Such was the resolution that she expressed, and she did her utmost to give it effect. A sermon was announced at the chapel, and the report of it reached the lady's ears. She accordingly hired a number of strong men, who were likewise men of Belial, to go to the place, disperse the congregation, and send the preacher about his business; and it was arranged that, after having done all this, they were to go to her house to dinner. The morning came, and the preacher and a few people assembled together to hear the Word, but scarcely had the proceedings commenced when there came upon them the lady's hired host, who soon broke up the meeting and chased the preacher away. Having done this, they retired to the house of her who had employed them to enjoy the promised feast. There were great preparations, in which, as it seems, the mistress herself took an active part; but before it was complete a disaster took place which made the house anything but a house of feasting. By some mismanagement on the part of the lady herself, or some of her assistants, the contents of a large boiling pot were poured over her person, and she was scalded so severely that she almost immediately died.

“But are we to rush to the conclusion that these and similar events were the interpositions of Providence? Is a man able to know good or evil, love or hatred, by all that is before him? Do not the same things happen to the evil and the good? Have not preachers died in the pulpit? And have not good Christians expired in the very act of prayer? When one reflects on the innumerable things which continually happen, such coincidences are perhaps fewer and less remarkable than a fair calculation of chances would warrant us to expect.” Perhaps it is so. We have not had much experience in the calculation of chances, and have not much faith in the process; but events of the kind which we have narrated affect our story, not according to the light in which they are regarded in the present day, but according as they were looked upon at the time in which they happened. We are getting quite familiar with modes of expression and of thought which the Welsh people of those days had never heard of. Whatever we may think of those occurrences, the poor persecuted Methodists of that time had no doubt but that they were the interventions of their God in their behalf; and their enemies and persecutors had, to say the least, grave suspicions that such was the case, and therefore thought it safer to let them alone.