

by its vitality in close contact with the people. Its aristocrats are its most active workers. It has never been fed on state pabulum, but by the sweat of its brow has it eaten bread. The limit of its expansion can only be the limits of this globe. The depths of human woe, and the height of heavenly glory are the measures of its enterprise.

It is not necessary to minimize other great men, ancient or modern, for the purpose of exalting the name of Wesley, but in all the history of Christianity, Mr. Wesley stands overshadowed and outstripped by none in his flaming zeal for the salvation of humanity and the glory of Christ who called him out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Listowel, Ont.

## Susannah Wesley,

The Mother of Methodism.

BY REV. J. R. PATTERSON.

IN seeking for the springs of Methodism, we must go, not to Oxford, but to Epworth. There, amid sickness, poverty and repeated bereavements, a beautiful and accomplished woman, scarcely known outside of her own home, devoted the best of her days to the training of her numerous family from which came forth the most apostolic man since the days of St. Paul. No Englishwoman of the eighteenth century is surer of immortality than Susannah Wesley. Thirty million Methodists rise up to call her blessed.

She was born in the year 1669, the daughter of a prominent Nonconformist minister named Dr. Annesley. From him she inherited earnestness, a strong will, fervent piety and excellent common sense. Very early in life she manifested marked individuality and intellectual power. She became interested in the theological literature of the day, and, before she was thirteen years old, she had examined the whole controversy

Before long the Wesleys moved to South Ormsby, and then finally settled at Epworth. Here their house was filled with little folk. Nineteen children were born to them, many of whom died; but John Wesley states that there were thirteen in the home at one time.

Had Mrs. Wesley's fame as a mother not obscured her other virtues, she might have been known as the model wife. Never did man have a more loyal or more capable helpmeet. She took almost complete charge of the business affairs of the family, not because her husband was unwilling to bear the burden, but because he was not competent. A clever man, Samuel Wesley undoubtedly was, but his realm was theology, literature, poetry, homiletics—not finance. John Wesley records his admiration of the serenity with which his mother conversed, transacted business and wrote letters surrounded by her children.

But with all her capacity she could not save the family from falling into a sea of troubles. In settling at Epworth, the rector had contracted a debt which he was never able to discharge. Poverty became chronic. Sometimes bread for the children was hard to provide. Yet ministerial dignity and decency had to be maintained. Once a spiteful creditor had Mr. Wesley committed to jail. His wife sent him her rings, which he manfully refused to accept. The poor parson was almost discouraged, but his heroic wife never bated one jot of heart or hope. Her grateful and admiring husband wrote: "Tis not every one could bear these things; but I bless God my wife is less concerned with the suffering of them than I am in writing."

Beyond controversy, Mrs. Wesley is the Queen of mothers. She gave herself to her children with unexampled devotion. "No one," she writes, "without renouncing the world in the most literal sense, can observe my method." Under her guidance the home became a school for the culture of body, mind and soul. From their birth, the children were drilled in regular habits. Eating, sleeping, dressing were all reduced to rules. Regulations governed every hour of the day, and these regulations were enforced with military precision. Mrs. Wesley took charge of the family school, which lasted from 9 till 12, and from 2 till 5, and opened and closed with singing. At 5 o'clock all had a season of retirement, when the oldest took the youngest that could speak, and the second the next, to whom they read the Psalm for the day, and a chapter in the New Testament. Every evening the mother would, if possible, spend some time in conversation with one of the children.

To assist in the management of her household, Mrs. Wesley drew up a code of rules and regulations. Obedience must be implicit; therefore the will of each child must be early and thoroughly subdued. Every child must learn to "cry softly" by the time it was a year old. Children must keep quiet at family prayers, and ask a blessing immediately afterwards, by signs, before they could speak or kneel. Courtesy must be shown to servants and to one another. No child should be allowed anything because he cried for it. No child, guilty of a fault, should be chastised if he ingenuously confessed it and promised to amend. No child should be punished twice for the same fault; and, if he reformed, the offended was never afterwards upbraided. Acts of obedience were commended and frequently rewarded. Promises were strictly observed. No girl was taught to work until she had learned to read correctly. At suitable intervals, rigor was relaxed, and the nursery, with its large juvenile community, became "an arena of hilarious recreations, high glee and frolic."

In 1709, the Rectory was burned to the ground. John was rescued just as the walls fell in. The effect of this incident is seen in his mother's private meditations: "I do intend to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child that Thou hast so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been, that I may do my endeavor to instill into his mind the principles of Thy religion and virtue. Accordingly, Mrs. Wesley became and remained throughout her life, her son's guide, philosopher and friend. Her letters were his oracles; her counsel was his law. At her decision he left England for Georgia. On her advice he countenanced lay preachers. To her influence we may justly ascribe many of the distinguishing peculiarities of early Methodism.

Her last days were her brightest, if not her best. They were spent in London, at "The Foundry," where her son John made his headquarters. There, relieved from poverty and care, she beheld her two distinguished sons leaders in the great



From Mr. J. W. L. Forster's painting.

Copyright.

SUSANNAH WESLEY.

between the Churchmen and the Dissenters, and joined the Church of England. As she grew older, she developed into a beautiful and accomplished woman. Her portrait, taken after her marriage, shows us a refined and even elegant lady, with slight features of almost classic regularity. Sir Peter Lely painted her sister as one of the beauties of the age, but a competent authority declares that Miss Annesley was not nearly so beautiful as Mrs. Wesley.

At twenty years of age, she married a brave, pious, learned but impecunious London curate, named Samuel Wesley.