

ONE OF THE FATHERS OF METHODISM.

A MEMOIR OF BYGONE DAYS.

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ON Wednesday, Nov. 9, 1783, Thomas Brocas writes in his diary: "I have been employed most of the day planting forest trees. Who will live to see them in a state of perfect growth, is only known to Him who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters and who walketh upon the wings of the wind. He seeth who shall cut them down, and it may be that I shall then be plucking fruit from the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and whose loaded branches even now bend so low that he who lies prostrate on the earth bleeding with wounds inflicted by Satan and sin, may stretch forth his hand and eat and live for ever."

While the humble Shropshire gardener is planting forest trees on the rich deep soil of Salop, and wondering who shall cut them down, other hands were busy planting on Britain's fertile soil, trees of righteousness—forest and groves and plantations of earnest Christian churches. Methodism was being planted by the Wesleys and their *coadjutors*. Foremost among these was the immortal Fletcher. Madeley has never taken a first rank among England's manufacturing towns. Like Epworth, it would hardly have been known beyond the boundaries of its own county, were it not that the celebrity of its devoted pastor has given it a world wide interest. Fletcher and Madeley are indissolubly united as Wesley and Epworth are. A two hours smart ride from Shrewsbury would bring the horse-back traveller to Madeley. A somewhat smoky straggling town—or series of villages—reposing on the Severn, and once greatly celebrated for its iron bridge, the first of these remarkable structures which in our day have had so many successors and which have enabled engineers to throw the highway across chasms of nearly a mile in width without arch or central buttments. The first model for the Suspension bridges which now span the Niagara river below the falls.

In Wesley's time it was an exceeding pleasant village. Encompassed with trees and hills. Its vicarage was a favourite resort.