

The Great Welsh Revival

BY REV. J. R. PATTERSON

RECENT cable dispatches have referred to a great revival that has broken out in Wales. The ancient principality is in a state of unparalleled religious enthusiasm. Football matches have been cancelled; theatres deserted; drinking clubs broken up; atheistical books burned; piles of low music destroyed. Prayer-meetings are being held in homes, stations, coal-pits and on street corners. Denominational barriers have disappeared, and ministers of the different churches have co-operated in the most fraternal manner. So great is the public interest that Cardiff's four leading newspapers have been devoting two columns daily to the news of the movement.

So far the movement has been chiefly among the Welsh; but their English neighbors are catching the fire and there is hope that it will spread to London and throughout England. Altogether there is promise of the greatest awakening since 1859.

The remarkable feature of the revival is its apparently spontaneous character. It is true that for some years devout Welshmen have publicly and privately expressed the longing for a great revival. But this one began in an unexpected manner and in an ordinary service, the immediate occasion being a young woman's brief but thrilling testimony of her love for the Saviour. At once the whole aspect of the meeting was changed, and ordinary decorum gave place to long-lost expressions of rapture. About the same time a young miner, named Evan Roberts, felt the call and compulsion of the Spirit. He had already left the mine, preparatory to entering a theological college when suddenly and authoritatively he received what he called his baptism of fire. Testifying in simple phrases to the voices he had heard and the visions he had seen, he began work in his own neighborhood. Conversions followed; the news spread; the countryside was aflame. Calls to the young missionary came from every hand; and wherever he has gone the large mining villages have been so roused that everything else has been overshadowed. Thousands have turned to Christ, and have shown the sincerity of their profession by directly uniting with the churches.

In the *British Weekly* Rev. Thomas Law gives his impressions of Mr. Roberts and his work. He says that the revival is going on in innumerable towns and villages simultaneously. "It is just as if a spark had fallen in dry heather and ignited the countryside. It is generally believed in the churches of Wales that it is the direct work of the Holy Spirit. Certainly it is difficult to explain on the human side, for all the usual machinery of a mission is absolutely absent. There are no bills announcing the mission, there are no united choirs, or choirs of any kind, as far as I could ascertain. I believe in many cases there is not even a committee." Mr. Roberts is thus described: "He is a young man of about twenty-six, clean shaven, and quite youthful-looking. He has a most attractive personality, and you realize at once that he is really and intensely in earnest. His work is far from being a mere performance. He is magnetic to a degree, and his wonderful appeals, given when his face is lighted up with an indescribable radiance, seems irresistible. His addresses are short and broken. Speaking as he did almost entirely in Welsh, the elect language which I had the misfortune not to know, I could not gauge the quality of his addresses, except by the effect they produced on the audience. Occasionally he spoke in English, but evidently he has no practice in English speaking. I should judge that he is no orator, even in his own language. I may say I saw nothing of the extraordinary gestures, about which some people have written to the papers. Away from the pulpit he is most modest and retiring.

"Although he has decided gifts and marked attractiveness,

and a personality which cannot be analyzed or described, yet the explanation of the unique mission is not to be found in Evan Roberts, and he would be the first to confess it. He usually does not stay in a town more than two days, and he makes no plans ahead, going from town to town, as he believes he is led of the Spirit."

Mr. Law gives a graphic description of an extraordinary meeting which he attended in a village bearing the decidedly Welsh name of Ynysbwl. This meeting is a type of many. In spite of the bad weather the church was crowded and many could not get in. Mr. Roberts did not arrive for two hours after the commencement. But the mission went on in his absence. There was absolutely no order or arrangement in the service, and there was really no conductor. Someone would pray, then perhaps another would start a Welsh hymn or give testimony or make confession of sin. This might be followed by another prayer or a short address. Anybody would spring up in any part of the building, and no one could tell one minute what was going to happen the next. This went on for hours without the slightest cessation. Frequently prayer and singing went on together. Sometimes a brief address was delivered by someone in the audience. Perhaps in the middle of it someone else would start singing.

Asked if this did not mean a great deal of confusion, Mr. Law replied: "I admit that this would give you the impression that it was so, but, remarkably enough, there was really no confusion. There was undoubtedly great emotion. Some of the strongest men were prostrate in tears, and convulsed by some unusual power. Altogether, the manifestations were extraordinary. When Mr. Roberts arrived at about 12.30, after the meeting had been going on for two or three hours, the same thing continued, except that his presence seemed to give extra enthusiasm. He ascended the pulpit, which had up to this time been unoccupied. He gave a very brief address, which was broken in the middle by somebody in the audience striking up a Welsh tune, and then someone broke in with prayer, and then another quoted passages of Scripture. This was mostly in Welsh, though with occasional snatches of English. Again Mr. Roberts spoke for a few minutes. Then those who professed conversion during the morning stood up. One thing with which I was very much struck was that names and addresses of those who professed conversion were read out from the pulpit. At 2 o'clock, Mr. Roberts said they might adjourn for a little physical refreshment. They resumed the meeting at 3 o'clock, and went on all the afternoon, all the evening, and well on to the next morning, and the astonishing thing was that everybody stayed. It was only when absolute physical exhaustion came on that the audience began to move. There seemed to be a remarkable spell over the people."

One thing which impressed the observer was the large number of young men and young women at the meeting, particularly the young men. In case the tide of rich blessing spreads to England Mr. Law expects that it will take another form as the English temperament differs from the Welsh. But, of course, no one would for a moment limit the methods of the Spirit.

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I HAVE not a shadow of a doubt that if all our eyes could be opened to-day, we should see our homes, and our places of business, and the streets we traverse, filled with the "chariots of God." There is no need for any one of us to walk for lack of chariots. That cross inmate of your household, who has hitherto made life a burden to you, and who has been the Juggernaut car to crush your soul into the dust, may henceforth be a glorious chariot to carry you to the heights of heavenly patience and long-suffering. That misunderstanding, that mortification, that unkindness, that disappointment, that loss, that defeat—all these are chariots waiting to carry you to the very heights of victory you have so longed to reach. Mount into them, then, with thankful hearts, and lose sight of all second causes in the shining of His love who will carry you in His arms safely and triumphantly over it all.—*Hannah Whitall Smith.*



MR. EVAN ROBERTS