

be made. Think, then, about death, and make preparation for that also, lest it overtake you as a thief in the night." One man, in consequence of a reproof from Fletcher, vowed that he would never enter the church; and once, coming with a funeral, he remained in the porch during the service. Fletcher came out to him and begged him to leave off his evil ways, and at last, finding him obdurate, he said, "Oh, John, if you will not come to God's house on your own feet, prepare, at any rate, for the time when you must come on your neighbours' shoulders."

Fletcher held stirring services in the open air, and thus attracted many hearers who would not come to church, and on Sunday he would go round his parish with a bell (starting at five A.M. in order to reach the most distant houses), to call those who had excused themselves from morning service because they could not wake in time to get their needful work done before they went. He continually preached against the cruel sports so common in Madeley, and against the evils of the wakes and fairs which were often held there. He was, in consequence, frequently threatened by the rough colliers, who would not give up their amusements, and once some of the most lawless planned a "parson-baiting," as they called it, in which he was to be pulled off his horse and worried by their fierce dogs. But Fletcher's courageous spirit in time commanded their respect, his kindness and tact began to tell, and his church gradually filled. The opposition of the neighbouring clergy and squires, who resented his interference with the established pursuits of the neighbourhood, was more slow to yield, and showed itself in constant petty persecution; but this also in time gave way before the untiring zeal with which Fletcher pursued his object. He wrote to Charles Wesley:—"When I first came to Madeley I was greatly mortified and discouraged by the smallness of my congregation. . . . But now, thank God, things are altered in that respect, and last Sunday I had the pleasure of seeing some in the churchyard who could not get into the church." But in less than a year he had to add:—"My church<sup>is</sup> begins not to be so well filled as it has been, and I account for it by the following reasons: The curiosity of some of my hearers is satisfied, and others are offended by the word; the roads are worse, and if it shall ever please the Lord