

# The Welsh Revival

Contributed by F. B. Meyer

No money is spent on advertising the Revival meetings, and there are no posters on the announcement boards. There is no need to print "Evan Roberts" in large type in order to secure a crowd. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit in mighty power that attracts. Still the lack of direction is rather disconcerting to a stranger; though in our case, the difficulty was lessened by meeting groups of people hastening to the chapel. We had the great pleasure of conversing with the mother of the young miner-student whom God has so greatly honored.

Mrs. Roberts is a happy woman today. She said that her step was much lighter than it used to be, and her heart is lighter. She told of the early years when her husband broke his leg, and the lad (Evan Roberts) had to go to the mine and how even then he was different from other lads. He always had a book in his hand and cared for the things of God. She told how, before the Revival came, he could neither eat nor sleep. Then the now familiar narrative of the outbreak of the Revival at Loughor was told again; and then the account of the baptism which had come to her, after seeking it for eight days—"a kind of burning in my heart."

So we get to the little chapel, perched on those Welsh hills, the central building amid clustering cottages. It would seat about 600, and was filling fast. The area and galleries were soon packed with young miners, with women and girls, with men in the prime of life. Two or three ministers sat in the big square pew below the pulpit, but no hymn books, no organ or piano - these were not needed to lead that magnificent singing, which rolled in successive billows of harmony over the congregation. What noble tunes - the hymns are full of the music of the Gospel! Again and again you catch the names of Christ, of Golgotha, of Calvary! Such voices - each trained to its part!

Two hours pass in prayers from old and young - from women for their husbands, in singing and in little bursts of exhortation but most of these are cut short. Mr. McTaggart speaks a little in English on the filling of the Holy Spirit, and there are one or two English choruses like, "For you I am praying." Then the volume of sound is doubled when the congregation falls back again into the grand familiar sacred Welsh tongue.

Two or three young ladies quietly slip in and take their seats beneath the pulpit. These accompany Mr. Roberts and help by prayer and are often broken with sobs, and end the meeting with sweet solos which the people catch up and repeat the refrain. Presently Mr. Evan Roberts enters—a tall young man of 27 years, with a pleasing open face, a winning smile and dark searching eyes. He is unobtrusive, simple and yet strong. He is no weakling, but a man born to lead and certain to be known as one of the great spiritual forces of the coming time! This is the man whom God has repeatedly awakened to hold communion with Himself from 1 until 5 A. M. for three successive months, promising that a Revival should break out, which like a tidal wave will sweep through the world. No wonder that he who has seen God is a master of assemblies, and that hearts bend before his words though they may be the simplest!

Shortly after entering, he speaks a few words on the necessity of obeying the Spirit, which are interrupted, first by confirming testimonies on the part of two or three who feel impelled to bear witness, and then by bursts of song. The meeting next falls to prayer; and amongst others a young miner in the gallery mentions that some men behind him are mocking, and he prays for their conversion. Then one of the men referred to says that he is quite prepared to be convinced of the existence of God, if some tangible proof were given.

This challenge greatly agitated the meeting, and especially Mr. Evan Roberts, who casts himself on his knees, and begins to wrestle in prayer for these two with the most terrible anguish of soul that I can conceive of. It was as though he were a father in agony for the life of his only son. His cries were heartrending to listen to; a friend of mine started a chorus to drown them. There was no effort at display, no unreality, no false emotionalism, but just travail of soul. Shame on us that so few have known it - that we have been so calloused about the hardness of impenitent sinners! That our eyes have so seldom been fountains of tears! They told me afterwards that they were obliged to use a handkerchief to dry up the pool of tears upon the chair over which the Revivalist bent.

After some time spent in prayer he challenged the men to yield, and on their refusal he asked the entire congregation to join him in prayer. In a moment every person in the place knelt down and a hurricane of audible prayer swept through the place, and for some ten minutes the air was heavy with sobbing, strong crying, and prayers audibly uttered by 500 voices. I have never heard anything like it in my life. A group of people gathered around the two unyielding souls, and so we continued. Then Mr. Roberts called for an interval of silent prayer, and read the passage from Exodus, where the people are bidden to stand still and see God's salvation. It was one of the most moving spectacles that can be imagined, and it was impossible to speak for tears. No wonder that under such a strain of emotion two or three fainted, and had to be carried out; but these episodes were hardly noticed, and could not break the holy grip which was on every heart.

The meeting broke up at 5:30 and we hastened to the good minister's house (where the young Revivalist was also staying) for a little hurried refreshment. Then we traveled in the dark along the muddy roads to the chapel at Tabor, where the evening meeting was to be held. It was almost impossible to get in, but by great courtesy room was made for us. They recognized the London preacher, and urged him to speak, but he felt that his wisdom was silence before the great manifestation of Divine power, and that he must sit still as a little child in the school of the Holy Ghost.

For two hours the meeting took its Spirit-prompted course. A girl would pour out her heart in prayer, rising almost to agony; another would follow, falling at last into a kind of rhythmic chant and then a minister would give a few words of exhortation. Soon a boy would pour out an earnest appeal for decisions, followed by dropping on his knees amid a group of his associates and pouring out his soul in prayer. So the time passes rapidly till Mr. Evan Roberts entered; and alas we must reluctantly tear ourselves away, pushing through the crowd to our carriage, and then back to the train. But we have seen and heard things which have unveiled the spirit-world, and are so totally dissimilar from the stereotyped religious forms that we usually pursue, as to usher us into a new world.

They who merely read such descriptions as this may think that the meetings are characterized by emotional excitement. But that is not the case. There is undoubtedly strong excitement and deep emotion, but these are well under control; and beneath all that can be accounted for by the influence of highly-exalted moods of soul on other minds. It is undeniable that the power of God is working after the fashion of those wonderful scenes of which our fathers have told us in 1859.

It is preeminently a young people's movement. Boys and girls, young men and women, crowd the chapels. The keynote is Calvary—no other aspect of the work of our Lord seems to satisfy. The personality and work of the Holy Spirit are in every prayer and on every tongue. The pent-up power of godly people, which has too long been restrained, has broken loose, and before it the ministers are silenced. One told me that he felt that things would never be the same, but that liberty of utterance would have to be conceded (during at least part of the ordinary services) to the speech of the Holy Ghost through consecrated lips.

A new way of handling the cranks and bores, who have been the bane of our open meetings, has been discovered in the power of sacred song; and an example has been set which may well be adopted universally. Of course, there will have to be definite teaching, and even now I think there is room for more wise counsel than is for the most part permitted. But such things as these will necessarily right themselves as time goes on. In the meanwhile, there can be no doubt that God has answered prayer, and visited His people, and that the marvelous and widespread ethical results attest that this is the finger of God.

Reference: Record of Christian Work, March 1905 Volume 24, Number 3